

Recollections of the Almshouses

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Evelyn Fogg nee Ashley-Cox, was the grand daughter of George and Florence Hartnup of Ewelme. She remembers visiting them in the Almshouses. Evelyn's parents, Leonard Ashley-Cox and Evelyn Hartnup were married at Ewelme Church on April 7th 1919. Leonard was an RAF mechanic aged 28, his bride was 23. The bride's father George was aged 64 and his second wife Florence was 50. Evelyn takes up her story.



The wedding of Evelyn's parents in 1919. George Hartnup is standing behind the bride and Florence Hartnup is standing behind the groom.

“My grandparents, George and Florence Hartnup, lived in a cottage at Kings Pool [next to the pond]. They had four children – Evelyn my mother, Florence, Rose and Fred. There were also two children from my grandfather's first marriage, Nellie and Tom. Granpie was a gardener for Miss Maxwell and had served in the police during First World War. For a while my parents lived with the Granpie and Grannie and the first child, Tony, was born in January 1920 in Kings Pool Cottage. He went to Ewelme School with Connie Winfield.” [The Winfield family lived next door to the Hartnup's at Kings Pool Cottages]. Another brother Ron was born in 1923 when my parents lived in Green Lane, but they had moved again to a cottage next to the London Road Inn on Beggarsbush Hill, where I was born in 1925. When my family moved to Wallingford, my father Leonard was chauffeur to Col Wyndham who had lived at Ambrose Farm and was then at St Johns House. My sister was born in St Johns Road, Wallingford in 1930.

Almshouse Recollections

My first recollections of Grannie and Granpie [Hartnup] where of them living at No 8 the Cloisters. We would visit them and walk from Wallingford up Clacks Lane with mother pushing a pram carrying my younger sister. (Fortunately, in 1935 Kemp's buses started up, so we could take a bus). The

Almshouse consisted of one room downstairs with a table and chairs in the middle of the room, with a red chenille tablecloth and well polished brass oil lamp. (There being no water, gas or electricity laid on then). A black leaded grate which was always burning, summer and winter, this being the only means of cooking and there was always a large kettle singing on the hob. At meal times the chenille cloth and lamp were removed and washing up was done on the scrubbed wooden surface. The dirty water was then tipped into a pail and put behind a curtain in a niche just inside the front door, to be disposed of later. There was a large bay window in this room which was always full of red geraniums. A wooden door with a latch led upstairs to the bedroom. All the water had to be drawn from the well in the centre of the square and my sister and I loved to go and wind up the large wheel to collect the water.

The toilets, for the ladies, were along the corridor where I think there were four toilets. Wooden boxes with a hole in the top over a bucket. By the side of the toilets there was a long wooden box and the residents put the ashes from their fires to cover the excrement. The men's toilets were further along the corridor and outside on the path leading to the wood yard.

Each almshouse had its own garden and Granpie's was a patch through the gate towards the nurse's house. The residents also had a woodhouse overlooking the wood yard and I used to go with Granpie to help sharpen the knives on the wheel. We also used to play in the wood yard and Peggy Quixley would often join us. [Younger daughter of Mr Robert Quixley, the Head teacher].

The Almshouses were originally built for 13 'old men of the village' and when Granpie died [on 19th October 1941 aged 86] Grannie had to leave No 8 and she went to live in a tiny cottage overlooking the Common, but her cottage looked towards the village. [Now Number One Old Rectory Cottages]. This cottage was very similar to the Almshouse, one room up and one room down and still had no water, gas or electricity. There was a wooden shed at the bottom of the garden, just inside the gate, which had a toilet, copper and coalhouse. Beside the front door was a well. I believe this cottage has now been taken into the one it backed on to.

My sister and I would walk to the village to buy a huge bunch of watercress for 3d. We would also collect dandelions from the Common for Grannie to make wine. There would also be parsnips from the garden to make into wine. [Florence Hartnup lived in the cottage until a few months before she died on 21st September 1959 aged 90].

Some years later I went with my Aunt to visit Minnie Harris who was then living at No 8. The almshouse hadn't altered at all. About five years ago I visited Ewelme with friends and we went to the Church and then went to the Nurse's house to buy a tea towel. I told the Nurse that my grandparents had lived at No 8 and she asked if we would like to see one since they had now been renovated. She took us to No 13 and what a transformation! The plaster had been stripped from the wall showing the oak beams. There was a bathroom and kitchen, all so modern and lovely, and I thought how my grandmother would have loved it, so cosy and warm and no black grate!"

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