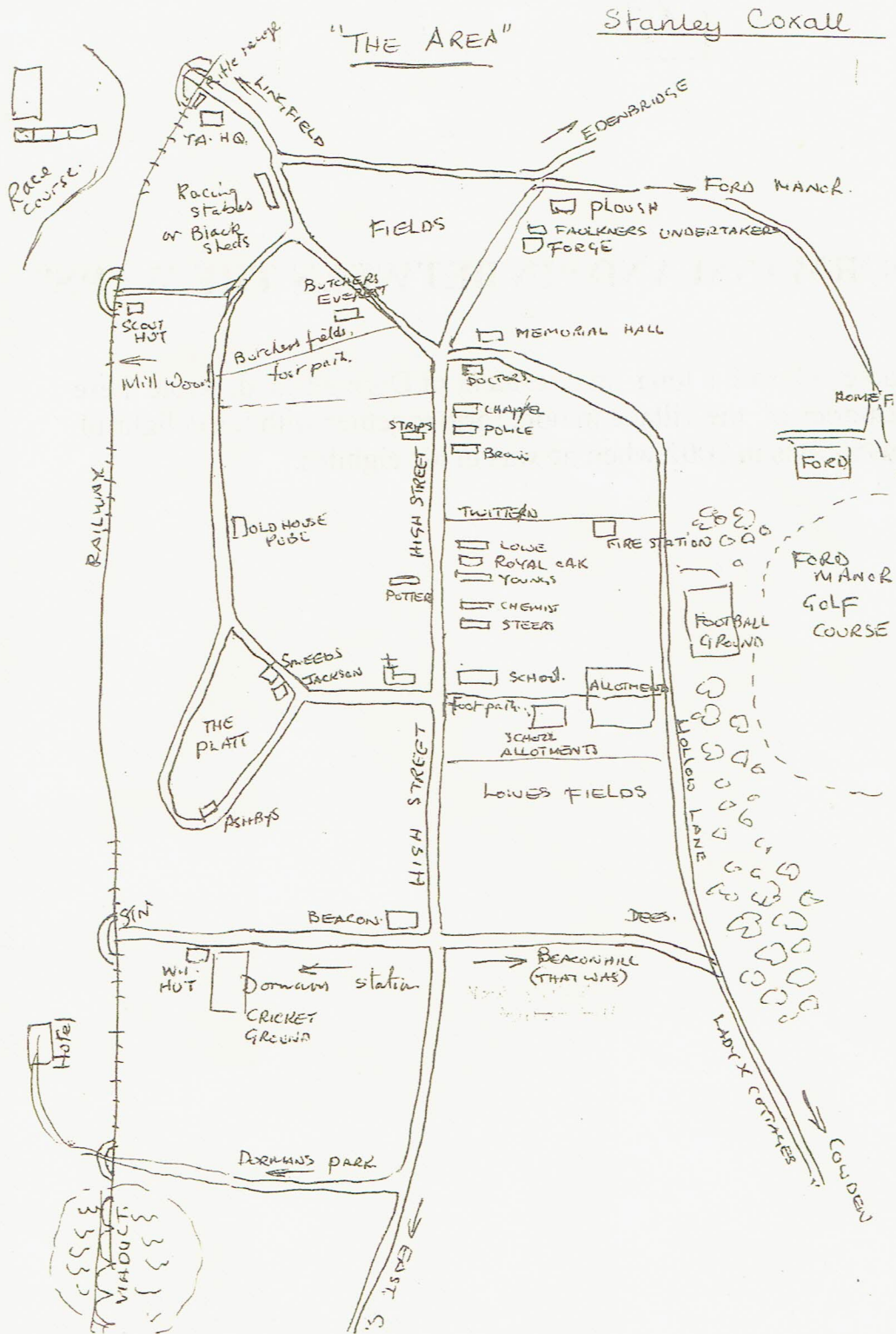


£1.40



## **DORMANSLAND “IN BETWEEN THE WARS”**

Stanley Coxall, a long-time resident of Dormansland, wrote these memories of the village in note form together with his delightful illustrations in 2002 when he was in his eighties.



**DORMANSLAND IN THE 20s – 40s**

- 1 church
- 1 chapel
- 1 chemist
- 7 shops
- 3 builders
- 3 public houses
- 1 post office
- 1 parish room
- 2 doctors
- 1 corn merchant
- 2 coal merchants
- 1 shoe repairer
- 1 train station
- 1 Memorial Hall
- 1 Football field
- 1 Cricket field
- 2 chimney sweeps
- 1 blacksmith
- 1 band
- 1 fire brigade (volunteers)
- 1 laundry
- 1 school
- 1 resident policeman

**Village Businesses**

Builders	Steers Faulkners	High Street Next to the Blacksmith
Undertakers	Faulkners	High Street
Butcher	Everest	Now a furniture shop <sup>1</sup>
Coal Merchant	Lowe Young	Behind Ernest Walls house opposite Youngs garage <sup>2</sup>
Chemist	Sandall	opposite Youngs garage
Cobbler	Meeks	sited on what is now Youngs garage
Grocers	Potters Stripp	family business Lower High Street
Drapers	Brown	Lower High Street
Post Office	Mr Weller (manager) (lived in Clinton Hill)	existing site
Police	R. Tanner (constable)	house was opposite Stripp's
Blacksmith & Farrier	Skinner & Mayo	on existing site <sup>3</sup>
Sweet shops or General store	Ashby Smeeds	both in the Platt either side of Parish Room
Fried Fish	Jackson	in the Platt (fried in 'copper' boiler)
Corn Merchant also coal	Lowe	High Street

**Pubs**

The Plough	Mrs Glover
Royal Oak	Mr Skelton
Old House	Mr Deal

1. Now a private house in Dormans Road
2. Youngs Garage demolished and is now small housing development (2016)
3. Blacksmiths is now a private house in Plough Lane

**Farms supplying milk at the door**

Lee  
Ansty  
Butterfield  
Pearce  
Cowdry  
Kirkham  
Froggate

**Visiting Tradesmen**

Mr Finch with his muffin cart (he walked from Lingfield ringing a hand bell)  
Mr Brown with a three-wheel trades bike with wet fish from East Grinstead  
The first van in the village was Leytons shoes from Lingfield  
Mr Skinner supplied fruit and vegetables by horse and cart from Lingfield.  
The Ice cream 'Stop Me and Buy One' cycled from East Grinstead  
The knife grinder (the grindstone was driven by pedals)  
Shoe shop (by car from Lingfield)  
The Gas man (collecting money in the slot)  
The postman (delivery from Lingfield by cycle twice a day)  
Carter Patterson parcel delivery by lorry  
Local stores in Lingfield delivered to Dormansland by trades-bike. (Castle Stores and International Stores)





MR. CLAYTON known as "Roger" because he called everyone Roger.



MR. Brown from East Grinstead



MR. Finch pushed this cart through the district ringing his hard bell and shouting Muffins.

DORMANSLAND "BETWEEN THE WARS"

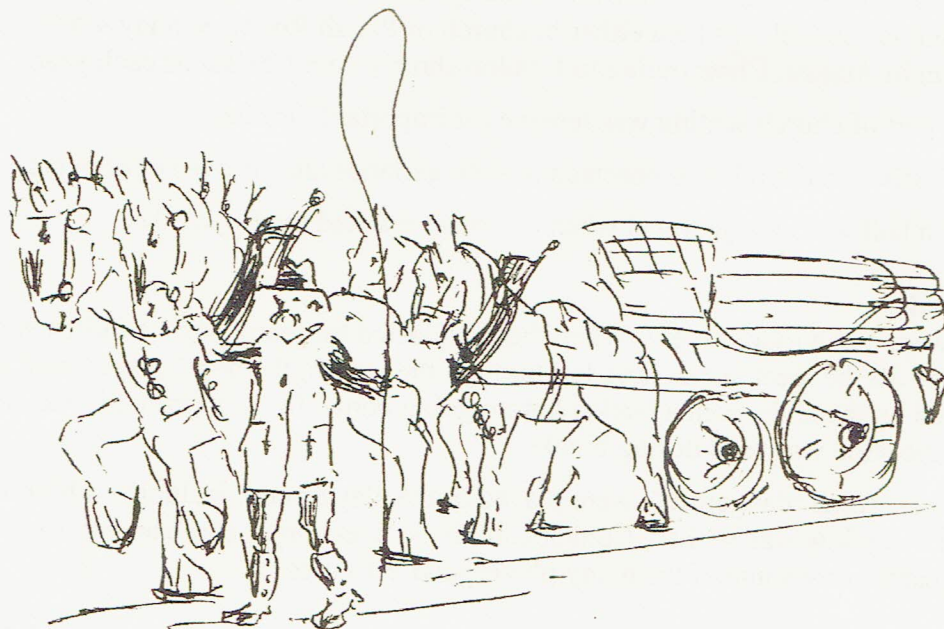
Village 'characters'

'Carter' Wallace	Ford Manor
Skinner	Blacksmith
Clayton	Black sheds in stables – now chicken farm
Miss Wests	pillars of the W.I.
Miss Wilson	domestic at the Beacon
Miss Bignell	lived in cottage now Youngs Garage
Mayrs Loffer	Austrian eccentric; lived in the Platt
The cat lady	Dormans Park



MAYRSHOFFER  
WALKED THE VILLAGE  
BARE-FOOT COLLECTING  
SACKS OF LEAVES.

JOE BIGNEL USED TO  
WALK FROM DORMANS PARK WITH  
THE WOOD FASSETS THAT HE  
BURNT ON HIS COTTAGE FIRE



Bill "Carter" Wallace <sup>Wallis?</sup> with the Greys  
from Ford Manor.



### **The Village**

There were two general stores; one drapers; one butchers; three sweet shops  
There was a bakery at the rear of Potters Stores (operated by Stan Potter)

Three people were employed in the Post office; it was separate from the shop in the early days.

The Chemist shop (or hut) same side as the Royal Oak.

Three builders' yards

Three public houses – The Plough, The Royal Oak, The Old House.

Two doctors in the village. In these times they were able to visit, day or night.  
The doctor's surgery was opposite the Memorial Hall. There were other doctors with private practices in the village.

Two coal merchants, one on each side of the Royal Oak. One also sold corn etc. for animal feed.

A shoe repairer had a hut on the opposite side to the Royal Oak.

There was a laundry beside the grocer's shop on the left hand side between the Royal Oak and the Memorial Club.

There were nine farms and a racing stud inside the village boundaries.

### **Church**

There was a large all male choir. Choir practice was on Tuesdays. Choir boys pay was about 5/- per quarter with extra pay for weddings and funerals. Morning and evening service. Sunday school was held either in church or Parish Room. Sunday school outing to Brighton in August. Choir outing to London shortly after Christmas each year.

The front part of church seating was reserve for important families.

Harvest Festival in church was spectacular with garlands and sheaves of corn etc.

The church bell was always tolled when a cortege reached the Royal Oak.

### **The School**

Winters were much more severe. When the frost lasted for many days, children slid or "skated" on all the local ponds (and fell through the ice). In the boys' playground water was poured on the slide from a bucket before going home. In the morning it was frozen hard and the slide was used during breaks.

Many games, some 'dangerous', were played in the playground, including whipping tops until a window was broken. Conkers, marbles, five-stones, cap-bangers, swapping cigarette cards were some of the many playground activities.

Senior boys had to attend gardening lessons on the school allotments, on ground that is now Farthingdale. Half the lesson was practical and produce was purchased for modest sums. Half the lesson was used for writing up class notes. The Instructor was Ernest Walls' father.

Girls had the cooking side.





Carpentry classes were at Lingfield and senior boys had to cycle to Lingfield for a half day and back to Dormansland for the afternoon. When Lingfield was modernised it meant cycling to Blindley Heath and still be back in the afternoon.

Coal fires and open grates were used to dry wet cloths and melt frozen milk. Children roamed as far as the village boundaries even after dark without any mishap; you either walked or cycled.

School outings were very rare and only for one day.

There was a Sunday School outing to Brighton by train once a year. Also there was a choir outing to London once a year that usually included a visit to the circus at Olympia.

Empire Day was always a major event with prize giving, maypole dancing and a half day holiday.

The school football team played at Lingfield Hospital School; cricket at Lingfield, Blindley Heath and Baldwins Hill

The school had many activities besides the normal 3Rs.

Swimming lessons at East Grinstead meant walking to Dormans Station in the morning; train to East Grinstead and walking from East Grinstead Station to the pool in Brooklands Way. Make the return journey, sandwiches on the way and be back in school for the afternoon period.

Entering hand work in the autumn flower show; stage shows at the end of term.

Mrs Charlton used her grounds at Rede Place in Dormans Park for her cub pack meetings.

Scouts either met at the Hut near Mill Wood or in the Territorial HQ at Stanhope Cottages.

The Rifle range was used by the scouts and silver spoons were presented by Major Wilmot for the best shots.



You could buy sweets for a farthing.

A large paper cone made of blue sugar-paper filled with mixed broken biscuits (biscuits were all kept in large tins with a glass top) would cost 1d.

Lemonade powder in blocks to make 3 pints of lemonade cost ½d.

Have a hoop made while you waited at the forge for 1d.

In Spring time children would whip tops in the main road. (no cars or lorries)

For Boat Race Day all shops in the village sold coloured favours; light or dark blue, celluloid dolls etc wearing dark or light blue feathers.



The football field was on the Ford Manor estate off Hollow Lane. There were wonderful games between Dormans and teams from Oxted, East Grinstead, Edenbridge etc. (The Memorial Club was the changing room). Once a year there was a fancy dress match played on the ground belonging to Ford Manor in Hollow Lane. All the players wore an outfit other than the usual 'wasp' of black and yellow stripes.



## DORMANSLAND "BETWEEN THE WARS"

Cricket field (still there on the road to Dormans station) saw real cricket. All white, only the click of the bat and a round of clapping. Tea was in the W.I. tin hut beside the ground.

The Old Surrey & Burstow Hunt always met at the Plough twice a week. Many famous people were to be seen on horseback.

The Plough Fair was held each year in the yard of the Plough pub. Sideshows, swings roundabout, coconuts etc. were up against the doors of the pub.

Once a year there was 'Cherry Sunday'. People would come to the Platt to buy cherries that grew in most gardens. People sold them at the garden gate.

The Parish Room was used for various events – meetings, dances etc. and Sunday school.

The village band played carols at Christmas in every street and carried lanterns on long poles.

Parties of children walked as far as Dormans Park in the dark and alone to sing carols at the big houses. (today it would not be possible).

The Memorial Hall was used for many events- shows, exhibitions, dances, stage shows, receptions. The AKKERS party for village children always had a huge Christmas tree with real candles. (lights came much later)

Regular flower shows were also held there.

Lingfield Racecourse "straight mile" began below Dormans Station. This could be entered through Mill Wood.

The covered way from Lingfield station to the Racecourse was open to all except on Race Days.

There was a hotel in Dormans Park owned by Letherby & Christopher who also catered for race meetings at Lingfield and elsewhere

A racing stud (associated with the racecourse) was known at the 'Black Sheds' at the junction off the Lingfield to Edenbride road; later it became a chicken farm.

Dormans Station had a station master and two porters. Everything was sent by rail (wet fish, laundry, animals etc.)

Trains from Victoria to Tunbridge Wells were regular and reasonably on time in all weathers. The station's porter always had a huge fire in the waiting room (no shortage of coal).

Buses did not run until the early thirties and then it was 1d to East Grinstead.



The Fire Brigade (all volunteers) hut was sited in the twitten by the gate leading to Ernest Walls' land.

The bell was operated by rope and was a great temptation.

You could hear maroons fired in East Grinstead when there was a fire. One bang if in the town; two bangs if the fire was outside. This told part-time crews what action to take.



Sheep and cattle were moved by walking them through the village (no transport). Many horses were exercised by grooms and prize bulls were taken around the village for exercise by herdsmen using long poles attached to the ring through the bull's nose. Many people in the village still had pigs at the end of the garden and most people with large gardens kept chickens.

There was a resident policeman backed up by the police station at Lingfield.

Planting potatoes on the farm 2/- for Saturday morning.

Gypsies would collect jam jars and rabbit skins or old rags etc. in exchange for hand-made willow clothes pegs or paper flowers

Tramps were a common sight moving between workhouses; the nearest being in Railway Approach in East Grinstead. Passing through the village in the afternoon they would call at Potters Stores and ask for any scraps of fat bacon or cheese, broken biscuits or a large scoop of mixed tea and a 'screw' of sugar for 1d.

The tea would be brewed by the roadside in a black can over a wood fire.



*Most tramps used an old pram to carry their possessions.*

The big estates surrounding the village held shoots during the appropriate season. Men and boys from the village would act as beaters, sometimes in dreadful weather. The men were given bread, cheese and beer, the boys had ginger beer. They received a small sum, the boys less. The men were also given a rabbit in addition to the pay if it was a good day. Boys were paid 1/- a day

When playing in the woods it was as well to keep an eye open for the state gamekeepers, who did not take kindly to trespass and noise near the pheasant coops.

As children, the space and adventure was never ending. Gathering chestnuts, mushrooms, blackberries. Wild strawberries were picked on the railway line at Barkers Bridge, near Nobles an approach to Mill Wood and the racecourse.

There were places to fish. Ladycross Farm, Lullenden, Longbridge, Cooks Pond, all within walking or cycling distance (there were few cars or lorries).

Summers were very hot, winters very cold. It was possible to skate or slide on ponds and lakes.

This was Dormansland.

It was possible to walk almost anywhere. Farmers did not mind. There were few problems, no arrests, not a lot to live on but a time to be treasured and remembered.



### **Dormansland 1939 (all change)**

Men left their jobs and went into the armed forces. Housewives had two occupations, one at home and one connected with National Service. People joined the ARP, Ambulance, Fire watching, factory work or land work. A number of men became Special Constables.

Canadians came and occupied the big houses. Roads became choked with troops, lorries, tanks etc.

Lingfield Racecourse became the Aliens Internment Camp, then a P.O.W. camp for Luftwaffe and Navy P.O.W.s. These people made items such as ships in bottles and exchanged them for cigarettes with the guards who then sold them in the local pubs.

1940 saw many air battles over the village. Bombs fell on Hollow Lane; Kites field in the high street; Pelams above Beacon Beech was hit. Flying bomb fell very near to Nobles. Planes crashed at Marsh Green, Ardenrun at Lingfield, Lullenden and Felbridge. Many large bombs and firebombs in the Dry Hill area and Burnt Pit. There were cartridge cases and slugs scattered across Leppards field below the Platt.

These events drew a line under the 20-30s in Dormansland. Very little remains of this time.

Stanley Coxall  
2002