

# Leatherhead & District Local History Society

Potted Histories No 51

## Beverley Nichols - Merry Hall



*Beverley Nichols*



*Merry Hall*

In the 1841 census this house in Agates Lane appears as Maryls and in 1861 as Merry Halls. Arguably one of the most pleasant looking houses in Ashted, although much of its back land was sold in the 1970s for housing development and the old wall on the south corner had to be cut back for an access road.

Beverley Nichols, the well-known prolific author and contributor for many years to the magazine *Woman's Own*, bought the house in 1946 and stayed for some ten years. He was also a talented musician and composer and a close friend of many theatrical and literary figures of the day.

He wrote several books during his stay. One of these, Merry Hall was dedicated to A.E. Newby, his gardener who is referred to in the book as 'Oldfield'. This name is preserved in Oldfield Gardens. Many famous celebrities visited him at Merry Hall, but few local people were invited into the house. Exceptions were the Maples family who lived at Murreys Court opposite and Peter Yorke, the band leader who lived in Rookery Hill.

His main local interest was in the productions of the Ashted Players of which he was a patron from 1954 to 1957. He wrote a most complimentary article in *Woman's Own* about the 1954 production of *Ruddigore*, recounting how the cast were invited to Merry Hall after the show, and sang and danced in the music room, repeating most of the opera.

When he moved away it was to find another house and write more autobiographical books.

He was born John Beverley Nichols: September 9, 1898, Bower Ashton, near Bristol and died: September 15, 1983, Kingston upon Thames

*Goff Powell - Extracted from Ashted A Village Transformed L&DLHS 1977 / History of Ashted L&DLHS 1995 with additions.*

***For information regarding Membership, Lectures and Museum opening hours***

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