

Village Echoes

Old views of the village show The Plain, in the centre of Goudhurst, as a tranquil place empty of any form of life apart from the occasional schoolboy loitering by the village pond. Nowadays it is a busy crossroads where pedestrians dodge the traffic. Easy to miss then, the two monuments on opposite sides of The Plain, both of which were erected to commemorate the dead, although for very different reasons. One is, of course, the War Memorial unveiled in 1924 to record the names of those killed during the Great War; the other, by the pond, is less noticeable and was 'donated' to the parish in 1910 and is the subject of this Village Echo.



Before the advent of the motor car the only means of transport through Goudhurst was either on foot or by horse, and the steep hill leading into the village meant that pedestrians and horses alike arrived at The Plain both tired and thirsty. The offer by Leonard Franklin of a fountain near the pond in memory of his late parents, Ellis and Adelaide Franklin, was therefore enthusiastically welcomed by the Parish Council of the time.

Franklin had probably moved, with his wife and children, to The Grange when it was sold in the summer of 1901, at which time both his parents were living in London. Although his mother died in 1902, it was after his father's death in May 1909, perhaps feeling that he was well enough established in the village, that Franklin made his offer. The cattle trough and drinking fountain (as it was referred to by the newspapers of the day) was completed in October 1910 and Franklin received a "hearty vote of thanks" from the Parish Council. The photograph of the opening ceremony shows a large crowd of both adults and children gathered to celebrate the event, although the only identifiable figure is the elderly gentleman (Rev. James S Clarke, vicar of St Mary's) with the beard and top hat standing immediately to the left of fountain. Since then, or at least until the advent of motorised transport, it was well used by thirsty horses, including those of the troops who passed through the village during the Great War. By 1935, however, Alfred Tiffin in his Goudhurst Jubilee Book was already lamenting that the travellers of his day were failing to appreciate it. Nowadays, the trough is planted with flowers and the drinking fountain is no longer in use.

Franklin, who was knighted in 1932, was born in 1862 and qualified as a barrister in 1894 although he never practised. His father was an eminent Jewish merchant banker and it was in this profession that his son Leonard also earned his living, becoming senior partner in the merchant bank of Keyser & Company in 1929. During the Great War, Franklin was appointed the representative of the Local Government Board responsible for the organisation of Belgian refugees arriving in Folkestone in 1914 when the voluntary War Refugee Committee struggled to cope with overwhelming numbers. Shortly after this, he was also sent to France to look into the finances of British Military Hospitals. As a member of a family with strong links to the Liberal Party (he was related to Herbert Samuel, leader of the Liberal Party between 1931 and 1935) he made several attempts to be elected as an MP but was successful only once, in 1923, although his career in this sphere was short-lived as he lost his seat at the 1924 general election.

Sir Leonard Franklin died at The Grange on 11th December 1944 and is buried in Willesden Jewish Cemetery.

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