

EWHURST BOWLING HISTORY

By John Greenwood

We were all very saddened by the sudden death of our long-standing club member, John Greenwood in May 2024. Many of you will know he was also an active member of the Ewhurst History Society, and they have kindly given us permission to share the last article he wrote for them, which fittingly combines both history and bowls.

SEYMOUR BOTTING and TED STANFORD, THE FOUNDERS OF EWHURST BOWLING CLUB

Seymour Botting was born in Henfield in Sussex in 1885. His parents, Thomas and Jane (Challen) came from families of yeomen farmers and millers from Wisborough Green and Loxwood. Thomas had farmed at Rydinghurst Farm west of Cranleigh but, after a friend whom he had backed went bankrupt, he sold up and worked for other farmers.

Seymour was the seventh child in a family of ten and, after attending school, started his life as a shepherd's boy on Firlle Beacon from where he was fascinated by the trains steaming along the railway below. The solitary life of a shepherd did not suit him so, at the age of 14, he joined the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway as a railway clerk dealing with goods trains. He enjoyed figure work. In 1913 he married Florence Richardson, a London girl who had been in service with the local doctor's family, and a year later he was appointed goods clerk at Cranleigh. They rented a house in The Mount where they had a son, Maurice, born in 1916 and a daughter Joyce in 1919. Presumably his job on the railway excused him from military service in WW1, as there is no record of him serving.

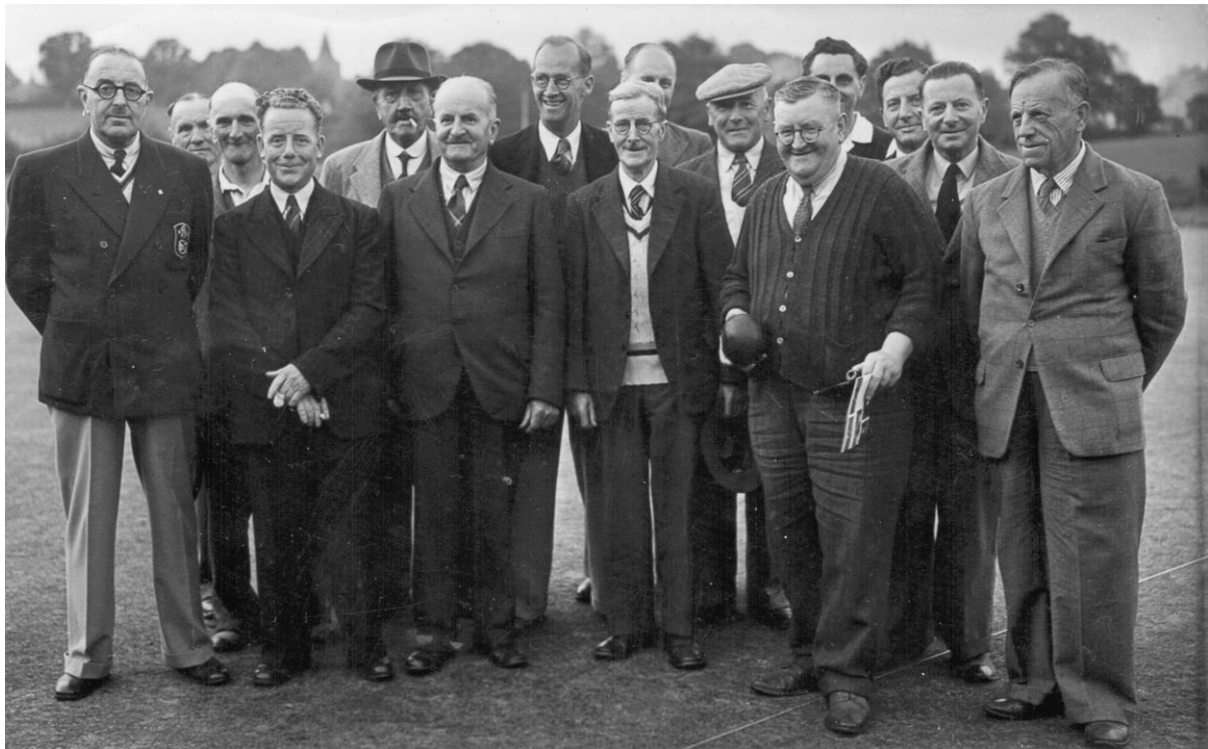
Their landlord was Edwin Stanford, born in Cranleigh in 1868 to Edward, a farmer at New Park Farm in Cranleigh, and his wife Hannah. He was the youngest of five children, the other four having been born in Ewhurst. Edwin, or 'Ted', was apprenticed to a butcher and then ran his own butcher's shop in Petworth. He married Annie Louise with whom he had one daughter, Constance ('Connie'), born in 1902. In his fifties he sold his butchery business and became a farmer, living and working at Baynards. In 1927 Connie was engaged to be married but died before the wedding, followed by Edwin's wife Annie a year later.

Notwithstanding their age difference, Edwin and Seymour became great friends, continuing long-established links between the Botting and Stanford families. After Annie's death Edwin had a housekeeper, but she wanted to retire, so he suggested that he, Seymour and Florence and their family share a house together. He would run his farm, Ivelle Farm in Knowle Lane south of Cranleigh, Seymour would continue working at Cranleigh Station, and Florence would keep house for them both. This arrangement suited them all and Edwin developed a particular fondness for Seymour's daughter Joyce. A few years later, in the mid 1930s, Edwin, approaching his 70th birthday, gave up farming and they all moved to Thornbrook

(thought to be now called Little Langham) in Cranleigh Road in Ewhurst which is where they were registered at the start of WW2 in 1939.

Edwin enjoyed country sports and is mentioned in reports of the local hunt, but his favourite game was bowls. In 1936 he and Seymour, together with Keith Swallow of Swallow's Tiles, formed the Ewhurst Bowling Club and approached the Parish Council to allow them to build a four-rink bowling green at the south end of what is now the recreation ground. Keith and his brother Ray had already built themselves a two-rink green next to their tile works. Their 'Swallow Tiles Bowling Club' was affiliated to the Surrey County Bowling Association by 1931 and continued until 1939. The green has now been replaced by the houses called 1 and 2 Bowls Green.

The top spit of soil was sold off to fund the cost of establishing the green and the turf was laid on a bed of broken Swallow's tiles as a drainage layer. A small pavilion was erected, and a hedge was planted along the north and east sides. The first external match was played against Warnham in July 1937 with Edwin as captain. He continued as Club Captain, and also as chairman of the sports section of the Ewhurst United Sports, until he died in 1943 aged 74. He was commemorated by a seat in the corner of the existing green, but this fell apart a few years ago.



Early Bowls Club members: Seymour Botting is 2nd from the right in the front row, holding a bowl. Ted Stanford is thought to be fifth from the left, wearing a hat. Ewhurst church is just visible over his shoulder.

After the war Seymour retired from the railway station and took a post with Johnston's rose gardens at New Park Farm, finally joining David Mann's as wages

clerk. He moved to New Park Road in Cranleigh and from there to Barhatch Lane. At the same time the bowling green was extended to form a complete square so that it could be played in either direction, and the pavilion enlarged. The hedge, however, remains at its original length.

Florence died in 1956. Although lamed by rheumatism, Seymour liked to go away for a week's holiday so after Florence's death he took with him his granddaughter Jenny. He would spend the morning sitting in the park doing the crossword while she went round the sights, met her for lunch and then played bowls in the afternoon. She remembered him with great affection. He continued to work and served as secretary and then as chairman of the Ewhurst Bowling Club until he died in 1962 aged 77.

Acknowledgements:

Memo by the late Jenny Overton of Peaslake, Seymour's granddaughter, written in 2005.

Short history of the Club written by Jack Low to commemorate its 70th anniversary in 2006.

Notes on the Swallow Tiles Bowling Club written in 2017 by the late Dick Starbuck.