

OBITUARY

ELSIE REDSTONE

Miss Elsie Redstone, who died on 14th January 1972, shortly before her 89th birthday, was the last remaining member of a family whose remarkable contribution to Woodbridge history is unique.

It is impossible to estimate the extent of the influence of this talented woman, which went far beyond the immediate circle of those who knew her as librarian at the Seckford Library at Woodbridge.

She was born of a family whose absorbing interest was history and transcribing Suffolk records. Her father, Vincent Burrough Redstone, came to Woodbridge towards the end of the last century as assistant master at Woodbridge School where he taught until 1921, publishing among other works 'Bygone Woodbridge' in 1893. Her two sisters, Mabel and Lilian, shared the same tastes, and Lilian became widely known through her many books and her work as an archivist.

Elsie took over as librarian at the Seckford Library upon the death in 1927 of Harriet Churchyard, the last of the daughters of Thomas Churchyard, the distinguished landscape painter.

Her interests were overwhelmingly concerned with Woodbridge and its past, and with her capacity for hard work and with the family archives behind her, her knowledge of the district became encyclopaedic. She had the great personal gifts of simplicity and eagerness to impart her learning to others. She was never impatient and was ever ready to give up her time to the many children and grown-ups who came to consult her.

There can be few people in Woodbridge who, at some time in their life have not come into contact with her either at the Library or as research students. Many of them, like the writer, will have spent fascinating hours at her quiet Seckford Street home trying to assimilate the mass of information she so unselfishly provided for them. Her home became the meeting place of students from all over England as well as from abroad.

It was a great blow to her when, in 1963, many of the old Seckford books were dispersed and the County Library took over, subsequently (1970) moving to new premises in New Street.

The valuable reference collection of Suffolk books, however, remained for a time at Seckford Street, where Elsie continued to look after it with loving care and until within a few weeks of her

death she was still actively engaged in cataloguing and arranging her family's collection of manuscripts and books.

With Elsie Redstone goes the last link with old Woodbridge. A countless host will remember with gratitude her ready help at the college-like library or the homely reference room at Seckford Street. Her passing brings to an end a life of dedication and service which few people can have equalled. It is also the end of an era in the annals of Woodbridge.

W.G.A.