

Oral History – Laura Annie (née Cox) Essam

Recorded by (THE LATE) MONICA MERCY O'CONNOR
transcribed with a commentary by CHRISTOPHER JOHN HOGGER

Among the oral histories accumulated by ELHG, that of Laura Annie Cox looks back at earlier times than do all the others; she was born in 1884 and able to recall people, places and events at the time when Queen Victoria was still on the throne. Fortunately her memories, although rather piecemeal and not entirely reliable, were captured on tape in 1970 by Effingham historian Monica O'Connor just in time, as Laura died in 1971.

Introduction

Mrs Laura Annie (née Cox) Essam, born in 1884, was interviewed in 1970 by local Effingham historian the late Monica Mercy O'Connor. A tape-recording made of that interview – transcribed in this article – is presumed to have been undertaken by Monica or by someone assisting her. Laura died the following year.

The original tape was lent to Effingham Local History Group (ELHG) by its custodian the late Mary Alfreda (née Bridger) Rice-Oxley and has been digitised as an mp3 audio file made accessible on ELHG's website.

The audio file was transcribed by C J Hogger in 2011; words not transcribed owing to indistinctness are marked ***. In the transcript below, Monica's speech is shown in italic and Laura's in roman.

Transcript

(Monica speaking) Now you told us, I think, that you were born in Effingham.

(Laura replying) Yes.

Will you tell us where you were born?

You know those white cottages going round to The Plough, that they're back on the left it will be, going to The Plough, in the middle one, 'cos there were three cottages then.

Opposite what is now the Douglas Haig?

No.

Or round the corner?

Round the corner ...

Round the corner, opposite The Plough.

Yes, those that ... they're white, aren't they?

And they are now where Mrs. Hanley lives, there are three cottages.

Yes, there was three cottages and I was born in the middle one.

Now when were you born?

That was the 3rd of June 1884.

And were you the first child, you (were) the eldest child?

Yes.

And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

I had two brothers and one sister, but my eldest brother is dead and my sister is dead, so there's only me and my younger brother.

Now what is the first thing that you can remember?

The first thing I can remember was when my sister was born.

How old were you then?

Two years and nine months.

And why do you remember that so clearly?

Well, I don't know, it's always sort of done, it's always been in *** me, I don't know why.

Was she born in this house?

No, she was born at Ockham.

In a hospital, or ...?

No, in a home, in a home. Lady Russell's at Ockham. Hatchford End, Ockham ...

Oh, yes ...

... that's where she was.

And where you, were you there then?

I didn't just see her born, but I heard her cry, 'cos Mum had twins, a boy and a girl, and the boy wasn't perfect so he died. And he was ... they there? wasn't cleaned properly. There was – what's the name, Dad? – Wesley, he christened them, and I can remember standing there at the bottom of my mother's bed, my father was that side, old Granny Birch – the old lady lived down the bottom of the garden, that looked after mother – she stood that side, and Reverend Wesley had one baby in that arm, and one baby in that the other arm.

And they had just been born?

Yes, 'cos they said they were asleep, but my sister lived and the boy died.

There was no doctor then, you didn't have a doctor when she was born?

Well, I suppose they did, I don't know, I don't know about that. But I know I heard her cry. And I ran into the room, and the Reverend Wesley he came just afterwards and I can remember him coming up the stairs and he give me a pat on top of the head, on the top, like you do to little ones, and I remember standing there with Dad that side the bed, old Granny Birch that side, and he's got the two babies in his arms.

And what was your sister christened, what was her name?

Mary, her name was Mary.

You were living at Hatchford then?

Yes, we was living ...

When did you come back to Effingham?

When my sister was ... March ... I know she was a little tiny thing, but I suppose she'd be about ... maybe about September, somewhere along there.

And did you come back to this cottage where you live now?

No, we come back, 'cos my father saw the Lamberts in, because he worked at the Manor House, you see, before he was married, from a boy of 16. He was in the lounge and he used to have to look after the house and do the housework for the men. He lived in the bothy, and he had to do the cooking and everything. And he's got the old paste board and this roller pin that they give him then.

Now which do you call 'the bothy'?

Well it's where Rangers live, you know where Rangers live ***.

Oh yes, where ... inside that wall along that low building.

Yes. When my Dad was married, you see, he had this paste board ***. That was Mr Hall that lived there then, they were the paint and whitewash people. And he – when I was born – he kept worrying my Dad 'cos he's never, wherever my family's worked, he's never been to desert an employee, never, I don't know, he had that ... they could always trust him, that was the thing. And I can just remember ... She kept on to my Dad – because this is what my father has told me – kept on to him, she wanted to see the baby. So he rolled me up in two blankets and brought me up to the Manor House (and I've seen the alterations to that Manor House), in the Manor House. Well then, he was there, I suppose, a year, then he went to Lady Russell's. Of course I was a baby there, I could always go anywhere there, and if she didn't see me about, Lady Russell was soon down to mother's and to know where I was! (laughter)

Now when you came back to Effingham – you told us that you used to play in the Manor House.

Yes, well when they come back, the day they came back, they went up High Barns, went straight up there, lived up High Barns – the house that faces this way, this end, first two cottages up there – because I think Mr Lambert built them for Dad to go in. I don't know who all that belonged to then, but Farmer Brown had all that ground ***

And Farmer Brown lived at what is now called Browns?

Yes.

Do you remember Farmer Brown?

Yes I do, and his son and daughter.

Have you got anything you can tell us about Farmer Brown?

He was a very nice old gent but he was very – so – you know, you had to be quiet a bit.

You had to behave yourself, in other words?

Yes, and it was lonely there, to go there. Sometimes I'd go up and look for the old people in the house. If there was anybody wanting ... in the house they'd see me playing – 'Oh Tolley, I want some milk'. So they'd be setting me up, off I'd go and get it.

What did they call you?

Tolley.

Tolley?

That's my nickname,

What is your real name, what were you christened?

Laura.

Oh. Well now, tell us about when you used to play in the Manor House.

Well then, when we come down from the High Barns, we lived in the bothy ...

Oh yes ...

... we lived in the bothy, and then we used to go and play out in the gardens all the way around, and where that house stands just over the big wall, that was the orchard you see, that was the orchard where they had fruit and all sorts there, and that's where their pets was all buried, in there, but there was – in front of the house, the bungalow – there was a mulberry tree, you know how they grow, thick round mulberry trees, we used to play underneath there, we could go all the way round.

Did you play 'Here we go round the mulberry tree'? Did you play that?

I think so.

That was the whole game?

I don't know.

What did you play, what games did you play, do you remember?

Well I don't know, we were all sorts, whatever there was coming along.

How many of you?

Well, then ... I don't know who the coachman was, but they had a new one come in, and I remember Mr Chapman coming in. And he come in, and he lived up over the stables, you see, that's where he lived and with all his children. And his second son Jack and I we were pals, we *** up his kids, I think he was about four years, a little older than me. However, he used to come through, see he and I we could go anywhere in the yard, in the pig sty, cow stalls, anywhere, didn't matter where, we could always go, but not the other children, they weren't allowed in. That was funny, wasn't it?

They liked the look of you, by the sound of it ... (laughter). Now, how old were you when you first went to school?

Oh I don't know, I was with ... I suppose five, I don't know ...

And which school did you go to? Did you go to ...

The present one, down the road, down the bottom now, they had to pay five pence a week for me when I first went to school. Then, it was a church school and you had to pay for it.

But do you remember when the building at Crossways was used as a school?

Yes, my Dad, when he was a boy he went there to school 'cos there wasn't a school.

Your father went there ...

He was born at West Horsley in 1860.

And came to Effingham when he was ...

In 1861.

To work in Effingham?

No, he was a baby, my grandfather come in.

Oh, I see.

Yes, you see, my grandfather knew Uriah Loxley, of the Loxley farm, see they were – well, one another I suppose – they were always together, you see, there was Grandfather, they could always trust Grandfather, and he used to work, he was part-term?, I don't know what he wasn't ...

He worked for Mr. Loxley?

Yes, he worked for him right up till he couldn't work any longer.

Your grandfather?

My grandfather. And then Uriah Loxley looked after him, that's when he died, I don't know which died first, one or the other.

And where did he (the grandfather) live?

Next door to where I was, where we first come, he lived in the end house, that house opposite the Haig. There was three cottages, see, first it was one house and then it was divided into three cottages and – I don't know, my father didn't tell me – whether grandfather was the first to go in there, as a cottage,

I don't know. But however, in the middle there was someone lived there, I forget what her name was, she used to take in washing, you know, laundry, she used to take that in, and in the top end was an old lady lived there, name of Creasey, well she had ...

Creasey.

Creasey, Mrs. Creasey, I did remember that after you was gone!

Now you told me, I think, that the teacher who taught your father, her name was Miss Tagg.

Yes, well when my Dad was old enough to go to school, you see, he went up to the Crossways, that was the only school there, the few children there was they went there to school, see Miss Tegg [she seems to say 'Tegg' rather than 'Tagg'] would be young then, but I could remember of course when she was a very old woman.

And where was she living when you ...

She lived there.

And what did they use that for when they opened the new school? Was it just ...

Well, she still lived there.

She lived in the school?

Yes, she still lived there.

Now Mrs Essam, are you too tired to tell us any more, would you like to ...

No, I will carry on til you finish 'cos I don't like to ***

You told us you remembered old Mr Tyrrell.

Yes, old Froggy Tyrrell, he was nine years older than me.

Well, why did you call him Froggy?

I don't know, that was his name when he was at school, his nickname, and he had that name right up to the day he died, to those that really knew him.

It was those who really knew him.

It was always 'Froggy werrr – what do you mean, old Froggy Tyrrell' !

And where did he live, do you remember him at school?

On the Common. Oh yes, he was nine years old then me, 'cos he was further up the school and I was down the bottom.

How old were you when you left school?

When I left school I was just not quite eleven years old.

And you never went back to school?

No.

Why did you leave?

Because my mother was delicate, she had heart trouble, you had to feed her, I had to look after her, I was fatherless, I also had to be a mother to all the jobs etc. and so forth – so, I left school.

Do you remember which house Mr Tyrrell lived at, on the Common?

Well ...

Was it anywhere near Slaters Oak, or ...

Yes, but not that side, over the other side.

Can you remember anything about ...

Yes, he had a big ... he had a house, it was a big house, just the top of the hill where the *** lived in, The Willows, then there's another one, I think it was The Willows that he lived in ... no, no, he lived in another one just above it, I think there's three along there, and he lived just there somewhere. And I went, going up there, to get the loom to do the laurels [The Laurels?] with. And *** the old chap? used to come in sometimes and we used to go round ...

He (Tyrrell) was a wonderful old man, wasn't he?

Yes, yes,

I remember him, he used to wear a smock – do you remember him?

Yes.

*And he had a lovely little wife, didn't he, very very pretty, with a lovely ***. They were very very nice people.*

Used to go out with her and in the ... when we had our summer holidays, mother used to do up her basket and we'd go down there while Dad was digging the loom.

When you say 'the loom', what is 'the loom'?

Well, that's the green that you make lawns with, you know, they cut up all the old stuff and there's the bare earth and then this grass what they get down there, it's a special place down there, it's treated left [?] and they cut it up in pieces like that, and then they lay it in the lawns.

And who did that – Mr Carpenter?

Oh no, he used to ... I don't know what he had, he had cows and all sorts there, I don't know what he did have really, sheep and pigs and all. And we went down, he used to let them out on the Common. Then, you see, if we were down there he'd come out, Father with a jug of tea or, if Mother was there, if us youngsters were there, it would be hot milk and water. See, he had cows, one or two cows, sheep, pigs. 'Cos I didn't have much use for those, but where the pigs was of course I was there.

You liked pigs, did you?

Yes. You can make a good pet of a pig and a pig is a very clean thing, it's awfully clean is a pig.

Have you ever kept a pig?

No, but I've been where they, where they are, I've not looked after them.

And on pigs, we'd like you to tell us, if you possibly could, and that is about the shops, where did you do your shopping?

Well, you know where Yew Tree House is. Now up The Street we had a baker's shop, Richards' the name, and when Miss Faris died, Miss Richards was the organist at the church. She took that over.

Miss Faris was the organist before she died?

Yes.

She lived in Crossways?

Yes, in Crossways House, she lived in, Miss Faris. Well, the baker up The Street, he had three daughters. His eldest daughter Edith, when Miss Faris died, she took over as the organist at the church, 'cos Miss Faris used to play the organ there.

Did you have a very big congregation in those days? Was the church full?

Sometimes, and sometimes no, all depends.

Now you told us that you knew Mr Bayly.

Yes.

And you told us that he gave you ... Will you tell us about the thimble again, how he came to give you the thimble?

Well now ... he always ... his mother gave him that thimble – and he always carried it, I think that was the last thing she used – and he always carried it in his waistcoat pocket, didn't matter where he went, what clothes he had on, that thimble was always in his waistcoat pocket. So this day I was, I think, sewing a button from his shirt, so there was a button on there, it was hanging on the chair where the parlourmaid put it there for to air, and I see there was a button off, so I sewed a button on, sewing a button on, but I hadn't got a thimble. She she said 'You'll prick you finger, won't you?' I said 'No.' 'That's useful, that's all right.' Never said anything more. So I ... now when I went down, when I took him the coffee, he said 'Here you are, my mother's thimble.' That was in 1900.

That was very kind of him. You were working at the Rectory?

Yes, for the *** a bit of time?. Most of the houses ... our jobs were temporary, you know, when they wanted anybody – used to run down for me, to go and do the odd job if it was only for a couple of hours. I never had a proper job really.

Would you mind telling us, if you don't mind this, about the fever hut and how you did the laying-out of people? How old were you when you first started?

My first start was – laying out a dead person – was Mr Bayly's housekeeper. And I was fifteen years old. And the old lady that went round doing the job, she come in to do it, you see, Old Granny Barnett. And she come in, she said to me 'Here, come on, you will do that.', she said, 'Oh', I said, 'I couldn't, I couldn't touch her.' You know, I helped to look after the old lady and wash her and that sort of thing. 'Oh yes you can,' she said, 'now come on, you're going to do it.' And she made me do it. Stripped all *** out, washed her, her dead body, cleaned her all up ready. And when the coffin come I helped put her in the coffin, put her all straight. I was fifteen years old. And you learn more religion of doing that than you do going to church.

That was a very noble thing for you to do. and did you do it often?

I've always done it, or right up here till Dr Winslow Smith stopped me doing it.

Because you were not strong enough?

Yes.

Did you not mind doing it?

Oh I loved it. The sum ... if they was like myself I always used to charge five shillings. I thought 'Oh well, they can pay – five shillings.' And I have a cup of tea, in poor places like myself. Well I'd have my cup of tea, I'd put my five shillings down and say no more about it. I never took it out the house – but they paid me, you see: they paid me for doing it. See, you learned all those little things *** today – it would.

Well, now, you told us that the fever but ...

Well, there was a coffee room, down at the corner, a coffee room, it was on the top road, along here ... there's the ... it was used as a hospital – smallpox, and before that, I know it was just before that, it was along there they had the black fever. And here's one that lives down here, his great-grandfather had it. And he lay just inside the ... they didn't take them in church them days, they put them in the coffin – and they never had a proper coffin, they put them in a box – and they put him ... he lay just inside the gate with the Vicarage, just round in the churchyard, just round inside the gate, two days there.

And he had smallpox?

No, he had black fever.

Oh, black fever.

My father had smallpox but he wasn't ill enough to go into hospital.

But he got better quite ...

Yes, he got better, but it left him with a hole that ***

Do you remember if there was a doctor in the village?

No, we had to go to Bookham, Great Bookham.

Do you remember what his name was?

Why, the doctor that I first remember was Dr Stedman, a very old man and he had a beard all down ... And when my brother Jim was born, he come in there and he'd got an old scarf, one of those old woolly scarves on his head with a ... tied across here, and he brought a very young man with him. And he said 'this young man will attend you, Mrs Cox', he said. He said, and he pointed to me, old Dr Stedman, and he said 'Young man *** occasionally' (laughter). And that was in the ... where Ranger lived, when he first come in here, my oldest brother Jim was born in there.

And how old were you then?

Er, well, my sister was ... two in March ... well, I suppose I'd be about, let's call it, two, five, six.

Well, you must have lived very near The Blücher.

Yes, yes, I used to play in there, used to come out and run in there, and play in there, in the house ...

Who had that?

People with the name of Chandler.

Did they have it for a long time?

Well, I don't know how long ... yes, they had it some time till I was grown up, until the time I could work.

And do you remember when ...

And they had lovely gardens.

Did they?

They went back, oh they were beautiful.

Now can you tell us how far they went back, how far did those gardens go?

Well, see it's cut up now. Where the garage is, and the other part, and where the coach house, lawn, ... yes, well that was built in the garden, all that was built in the garden ...

Oh yes ...

... and they come – well, I don't know how far – because there was a wall along the back.

Did it go back as far as where Mr Ranger lived, where you lived?

Yes, that was all the stable yard, the back of Ranger's, where he is now, you see that was all the stable yard you *** those gates ...

Now is that Mr Lambert's stable yard?

That was Mr Lambert's, yes.

And it wasn't the inn, it didn't belong to the inn?

Well, the inn, I don't know who it belonged to, who the Prince Blücher belonged to, I don't know the brewer, I never did know the brewer, all I know was, it was The Prince Blücher and Chandler [Challis?] lived there, and it was a lovely place. Well, when they moved out, another lot went in, the name of Bonser [Bonsey?], and they used to have teas and like a restaurant ...

[The tape then has 23 seconds of total silence before continuing:]

... that's where you go in this end of the door, that was the tap room, where *** [he had that made larger?], you see, and in the garden he had two big electric engines, he made his own electricity, the rest of us never had electricity in Effingham then.

Mr Lambert did?

Yes, he's out there. For his house and all his property, you know, his two big electric engines was in there.

Did he make a lot of alterations to the Manor House, Mr Lambert did?

Yes.

Could you tell us ...

Well, he had what they've got there, he had all those coach houses built, he had the stables built, he had my Dad's stable [built?] – now Ranger's got it for rubbish or something ... so my Dad's ...

[end of recording]

Commentary

Mrs Essam was born on 3 June 1884 as Laura Annie Cox [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 116, 1884 (Q3)]. In what follows she is referred to simply as Laura.

Her tape-recorded oral history is of greater antiquity than the other oral histories we currently possess and may be a unique source of certain details about Effingham and its people. It is therefore worth analysing her account. The recording is now not of very high quality (if it ever was) and her strong accent, hesitations and wayward phrasing present challenges in places. Matters are not helped either by Monica's frequent interruptions and her habit of talking over what Laura is trying to say. Consequently, a few uttered words or phrases have so far resisted transcription.

Laura's parents were James Cox (Junior) born in 1860 and Eliza (née) Gorringe, who married in 1883 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 205, 1883 (Q2)]. She married Charles James Essam in 1908 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 377, 1908 (Q4)] and produced by him a son Daniel ('Dan') Gorringe Essam born on 7 February 1914 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 364, 1914 (Q1)]. Charles James died aged 79 in 1955 [GRO Ref: Surrey Mid.E. 5g 213, 1955 (Q1)]. Daniel died aged 85 in 1999 [GRO Ref: West Surrey 87B/7611B 106, 1999 (July)].

The cassette tape from which this transcript was made was in the possession of Mary Rice-Oxley and marked with the comment that Laura died in '1971 aged 84'. She was actually 87 when she died, in Somerset, in 1971 [GRO Ref: Frome 7c 946, 1971 (Q3)]. This tape's marking gives the date of the recording as 1970.

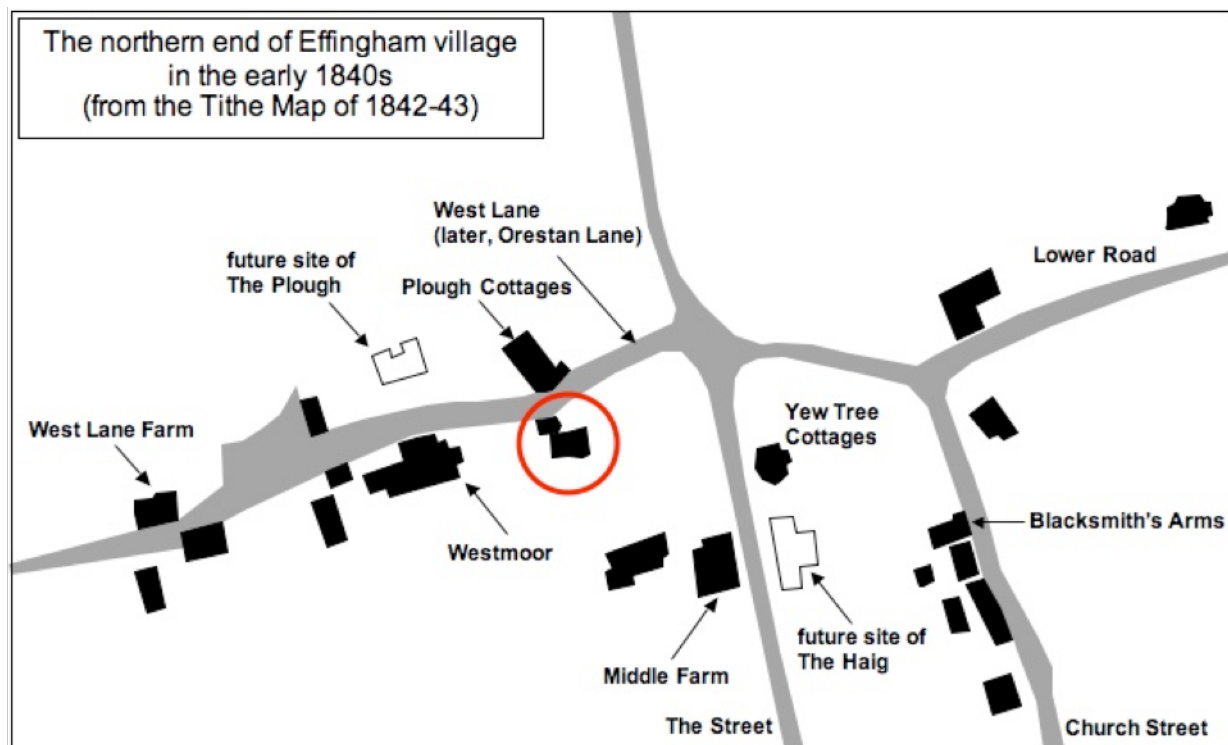


Figure 1 The northern end of Effingham village; early 1840s.

Laura begins by telling us that she was born in the middle cottage in a group of three white ones that once stood 'opposite' The Plough inn. Her phrases 'back on the left' and 'round the corner' when 'going to

The Plough' establish that these cottages were those forming the red-circled group shown on the 1840s map in Figure 1. In the present day this group consists of a single dwelling called Ramtops (formerly Beech Cottage) but a century ago consisted of three separate ones; on a map from 1920 they are labelled Westmore Cottages. This naming is potentially confusing, not only because the much older property Old Westmoor Cottage has often been called Old 'Westmore' Cottage but also because at the southern end of the three Plough Cottages there was appended, in a staggered fashion (as the map below shows), a further dwelling called Westmore Cottage.

Her oldest siblings Mary Ann and Arthur James (who were twins, as she says) were born in 1887 [GRO Ref: Guildford 2a 65, 1887 (Q1)]. Arthur James appears to have died very soon afterwards [GRO Ref: Guildford 2a 47, 1887 (Q1)]. Her remark 'I had two brothers' would be more correctly rendered as 'I had two *surviving* brothers', these being James Alfred born in 1890 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 160, 1890 (Q1)] and Louis Henry born on 24 November 1894 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 154, 1894 (Q1)]. Since she states 'there's [now] only me and my younger brother' we must infer that by 1970 James Alfred had died; his GRO death reference has not yet been clearly identified. Louis Henry was certainly still alive in 1970; he died in 1976 [GRO Ref: Eastbourne 18 0511, 1976 (Q2)].

Laura gives the birthplace of the twins as the home of 'Lady Russell's' at Hatchford End which she describes as being in Ockham; although near Ockham it is actually in the parish of Cobham. She must be referring to Miss Rowena Elizabeth Russell, baptised in 1845 as the eldest daughter of Hester (née Lushington), wife of Capt Robert Russell RN. Hester was the eldest daughter of the Privy Counsellor, judge and anti-slavery campaigner the Rt Hon Dr Stephen George Lushington. As far as we can determine, however, Rowena never bore the formal title of 'Lady'. The twins were christened by Rev Louis Herbert Wellesley Wesley, Vicar of Hatchford; he was born around 1845 and, according to his census returns, did not know his own birthplace but believed it to be Southwell in Cambridgeshire. 'Granny Birch' who attended the births may have been the wife Elizabeth of John Birch – this couple were the oldest people named Birch living in Ockham parish at this time, both being in their sixties.

Laura then relates the movements of her father in this period. She says that from the age of 16 (ie around 1876) he worked at 'the Manor House' (Effingham House), living there in the bothy among the outbuildings on the east side of Beech Avenue opposite the house; this area was later used by Mr Ranger as a market garden. At that time the tenancy of the house was held by the chemical manufacturer Thomas Farmer Hall whose firm (or family) Laura describes as 'the paint and whitewash people'. Mr Hall and his family had certainly been at the house in 1881, but had departed by 1885. When James Cox (Junior) married in 1883 he presumably left the bothy and set up home in the white cottage 'opposite The Plough'. Laura appears to suggest that, when she was newly born there in 1884, she was taken by her father up to the Manor House to be presented to Mrs Hall (whose maiden name was Maria Robinson Kay).

It appears that her father then left the employ of Mr Hall and worked for about a year at 'Lady Russell's', where the twins were born in 1887, before returning to Effingham. She says that her father 'saw the Lamberts in'. This refers to the family of the tobacco magnate Charles Edward Lambert, but her chronology here may be somewhat awry as Lambert had already taken up the tenancy of the house in 1885.

On their return to Effingham Laura's family went to live at 'High Barns'. Her description here is not precise enough to identify the 'first two cottages' firmly, but they may have been the pair adjacent to High Barn Farm at the top of High Barn Road. Her statement that 'Mr. Lambert built them' is not correct; they were built in 1873, the date shown on their chimneys. She says that they were on land occupied by 'Farmer Brown'.

The latter was Samuel Brown, baptised at St Paul's Walden, Hertfordshire on 29 January 1832. In 1854 he had first married in Hitchin to Harriet (née) Bygrave, who died in 1860. In 1863 he remarried in Southampton to Emma (née) Marshman and continued living in Hertfordshire. He and Emma appear to have moved from there to Effingham in the 1870s. Until then he had been occupied as a grocer and baker. By 1881 he was living at High Barn Farm, but by 1891 had moved into the village proper, at Manor Farm – the property today called Browns. Laura appears to say that as a child she would sometimes play at Browns and be asked to run errands such as fetching milk. Samuel died in 1897 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 91, 1897 (Q3)].

Her family seems not to have stayed long at 'High Barns', going to live once again at the Effingham House bothy. This is where they are found living in the 1891 Census, with James occupied as a cowman. She recalls the arrival of the Lamberts' new coachman 'Mr. Chapman'. This was Brighton-born John Lewin Chapman who in 1878 had married Emma Sparrow (née) Sindale. In 1891 these two were living above the stables with their nine children, with John occupied as a coachman and domestic servant. His second son, whom Laura calls 'Jack', was John Rave Chapman, born in 1882 at Earl's Court in London; Laura says of this 'pal' of hers that he was 'about four years' older than her, but the gap was actually just two years.

She is asked by Monica about the school she attended and implies – as one would expect – that it was the National (later St Lawrence) School, ‘down the bottom’ (of The Street). However, she also states that her father James (Junior) had had his schooling at the single-storey building at Crossways (adjoining The Street) because ‘there wasn’t a [proper] school’. This seems to make no sense: when he was born in 1860, the National School had already been open for three years, surely rendering redundant the former schooling provision at Crossways.

She discusses next her father’s arrival in Effingham as a baby in 1861. His own father James Cox (Senior), an agricultural labourer born in Ripley in 1826, had married in 1846 to Warwickshire-born Maria (née) Crowley [GRO Ref: Guildford 4 181, 1846 (Q2)] and raised his children in West Horsley. At the time of the 1861 Census they were living there in Spring Cottage, with their youngest child James (Junior) aged just ‘8 months’. The 1871 Census finds them living in Effingham at Ruffinshaw House, off Church Street, with James (Junior) now aged ‘11’ and recorded as attending school.

Laura next relates that her grandfather James (Senior) worked for Mr Uriah Loxley. Uriah was born around 1824 in Colmworth, Bedfordshire, just north-east of the town of Bedford. He was baptised, in his teens, on 20 February 1837 in the nearby village of Clapham where he was still living in 1851. By 1861 he had moved to Home Farm in Effingham, still unmarried. He married Sarah (née) Hooker in 1869 [GRO Ref: Guildford 2a 45, 1869 (Q1)]. His family appears at Home Farm in subsequent censuses up to 1901. Laura’s account implies that her grandfather had worked part-time for Uriah and then been ‘looked after’ by him until whichever one died first. In fact it was James (Senior) who died first, in 1903 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 118, 1903 (Q1)], whilst Uriah died the following year [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 97, 1904 (Q2)].

Monica then asks Laura where her grandfather James (Senior) had lived and is told that this was in one of the three cottages opposite The Sir Douglas Haig Hotel (these cottages later became the single property we know today as Middle Farm). The 1901 Census finds him living there in the household of a farm carter Jesse Bolton who in 1887 had married his daughter Anne Maria (Laura’s aunt). Next door were Laura’s parents and siblings. Her father James (Junior) had clearly moved out of Mr Lambert’s bothy. He too was occupied as a farm carter. Laura, however, was no longer at home – she had already left Effingham and gone into service. The 1901 Census finds her living, at age 16, at St John’s Foundation School in Leatherhead where she was employed as a housemaid.

The conversation now returns to the schooling of James (Junior) and again Laura says that he attended Crossways, ‘the only school there’, and was taught by a Miss Tegg. But, as noted earlier, by the 1860s when James (Junior) would have been of school age, Effingham already had its own National School, which had opened in 1857. It may be that Laura’s father had been taught by Miss Tegg because that was a cheaper option than his attending the National School. Miss Tegg was very probably a Mary who had been born in Effingham in about 1827-28 whom the 1871 Census finds in Effingham as the ‘wife’ of John Tegg, an agricultural labourer born in Little Bookham (no marriage record has been found for them). The 1881 Census finds John as a patient in London’s King’s College Hospital in Portugal Street and Mary as a visitor of her friend Julia Wareham at 49, Barclay Street, St Pancras. John died aged ‘57’ in 1882 and was buried at All Saints, Little Bookham on 24 April. The 1891 Census finds Mary widowed and evidently residing alone at the coach house of Crossways living on her own means; this is the period in which Laura, as a child, could have known Mary.

Next, Laura talks about ‘old Mr Tyrrell’, telling Monica that his nickname was always ‘Froggy Tyrrell’ and that he was ‘nine years older’ than her. Almost certainly, this was Henry Tyrrell who was born in East Horsley on 9 February 1875 [GRO Ref: Guildford 2a 64, 1875 (Q1)]. (Strictly, their age gap was about four months under nine years.) Henry was the son of Edward Tyrrell (baptised at Wisley in June 1853) and Elizabeth (née) Ranger, who had married on 28 November 1874 [GRO Ref: Guildford 2a 83, 1874 (Q4)]. In 1970 Henry told Mary Rice-Oxley that his parents had both attended the school in Crossways. Soon after Henry’s birth, Edward, a labourer, moved his family from East Horsley to Effingham, where the 1881 Census finds them living on the Common. Edward died aged ‘31’ in 1885 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 103, 1885 (Q1)] and three years later Elizabeth remarried, to George Burton [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 226a, 1888 (Q3)]. The 1891 Census finds the family living at ‘Common Cottage’ which appears in the schedule between Slaters Oak and Banks Cottage. Henry, now aged ‘16’, was working as an agricultural labourer. In 1899 he married a Scots woman named Williamina – or Wilhelmina – (née) Gibb, born in Tarves, Aberdeenshire. She must have been the ‘very, very pretty’, ‘lovely little wife’ recalled by Monica in this interview. The following year their daughter Mary was born [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 172, 1900 (Q2)]. The 1901 Census finds Henry living on the Common with his (much) younger brother Edward, whilst his wife (with their infant daughter) was visiting her widowed mother (also named Mary) in Tarves. The family was still on the Common in the 1911 Census, apparently having produced no other children. Williamina

died in 1936 [GRO Ref: Surrey S.W. 2a 580, 1876 (Q1)], but Henry outlived her by a further 33 years, dying aged '94' in 1969 [GRO Ref: Sutton 5e 192, 1969 (Q2)].

The discussion of Mr Tyrrell alludes briefly to a Mr Carpenter, presumed to be John Carpenter who lived on the Common at Leebrooke until his death in late 1931, after which that property passed into the ownership of Adrian George Estler.

After this, Monica asks Laura about the shops, but is told very little about them; Laura seems to lose track here and begins talking instead about the organist 'Miss Faris'. The latter was Elizabeth Susan Faris who lived with her unmarried sister Margaret Young Faris. They had been living in Effingham as far back as 1851 and possibly earlier. The 1881 Census finds the sisters living in Effingham at The Cottage in The Street with their mother Mary – described as an Officer's widow – and gives their birthplace as the East Indies; more precisely, they were born at Quilon, a formerly Portuguese colony, on the Dutch Malabar coast of India. Mary died aged '79' in 1885 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 98, 1885 (Q4)] and was buried in St Lawrence churchyard. The girls' father George had died in India in 1835 and is commemorated on his wife Mary's gravestone. By 1891 the two sisters had moved to Crossways House (this is clear, though not explicit, from the schedule) and were living on independent means. Margaret died aged '61' soon after the census, on 16 May [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 188, 1891 (Q2)], and Elizabeth died '71' in 1899 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 111, 1899 (Q3)]. They were buried in the same plot as their mother. The church contains wall plaques to all four of them: that for Elizabeth Susan reads '*Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam and in memory of Elizabeth Susan Faris who died July 4th 1899. Erected by Rev. E.F. Bayly, vicar. Easter 1900*'. Laura states that the role of (church) organist was now taken over by the 'eldest daughter Edith' of the baker, Mr Richards, 'up The Street'. Mr William Richards was the man who, besides much else, sold the photographic postcards of the village that are today so valuable to us. His daughter Edith Agnes was born in Hertfordshire in 1878 [GRO Ref: Edmonton 3a 297, 1878 (Q4)].

This turns the discussion to the Reverend Frederic [sic] Ernest Bayly (who usually gave his forenames in reverse order) and the thimble that he gave to Laura. The thimble, we are told, had belonged to his mother, whose name was Mary (née) Maskell.

Monica then enquires about Laura's role in laying out the dead. Laura says that her first experience of this was when, at the insistence of 'Granny Barnett', she performed it for Rev Bayly's deceased housekeeper. The 1891 Census shows that this housekeeper was a widow Sophia Thompson, then aged 79. Twenty years earlier she had been a servant in the household of his father Frederic Jolliffe Bayly. Her origins have not yet been discovered. She died aged '88' on 17 March 1900 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 154, 1900 (Q1)] and was buried at St Lawrence. Laura is wholly accurate in saying that she was 'fifteen years old' when she laid out Sophia's body.

'Granny Barnett', who had traditionally done this task in the village, was the widow Ann (née Jackson) of Francis Barnett. These two were both born in Effingham, he around 1814 and she around 1831. In 1861 Francis was living with his mother Mary in the Alms Houses. He married Ann somewhat late in life, in 1868 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 177, 1868 (Q2)]. They produced a son William who in turn fathered Frederick William Barnett, one of the fallen men in the Great War commemorated on the St Lawrence shrine. Francis died aged '72' in 1886 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 98, 1886 (Q2)]. Ann died aged '86' in 1917 [GRO Ref: Dorking 2a 346, 1917 (Q1)] and so would have experienced the loss of her grandson Frederick William in July 1915.

Laura tells Monica that she has 'always done' the laying out, until her doctor stopped her, but it is unclear whether she remained 'on call' for it while she was living and working in Leatherhead in her later teens. The doctor she mentions was William Leslie Winslow Smith, born in Dublin in 1896, whose practice was in East Horsley; he died on 14 September 1967 [*British Medical Journal*, Issue 14 October 1967, p116].

The focus then turns to the 'fever hut'. This refers to the large, white wooden hut standing at the corner of The Street and Orestan Lane, currently the premises of Colets Piling Ltd. On its exterior is a sign reading 'The Old Village Hall'. From early 1877 it had stood alongside the Guildford Road (now the A246) and functioned as an isolation hospital. By the early 1900s it had been relocated to its present site and was being used by the village for various purposes, including a venue for Parish Council meetings, a Reading Room and a coffee shop. Laura says that in its days as a hospital it had been used to treat 'black fever' (and, later, smallpox) and mentions an acquaintance whose great-grandfather had this 'black fever'. The latter possibly refers to what was commonly known as Kala-azar (in Hindi) or dum dum fever; technically this was *visceral leishmaniasis*, a sandfly-borne parasitic disease of extreme seriousness. Many men serving abroad, such as in the Indian Army, succumbed to it. However, the hospital being discussed had been built for smallpox cases. She mentions that her father had had smallpox, from which he had recovered.

The subject of doctors is then raised and Laura recalls a 'Dr Stedman' in Great Bookham. The 1891 Census shows that, when she was a young girl, a general practitioner Arthur Stedman was living in Great

Bookham's Church Street, whilst in the nearby High Street there lived his older brother Frederic [sic] Savignac Stedman, a retired Army major and surgeon who had served in Upper Bombay. Both these men were born in Sevenoaks, to parents Robert and Theodosia, and were baptised there in 1834 and 1829 respectively. It is perhaps Arthur whom Laura is remembering. He died in 1894 and so could well have attended the birth of her 'oldest brother Jim' in 1890, but his age at that time (56) scarcely qualifies him as 'a very old man'; still, he may have appeared so to a girl aged only 6.

She recalls playing as a child in The Prince Blücher (as the inn was then called). This is the property at the crossroads which is today named Crosslands. She gives the names Chandler and Bonsor for the people who occupied it but it is uncertain as to which era she is referring to. Francis Albert Bonsor, born in 1859, had been the publican at The Prince Blücher from around March 1894 until early 1901. It may be that her 'Chandler' was actually Challis, since the proprietor was recorded as Sidney H Challis in the 1901 Census, this being the time when she became 'grown up' and 'could work'.

Her account ends with a glimpse of the works that Mr Lambert of the Manor House undertook on his land (the stable yard, etc.) behind the inn. A very interesting detail given here is that he installed two electricity generators for powering 'his house and all his property'. In her book *The History of Effingham* Monica states that 'early in the 20th century' The Prince Blücher ceased to function as an inn and that the tenant of Effingham Manor (presumably Lambert) used it instead for staff accommodation. This change of use was certainly no later than 1904 because we have a photograph from that year showing the new Blücher Hotel at the northern end of The Street.

As noted in the above transcript, the tape has a 23-second blank period near the end which may or may not signify the loss of some recorded material.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: adapted by Christopher John Hogger from the 1842 Tithe Map for Effingham