

LITERARY EYNSHAM

by Martin J Harris

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Eynsham and the surrounding area have, over the years, been featured or briefly mentioned in published books both factual and fictional or linked in some way with authors. Only this year, it was reported that letters belonging to the American novelist Henry James were found in a house in Eynsham.

For books that include Eynsham or are written by Eynsham authors the list is larger than perhaps you might think. In Eynsham Record 1 and 2, Brian Atkins compiled lists of writings (books, leaflets and unpublished) that had historical references to Eynsham but these now need updating. The following is an inevitably incomplete list of Eynsham authors and books of fact and fiction that mention Eynsham somewhere in their pages. This list does not include, for example, the many contributors to this journal (unless mentioned below for their other publications), papers by Eynsham scientists and other scholars in the specialist literature, nor all the many references in guidebooks and gazetteers.

Key to the entries: * Lived or lives in the village; \$ Factual; + Fictional

AELFRIC *\$. Eynsham Abbey's first Abbot in 1005. Much of his work was written when he was at his previous monastery in Cerne, Dorset. His output included the *Colloquy* (a sort of Teach Yourself Latin), his *Customary* and his *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham* (detailing the rules and regulations for the then new Abbey), his sermons written down (called *Homilies*) and his *Lives of the Saints*. [see ER 9, p12, ER 23, p39]

ADAM *\$. Abbot of Eynsham Abbey in the early 13th century. Previously he had been chaplain to Bishop Hugh of Lincoln, later sanctified. Adam wrote St Hugh's biography, *Vita Hugonis*, and also *The Vision of the Monk of Eynsham*, an account of his brother Edmund's extended dream, while in a coma, of his tour of purgatory. This account was widely circulated and may have been used by the Italian poet Dante.[see ER 13 p.4].

AMIS, Kingsley & Martin *. The successful novelist Kingsley Amis briefly resided in Marriner's cottage in Newland Street in the late 1940s. His young son Martin, who would continue the literary success, was just a baby when they moved away. While in Eynsham, Kingsley's wife Hilly befriended Anastacia Smith (1916-2006) who then lived at St Michael's lodge in Acre End Street with her husband and young children.

ALLEN, Trevor \$. Wrote a chapter, *The Gutteridge Murder in Famous Crimes of Recent Times* - This book contains chapters of various crimes mainly from the period 1900-1930. Allen's chapter is about a village constable shot dead in Essex with one of the perpetrators having Eynsham connections. The two criminals were Frederick "Leo" Guy Brown(e) and William Henry Kennedy [see ER 8, pp30-36 and ER 21, ppl5-20] whom he compared to "Chicago gunmen". The chapter includes details about the former as follows:

"Leo Browne - his real name - was born of working-class parents in Catford in 1881. As a young man of twenty-eight he lived with a widowed mother at Eynsham, Oxfordshire, and carried on a bicycle repairing business as Brown Brothers. The business was a mask for stealing bicycles, which he rebuilt, removing identification numbers, and sold in surrounding market towns. In these days he carried a loaded revolver about him on his predatory excursions, mostly at night His wife declared that she first met him at Eynsham in 1910, and married him at Clapham in September 1915."

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ATKINS, Susy *. Broadcaster and writer who lived in Eynsham through her childhood, has written ten books on the subject of wine.

CHAMBERS, Sir Edmund K. *\$. A great Shakespearean scholar, he lived at Hythe Croft in Eynsham and wrote *Eynsham under the Monks* (1936).

CHAPMAN, Don *\$. Eynsham resident Don compiled *Images of Oxford* in 1994 with fellow Oxford Mail colleague Peter Farr. This fascinating book includes a range of old Oxford photographs from shops no longer in existence, to royal visits. For many years he wrote the 'Anthony Wood' column in the Oxford newspaper, and was its theatre critic. 2008 marks the publication of his history of the Oxford Playhouse.

COBBETT, William and the Swann family *. William Cobbett (1763-1835), political agitator and author of *Rural Rides*, was great friends with the Swann family, owners of Eynsham paper mill and probably visited them in Eynsham. The Swann family themselves would have sold paper that ended up as publications (like Cobbett's Weekly Register) or books and bibles [see ER 18, pp5-6]

CROSSLEY, Alan \$. Former editor of the *Victoria County History of Oxfordshire*, he researched and wrote the lengthy section on Eynsham in Vol.12 [see ER 8, pp.44-6]

DEXTER, Colin +. *The Dead of Jericho* (1981). One of Dexter's earlier novels, this was the first Inspector Morse story to be dramatised on television. In the early part of the book, Morse attends the Oxford Book Association's talk by Dame Helen Gardner (qv) on *The New Oxford Book of English Verse* in Oxford's Walton Street. He also mentions that the Book Association's chair had taken the "distinguished speaker back to Eynsham."

DE VILLIERS, Lady E \$. Wrote the text for *Swinford Bridge 1769-1969* which was published by the EHG in the bicentennial year of the toll bridge; a booklet long out of print.

GARDNER, Dame Helen * (1908-1986), moved to Myrtle House (12 Mill Street) in Eynsham after her retirement in 1975. A literary scholar and university teacher, in 1966 she was appointed Oxford University's Merton Professor of English Language and Literature, being the first woman to hold this chair. In her own publications she wrote about poets such as Donne and TS Eliot.

GORDON, Bishop Eric *\$. Former Bishop of Sodor & Man, he retired to Eynsham where he lived with his second wife, the sculptress Gwynneth Holt at Cobden in Queen Street. There he spent much of his last 16 years in research which resulted in a new book, *Eynsham Abbey* (1990).[see ER 10, pp.3-4]

GRANSDEN, Antonia \$. edited *The Customary of the Benedictine Abbey of Eynsham in Oxfordshire*.

GRUNDY, Lynne \$ wrote *Books and Grace: Aelfric's Theology* (1991) which was based on research for her PhD at King's College, London

HALL, Mr & Mrs SC. *The Book of the Thames* (1859, republished 1975, 76, 77). Books on the Thames abound and so, unsurprisingly, Eynsham gets a mention and sometimes photographs / drawings in many of them. This mid-19th century publication by Samuel Carter Hall (1800-89) and his wife Anna (1800-1881) includes two Eynsham drawings of "Ensham Bridge" (i.e. the bridge at Swinford) and "Ensham Cross". It contains a very brief Eynsham history and states that following the dissolution, the Abbey went to the Earl of Derby. However, as the book is very much about nature, most of the Eynsham narrative focuses on the weed "Anacharis absinastrium" better known as the American weed which according to the Halls was new to England in the last 10 years and had spread rapidly.

HARDY, Alan \$. The last senior archaeologist to supervise the excavations on the abbey site in the 1990s, he was responsible for co-ordinating the subsequent research and co-wrote the definitive volume, *Aelfric's Abbey* (2003), and a slim booklet, *Eynsham: A Village and its Abbey*.

HARRIS, Martin J \$. Chairman of the Eynsham History Group since 1998, I have published three books, *The Changing Faces of Eynsham* (1997, 1998 and 2002), which consist of photographs of village life from different periods, with extensive captions.

HARRIS, Mollie *\$. Known nationally as the shopkeeper Martha Woodford in the radio soap 'The Archers', Mollie who lived in Mill Street was also a prolific author. Perhaps her best known writings are her accounts of her childhood in Ducklington, and, for local historians, her book *From Acre End* (1982) in which she recorded the oral memories of 24 elderly Eynsham folk. [See ER 13, p.3 for her obituary and a full list of her publications].

HIBBERT, Edward *\$ was co-editor with his historian brother Christopher for the 1988 book *The Encyclopaedia of Oxford*. It is an essential book for anyone who loves Oxford and its history. Following his retirement as an Oxford solicitor, Edward moved to Eynsham in 1987. He died in 1992. [see ER 10, p.2].

JORDAN, Tim *\$. Tim, who lives in a converted barn in Newland Close, published his book *Cotswold Barns* in 2006.

KEEVILL, Graham \$. Senior archaeologist on the abbey excavations until Alan Hardy (qv) took over, he wrote *In Harvey's house and in God's house* (1995), an account of the results of the dig at that time. He continues as a freelance archaeological consultant to the current fishponds restoration project.

LIVELY, Penelope +. *The Ghost of Thomas Kempe* (1973). See front cover illustration and page 3 of this issue.

MEE, Arthur \$. Whilst there are too many gazetteers and county guides to mention in detail, they are an important source of information on Eynsham. For example, in Arthur Mee's *Oxfordshire (The King's England)* (1942) the main focus in his entry for Eynsham is on its Abbey history and its churches including the Roman Catholic church which was then in the old prison house (Bartholomew Room). Mee describes Aelfric's writings as being "a musical style, a kind of poetical prose".

OAKELEY, Mary *\$. Daughter of Major Oakeley of the Gables, she grew up in Eynsham to where she retired after a successful career as a Headmistress in New Zealand and as a teacher in Switzerland and England. Her autobiography, *The Long Timetable* was published in 1997.

OAKESHOTT, Sir Walter Fraser (1903-87) *. After retiring as rector of Oxford's Lincoln College in 1972, Oakeshott lived in the Old School House in Station Road. He wrote many books, especially on his interest in Medieval art history. His publications (and subjects) included: *Founded upon the Seas* (1942) (Renaissance cosmography), *The Queen and the Poet* (1962) (Sir Walter Raleigh's poetry), *Essays on Malory* (edited by JAW Bennett) (1963), *Mosaics of Rome* (1967), and *Sigena Wall Paintings* (1972). His studies on the Winchester Bible resulted in *The Artists of the Winchester Bible* (1945) and *The Two Winchester Bibles* (1981). He was knighted in 1980. [Also see ER 5 p.14 for a Thomas Hardy link]

PAGE, Nick *. Nick moved to Eynsham in 1994 and as a professional writer has brought out books on history (*Lord Minimus*), Christianity (*The Tabloid Bible*, amongst many others) and bad writing (*In Search of the World's Worst Writers*).

RICHARDS, Pamela *\$ lives in Abbey Street and is an active member of the Eynsham History Group, and for many years, as a schoolteacher at the local County Primary School, encouraged the children in their interest in local history, resulting in several articles in the ER, and their own journal, *Good History* (1995-). Her own book, *Eynsham; A Chronicle* (which draws heavily from the pages of this journal) was published in 2005, and reviewed in ER 23, pp.40-2.

SALTER, HE \$. An indefatigable transcriber of medieval documents he edited, with extensive commentary, the *Cartulary of the Abbey of Eynsham* in 2 volumes (1907 & 8), the first and most thorough transcription.

SERGEANT, John \$. Sergeant is probably most well known for having been the BBC's Chief Political Correspondent. He was reporting on television, live outside the Paris Embassy in 1990 as then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher came outside to comment on her failure to win a significant majority on the challenge to her leadership by Henley MP, Michael Heseltine. In his book of memoirs *Give Me Ten Seconds* (2001) whilst living in Wolvercote, he describes how his mother met her second husband in the late 1950s. She arranged, as part of her work for adult educational classes, for a fellow of Magdalen College, Courtney Edward Stevens, to talk to "the aspiring intellectuals of Eynsham" about Roman Britain.

SHUTE, Nevil + (real name Nevil Shute Norway [1899-1960]) is perhaps most famous for *A Town Like Alice* (1950) which was made into a successful film. In his 1961 novel, *Stephen Morris*, the eponymous character drove by car out of Oxford, travelled "over the bridge before Eynsham" and paid a girl at the tollgate. He then drove through Eynsham and on towards Witney and Burford. Shute himself had been educated at Balliol College so it is no surprise that the city is featured in this book. Shute moved permanently to Australia in 1950.

TAUNT, Henry \$. *A New Map of the River Thames* (1872 1st edition) [republished and edited by Susan Read in 1989 as *The Thames of Henry Taunt*]. Taunt's photographs of Oxford, Oxfordshire and the Thames are today considered an important resource for local historians having been championed by Malcolm Graham (Centre for Oxfordshire Studies) for many years. This book follows Taunt from the Thames head in Gloucestershire to London via maps, photographs and narrative. The Eynsham part includes a photo of Eynsham Bridge viewed from the south with the toll house in view. The narrative mentions that there are nearby pubs the Swan and the Red Lion and that your boat can be left at the bridge with Richard Treadwell the river and weir-keeper. It also (in the 1889 edition) describes Eynsham or Boldes Weir as being in a "ruinous state".

THURSTON, E Temple \$. *The Flower of Gloster* (1911). Perhaps almost forgotten by all except canal lovers, Ernest Charles Temple Thurston (1879-1933) had many books published from 1895 until his death. His first of three wives, Katherine Cecil Thurston (whom he divorced in 1910), was also a writer. Thurston's 1911 book told of his actual journey along the Oxford Canal and Stratford Canal in *The Flower of Gloster*. Starting at Oxford he went into the Nag's Head in Oxford's Hythe Bridge Street to find his bargee Eynsham Harry who took him on his trip. Who was Eynsham Harry? Perhaps we'll find out when the 1911 census is made available to the public.

TOLKIEN, John *. Although the celebrated author of *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*, JRR Tolkien, did not live in Eynsham, his son John was the priest at St Peter's for many years.

WEIR, Alison \$. *Eleanor of Aquitaine* (2000). Renowned historian, her biography of the wife of England's Henry 11, whom she married in 1152, includes as the first entry in her *Primary Sources and Notes on the Chief Sources* the monk Adam of Eynsham (qv) for his biography of St Hugh of Lincoln.

WRIGHT, Lilian *\$. Long time resident of Eynsham, and frequent contributor to these pages, she is an expert on the history of St Leonard's Church - *St Leonards, Eynsham* (1981).

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