



EDEN VALLEY MUSEUM

Object of Interest – October 2024

Edenbridge Historic Houses painting and Douglas Henry Griffin



Edenbridge Historic Houses was painted by Douglas Henry Griffin who donated it to Edenbridge and District War Memorial Hospital for sale in aid of its League of Friends, of which he and his wife were keen supporters for many years. The buyer of the painting lived in Edenbridge at the time, but on moving from the district returned it to the League of Friends.

The War Memorial Hospital was founded in 1930, paid for by public subscription as a memorial to the dead of the First World War. It closed in November 2023, after which the League of Friends donated the Edenbridge Historic Houses painting to Eden Valley Museum.

Douglas Griffin was born in 1926. In 1955 he moved to Hever Road with his wife, Elsie, and daughters, Marilyn and Elaine. At that time Douglas was working in the Office of the Receiver of the Metropolitan Police as a draughtsman and living in Edenbridge was convenient to travel by train to work. The Receiver of the Metropolitan Police was the chief financial officer whose office included the Architects Department in which Douglas worked. In due course Douglas qualified as an architect and



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became part of the team which designed various buildings for the Metropolitan Police, including the forensic laboratories in Lambeth.

Edenbridge and District Residents Association was founded in 1959 *“with the aim of protecting the interests of the population. The objects of the Association will be to protect the rural character of Edenbridge and District, to preserve its open spaces from encroachment and disfigurement, and to stimulate public consciousness and appreciation of the beauty and rural character of the neighbourhood.”* Douglas was involved from the start and became one of its most active members, believing strongly that new development should respect the existing character of its surroundings.

In 1981 Douglas became seriously ill with sepsis and took early retirement from the Metropolitan Police. With more time to spare he rekindled his love of painting. He joined the Tunbridge Wells Art Society and painted prolifically in watercolour and oils. He sold some of his paintings, examples of which can be tracked down today. In addition, Douglas acted as architect in the renovation of Honour’s Mill in 1984 and in the renovation for the Great Stone Bridge Trust of 96, High Street, the offices of the National Light Horse Society, in 1995.

Douglas was a founder member of Eden Valley Museum. In conjunction with Alan Dell, he researched the lost manor of Delaware using an inventory of 1605, and various other records to build a conjectural picture of how the mansion might have grown over the years. Douglas wrote and illustrated a booklet setting out the results of the research, which the Museum published.

Elsie and Douglas were still living in Hever Road at the time of their deaths in 2015, and both are buried in Edenbridge cemetery.

Richard Seymour

N.B. The painting is currently on display in the Courtyard Bedroom Gallery