

The Fisher family moved to Emmer Green from Mapledurham in the 1870s and were to play a significant role in village life for over a century. William Fisher set up a wheelwright and timber merchants on the Peppard Road, and in due course was joined by his sons Noah and Edwin. W N & E Fisher had their own forge, and Edwin was the blacksmith. William and his large family lived in Oak Villa, (241 Peppard Road), and several cottages were built nearby. With plenty of good local timber available, carpentry and coffin making were undertaken. (At the appropriate time the staff would exchange their working clothes for black attire, ready to escort the coffin!) When his father, William, died, George Fisher also joined the business, and his experience in the building trade helped the firm change direction.

With the next generation offering skills such as architecture, carpentry and brick-laying, the firm flourished. From the 1920s they began building houses along Grove Road, and in 1924 the foundation stone was laid for St Barnabas Church. They built houses along the Peppard Road and after the war the big housing estate around the Evesham Road area. The business was sold in the early 1980s, and the land was finally redeveloped in 1988 (Fishers Court). Only the forge remains.



The Belle Vue Hand Laundry (70 Kidmore End Road) was set up in 1878 by one of the Fishers for a relative, a Mrs Fewster, a widow with six children. One of her daughters, Mary, married William Short, a draper. Mary Short eventually returned to Emmer Green to help with the laundry, and it was her unmarried son (Robert) and daughter (Daisy) who eventually took it over. The Fishers played a very active part in church and community life.

Years ago the villagers had to make their own entertainment. Singing and music making was important, and Emmer Green had its own band, and a team of handbell ringers. It also had its share of acting talent and put on several Minstrel Shows to entertain the community. A programme remains of a 'Miscellaneous Concert' held in The Schoolroom, Emmer Green, April 1901. Miss I Short and Mr S Gibbs played pianoforte and banjo, followed by a dozen songs and recitations. A curious play followed entitled "The Matrimonial Agency"- two of the characters include Mr Ponsonby Funkleton, and Mr Augustus Plantagenet Splatchett!

World War II

Nineteen servicemen lost their lives in the Great War, and twenty-one in the Second World War. They are commemorated in St Barnabas Church.

Emmer Green probably seemed like a peaceful haven to those fighting abroad in the 1940s, or affected by the blitz. Most of the young men were on active service, or those ineligible were seconded to the Home Guard or became ARP wardens. The local ARP post was situated in a barn behind Old Grove House owned by Col and Mrs Stevens. It had basic equipment including a telephone, stirrup pumps & buckets. Col Stevens was the air-raid warden in charge, whilst Messrs Povey, Page and Goodworth were three of the wardens. A concrete machine-gun post was constructed near the junction of Peppard Road and Surley Row. It was kept for a while after the war, but subsequent neglect led to it being earthed over. The White Horse became a place of refuge during the war, but sadly beer shortages were common. It provided shelter for firemen and air-raid wardens and was the headquarters of the Home Guard. Evacuees from the East End of London were housed locally and some temporary 'pre-fabs' were built in Grove Road to cope with Reading's growing population.

The BBC monitoring station at Caversham Park played a vital role during the war receiving broadcasts from all over the world. People of many nationalities were enlisted and brought here as translators, and they were billeted compulsorily on any house that had a spare room.

Emmer Green was not without incident. A series of small 100lb bombs was dropped in 1943 from a lone German plane. They fell in a line from what is now the Emmer Green Garage, across Fisher's Cottages and Kidmore End Road, and the last demolished the professionals' shop on the left-hand side of the old Reading Golf Club. At least one fell into soft earth in one of the gardens and had to be dug out by the bomb disposal squad.