

BROOMFIELD

Two hundred years ago Westcott was still a small village centred on the Green and even where it passed through the village the A25 was still largely bordered by fields. All the fields had names and one a little to the south of the main road and forming part of the Bury Hill Estate was known as the Broom Field.

We haven't quite sorted out the sequence of events but we do know that part of that field was bought by a solicitor – Thomas, later Sir Thomas, Paine, to extend other land he had bought and on which he had a mansion built- and which he named Broomfield.

When Paine died the estate was bought by George Touche. He was a Scot who made his name and his fortune applying his accountancy skills to the concept of Investment Trusts. His firm expanded and eventually became the Touche Ross international consultancy. Shortly before moving to Westcott he had earlier become George Touche instead of George Touch and in 1910 he was elected as the Conservative MP for North Islington.

His four sons were brought up at Broomfield, which he extended to provide sufficient accommodation when they returned with grandchildren and their nannies. He also added to the Estate when adjacent land became available following the accidental death of his neighbour Dudley Cory Wright at The Red House (now the Little Manor House).

On his death Norman Touche inherited the big house but by the 1950s it proved unreasonably large for one family and so Norman and his wife Eva moved into a modernised Ivy Cottage at the end of Stones Lane and the Broomfield Estate became Broomfield Park, and in due course pointers Hill was added using former Red House land.

In many respects we know more about 19th century Westcott from census returns and rate books etc , than the 20th century where we must rely on personal memories, but we hope to glean more information about Broomfield today, especially we are please to welcome at least two of George Touche's grandchildren with us this evening.

But our main aim is to get a feel for the old Broomfield Estate and especially its 'pleasure grounds' by visiting four gardens. We will do them in

sequence if only to finish at No 9 where there will be some refreshment courtesy of Tony Golding and the Local History Group. There are a few maps to stop you getting lost and to help relate Broomfield Park to the original Broomfield Estate.

Meanwhile you will appreciate that we are standing by the Broomfield Garages – and I suspect before that the Stables, and Benny Brooks, although never a Touche employee, will no doubt be able to help paint the picture of the original Broomfield.