

# Effingham Post Offices

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*This article describes the four families who ran the post office service in Effingham during the approximate period 1841–1952. Their surnames were Bradford, Naldrett, Butcher and Green. The author acknowledges the valuable contributions to the article from Frank and the late Mary Rice-Oxley, the late Margaret M. Biles, Bryan R. Sherwood and Colin Jordan.*

## Elizabeth Bradford: up to the 1840s

Elizabeth was the wife of Robert Bradford. He was evidently baptised in Effingham, as the son of Henry and Elisabeth, on 28 May 1770 [IGI: Batch P008221]. She may have been the Elizabeth Combs who married a Robert Bradford at St. James, Paddington on 19 December 1798 [IGI: Batch M079033]. The 1841 Census finds them living together, with no other persons present, and Robert described as a schoolmaster. He may have been retired or may have been still teaching in Effingham. The schoolmaster usually associated with this period was a much younger man Charles Coombs whose wife Harriett was the schoolmistress. The similarity of the surnames 'Coombs' and 'Combs' may not be coincidental – Charles may have been a relative of Elizabeth.

### 1841 Census

[no specific address] Effingham, Surrey : PRO Ref: HO107 Piece 1071 Book 3 Folio 6 Page 4

Robert Bradford : 70 : schoolmaster : yes [born in Surrey]

**Elizabeth Bradford** : 70 : — : no

### 1841 Census

[no specific address] Effingham, Surrey : PRO Ref: HO107 Piece 1071 Book 3 Folio 4 Page 1

Charles Coombs : 30 : schoolmaster : no

Harriett Coombs : 30 : schoolmistress : no

Thomas Coombs : 2 : — : no

Walter Coombs : 1 : — : no

The 1842-43 Tithe Map and Schedule indicate that the Bradfords were living in or directly next to the property in Church Street that today consists of the two dwellings 'Dormers' and 'Thorncroft'. Robert died in 1843 [GRO Ref: Dorking 4 85, 1843 (Q2)].

*Kelly's Post Office Directory of the Six Home Counties* for 1845 has, in its description of Effingham, this entry:

POST OFFICE.— Mrs. Elizth. Bradford, post mistress.

London letters arrive from Leatherhead, by foot post, at 1/2 past 8 p.m.; despatched 5 p.m.

The '8 p.m.' was very probably intended to be '8 a.m.'. By now Charles Coombs appears to have been no longer the schoolmaster, as this directory also says:

PUBLIC SCHOOL.— David Crebbin, master; Mrs. Crebbin, mistress.

Robert had evidently died in 1843 [GRO Ref: Dorking 4 85, 1843 (Q2)]. It is suspected (for reasons shown later) that Elizabeth may have surrendered her role as postmistress soon afterwards, perhaps in 1844, and that the 1845 directory had been published too late to capture this.

In any event, Elizabeth died in 1847 when she would have been aged at least 77 [GRO Ref: Dorking 4 85, 1847 (Q2)].

### The Naldrett family: 1840s – 1890s

The next postmistress of Effingham was the wife of Allen Naldrett. He was born in Abinger to parents John and Mary and was baptised at Ockley on 28 September 1817 [IGI : Batch C109911]. In early 1841 he married Sarah Earl (née) Cook [GRO Ref: Dorking 4 71, 1841 (Q1)]. The 1841 Census finds them living in Church Street:

#### 1841 Census

Church Street, Effingham, Surrey : PRO Ref: HO107 Piece 1071 Book 3 Folio 16 Page 2

Allen Naldred [sic] : 25 : agricultural labourer : no [in error]

Sarah Naldred : 20 : — : yes [born in Surrey]

The 1842-43 Tithe Map and Schedule indicate that the Naldretts were living in the west-most of the series of Church Cottages that extended (as they do today) westwards from Church Street.

It appears that around 1844 they began to use as a Post Office one or other (or possibly both) of the pair of cottages in The Street that are known today as ‘Old Post Office Cottages’. The source for this view is a letter written by Allen's daughter around 1930-31 in which she stated that the Post Office had opened in 1844 and that ‘they were in it up to 1893’. These cottages stand right next to Home Farm and at one time had belonged to that estate. The Census returns spanning 1851-91 are not very helpful in confirming just where the Naldrett family was living during that period, but the 1861 Census makes it entirely clear that at that date they were indeed living in the Old Post Office Cottages, whilst the 1891 Census makes the same proposition quite probable if not definite.

Figure 1 shows the office stamp that the Naldretts were applying to the mail during the period 1842-52.



Figure 1 Effingham mail stamp in the 1840s.

The 1851 Census finds them living in ‘Effingham Street’, a vague address assigned in this census to most residents of the village irrespective of which road they were in.

#### 1851 Census

Effingham Street, Effingham, Surrey : PRO Ref: HO107 Piece 1598 Folio 362 Page 6

Allen Naldrett : head : mar : 34 : agricultural labourer : Abinger, Surrey

**Sarah Naldrett** : wife : mar : 32 : --- : Dorking, Surrey

John Naldrett : son : unmar : 8 : scholar : Effingham, Surrey

Allen Naldrett : son : unmar : 6 : scholar : Effingham, Surrey

Edward Naldrett : son : unmar : 5 : scholar : Effingham, Surrey

Henry Naldrett : son : unmar : 2 : at home : Effingham, Surrey

James Naldrett : son : unmar : 4 months : at home : Effingham, Surrey

Julia Gadd : lodger : unmar : 18 : dressmaker : Effingham, Surrey

Their immediate neighbours at this time were Francis Bilby and William Wells. The latter had certainly been living in ‘Old Post Office Cottages’ when the 1842-43 Tithe Map and Schedule were drawn up.



Figure 2 Old Post Office Cottages in The Street : 20<sup>th</sup> century.

There is a complicating factor when considering the precise whereabouts of the Naldretts during 1851-91, in that *The History of Effingham in Surrey* [O'Connor, 1973] asserts on pages 90-91 that in 1851 the property 'New House' – being the property now comprising 'Dormers' and 'Thorncroft' – had been sold at auction and that the associated auction notice stated that the house was 'now or late in the occupation of Francis Bilby and Allen Naldred [sic]'. The association of Allen with this property is indicated by 19<sup>th</sup> century legal documents lent to ELHG some years ago by Dormers' then owner. It may be that the Naldretts did not occupy Old Post Office Cottages continuously throughout the four decades in question but nevertheless did always use it to operate a post office there. No evidence has been found so far to show that a post office was ever operated at Dormers/Thorncroft, but the OS Map of 1870 labels Old Post Office Cottages very clearly as a post office. It is possible that the Naldretts rented both Old Post Office Cottages and Dormers/Thorncroft concurrently for some time, perhaps occupying one whilst sub-letting the other. Future research may illuminate the matter.

*Kelly's Directory of Surrey* for 1851 has, in its description of Effingham, the entry:

POST OFFICE.— Mrs. Sarah Naldrett, post mistress.

London letters arrive from Leatherhead by foot post at 1/2 past 8 p.m.; despatched 6 p.m.

Again, the '8 p.m.' should doubtless have read '8 a.m.'.

Sarah died in mid-1853, [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 65, 1853 (Q2)], three weeks after the birth of her child Sarah. There is no GRO birth entry for this child, who was baptised at St Lawrence on 13 May.

In late 1854 Allen remarried, to Ann(e) (née) Rose [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 169, 1854 (Q4)]. She had been born on 5 February 1808 to parents Henry and Hannah in Betchworth and baptised there on 8 February 1808 [IGI: Batch C067941].

*Kelly's Directory of Surrey* for 1855 gave a similar entry as for 1851 except that it finally gave a plausible arrival time for letters:

POST OFFICE.— Mrs. Sarah Naldrett, post mistress.

London letters arrive from Leatherhead by foot post at 1/2 past 8 a.m.; despatched 6 p.m.

but was clearly out of date in not reflecting that Sarah had died.

The 1861 Census finds Allen's family living at the 'Post Office'; this was the first census to refer explicitly to a post office in Effingham and, as discussed earlier, it was certainly referring to Old Post Office Cottages. His new wife was now the (sub-)postmistress:

#### 1861 Census

Post Office, Effingham Street, Effingham, Surrey: PRO Ref: RG9 Piece 441 Folio 68 Page 3

Allen Naldrett : head : mar : 47 : agricultural labourer : Abinger, Surrey  
**Ann Naldrett** : wife : mar : 52 : sub. post mistress : Betchworth, Surrey  
 Henry Naldrett : son : unmar : 12 : cow boy : Effingham, Surrey  
 James Naldrett : son : unmar : 10 : scholar : Effingham, Surrey  
 Sarah Naldrett : dau : unmar : 7 : scholar : Effingham, Surrey  
 George Cobden : lodger : unmar : 28 : constable of Surrey Constabulary : Singleton, Sussex  
 Charlotte Cobden : servant : unmar : 26 : domestic servant : Singleton, Sussex

The 1871 Census shows Allen now employed as postmaster besides Ann as postmistress, but there appears to have been an enumeration error in recording his birthplace:

#### 1871 Census

[no specific address] Effingham, Surrey : PRO Ref: RG10 Piece 829 Folio 104 Page 11

**Allen Naldrett** : head : mar : 53 : postmaster & gardener : Horsham, Sussex (!)  
**Ann Naldrett** : wife : mar : 61 : postmistress : Betchworth, Surrey  
 Henry Naldrett : son : unmar : 22 : gardener : Effingham, Surrey  
 James Naldrett : son : unmar : 20 : agricultural labourer : Effingham, Surrey  
 Sarah Naldrett : dau : unmar : 17 : --- : Effingham, Surrey

*Kelly's Post Office Directory of Surrey* for 1878 has for Effingham the entry

POST OFFICE.— Mrs. Ann Naldrett, post mistress.  
 London letters through Leatherhead at 8 a.m.; despatched at 6.30 p.m.  
 Letters for Effingham Hill are received through Dorking.

By 1881 Allen's daughter Sarah was also assisting with post office duties:

#### 1881 Census

[no specific address] Effingham, Surrey : PRO Ref: RG11 Piece 796 Folio 114 Page 2

**Allen Naldrett** : head : mar : 63 : sub post master : Abinger, Surrey  
**Anna [sic] Naldrett** : wife : mar : 72 : post mistress : Betchworth, Surrey  
 Sarah Naldrett : dau : unmar : 27 : post assistant : Effingham, Surrey  
 George Kemp : lodger : unmar : 27 : gardener : Springfield, Essex

Later in 1881 Sarah married Jabez Lugsden [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 249, 1881 (Q4)]. He had been born to parents Jabez and Deborah in Eaton Bray, Bedfordshire and baptised there on 26 November 1854 [IGI: Batch C035623].

Ann died aged '82' in 1890 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 109, 1890 (Q1)]. The 1891 Census finds Allen widowed and described only as a labourer. This census makes no mention of a post office or postmaster/mistress in Effingham, but *Kelly's Post Office Directory of Surrey* for 1891 has this entry:

POST OFFICE.— Mrs. Sarah Lugsden, receiver.

Thus it appears that Allen's daughter Sarah was still authorised to receive the mail but, perhaps, not to perform the full duties of a postmistress.

**1891 Census**

The Village, Effingham, Surrey : PRO Ref: RG12 Piece 576 Folio 87 Page 2

**Allen Naldreth [sic]** : head : widower : 73 : labourer : Abinger, Surrey

Jabez Lugsden : son-in-law : mar : 37 : labourer : Eaton Bray [Bedfordshire]

**Sarah Lugsden** : dau : mar : 37 : --- : Effingham, Surrey

Robert Lugsden : [grand]son : unkm : 8 : scholar : Shere, Surrey

Sarah Lugsden : [grand]dau : unkm : 4 : --- : Effingham, Surrey

Olive Lugsden : [grand]dau : unkm : 2 : --- : Effingham, Surrey

Hannah Baker : visitor : widow : 77 : --- : ---

It is thought that the family ceased their involvement with the post office around 1893. In any event, Allen died aged '77' in 1895 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 89, 1895 (Q3)]. By the time of the 1901 Census Sarah and Jabez had left Effingham and were living in Addington [PRO Ref: RG13 Piece 635 Folio 5 Page 2].

Jabez died aged '75' in 1929 [GRO Ref: Godstone 2a 262, 1929 (Q3)]. About 18 months afterwards his widow Sarah wrote an undated two-page letter to the Rev. H. M. Larner, addressing the envelope to him at 'Effingham Manor Golf Club or Vicarage'. The envelope has lost its franking and thus its date. The original is in the Surrey History Centre at Woking [SCH Ref: PSH/EFF/23/4]. It reads (after slight repunctuation) as follows:

98, Godstone Rd  
Whyteleafe [Surrey]

Dear Sir,

I see in my Dorking & Leatherhead paper last Saturday that you have written a little booklet, I see it is entitled [sic] Effingham Surrey, the Church, the Parish and the houses. If you have the book for sale, if you are not asking too much for it, I should so like to have one as I am a native of Effingham. My maiden name was Naldrett. My parents kept the Post Office for many years, in fact they were the first people who kept it. It was first opened in the year 1844 and they were in it up to 1893. Then it was made a larger office so they moved it away from us as, when we had it, it was only a small Sub Office; they did away with all small Offices at that time. My stepmother did the Office. My father was cowman at Effingham House for Colonel Parrott [Parratt] between 30 and 40 years, and for three gentlemen after he died. And they tell me that the old cowshed (where the Ice House is) where my father milked his cows for so many years is the Women's Institute now. I should so like a postcard of it, they seem to have altered the place. The hours I have spent there with my Dad when a child. I often wish I might see the old place once again. One of my brothers came down a year or so back. I would have liked to come with him then but was prevented from coming. I hope he may be spared to come this next Summer so as I can come with him if my health will let me. My brother is older than myself but is better able to get about than I am. He is 82 and myself within my 78th year. But since I lost my poor husband 18 months ago I have never been well since. There are not many people in Effingham who would remember me now for I see by the paper there are many fresh names now [which] I don't know. There are Whitingtons, Stovells, Tyrells. Now John Ottaway has passed away. Miss Ross and Miss Teasdales [Teesdale] might remember me and [the] West people at the shop.

I hope you will excuse my taking the liberty of writing to you for the book but I felt I must get it if possible.

Yours obediently Mrs. Lugsden.

P.S. Why I put stepmother – my own died when I was 3 weeks old.

Figure 3 Sarah Lugsden's letter to Rev. Larner in 1930/31 (transcription).

The correct title of Larner's booklet is *Effingham, Surrey: the church, the parish, the houses*. It does not contain much original material, merely reproducing other established sources. He wrote it in 1930 and had it printed by Biddles Ltd of Guildford. It can be viewed at the Surrey History Centre [SHC Ref: 942.2/EFF]. Sarah evidently wrote her letter to him around late 1930 or early 1931. It is the (sole) source of the suggestion that the Naldretts took over the post office duties from Elizabeth Bradford in 1844 and gave them up in 1893. We do not know whether Sarah ever did get to visit Effingham again. She died in London in 1951 aged '97' [GRO Ref: Willesden 5f 418, 1951 (Q1)].

### The West family: 1890s

The Post Office in Effingham was relocated when the Naldretts ceased to operate the service. It appears to have taken up residence at Yew Tree House, then the home of the village grocer and draper James West and his wife Rebecca.

James, who had been born in Ripley, came to Effingham in the 1850s. The picture of him in Figure 4 is drawn from a family group photograph which was taken, we have been told, in the garden of Yew Tree House on 12 April 1864.



Figure 4 James West in (it is claimed) 1864.

An entertaining account of a visit to Yew Tree House by the distinguished journalist Louis John Jennings in 1856 – thus, very soon after James had set up his business there – can be found on the ELHG website via the Book Extracts page.



Figure 5 Yew Tree House in The Street, seen here no later than 1904.

In 1894 James was among the first Councillors elected to Effingham's Parish Council.

One piece of evidence that the Post Office had migrated to Yew Tree House in the 1890s appears on the 1896 Ordnance Survey map, as shown in Figure 6. Another is the advertisement shown in Figure 7 which was published in *The Dorking and Leatherhead Advertiser* on 1 August 1895.



Figure 6 Post Office at Yew Tree House in 1896.

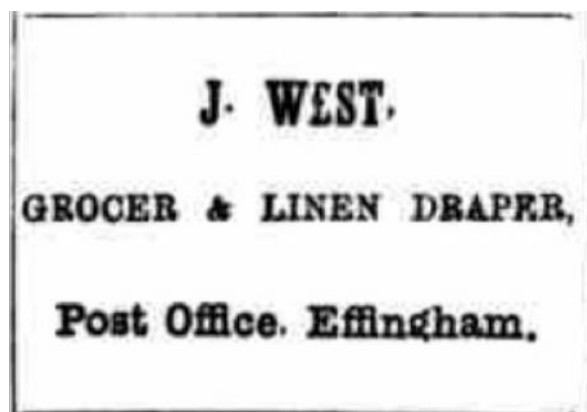


Figure 7 James West's advertisement in 1895.

James died in 1900. An obituary published in *The Dorking and Leatherhead Advertiser* on 10 February 1900 began as follows:

‘A very old and highly esteemed member of the Wesleyan Church passed away last week in the person of Mr James West of the Yew Tree House, Effingham. Mr West had resided at Effingham for a great number of years and was well known almost throughout the county as a local preacher of the Wesleyan community, a service which he had performed in the interests of his church for upwards of fifty years.’

A short article in *The West Surrey Times*, published on 2 February 1900, noted that James had died at his home ‘last Wednesday’, that is, on 31 January.

### The Butcher family: 1890s – 1940s

Soon after the death of Mr West the Post Office moved again, this time to Church Street in the property known today as ‘Old Post Cottage’, with William Butcher serving as postmaster.

William was born in Epsom in 1862 [GRO Ref: Epsom 2a 13, 1862 (Q2)]. The 1891 Census finds him as a “visitor” at No. 45, High Street in Epsom, next door to the home at No. 46 of his parents John and Emily, and occupied as a carpenter [PRO Ref: RG12 Piece 546 Folio 57 Page 10]. In 1894 he married Edith (née) Taylor [GRO Ref: Epsom 2a 29, 1894 (Q2)]. She had been born in Cuddington, Surrey around 1871.

In that same year, on 21 May, John and Emily celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary, a souvenir of which is shown in Figure 8.

By 1895, if not before, William and Edith were living in Effingham where their first child William John was born in the first half of that year. Here is the family in the 1901 Census:

#### 1901 Census

Church Street, Effingham, Surrey : PRO Ref: RG13 Piece 623 Folio 89 Page 3

**William Butcher** : head : mar : 38 : carpenter & sub-postmaster : Epsom, Surrey  
 Edith Butcher : wife : mar : 29 : — : Zuddington [sic – Cuddington], Surrey  
 William J. Butcher : son : unmar : 5 : scholar : Effingham, Surrey  
 Ernest C. Butcher : son : unmar : 4 : scholar : Effingham, Surrey  
 Edgar R. Butcher : son : unmar : 3 : scholar : Effingham, Surrey  
 Edith M. Butcher : dau : unmar : 3 months : — : Effingham, Surrey

Figure 9 shows the office stamp they applied, for a charge of 3 pence, to a parcel on 22 April 1898.



Figure 8 Souvenir of the Golden Wedding Anniversary of John and Emily Butcher : 21 May 1894.



Figure 9 Office stamp in Effingham in 1898.



Figure 10 William's wife Edith.



Figure 11 William (standing); the man seated is possibly his father John, or perhaps Edith's father.

On 10 February 2011 *The Leatherhead Advertiser* published a version of the photograph in Figure 12, which it had been sent by a relative of William's son Edgar Robert ('Bob') Butcher. It shows Edith, on the left of the doorway, with one of her sisters.

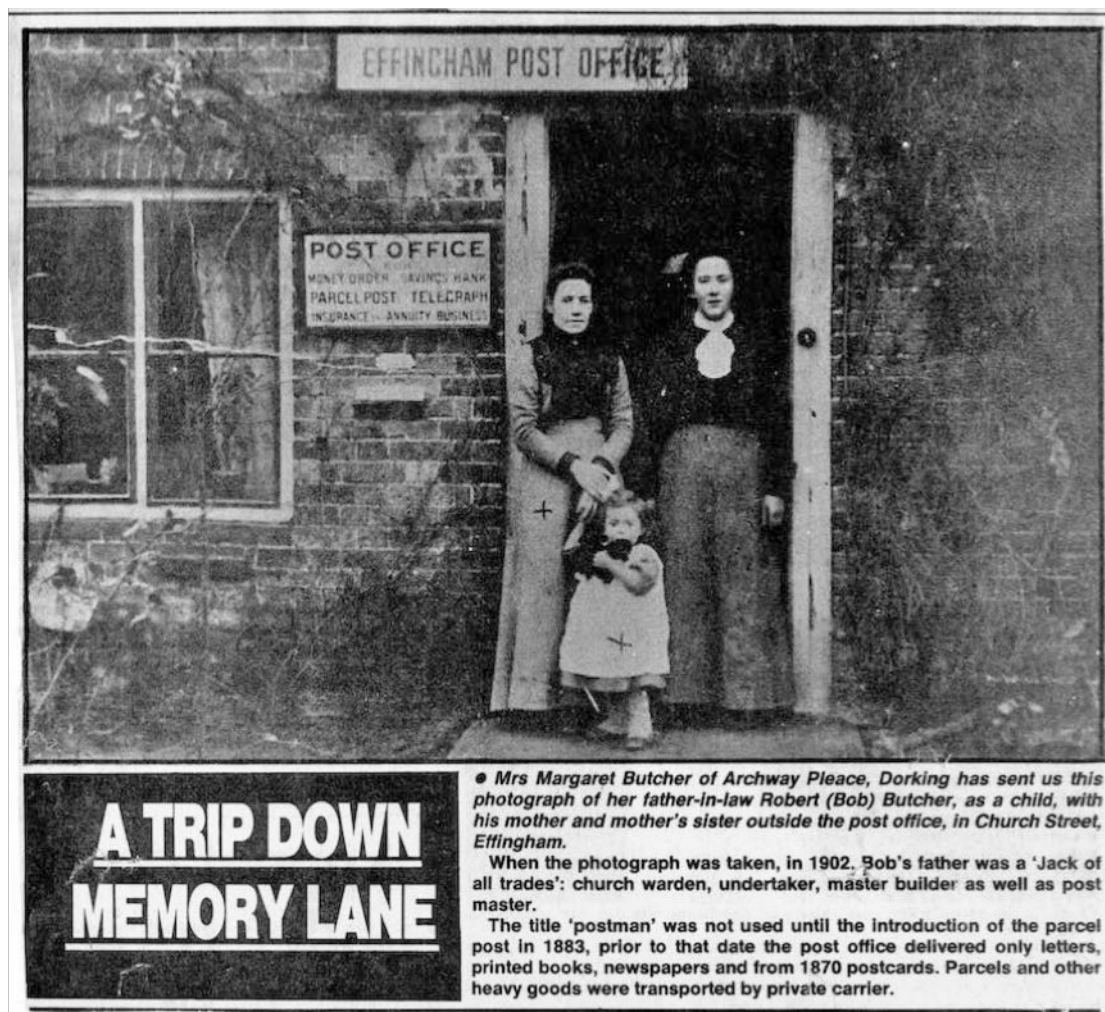


Figure 12 Edith (at left) with one of her children (probably Edith Maud) at the Post Office in Church Street, early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The newspaper's caption with the photograph claims that the date is 1902 and that the child is Edgar Robert; however, the latter boy was born in the first half of 1897, whereas the child in the image is clearly not yet 4 or 5 years old. Instead, the child seen here is almost certainly Edith Maud whose birth was registered in early 1901.

In 1903 their daughter Elsie Mildred was born [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 191, 1903 (Q4)]. She was born with a deformed hand and/or arm and never married.

The 1911 Census finds the family living at the Post Office:

#### 1911 Census

Post Office, [Church Street] Effingham, Surrey : PRO Ref: RG14 RD36 SD2 ED12 SN52

**William Butcher** : head : mar : 49 : carpenter : Epsom, Surrey

Edith Butcher : wife : mar : 39 : — : Ewell, Surrey

William John Butcher : son : unnm : 15 : domestic gardener : Effingham, Surrey

Ernest Claude Butcher : son : unnm : 14 : post office messenger : Effingham, Surrey

Edgar Robert Butcher : son : unnm : 13 : school : Effingham, Surrey

Edith Maud Butcher : dau : unnm : 10 : school : Effingham, Surrey

Elsie Mildred Butcher : dau : unnm : 7 : school : Effingham, Surrey

Edith Mabel Donovan : niece : unnm : 18 : assistant, mother's help : Purley, Surrey

Two of the children died quite young: William John died aged '23' in 1918 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 253, 1918 (Q2)]. A report in *The Dorking and Leatherhead Advertiser* published on 11 May 1918 states that he had been in ill health for some time and that on Saturday 4 May he had become worse and died an hour later. His sister Edith Maud ('Cissie') died aged '19' in 1920 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 194, 1920 (Q2)]. They are buried together in St Lawrence churchyard (Figure 17), next to the (later) grave of their parents.

The Post Office in Church Street has been remembered in the written or oral histories of many persons who lived in Effingham during the inter-war years. Mrs. Lena (née Keeling) Bridger recalled that the office itself was very tiny, had a lovely open fire and had space for two people only. When Edith served there she wore a black dress with a high white collar and a brooch at her neck. William worked as a general builder but also managed burials, wheeling the coffins to the church on a handcart. Lena's daughter Mary A. Rice-Oxley remembered the bell at the front door (seen on the right of the door in photograph below) and that one entered a passage to reach the office on the left, which had its own glass window and counter. Other residents have remembered that the mail arriving at the cottage was spread over the front yard to be sorted there for subsequent delivery. Richard Curtis Selley remembered, from his boyhood, William 'in his Panama hat teaching me how to shake hands'.

The photograph in Figure 13 was probably taken in an early decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has been plausibly suggested that William is looking out from the right-hand lower window, Elsie Mildred from the left-hand lower window and Edith from the upper window.



Figure 13 The Butchers at the Post Office (today's Old Post Cottage) in Church Street.

In early July 1944 William and Edith celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary, as described in an article from *The Surrey Advertiser and County Times*, published on 8 July (Figure 16).

Later that year the last of their daughters Elsie Mildred died aged only '40' [GRO Ref: Surrey Mid.E. 2a 315, 1944 (Q4)] and was buried in St Lawrence churchyard. On one kerb of her gravestone (Figure 18) is this inscription:

Also Emma Brockwell  
Died 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb. 1947 aged 82 years.  
At Rest

This refers to Elsie's aunt Emma (née Taylor) – the sister of Edith – who in 1902 married Frederick Clifton Brockwell [GRO Ref: Epsom 2a 23, 1902 (Q3)]. Frederick was born to parents Clifton and Mary, then living in Cuddington, in 1860 [GRO Ref: Epsom 2a 11, 1860 (Q3)] and was baptised at St. Mary, Ewell on 2 September 1860 [St Mary Baptism Register]. He appears (from the Commonwealth War Graves

Commission's database) to have died on 8 February 1917 while serving in the Royal Fusiliers, 12<sup>th</sup> Btn. The GRO reference to Emma's death is [GRO Ref: Surrey S.W. 5g 1234, 1865 (Q1)].

By the mid-1940s William and Edith had outlived three of their five children. The photograph in Figure 14 shows one of their two surviving sons, Edgar Robert, taken perhaps in the late 1940s or in the 1950s, with his daughter Winifred (born in 1929) and the latter's baby niece Ann:



Figure 14 Edgar Robert ('Bob') Butcher.

We do not yet know precisely when the Post Office in Church Street ceased to operate, but it appears to have done so no later than 1946 – probably it ceased when the war ended. In any event, William Butcher died aged '87' in 1949 [GRO Ref: Surrey Mid.E. 5g 207, 1949 (Q4)]. Edith died a few years later, aged '81' [GRO Ref: Surrey S.W. 5g 1272, 1953 (Q1)]. Their grave inscription in St Lawrence churchyard reads as follows:

In  
Loving Memory of  
William Butcher  
who passed peacefully away  
28<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1949. Aged 87 years.

Also Edith Butcher  
 wife of the above  
 who passed peacefully away  
 13<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1953. Aged 81 years.



Figure 15 Gravestone of William and Edith Butcher.



Figure 16 William and Edith Butcher,  
 Golden Anniversary, July 1944.



Figure 17 Left-most grave – siblings William John and Edith Maud; right-most grave – their parents William and Edith.

The inscription on the left-most grave reads:

In  
Loving Memory of  
William John Butcher  
who passed peacefully away  
4<sup>th</sup> May 1918 aged 23 years

Also

Edith Maud Butcher  
(Cissie)  
18<sup>th</sup> May 1920 aged 19 years



Figure 18 The grave of Elsie Mildred.

The short (end) kerb reads

In Loving Memory of

and the long kerb on one side reads

Elsie Mildred Butcher  
Died 1<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1944 aged 40  
years.  
“God Knows Best”

### The Green family: 1940s and after

At some point soon after the war the post office service in Church Street came to an end. The service was then re-established, as a short-term measure, in a building that once stood in The Street a few yards east of where today's butcher's shop (now Bevan's, previously Gibbs') now stands. As far back as the 1930s, at least, it had been called 'The Laurels'. That building can be seen on the far left in Figure 5, which looks west from Crossways across The Street towards Yew Tree House in the centre. The Laurels faced not onto The Street but onto a track running westwards from it which became known as 'Madge's Lane'.

In the 1930s The Laurels was occupied by George Madge, his wife Dinah and their unmarried daughter Emily ('Miss Madge'). George, born in Thorveton, Devon [GRO Ref: Crediton 10 82, 1850 (Q4)], had married Dinah (née Splatt) in 1875 [GRO Ref: Tiverton 5b 776, 1875 (Q4)]; her birthplace was also Thorveton. In the early 1880s they had moved to Stoke D'Abernon and produced several children there. By 1901 they had moved to 'Sheepbell' in Great Bookham with George occupied as a farm bailiff. One of their sons, Sidney, was then a butcher's assistant; by 1911 he was running a butcher's shop in Bookham, where he continued living. In the 1930s, when George and Dinah had moved to Effingham, The Laurels was also used as a butcher's shop but was open only on Saturday mornings. In 1934 George died aged '80' [GRO Ref: Surrey S.W. 2a 430, 1934 (Q4)]. The Electoral Register for 1935-36 shows just Dinah and Emily living at The Laurels. In 1936 Dinah died aged '82' [GRO Ref: Surrey S.W. 2a 470, 1936 (Q4)]. The Electoral Register for 1939-40 indicates that Emily had left Effingham altogether (she died in north-east Surrey in 1965).



Figure 19 The Laurels in The Street, facing onto Madge's Lane, clearly in use as a Post Office; 1949.

During the War the property became somewhat derelict and was used by the Army for gas training exercises.

Its use as a Post Office after the war raised questions about its safety, as can be seen from the following extracts from the Parish Council Minutes:

**Parish Council meeting 1 March 1946**

Mr Henson said he wished to call attention to the new position to which the Post Office had been moved and said he viewed with grave concern the danger to people especially children having to cross a dangerous and narrow main road over which a great amount of fast moving traffic passed. He would move that the Council write to the Post Master of Leatherhead and express this as their view. Mr West seconded. Carried.

**Annual Meeting of the Parish Council 16 April 1946**

*Effingham Post Office*

A letter from the Head Post Master, Leatherhead, agreeing that the present site of the Post Office is not ideal and intimating that the position was only regarded as temporary was read. Mr. Wallis moved and Mr. Docker seconded that the Council reply that they view the present site with the gravest concern and regard it as dangerous and quite unsuitable, that alternative sites have been offered, and request that the Head Post Master receive a deputation from the Council. Carried. The following Councillors were appointed to wait upon the Post Master if he is willing to receive a deputation – Mr. Wallis, Rev. Reynolds and Mr. Flack.

**Parish Council meeting 10 May 1946**

*Post Office, Effingham*

The report of the Parish Council's representatives appointed to wait on the Post Master at Leatherhead was read and adopted. The best thanks of the Council are accorded to the deputation for their report. It was resolved that a memorandum be addressed by this Council to the Post Master General requesting a revision of the regulations to be made forthwith to ensure that in future the views of a Parish Council, as representing the Parish, should be ascertained before any irrevocable decision is made in such matters. Carried.

We do not yet know who was running the service at this time. Not long afterwards the building was demolished and, according to O'Connor [*ibid.*], 'In 1951 a [new] Post Office was opened in 'The Street'.

The schematic in Figure 20 shows the approximate position that The Laurels had occupied before it and Yew Tree House were demolished and The Street widened.

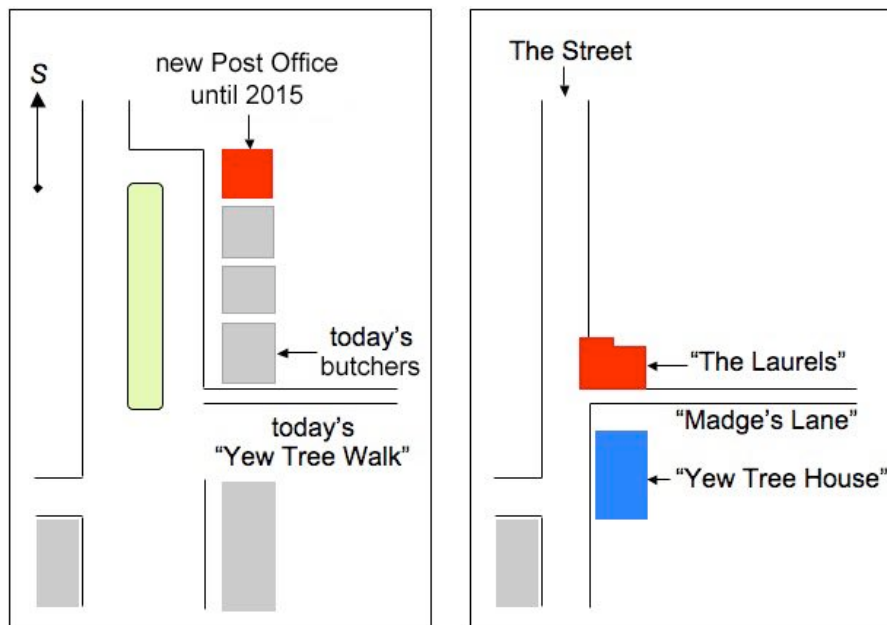


Figure 20 The frame on the left shows the current situation; that on the right, as in the 1930s.

Taking all the above into account, the post office service in Effingham probably followed quite closely the locus and time-frames shown in Figure 21:

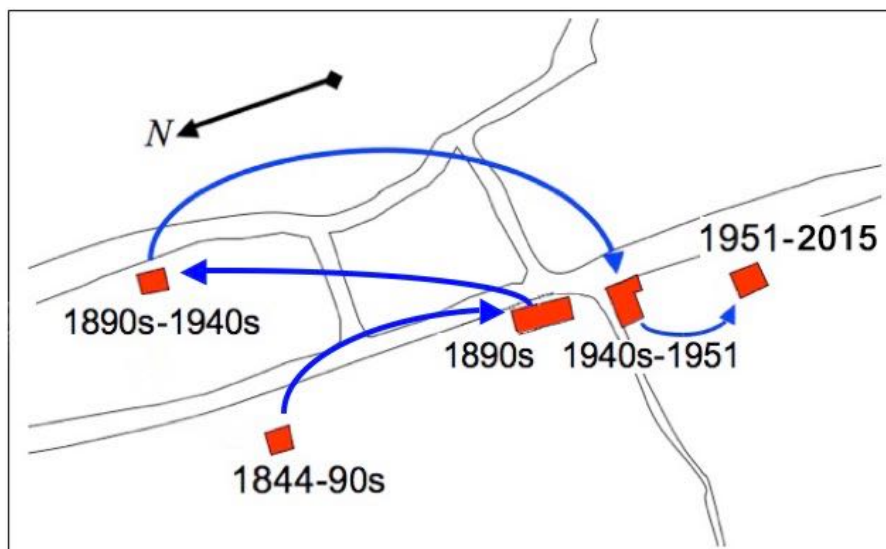


Figure 21 Probable locus of Effingham's Post Office service since the 1840s.

Around 1949 there came to Effingham, from Bookham, Frank W. Green and his wife Norah J. (née Wigley) who had married in 1944 [GRO Ref: Surrey Mid.E. 2a 379, 1944 (Q1)]. In December 1945 Frank had been appointed as a postman based at Leatherhead but resigned from there in 1946 [British Postal Museum and Archive POST 58/204, Appointment Books 1737-1969]. He and Norah did not appear in Effingham's Electoral Register for 1948 but were recorded in that for 1950, then living at Manor Barn Cottage. They were operating the service at The Laurels at least as early as 1949, using just its former shop area – the rest of the property was by then empty. They went over to the building each day to open it for this purpose.

The Electoral Register for 1952 shows Frank and Nora now living at 'The Post Office, The Street', where they remained for many years running the village's post office service. Figure 22 shows the Post

Office – just right of centre – after the other new shops had been built towards the end of the 1950s. The entire parade now incorporates the name ‘The Laurels’ into its official address.



Figure 22 The new Post Office and other shops, built in the 1950s.

The cast iron sign reading ‘Effingham Post Office’ that had previously been above the doorway of the Church Street Post Office had survived and was now mounted above a doorway at the new Post Office, as shown in Figure 23. It remained there until June 2015 when it was donated to Effingham Local History Group by Mark and Shirley Jones who had run this Post Office for many years; they left Effingham later in 2015 and the postal service was relocated in the village supermarket a few doors further down The Laurels.



Figure 23 The new Post Office with the old sign; photographed in 2011 but removed in 2015 and donated to ELHG.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures 1, 9: from Frank Rice-Oxley

Figure 2: from O'Connor's *The History of Effingham in Surrey*

Figure 3: from the Surrey History Centre

Figure 4: from Jennifer Chatfield

Figures 5, 13, 19, 22: from the Mary Rice-Oxley postcard collection

Figure 6: from the Ordnance Survey map of 1896

Figures 7, 12, 16: by courtesy of Reach Plc / *Mirrorpix*

Figures 8, 10, 11, 14: from Colin Jordan and family

Figures 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23: supplied by C. J. Hogger

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The author is grateful to the late Margaret Mary Biles for bringing ELHG's attention to the newspaper article shown in Figure 12.

The post office stamps were supplied by Frank Rice-Oxley from his extensive collection of such items. Special thanks are expressed to Colin Jordan, descendant of the Butcher family, for lending to ELHG the only known photographs of William and Edith Butcher as well as their family memorabilia.