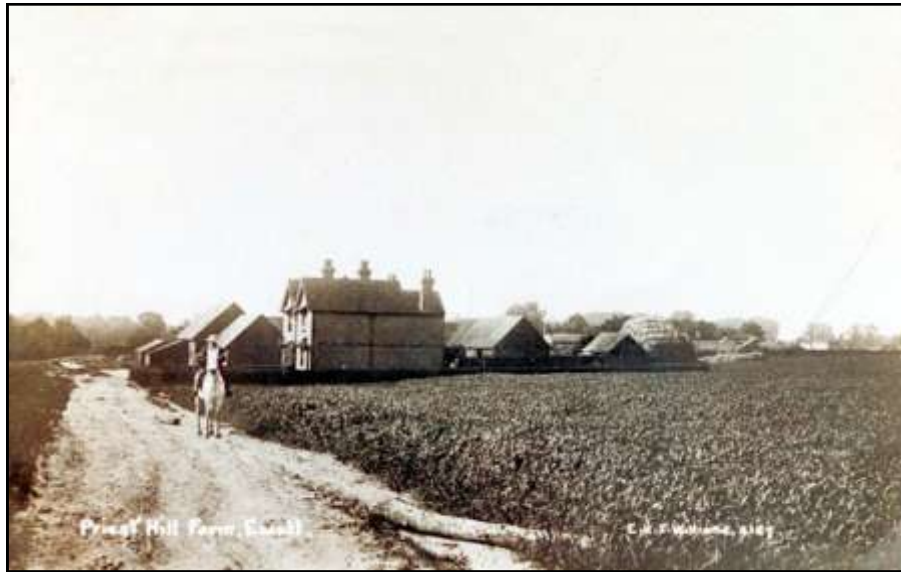


My Memories of Ewell

By David Body

I was born in Wimbledon (why Wimbledon I do not know! - never asked). On 21st January 1936, the night King George V died and called after the new man Edward V111, who was called David, so I was called after him. Dad was in the City and commuted up from Ewell West all his working life. Mum just stayed being a housewife. We lived at Lyncroft Gardens, off Spring Street. I somehow never wanted to follow Dad, and pursued a life in agriculture.



Postcard view of Priest Hill Farm, Ewell, date not known.
Image courtesy of Bourne Hall Museum*

One of my earliest recollections of Ewell was being wheeled in a push chair up to Priest Hill farm. That is beyond Ewell East station, between Banstead Road & Reigate Road where they milked a herd of Jersey cows by hand. The farm then claimed (1940ish) to have the largest unfenced field in Surrey. This was where cereal crops were grown. They had a "Standard" Fordson tractor which was on what they called "Spade Lugs" as an alternative to rubber tyres.



*A 1944 Fordson 'Standard' Tractor with 'spade lug' rear wheels
Image Source © austin7nut via <http://www.flickr.com>*

From the top of that farm one could see across London. After the war the technical college was built on the corner of the farm by the rail line, and Reigate Road. This was about 1950. Soon after, the whole farm was bulldozed to make way for London borough playing fields. Now it seems to be in a neglected state.

I cut my teeth in farming by visiting my Grandfather in south Nottinghamshire on school holidays, and he knew the farmer next door, who taught me to hand milk cows, and drive a tractor. I also used to help out at the cow shed belonging to the Horton Estate Farm, between Ewell West and Epsom.

After I left school I went deeper into Surrey, and on to agricultural college, the Ayrshire herds on all the hospital farms contracted the dreaded "Foot and Mouth disease" and they were all slaughtered. After that cattle never came back to those farms. They supplied milk, beef and pigs all for hospital use.



*Land Army Girls Rearing cows on Long Grove (Horton) Farm, circa 1940s.
Image courtesy of Bourne Hall Museum*

I was christened at St. Mary's church, and went on to learn church bell ringing at St. Mary's . I used to go to ringing practice on Tuesday evenings, and also at St Martins in Epsom.

I also was member of the Epsom Young Farmers Club. A club which no doubt was disbanded many years ago, as there is not much farming in and around Epsom these days.

I seem to have endless recollections of Ewell. Upper Mill on the Kingston Road still milling flour, the thump of its mill wheel turning could be heard from our garden, but it eventually closed. Carpenters, the bakery opposite Cracknell's, baked bread using flour from the mill. Also in Kingston Road down by Lower Mill there was Ralph's, they were still shoeing horses up to the end of the war. Albert & Ewart Longhursts did and still are, burying the dead.



Handling grain in the Upper Mill c.1900 Image courtesy of Bourne Hall Museum



*Carpenter's old bakery in February 1962
Image courtesy of Surrey Libraries and is held in the
Epsom & Ewell Local And Family History Centre Collection*

The "Parade" is the row of shops up by The Organ Inn, which I was told, (and I now think wrongly) were built with the view that the Northern Line underground trains were to be extended down from Morden to Ewell.



*Castle Parade, Ewell By-Pass, Photographed by LR James in 1971.
Image courtesy of Surrey Libraries and is held in the
Epsom & Ewell Local And Family History Centre Collection*

At the top of the High Street, by the Reigate Road turn off, was Grace Adams the tobacconist and newspaper shop, which then became Bounds. Mrs Earle ran a little general store, next to the UD (United Dairies). The UD deliveries were made by horse and cart from a depot in Upper High Street, Epsom where the horses were also stabled. When the milkman came into Lyncroft Gardens, I would often have a ride on his float right up and back in "The Headway" next to our road. Prior to the UD our milk came from Mr Cox, who had cows somewhere off Ruxley Lane. I think he stopped just before the war.

Mr Barker was Barkers general store on the corner of Reigate Road. Down the high street came Mr & Mrs Lewis who had a green grocers' shop, and pet shop, opposite what was The Lord Nelson pub and Bradley & Arthur builders (who built Lyncroft Gardens) .



*Lewis Pet Food Stores, Ewell High Street c.1987
Image courtesy of Surrey Libraries and is held in the
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Mr Hodges, soft furnishings. Mr Perry another green grocer, who used to boil beet root in the shop. Next to his shop was a nonconformist chapel with a little spire on its roof. This was pulled down before the war. The post office was just into Cheam Road opposite the Star pub. Next to it was Nuttall's general store. A little further down the High Street was the office of The Ewell Gas Light and Coke Company. mother used to order house coal from them. Market House Stores on the corner of Church Street. Sidney A Best, chemist and optician was on the opposite corner. And on the corner of West Street was Turners the bakers, who still delivered bread by horse and cart. Further up West Street was Jameson's the manufacturer of airplane engine components and the Ewell Boys School.

Between the Market House Stores, on the corner of Church Street and High Street, and Carpenters the bakers was Mr Willis, he had an ironmongers shop. One went up 2 steps to get into the shop. There must have been a 'Tinkle' bell on the door, as Mr Willis seemed to appear from the side of the shop. He always seemed to "shuffle" he would stand on another raised part of the shop, and looked down on a youngster like me. "Yes" he would say. "Could I have a gallon of Royal Daylight Paraffin please Mr Willis". He would take the 1 gallon can and disappear into the back of the shop, reappearing with a full can, costing about 1/6d. This was long before pre-packaged good, and nails and screws could be bought by the pound and ounces, and wrapped in a brown paper bag.



Cracknells c.1959

Image courtesy of Surrey Libraries and is held in the Epsom & Ewell Local And Family History Centre Collection

Down by the Spring was Carpenters (Bakers) and Cracknell (butchers) also there was another part of Hodges, this was a men's outfitters, and Mr Hodges wore a bowler hat. At the Spring itself, just before Derby week, gypsies would stop by and fill their cans with water before moving on up to Epsom Downs.

Thomas Pocock still had his haulage business in Chessington Road, using shire horses, no doubt shod at Ralph's, but they went in my very early years. "Fitznells" a house by the mill pond was a music school.

Ewell telephone exchange (on London Road) was manually operated, and if I ever "rang home" on a Tuesday evening I would hear the church bells ringing as the connection went through.



*Thomas Pocock, 8 & 10 Chessington Road, Ewell.
Photographed by LR James in 1966.
Image courtesy of Surrey Libraries and is held in the
Epsom & Ewell Local And Family History Centre Collection*

Ewell came through the war years relatively unscathed. A bomb did fall and destroy No 15 Lyncroft Gardens, luckily the owners were away at the time, this was rebuilt to the original design after the war. A bomb fell on playing fields in Old Schools Lane, off Chessington Road, and a crater remained, which filled with water for many years.

Extensive damage did occur by flying bombs up past Ewell East Station, and on the Nonsuch Estate. Many houses had their fronts blown off, mostly by blast damage.

Ewell West station had always had electric trains, but steam hauled goods trains used to shunt into the sidings at night. On the opposite side a branch line used to operate, taking coal up to the hospital cluster, using their own steam locomotive. This ceased soon after the war. Evidence of the track bed remains today. Ewell West Station was our gateway to London, and the underground, which fascinated me as a child and still does, but then I do not commute.

I left Ewell in 1952. Went on to agricultural college, National Service, and went to New Zealand (NZ) in 1959. Dad retired in 1961, sold up and went to Devon, I returned from NZ, and ended up in Buckinghamshire, got married where I still live.

I have a pal who lives up the Banstead Road, we were at school together, so do visit him and see something of the village at odd times.

I asked a resident of Holman Court why the clock was never repaired, as it showed 3.15 ever since I was a child. He told me it was in fact a wall sun dial. Holman Court must have had some connection with Holman Hunt the famous artist (Light of the World).

There is a lovely old wooden barn in Church Street, which was once part of Rectory Farm, which used to be in the days before the parade shops and the Ewell bypass.



*The wooden barn Church Street, Ewell
Photographed by LR James in 1966.
Image courtesy of Surrey Libraries and is held in the
Epsom & Ewell Local And Family History Centre Collection*

David Body
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* The house in the postcard view of Priest Hill Farm was not a farm house in its own right, but two semi detached workers cottages. The farm did not seem to have a farm house of its own. Two other cottages to the farm are still there. They are just by the bypass side of the rail bridge, between the station and Reigate Road. To the right of the picture is the yard where corn ricks were built, some were square, some oblong and some round, these were always thatched, until thrashing took place.

D.B.