

JOAN HAWKSLEY 1893-1989

JOAN HAWKSLEY (nee Joan Leadam) was born in London in 1893, the eldest of five children born to Thomas Leadam, a well-to-do timber merchant.

Joan was educated at St Paul's school in London and before World War I spent some time in Germany and New Zealand. Back in England in 1915 she joined the government service that intercepted the German mails (the forerunner of MI5/MI6). She married Charles Hawksley in 1918, and they lived in rented property in London.

But with a growing family and the financial crises of the 1920s, Joan Hawksley determined to get a house of her own without a mortgage. In the summer of 1929 the Hawksley family came down from London to live in Cherwell, a two-storey house in Bulmer. Joan paid her entire fortune of five-hundred pounds and she put Cherwell in her own name.



Cherwell 2011

At the time there was no electricity, water or gas mains available in the village but in the back garden of the house was a surface well and pump. During a drought in the early 1930s this was the only well in that part of the village that didn't dry up. Cooking and heating was by paraffin stoves or coal fires and lighting was by paraffin lamps or candles. Transport was via bicycles or a horse and trap, the horse being kept in a stable in the grounds of the Cherwell.



The family were Charles and Joan Hawksley and their five children: Mark, Geoffrey, Janet, Adrian and Robert.

They are shown here together in 1936.

Joan's second son, Geoffrey, joined the RAF in 1938 and served in Bomber Command. He was killed in November 1940 when his aircraft crashed in Yugoslavia. He is remembered on the war memorial in Bulmer.

Joan died in 1989 and is buried in Bulmer with her husband, Charles and his sister Dorothy. She was survived by her other four children

For further information see 'Snapshots' by Robert Hawksley.

Bob Hawksley 2011