

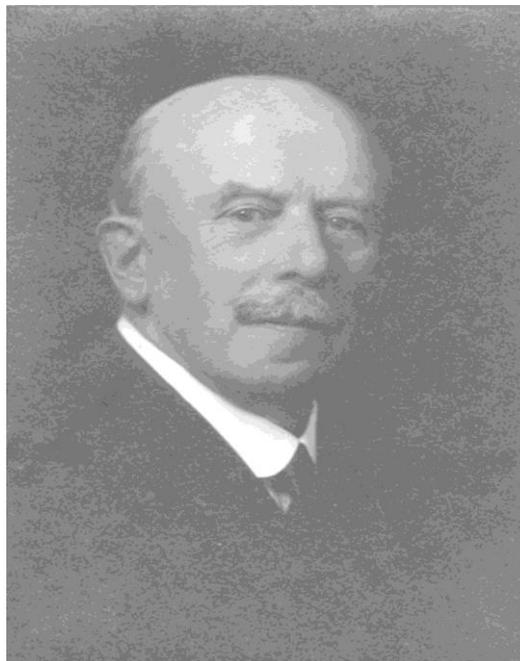
Savernake Cottage Hospital's very own Who's Who

Name: Samuel William Farmer 1847–1926 Benefactor & Governor of Savernake Cottage Hospital

Samuel William Farmer was born at Market Lavington November 29th 1847 and educated between 1855 to 1863 at Devizes and at The Spa Melksham.

Between Jan 1863 and 1868 he went to Aberdeen, Kings College Grammar School and in Martischall College where he studied medicine. He had wanted to become a Doctor but was unable to because of a medical problem with his lungs.

Sam's father died in 1869 aged 43 years. In 1874 he married Emily (Mary Elizabeth in 1926 newspaper) Redman, daughter of William Redman of Coulston. They moved to make their home at Manor Farm, Little Bedwyn.



His business partners were WB Gauntless and Frank Stratton. S.W.Farmer & Co managed farms amounting to 24,701 acres. His business life had been successful and he was recognised as being a good employer and very knowledgeable – at one time advising the Ministry of Agriculture. His work on agriculture during the war was recognised by the Order of the British Empire award. His name is closely associated with the setting up of the United Dairies and the transportation of milk by the newly built railways.

His charitable works were far ranging and enthusiastically undertaken. His interest in Savernake Hospital was very great, and he was a life governor of the hospital from 1911. He not only gave financial support but the benefit of a business-like mind.

In politics he was a Liberal and took an interest in the Temperance movement. He was a member of the United Kingdom Alliance and was placed on the Commission of the Peace for the county in 1907. He was a staunch churchman.

His wife died in 1908 and they had no children but there were some thirty nephews and nieces, including S.H. Sargent and Mr Edwin Gauntlett. Samuel William Farmer died on 9 July 1926.

Extracts from newspaper cutting;

Death of Mr S W Farmer

A prominent Wiltshire Agriculturist

"It is with much regret that we have to record the death of Mr Samuel William Farmer which occurred at his residence, The Manor, Little Bedwyn, in the early hours of Friday morning last, and whose passing leaves a gap in the public life of the county and in other connections which it will be extremely difficult to fill. It will indeed be hard to realise that Mr Sam Farmer is not more; he was so

intimately associated with so many institutions and so many organisations in which his sound practical common-sense allied to a generosity of nature were important factors that it will be difficult to reconcile the loss sustained by his removal. Always of an active disposition, the deceased gentleman applied himself with much zeal to his many business and public duties and although he had been confined to his room for some months he continued to exert his active interest in these duties practically to the end. Of an unassuming, unostentatious character simple in his habits and absolute devoid of the slightest affectation, Mr Farmer, by his directness and sincerity of character, was held in the greatest esteem, and his advice, given from a sound knowledge and understanding, and founded upon great business instinct and foresight, was readily sought and, when sought, never denied. Mr Farmer was the type of man of whom there are far too few, and his death will be very considerably felt”.

The above paragraph is but one tenth of the beautifully written obituary, part of which, due to the age of the newspaper is missing, but which I have photocopied should anyone wish to read it at full length.

Should you wish to do so you will find it in the 1920/30s file.

Clearly this was a hugely popular and very well respected gentleman who did much for Savernake Hospital. The Samuel William Farmer’s Trust carried on his good works after his death and with their permission I have printed some extracts to display from minutes of meetings past.



When the Farmer Memorial Unit (a much loved Mental Health Department) was closed and later became Cotswold House (Eating Disorders Unit), it was agreed his name should be placed there so Sam Farmer and the memory of his good work will not be forgotten. The Samuel William Farmer Trust continues to this day, some 83 years after his death.

His name can be found in the hospital in various places today – including on a plaque in the Café Courtyard, which refers to the gift of the Farmer Memorial Nurses Home.

Extracts form minutes of The Samuel William Farmer’s Trust

November 30th 1929

Dr Haydon reported that there is a debt of £4,400 on the Savernake Hospital Building fund, and that proper accommodation for the nurses is urgently needed. He was instructed to acquaint the committee of Savernake Hospital that the Charity Trustees are favourably disposed to an idea that they should build a home for nurses in memory of Mr Farmer and to ask for a scheme to put before them.

January 25th 1930

Mr Savery chairman of the Savernake Hospital Committee presented draft plans for the Nurses Home and various details were suggested for the architect’s consideration. The Trustees requested that tenders be advertised and the hospital committee’s final selection and recommendation should be put before them before accepting and that the expenditure including building an equipping be limited to £20,000.

May 10th 1930

The Architect presented plans for the Nurses Home at Savernake Hospital which were approved with the addition of basins to the bedrooms adjoining the hot water system. Mr Savery explained that a difficulty had arisen and the Nurses Home could not be proceeded with, without an additional expenditure on the heating and water system. After considerable discussion it was decided to give a donation of £5,000 to the Hospital if the sum could be used temporarily for financing the alterations to the heating and water system and be repaid to the hospital Trustees as money became available for an Endowment Fund for the Hospital.

July 23rd 1930

At a meeting held at Savernake Hospital on the 23rd July 1930 the Trustees were invited to attend to consider Tenders for the Nurses Home and it was unanimously resolved to accept that of Messrs F Rendell & Sons for £15,689.

Referring to the Minutes of May 10th 1930 owing to legal difficulties this was not considered advisable. It was therefore proposed by the Chairman of the Trustees and seconded by Sir Felix pole and carried unanimously to give £25,000 to Savernake hospital and the Chairman was authorised to sign the application to the charity Commissions for the sale of 5% War Stock 1929-47.

February 6th 1932

Dr Haydon read a letter from the Chairman of Savernake Hospital expressing the Nurses' gratitude to the SW Farmer Charity Trustees for the Nurses' home, and saying how happy they are in it.

A statement of account was presented showing a deficit of £1008 on the Nurses' Home. Mr EB Gauntlett proposed, seconded by Mr SH Sargent and carried unanimously that £1008 be sent to the Treasurer of Savernake Hospital when required to clear off this deficit.

October 27th 1934

The Donation of Five hundred pounds to Savernake hospital towards building a new operating theatre in memory of Dr Haydon was confirmed.

Regular donations of £10 per year were made until November 8th 1938.

On the application of Mrs FB Gauntlett asking whether the Trustees could increase their annual subscription to Savernake Hospital or make a grant towards the decorations which are very urgently required it was agreed to grant £50 a year for five years towards annual decoration subject to its remaining a Voluntary Hospital.

Researched by Val Compton
2009

Note from Val Compton; Since writing the potted history, I have recently discovered a superb website that is both well written and interesting – so for an in-depth history of Sam Farmer and his family, please go to;

<http://www.dannyhowell.net/1996/05/gauntlett-family.html>