

The following is a transcription of a letter from George Eynon to Rosemary Eastman dated 9th April 2000.

Rosemary Eastman was married to Ronald Eastman who died in 1997. Ronald Eastman was the grandson of William George Eastman and Betsy Eva Hutchings. William George was a Coastguard stationed at the turn of the 19th century at East Prawle and he married Betsy Eva in Chivelstone. Betsy Eva was born and brought up in East Prawle. Their first child, Eva Melita Jane Eastman was born in East Prawle.

Rosemary and Ronald were authors and also renowned wildlife film directors and photographers. It appears that Rosemary embarked on exploring and recording the family history which was not well known to her at the time after Ronald died.

Unfortunately, the work was never completed but her research and notes are contained in a document which I informally call 'The Eastman Files'. These documents hold interesting genealogical and historical research information concerning East Prawle, the Coastguards and the various family members emanating from the village.

George Eynon was the son of Eliza Putt. The Putt family lived in East Prawle.

The following transcription has tried to be faithful to the original letter in accuracy, including spelling, punctuation and grammar,

Access and publication of the Eastman files for the East Prawle History Society is courtesy of Elizabeth Bayliss the daughter of Ronald and Rosemary Eastman. Elizabeth lives in Whitchurch Hampshire.

Graham White

17.11.2020.

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9/11/2000

Mrs. Rosemary Eestman
Townmill Lane
Whitchurch, Hants
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Dear Rosemary,

Please excuse the delay in writing, but amongst other things I've spent time in going through my aunt's notes and papers looking up on things that are related to my the boat.

Anyway my aunt's side from now on I'll call Aunt Alice)

Born Elizabeth Alice Platt 26/10/1892

Marr'd Hoped Stutchings ~~26~~ 26/14/20

Hoped died at sea 10/3/23

(see correspondence from Admiralty)

Marr'd Cyril Quirk 10/11/29

Cyril died 15/12/58 (age 79)

Alice died 15/12/91 (age 99)

She was buried at Chelstone Parish church (the parish church for Princes)

with Cyril. There are also a number of her relatives - father, brother, relations etc also buried in this churchyard.

Between her marriages, she would work, for Squire Pells, the local



Photograph of
Hesperus Hutchings
taken by Hill &
Lusk - Photographers
61 Union St
Blenheim
Lyons

Photograph of Mrs. E.A.
Hutchings - undated. Later
Mrs. April Gould
taken at her front door
in later years by a visitor.
She would be 85 or so.

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9/4/2000

Mrs Rosemary Eastman
Townmill Lane
Whitchurch, Hants
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Dear Rosemary

Please excuse the delay in writing but amongst other things I've spent time in going through my aunt's notes and papers looking at things that are distant to say the least.

Anyway my aunt whom from now on I'll call Aunt Alice)

Born Elizabeth Alice Putt	26/8/1892
Married Hopwood Hutchings	26/4/20
Hopwood lost at sea	10/3/23
(See correspondence from Admiralty)	
Married Cyril Quick	16/1/29
Cyril died	15/12/58 (age 79)
Alice died	15/12/81 (age 89)

She was buried at Chivelstone Parish Church (the Parish Church for Prawle) with Cyril. There are also a number of her relatives - father, brothers, relations etc also buried in this churchyard.

Between her marriages, she worked as cook, for Squire Pitts, the local landowner at South Arlington House a few miles away, who lived in some style even in the 1920's. The family have long gone, and the house is now run as a Guesthouse.

Aunt Alice did not get a widow's pension from the Admiralty following Hopwood's death but Squire Pitts on learning this decided to take up on her behalf, the result of which was that she was awarded a pension after all.

I should have said that her second husband was a retired C.P.O (*Chief Petty Officer*) Shipwright, and entirely different to Hopwood as could be imagined!

As for me, my mother Eliza (in fact was Aunt Alice's favourite sister, and I think I was her favourite nephew (She had no children of her own) Anyway, I was made the executor of her will. I spent a lot of time during holiday with my grandparents, and Aunt Alice after she married - we lived in Plymouth and I used to cycle the 30 miles up to stay with them.

I know of the Eastman's, and knew they were in the Coastguard service, but very little apart from that.

Regarding Hopwood I enclose a private letter from his Captain, and two letters and one signal from the Admiralty reporting his loss. I understand you have been in touch with the Historical Branch of the R.N. - and now you have got his Service No. And some firm dates they should be able to give you his Service Records if you so wish.

I met Mr and Mrs Phillips (Meleta (sic)) *Eva Melita Jane Eastman born in East Prawle*) 4 St John's Piece Bungalow, East Oakley, Basingstoke, once or twice at Aunt Alice's request.

There is reference to a Mrs M Pullin, 11 Elm Grove Drive, Dawlish, S Devon EX7 OEU in aunt Alice's papers - saying she is Hopwood's niece. (*Eva Mary Pullen, nee Bloomfield - first daughter of Mary Ann Phillips Bloomfield née Hutchings*)

There are also references to Mrs Alice Cumming? of Babbacombe, Mr and Mrs Cumming? Also of Babbacombe who may also be related to Hopwood or the Eastman's, though it is by no means clear.

There are also a Mr B. Eastman who Aunt Alice was in contact with. He may have been related to Hopwood, and Aunt Alice left him a small legacy in her will, and as executor for her will I had to try rake him out! (*Hopwood was his uncle. He was the son of William George Eastman and Betsey Eva Eastman née Hutchings*). His

last address was in Southampton but he was no longer there and hadn't been heard of for a few years.

Anyway I finally unearthed him and visited him on 27/3/82. He was W R Eastman of 3 Latham Court, Endeavour Close, Southampton. This is a group of flats owned by the British Legion, with a Residential Warden in attendance. He and his wife were in good health, very comfortable - he was 76. I think his wife was fairly recent. He had not seen Aunt Alice since 1922 when he spent two weeks in Prawle. He was then a Boy Seaman on the training ship HMS Impregnable at Devonport. Again armed with this information you could be given details of his Service History if you wish. If they have passed away, as there is a Residential Warden she should be able to give you the details.

Finally, I understand some of the Eastman family moved to Plymouth and in 1932, 1933 when I was in Devonport Dockyard I met an official described as a "Recorder" in the Engineering Depot who knew Prawle and knew my mother's family in Prawle. Again the Dockyard authorities ought to be able to give you some information on his background. I understand they lived in the Mount Gold (sic) (*Gould?*) area of Plymouth.

Anyway, I have no more information on the Eastman's - though plenty of information on the Putts (my people and of Prawle itself).

You did not seem to know much about the Coastguard Service or Prawle during our conversation, so that a little bit of background might no come amiss.

The Coastguard Service was started after the Napoleon Wars to cut down smuggling which was endemic all along the South Coast.

Initially it was run by the Admiralty who built a chain of coastguard stations every 6 miles or so along the South Coast from North Foreland to Lands End. They were staffed by ex Naval personnel, and were essentially self contained - the personnel were not locally recruited - the locals were regarded as smugglers! The cottages were built around 1806 - 1810 and in the case of Prawle consisted of 5 terraced cottages and another one for the officer in charge. They had a garden for each man a piggery, a communal washhouse with adjoining earth closets, and their own water supply. Later on the stations were transferred to the Coastguard

authorities as an independent organised (sic) and with the redirection on smuggling, and improvement in communication, and the introduction of Steam - driven ships the Coastguard stations were sold into private hands - the Coastguard being concentrated in certain specific areas.

In the case of Prawle the cottages (where you spoke to Mrs Putt) were the original cottages, but just after the 1900's - say 1902 - 1904 another set of Coastguard Cottages to the same basic design but built in brick, instead of stone were built close to Prawle Point and it's look - out post. The old coastguard cottages were sold off privately and much later due to improved communications - so were the new ones!

The look -out Tower was taken over by Lloyds - known as Lloyd's Signal Station which communicated with Lloyds in London to report the forthcoming arrival of ships in the Port of London.

In the event Lloyds gave up the Signal Station, and it was left derelict for some years, although a radar was installed with transmission to a site elsewhere (I know not).

Recently due to the growth of sailing and yachting around the coast, the site has been taken over by a group of volunteers, who man the station, on a proper watch keeping basis and report to the centralised Coastguard Authorities who call up lifeboats and Helicopters where necessary. Even the later Coastguard cottages are now in private hands - are not permanently occupied but "Holiday Lets"

For more information, I can only suggest you contact

Kingsbridge Library - who should be able to give you a lot of background information.

Coastguard Organisation I don't know who to contact

Register of Births, Deaths, and Marriage Kingsbridge

South Hams District Council Follaton House Kingsbridge Road Totnes - background information who owns what etc.

I can only suggest the (Sic) your people were stationed at the “new” Coastguard Station - than the original one. *(This is incorrect. The 1901 Census has W G Eastman and the Hutchings family in the original Coastguard Cottages).*

The old cottages - Sea View Cottages, East Prawle, Nr Kingsbridge Devon TQ7 2 BZ

The “new” cottages - Coastguard Cottages, Prawle Point, Nr Kingsbridge.

The National Trust may be able to help - they own a lot of property local and their Coastal Path - runs past Prawle Point.

Regarding Prawle Point itself - a few words may not be amiss -

Prawle Point has been a look out point for seamen for hundreds of years. The name Prawle or Prahale is Anglo-Saxon for look-out point, and was first mentioned in the year 800 AD Or so by a Dutch Sea - Captain in his sailing instructions. In the first World War U Boats used to work off the point to catch those shipping using Prawle Point as a navigation point. The situation was so bad that an air-field was built at East Prawle to enable patrols to be mounted to drive the U Boats further away. The Second World War a large radar station was built at East Prawle to track enemy aircraft. It was the most westerly of a chain of radar stations stretching from Suffolk around the south coast and down to East Prawle. There was also a mine barrier laid off Prawle Point itself controlled from the shore for dealing with U Boats. Traces of this can still be found near the shore below the car park.

Over 750 U.S. soldiers were drowned off Slapton Sands a few miles away, when they were practising landings for D Day. E Boats got amongst the landing craft, which were insufficiently protected by surface ships. Geologically there is a raised beach between Prawle Point and Lannacombe caused by a shift in the land and sea levels. Parties of geologists often visit the site in the summer. Reputedly there were rare moths peculiar to this area that caused investigators to come to Prawle at appropriate times of the year. Even today it is common to see anything up to 25 ships at time from Prawle Point area with ordinary binoculars, quite apart from small yachting craft sailing close inshore between Salcombe and Dartmouth.

I hope these notes will be of interest to you in preparing your History. Do not hesitate to contact me if you think I could provide further information. I also

enclose a photograph of Hopwood in navy - blue and a photograph of Aunt Alice taken in her later years, standing at the door of her cottage.

Yours sincerely

George Eynon

I'll try to send a better photograph of my aunt later.