

DANEHILL PARISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

When I was researching Fletching, Tony Turk kindly gave me an invoice from J W Gould, Tailor, dated from around the 1800's which stated he was a "Tailor and Habit Maker, Shirt Maker and Woolen Draper-Mourning and Liveries on the shortest notice". In respect of this invoice an 'overcoat' cost £2.0s.0d and based upon that invoice I started my research about tailors. Fletching, in common with most of the other villages was probably self-sufficient-this certainly seemed to be the case with regard to tailoring.

The history of tailoring in Fletching, as far as Census records are concerned, dates back to Richard Roney, in 1841, who lived with his wife and seven children in the village together with his parents Ann and William (also a tailor). In 1851, Richard, still a tailor has been joined by his son, Edwin, who is 17. By 1861 they have moved off to Gravesend.

In 1871 the name of James Gould appears in the Fletching Census aged just 22 as a Master Tailor employing 1 man and 2 boys. His wife Emma is aged 27. John Sheppard who lives with them is a journeyman tailor.

James and wife Emma married in 1870 at Fletching Parish Church. Emma, who was born in Fletching, is a dressmaker.

In the 1881 Census, James and Emma have a son aged 9, another aged 6, and twin boys aged 7. It appears James and Emma also had another set of twins, girls, and in 1881 one of the little girls, who was nearly 3, dies. The remaining twin Bertha appears to be ok. It would have been incredibly dangerous for a lady to have twins in the late 1800's and even more unusual to have two sets of twins.

Still in this Census James Windsor Gould is at Merryfield Villa, Fletching Street aged 32 carrying out his trade employing 2 men, 3 apprentices and a female. Living with them is Emma's widowed father Frederick Akehurst and I can trace him up until the age of 85.

It's almost impossible to say where any of these inhabitants lived as the addresses are simply given as Fletching Village but as luck would have it, in 1881 the address Merryfield Villa

appears. By 1891 the family is no longer in Fletching.

There is a property called Drapers in the village; might this too have had some connection to tailoring?

There is a old photo of a shop in the High Street displaying what looks like bolts of material; could these be relevant to James and Emma's trade?

Jill Rolfe

