

Before the Museum Came to 10a North Street

In previous issues of *The Emsworth Echo* there have been articles on both the Victoria Cottage Hospital and the Emsworth Fire Station, so to add to our picture of this part of North Street Mrs Phyllis Farnham's reminiscences were invaluable.

Before the 1939-45 war the Museum was used by the Parish of Warblington as the Council Chamber and during the war it was used as accommodation for the Voluntary Fire Service. After the war, when housing was in short supply, it was made into accommodation by the Havant & Waterloo UDC for their employees. My husband and I and our children were the second family to live there, and actually the last, because after we left the big room was put back to how it is now. We had three bedrooms, a bathroom, dining and sitting rooms, kitchen and a play area for the children. At one time there was a large gate across the entrance, but that was removed early on. We had a small garden in the Council yard opposite the house, which is still there. Mr. Parsons, a Council workman, and his family lived there. His eldest son became Chief Fire Officer for Emsworth.

At the back of the yard was a garage for my husband's car, constructed from outbuildings, and the mortuary. Mr. Parsons looked after the mortuary and tells the story of the toddler who was knocked down in the road, receiving severe head injuries and died and was laid in the mortuary. The mother wished to visit so Mr. Parsons bought a doll's face mask from 'Dawns', the toy shop next door, and bandaged it in position to hide the injuries, thus saving the mother much anguish.

On the north side of the yard facing the hospital was a hall, used as the Emsworth County Library, run by Miss Crocker, an excellent librarian. Sometimes boxes of books arrived from Winchester main library when this one was closed, so of course I took them in and Miss Crocker collected them later. There were shelves all round the room, laden with library books and covers locked over them when the library was closed, thus enabling other groups to use the hall, such as the British Red Cross. I could see these people gathering from my kitchen window (now our Administrator's Room) and resolved to join them, which I did, the Emsworth Red Cross becoming a large part of my life for many years.

Phyllis Farnham

(Mrs. Farnham's full transcript complete with two Red Cross photographs, a press cutting, her uniforms and other memorabilia is now in the Museum. An article on her time in the Emsworth Red Cross will appear in the next issue.)