

Broomfield

The Broom Field is marked on the 1838 Tithe Map of the Parish of Dorking. At that time it belonged to Charles Barclay but a Bury Hill Estate map dated 1868 shows that Thomas Paine had acquired the land to the north and by 1886 Broomfield had been established on former arable land and comprised a large house, house, pleasure grounds, laundry etc. extending to ## acres.

Broomfield in 1908 with the original Broom Field highlighted

Sir Thomas Paine was born in Great Yarmouth in 1822, qualified as a solicitor in 1844 and progressed in his career to become President of the Law Society. He died in February 1908 and was buried in Holy Trinity churchyard beside his wife Anna who had died 15 years earlier. In his will he directed that each of his servants should have a suit of mourning, his coachman, George Moss should receive £200, Henry Hamlyn, his indoor servant, £150 and Henry Wakeford £100.

Broomfield viewed from the west

George Alexander Kent Touch (the 'e' was added in 1906 by Royal Licence) was born in Edinburgh in 1861. After qualifying as a chartered accountant he pursued his career in England where he pioneered the investment trust movement and by the end of the century had founded his own accounting firm. Expansion into America and Canada followed leading to the formation of 'Touche

Sir George Touche Ross'the multinational consultancy accounting firm.

George also had political ambitions and was elected as the Conservative member for North Islington in December 1910. He was a brilliant public speaker and in parliament he was noted for his lucid exposition of financial matters. He was a member of the Goldsmith's Company and became an alderman of the City of London and

would have become Lord Mayor but for ill health which also led to his resigning his seat in parliament in 1918. He was knighted in 1917 and created a baronet in 1920. He had married Jessie Brown in 1885 and there were four sons including Gordon who qualified as a barrister but then chose a carrer in politics. He entering the House of Commons, initially, in 1931, as the Conservative member for Reigate, and then, in 1950 following the redrawing of constituency boundaries, as the MP for Dorking.

Lady Touche died in 1917 and as Sir George's own health deteriorated his public appearances became rarer and he worked mainly from Broomfield which he had bought in 1908. He died on 7th July 1935 and was buried in Holy Trinity Churchyard, where the Touche Memorial can be seen just beyond the Lych gate.

Broomfield remained in the family and his eldest son, Norman lived there with his wife Eva Maitland for over 20 years. By the late 1950s

however, the house, which Sir George had extended to over 40 rooms, was felt to be too large. The Touche's moved to Ivy Cottage, initially retaining the 4-acre wild garden in Stones Lane (Sandy Lane on the plan above), and various proposals were made for the development of the rest of the estate. This had been extended in 1932 by the acquisition of ** acres of land to the west of the original Broomfield plot from the executors of Dudley Cory Wright. One plan provided for the demolition of the mansion and construction of 13 new houses, a second envisaged retention of the mansion for use as offices with 5 new houses in the grounds and a third proposed the conversion of the mansion into 4 apartments. All three proposals were vetoed as Broomfield was in the Green Belt, but on appeal it was accepted that Broomfield should be demolished and a new housing estate - Broomfield Park was built, with Pointers Hill following a few years later.

In addition to his speeches on financial issues, George Touche occasionally raised more local issues in the House of Commons. In 1913, for example, he asked the Postmaster General why a telegram posted at 10.08am at Victoria Station, announcing that a passenger would arrive at Dorking station at 11.16, in order that a motor car might be in waiting, was marked as having reached Westcott post office at 11.40, by which time the passenger had not only arrived at Dorking but walked to his Westcott home. The PMG replied that telegrams from London to Westcott were normally sent to Dorking but on the day in question there was an interruption in electrical communication and telegrams for Dorking had to be diverted to Leatherhead.

There are numerous examples of the Touche family's involvement in village affairs. Sir George was a major contributor to the village school, not only financially but by virtue of his directorship of a chocolate company the children always looked forward to Christmas when hundreds of boxes of chocolates were brought to the school in wheelbarrows by the Touche gardeners. One former pupil thought that this tradition started as a thank you to the school, which adjoins the Broomfield Estate, for keeping quiet when Lady Touche had been seriously ill. Others also had good reason to appreciate his generosity. In his will he left £500 each to his gardener William Hollis Etheridge and his personal servant Alfred Robert Wakefield who had worked for him for 27 and 24 years respectively. Also £250 to his chauffeur William Harvey, six months wages to each man and boy in permanent service and one months wages for

each year of service to each female servant. Mr Etheridge lived at The Lodge and another 'cottage' on the other side of the main road was used as the Broomfield Laundry.

Sir Norman Touche followed his father's example. He gave the land that enabled the footpath to be constructed from The Crown to the entrance to School Lane, thereby permitting a much safer crossing of the main road, and in April 1937 first meeting of the newly reformed 17th Dorking (Westcott) Scout Group was held in a 'Touche' barn which the scouts were then allowed to use as the base for wide games within the Broomfield Estate. Lady Eva Touche was actively involved with the Westcott Players. Another example of the esteem with which the family were held was provided is when Gordon Touche was elected to Parliament in the General Election of October 1931. After a long day campaigning he gave his acceptance speech in Dorking after which he planned to retire to bed. However the Westcott residents had other ideas. In great secrecy they had erected a platform outside the Prince of Wales bedecked with flags and illustrated with arc lights. And a banner was strung across the road bearing the word 'Welcome'. After the local celebration of his victory ropes were tied to Mr Touche's car and he was towed home in triumph.

The family's links with the village also included another of Sir George's sons, Donovan Meredith Touche, who lived at The Red House, since renamed The Little Manor House.