

How's that for shortness at the back, Sir?

01/01/2009 22:48 by neil

Mr. William Henry Johnson, born 10th October 1860 died circa 1935

Mrs. Joan née Moore Hall is the granddaughter of William H Johnson. He was a hairdresser in Grayshott during the latter part of the 19th century and first part of the 20th century. Joan's mother, Mabel was William Johnson's daughter. It was Joan who drew my attention to an account of William's 'business activities and contacts' contained in the book '48 Not Out' by R C Robertson-Glasgow (Hodder & Carter 1948). Robertson-Glasgow was a pupil at St. Edmund's School, Hindhead, then a master, and later the cricket correspondent of the Morning Post. He wrote on page 33,

'From the open door of the next shop (i.e. to Edinburgh House, Crossways Rd, Grayshott, the sweet-shop owned by Marion Menzies) would come a burst of laughter, then a mumble of monologue, and another burst. Mr. Johnson, the hairdresser at work. On the wall of his shop, where the eyes of the patron must fall, were cards exhibiting specimens of hair before and after the use of Damschinsky's Infallible Dye. In the window was an elderly lady sawn off at the bust and waxenly simpering at her disreputable past.

After shop hours Mr. Johnson bicycled around and worked private, thus gathering his knowledge of affairs. "Down at Mr. Lloyd George's yesterday evening" he would say. "A good job there, very good. A very affable gentleman. How was he? Ah, only so-so; pretty midlin'. Worry, I think. What about? Didn't you read it in the papers, sir? Ah : perhaps it didn't get into yours; wanted to hush it up, I expect. There's been a quarrel you see; him and the Prime Minister of Rumania. Mr. Lloyd George found out what he was up to; trying to get out of a Treaty or something. Says he won't have him at 10 Downing Street again, not at any price. How's that for shortness at the back, Sir?"

Styles may have changed at our hairdressers in Grayshott, but business seems to remain much the same in the fields of national and international politics.

David W A Barrett

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