

BROCKHAM GREEN

AND IT'S INHABITANTS IN THE 1930's

By

Len Jordan

Who was born and bred on the Green

Introduction:-

Some years ago, my old school-friend Alex Street, lent me a piece he had written about 'The Borough' and the people who lived there during his childhood. Having read it, I congratulated him and told him how much I had enjoyed it. Alex said "You should write something about The Green".

"Not so likely" said I! But I suppose it set me thinking! More recently, a few others have said much the same thing to me, including Mr Bob Bartlett and Mr Syd Huggett (that well-known local photographer and stirrer!) Syd issued dire threats if I didn't make an effort!

I did say to Bob that no-one would be interested in reading it except myself, but he replied "You might be surprised". So thinking maybe it might be something to keep me occupied for a few winter evenings, and with a lot of encouragement from my wife Freda, I thought I would make the effort.

It is basically about The Green and the people who lived there in the 1930's, but in the event, I seem to have wandered off in other directions at times. It is written as it came into my head, so if anyone should bother to read it, I offer my apologies for any spelling or grammatical mistakes.

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It began for me on St Valentine's Day 1924. My parents lived at No.3 Oak Cottages, which is now half of the residence of Clive and Mrs Roberts, and which they now call Oak Cottage. According to another school-friend Ted Boatwright, Dr. Thorne delivered me just before midnight on the 14th February, and then dashed (?) off on his "push-bike" up to Brockham Pits Cottages, and delivered Ted soon after midnight in the early hours of the following day.

No.3 Oak Cottages was a very small 2-up 2-down cottage with very winding stairs which I fell down with some regularity as a small boy. There was no gas or electricity in those days. Lighting was by oil-lamp and candles, and I well remember the excitement when we first had gas installed! We were given 3 gas lights, and were able to have a gas cooker and a copper! In fact my grandmother, who lived next door, already had gas lighting and the luxury of a gas-ring to boil her kettle! But the rest of the cottages were like ourselves, and had to wait some years for such a luxury.

The toilet (it didn't have a posh name like that in those days), was about 30 yards down the back garden. It was quite an adventure on a wet winter's night, when one had to grope the way down there through the gooseberry bushes etc., wearing wellingtons and carrying a torch, probably tripping over a neighbour's cat on the way! Another thing of course, was that the sewers were not installed round The Green until about 1932. So I will not go into details of the scene that was enacted (usually on Sunday mornings) when the men had to go through the disposal interment routine!



Len Jordan outside Oak Cottages during the 1930's aged 5 or 6 years

As mentioned, the sewage was installed around The Green about 1932. This entailed trenches being dug all over the place, and the sewer pipes being laid. This was done by gangs of men with "foreign accents". (Most of them turned out to be Geordies). They were a friendly lot who were forever handing us kids their empty Johnny Walker bottles, and asking us to go indoors and fill them with water. At least that's what we gathered they were saying! When they knocked off at night, the night-watchman came on duty. He was a Mr. Rapley from the Borough. I

always thought what a wonderful job he had. He began by setting a good fire going in his coke brazier, then walked round and lit all the oil lamps, which were placed so many yards apart to prevent people falling in the open trenches in the dark and breaking their limbs! He then spent the rest of the night (I presume) sitting in his little hut with the fire just outside. I thought, that was the sort of career I would like later on!

The house next door to us was occupied originally by Mr. and Mrs. Monnery and their two children, Rene and Don. Don, who was about four years older than me, was one of my first playmates. Mr. Monnery was a very skilled carpenter.

I have not mentioned that my father was from an old Brockham family. His grandfather lived with his wife and children at Noy's End, Wheeler's Lane.



Noy's End, Wheeler's Lane. c.1923

(I found this information in the census of those times). One of his sons, Edward (my grandfather, who was baptised in Brockham church in 1848) lived with Gran Jordan and their tribe at Elm Cottage, Middle Street. It is now All Hallows Cottage. My father was one of eleven children that I knew. I think there were fourteen originally, but of course a lot of children died at a very early age in those days. When my dad left school he went into the building trade, but only for a fortnight! Apparently it rained every day and he earned approximately nothing. He then took up gardening and worked for Sidney Poland at the Manor for around 50 years until his retirement at the age of 64, due to ill health.

Dad seemed to take part in most things in the village in those days. He was, by all accounts, a good cricketer. In fact Mr. Poland, who was a member of the Surrey

County Club, used to get father to bowl to him in the nets on the manor lawn. He would put a sixpence on the middle stump, and when dad knocked it off he kept it, and it would be replaced by another tanner.



Len Jordan Snr,
mowing the lawn at the
Manor in the 1920's

Later on, when Mr. Poland had the bowling green laid, down by the river near Mill Hill, dad took up bowls. He was in the Church choir, and also played in the village band and used to amuse us with his description of Uncle Ted Jordan, who wasn't very tall, and had a job to see over the big drum when they were marching along. Dad was also in the Fire Brigade. The fire appliance being kept at the rear of the Royal Oak, and had to be manually pulled along the road by handles on the truck!



A Brockham Fireman.
Fred Parker

He also took part in village concerts of the day, usually as a stooge for his old friend Jack Tickner. Dad spent all his life in Brockham with the exception of his service with the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment during the 1914-18 war, and he seems to have spent a pretty full life.

He married my mother, Beatrice Smith, in 1921. She had come to live on the Green from Reigate Heath when she was 15, but her mother was a native of Brockham, a descendant of the Sadler family, and her mother lived at Puddenhole, up "The Straight" as Brockham Lane was called in those days, and just along the Reigate Road, on the opposite side to the Puddenhole Cottages of today.

Getting back to the Monnerys! Mrs. Monnery was a particular favourite of mine, as she used to save me a dish of "afters" every dinner time. I would wait patiently for her to call me, when I would dash round and get stuck into it! Although I'd already had some at home!

Next door to them in the house with the large window, which I understand had at one time been a butcher's shop, lived Mrs. Monnery's parents, Granny and Grandad Duffell. They let two of their rooms to Mr. and Mrs. Brannan and their daughter Beryl, who was the same age as me, and was another of my early playmates. When the Brannans went to live in Wheelers Lane, the two rooms were then let to Jack Howes and his wife Jessie. Jack came from East Ham. Mrs Howes was a native of Betchworth, and her mother, Mrs. Miller, lived by Snower Hill.

Jack started off doing a bit of jobbing gardening, but in a very short time took on an evening paper round, and was a familiar sight riding round the village selling "Star, News or Standard" on his trades bike. He soon extended the business to a morning paper round as well, and combined this with turning his downstairs room (with the large window) into a small shop selling apart from newspapers, a selection of magazines, sweets, cigarettes, stationary, seeds etc., – and later on when he had electricity – Eldorado ice-cream appeared. When the Monnerys later moved to Kiln Lane, Jack and Mrs Howes moved next door and ran the shop from there for a couple of years.

I think it was during this time that their daughter Evelyn was born, Known by one and all round The Green as "Ba Ba" she was a great favourite with everybody. When Mr. and Mrs. Duffell moved (or passed away) I'm not sure which, the Howes moved back into their original shop at No.1 and eventually bought it. The business expanded further when Jack took over George Sherlock's much bigger paper business from the shop across the Green. The Howes shop was very popular, and they ran it for a good many years before retiring.

I remember before joining the navy, that Mrs. Howes used to take in evacuees from London during the early part of the 1939-45 war. One of them was a little

girl named Beryl Thornley. She unfortunately became a household name in the early 1950's as Beryl Evans whose body, and that of her eighteen month old daughter Geraldine, were found under the sink in 10 Rillington Place, Ladbroke Grove, London. Her husband, Timothy Evans, was eventually hanged for the murders, but his guilt became questionable when a couple of years later the same house became even more infamous, when another seven or eight bodies – maybe more – were found there and the other man who lived in the house, John Christie, was found guilty and also hanged in 1953.

On a more cheerful note, when the Howes moved back to No.1., our new neighbours became Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Gunner and their daughters Jo and Pat. Once again we seemed to have struck lucky with very good neighbours. In fact, Oak Cottages was a very happy little community. Everyone got on well together.



Long Cottage, as it is today!

On the other side of the shop was Long Cottage. This was occupied when I was a very small boy by Mrs. de Glenn. Later her daughter and her daughter's husband (Mr. and Mrs. Curtis) came to live there. I have good reason to remember the Curtis's for one of their dogs bit me! In the late 30's Long Cottage was occupied by a well known actor of the day, Reginald Tate and his wife. Alex Street tells me it was originally two cottages, and his great-grandparents lived in one in the 1880's. I do not remember much about Vine Cottage, which is behind Long Cottage. I believe that Syd Huggett, as a small boy lived there with his Mum and Dad at one time.

That takes us down to the corner of the Green. So to go back the other way, on the other side of us in No 4 (the original Oak Cottage) lived my maternal Grandmother. My early memories are of her sitting crippled on a bed in the kitchen. My grandfather died at the age of 54 when I was a few months old. When he was ill, my grandmother, who had done laundry work as quite a lucrative side-line, and had employed quite a few different aunts of mine, and other ladies to help out, suddenly by necessity, had to enlarge it as her only source of income, so my mother and her sister had to work there full time. To make things worse, when my grandfather died, my grandmother lost the use of her legs. Doctors said she would never walk again! This seemed true for a few years until Mrs. de Glenn from Long Cottage, who was a Christian Scientist, together with some friends of hers, managed after a considerable number of months to get Gran on her feet and walking again, albeit slowly.



North end of The Green. c.1930

Gran's house was quite large. It had a big laundry room which she said had once been a Dame's School room. There was a large stove just through the door on which the irons were heated. I once had my hand burnt by an iron carried my Mrs. Hall. Of course, amid all the pain and anguish I blamed her for it, but I'm sure it was my fault. Other painful experiences I remember, was twice flattening my fingers in the mangle. I was then more or less banned from the whole department. Gran used to have a lot of work from different people in Betchworth, Buckland and Brockham. Her largest consignment was from the Goulburn family at Betchworth House. Mrs. Goulburn had two very large baskets full each week. Gran would pay Ted Budd a shilling to deliver them to Betchworth on Saturday mornings, and to bring back the next consignment.

Next door in No 5 (now called Thimble cottage) lived old Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Street and their youngest daughter Edie, who later married "Geordie" Robinson. Their daughter Marian still lives in the village. One thing I remember about the Streets was that they had a cat named Fluff, which lived to the ripe old age of 32!

This was without the benefit of pills and jabs from the vet. People couldn't afford such luxuries! We all had cats and they lived to good ages, but Fluff held the record!

Now we come to the Royal Oak. When I was small it was run by Mrs. Smith, but she gave it up before I remember and it was then taken over by her daughter Mrs. Leach, who lived there with her husband and her daughter Barbara. Barbara was some years older than me and I became the proud possessor of her woolly elephant – with half a trunk – when she grew up. Mr. Leach was a nice old gent who went up to London every day. Although he had his name over the door, I don't think Mr. Leach had anything to do with running the pub. But he seemed very popular with the regulars, and could be seen playing darts in the tap-room most evenings.

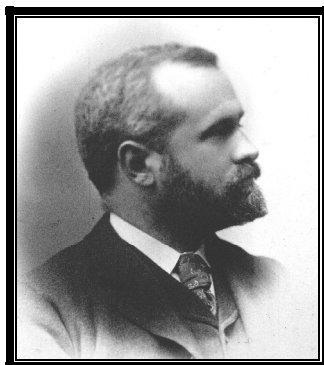
Next to the Oak stood the old house which I believe was the original Royal Oak. An old lady named Mrs. Turner lived there on her own, subsequently followed by her daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Firbank and their two sons. Later in the 1930's the house was occupied by a young couple, Mr. and Mrs Boardman. Mr. Boardman, an army captain, was killed in Sicily a few years later during the second world war. Mrs Boardman continued to live there, and after the war – in 1951 to be precise – she took one of the leading parts in Brockham Village Hall's greatest production "The Murder in the Red Barn". The villain was played by Dick Talbot, who everyone agreed should have been awarded an Oscar at the very least for his performance as 'William Corder' the murderer. Also in the cast among others were Claude Tickner, with Ted and Arthur Budd. The "Red Barn" was part of the Festival of Britain celebrations in Brockham which was the first of the famous festivals on the Green, when twenty-odd thousand people descended on the village from all parts of the world.

Back in the '30's, "The Meadows" was the home of Mr. and Mrs. Anning. I have an idea they lived in the Manor before Mr Poland arrived when it was called "Brockham Lodge". But I cannot be certain of this. Mr. Anning was an ex Captain of the Cricket club, and after his retirement, spent many hours on the cricket square stabbing the plantains with a large syringe of weed killer. He gave us boys numerous tickings off for running over the wicket.



Surrey County Cricket Team when they played Brockham in 1935. Mr Poland is in the front row, 5th from right (in hat) and his sister Miss Poland 3rd from right. Mr Anning is in the suit, third from left with his son Frank in a blazer. In the back row are, "Obby" Moore, a Surrey player, Jack Blanch, Harry Stent, Ted Budd, Sid Budd, Don Horton, Arthur Budd. In the centre row are Alf Meadows, Dr. Stratford with Kit Jones in blazer, & "Tich" Bowry in the centre and the last four Bob Chudley, L. Eaton, Austin Jennings & Joe Smith. While the two umpires at each end of the front row are George Farmer (left) and Ted Rochester (right). The elderly gent second from the right in front row is Reuben Childs, a veteran Brockham cricketer.
The remainder are County Players.

Next in line on the northern end of the Green was the Baptist Chapel. This was known as "Mr. Beasley's Chapel". Mr Beasley was a nice old chap who lived at "Chalvington" (up the Straight) and had his plumbing workshop in the old forge in Wheelers Lane. It is now the Star Building office. Mr. Beasley tried very hard to get me to go to his Sunday school, but I am ashamed to say I never quite made it. A very large congregation used to attend the Chapel on Sundays, both morning and afternoon, and sometimes in the week as well. The caretaker lived in River Cottage, which was owned by the Chapel authorities.



Dr. John Mills Thorne. First resident Practitioner in Brockham from 1904 to 1932.

Next we come to Dr. Thorne's house, with his surgery and pharmacy. It was called 'The Laurels' in those days. I have already mentioned Dr. Thorne, He was a nice old gentleman with a white beard. He rode a ladies bike with a basket on the front, to do his rounds. He attended me for measles when there was a big epidemic in the early '30's. So many kids in the village had measles the school had to be closed! No sooner had we started back to school, than I had chicken pox. So it was back to Dr. Thorne again, and another couple of weeks off.

The Duke's Head in my very young days, was run by Dan Duffell. I think he was a brother of old Mr. Duffell in the Oak Cottages. He used to keep a big white cow grazing on the corner of the Green opposite the pub. This is one of my earliest memories. He was followed by Fred and Mrs. Chandler, who were there for many years, and were joined early in the Second World War by Mrs. Chandler's niece Florrie, known later on to all and sundry as "Beryl". Beryl eventually took the pub over with her husband Doug Balchin, when Fred and "Auntie" had both passed away.



The Duke's Head. c. 1910

In the Duke's Head yard in the early '30's stood a large shed which was the workplace of Bert "Snobby" Chance, a shoe repairer. We had two cobblers on the Green, the other being George Bailey. Snobby Chance was a football fanatic, and the inside walls of his workshop were covered in photographs of all the league clubs. He was very popular with the older boys and would often come out and have a kick around with them on the Green. He had apparently been a very good player in his day. By Brockham standards anyway.



On the right-hand side of Penfold Lane, approaching the Pound, was the Butcher's shop. This was demolished in the 1880's and a new shop built in Middle Street, Aberdeen House, opposite the pond.

Between the Duke and the entrance to Brockham Court Farm, rising to the heavens was a row of poplar trees, behind which was a long, black wooden building which had been the venue for dances and other events for many years. This, and the poplars were removed in the mid '30's when the houses that stand there today were built. The first farmer I remember at Brockham Court was Mr. Pike, followed by Mr. Bertram, and then by Mr. Ayres who was there for some years. The farms in those days sold their milk direct to the public, and Brockham Court Farm Dairy was well known. As indeed was Teddy Stanford's "Stroud Green Farm Dairy". Teddy did his rounds every day by horse and cart, and the housewives would often bring their jugs out to his cart and he would fill them from the churn. No-one had seen milk bottles in those days. I think Brockham Court was the first local dairy to introduce them, just before the war. Anyway, Ted's sister Amy used to do a late afternoon round for those who wanted milk, riding a push bike with a large container fixed to the handle bars. Of course, the milk was all good stuff then! None of your skimmed or semi-skimmed rubbish.



The Old Brockham Court House which was finally reduced to six dwellings known as Mrs Hope's Cottages. So many people lived there that the Cottages became known locally as 'The Barracks'! They were demolished in the 1880's and North & South Lodges were built on the site.

On the north-east corner of The Green in North Lodge lived Mr. and Mrs. Best. Mr. Best was a large stout man, while his wife was very tall and slim. They used to come out on the Green and get Stan Farmer and myself to run races. A penny for the winner! Stan would have been around four or five at the time, while I would have been six or seven. As I was older and taller than Stan he always had a very good start on me, and I never stood a chance of catching him! Then came the ceremony of the prize giving and Mr Best usually took pity on me and gave me a penny for being a "good loser". We would then hare it across to the Post Office, glue our eyes to window for a few minutes, and then go inside to spend our well-earned prize money.

In South Lodge were Mr. and Mrs. Tarran Jones, two well-known people in the village. Mrs. Jones was another daughter of old Mrs. Turner next to the Oak. Mr. Jones eventually had "Riverdale" built just inside the Coach Road and they moved there.

Further along the Green towards the Church, in Vicarage Cottage, lived Mr. Chudley and family. Mr. Chudley appeared around 1931 I would think, and immediately threw himself into the life of the village. He played cricket, football, was into the bonfire when it re-started, in fact anything that went on round The Green. He was particularly interested in cricket, and obtained a bag-full of gear (boy size) and would come out on Monday evenings and teach us how to bowl a

length, and play a straight bat. We used to have a proper match, usually of twelve a side, and also played matches against other boy's teams such as Betchworth and Dorking Grammar School. The bag of gear was kept in Mr. Chudley's garage, and we could fetch it out whenever we wanted, which was most evenings!

Behind Mr. Chudley's garage was the original Church Room in the spot that the Church Hall of today stands. We boys, who were cricket-mad in the summer, once saw Mr. Patton, who came from Brockham Park, hit a ball right over it, and it (the ball) landed in Vicarage Drive. A mighty hit! Another big hit we talked about for years was by "Obby" Moore, who was left-handed, and he actually hit a ball right over the poplar trees by the entrance to Brockham Court Farm. But probably the longest hit ever seen on the Green, if we were to believe the old men of the day, was by Harry Barnes Snr, who played in a bowler hat and black trousers, the ball was said to have finished up in the Brook at the bottom of Tanners Hill!

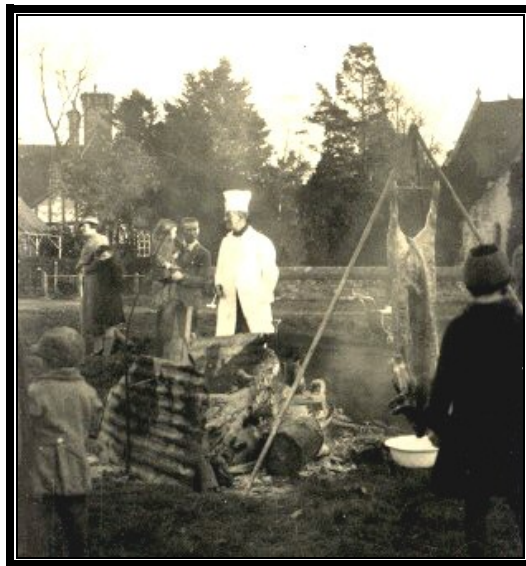
The vicarage which one could stretch a point, and say is just on The Green, used to hold summer fetes on the lawn. We used to dash in there on the way home from school, to spend our coppers on ice-cream, but on a couple of occasions were thrown out by the vicar of the day, Rev. F G Ward, for running around and being a danger to other people. He was a big man, and as I remember it his face became very red when he was angry! You didn't argue with him.

Behind the church lay two small cottages, now made into one. The first one was occupied by Mrs. Middleton, who fostered children. In the other one lived an old coachman from Staffordshire, Mr. Reid and his son John Henry. John Henry eventually became a postman in the Brockham area. But the postmen I remember most were Mr. le Cluse, who lived at Brookside, in Middle Street, and Mr. Parvin from Betchworth. In those times you would get two, if not three deliveries a day, and they would all have been posted the day before, sometimes the same day! And all without the benefit (?) of first and second class postage.

Across the road were the premises of Holman and Budd, farmers and coal-merchants. Old Mr. Budd lived in the first one, with his three sons Ted, Arthur and Sid, and his daughters Edie and Alice. The Budd brothers, along with Mr. Blanch, Mr. Chudley and a few others, were instrumental in re-starting the bonfire on the Green! Ted used to tell me how they had a bonfire in the Leighs in 1931, with fireworks, some food, and of course a quantity of liquid refreshment. They all enjoyed it so much, that they decided there and then, to have a big bonfire on the Green the next year!

These early bonfires were massive! Today of course there are so many restrictions, on the size of the fire and almost everything else. Many used to dress

up in those days. The procession would start from the Green, up the Straight, and along to the Barley Mow. After about an hour's stop the Procession would re-assemble, go back along the main road (out of the question today), back down to the Green round Wheelers Lane and on to the Old Spotted Cow. There, another very long stoppage, well over an hour, before they re-formed, and came back down Middle Street, more merry than sober! There, on The Green, a very patient (perhaps not!) crowd were waiting for the fire to be lit. This was often done in those days by a well-known personality such as the Duke of Newcastle. Afterwards, the firework display was held, (on the Green in those days!) Obviously not as lavish as today. But still very good! There were always plenty of "ooh's" and "ah's" from the spectators. We boys always had pockets-full of "bangers" which we had purchased from Stent's "Other" shop in the weeks running up to the Bonfire. They were kept in a big padlocked metal trunk at the back of the shop. On the morning of the bonfire the first sign of activity would be the fire being lit up near the church wall, for the purpose of roasting the "two-tailed" pig, for auction later in the day by George Moore the Dorking Auctioneer. The pig was presented by Mr J F Humphrey the local butcher in Middle Street. The actual roasting was done by a great character "Sticker" George Collins. He wore a tall white chef's hat and white coat, and was continually hobbling up and down to the Royal Oak to replenish his empty pint pot. The bonfire was a great occasion for us kids.



George Collins roasting the Pig in the 1930's

In the first of the two houses lying back – now called Fell's Cottage, lived, when I was very small, my mother's Uncle Joe Smith and Aunt Mag. She was my grandmother's sister, and they were married to two brothers, which I believe was a very common thing in those days. Uncle Joe had quite a large family, the one I

knew best was his son, also Joe, twenty years older than me, with whom I played cricket for many years. In the house next door lived Mr. and Mrs. Hunt, their son Ernie, and daughters Ethel and Lily. (Lily, lives in Glenfield Road today). When the family moved to Middle Street into one of the new houses that had been built there, the house on The Green became the home for many years of Ted Budd and his wife Olive.

Denmark House was occupied by Mr. Arthur Balchin and family. Mr. Balchin had previously been the butcher (hence Balchin's pond) as it is still known to a lot of people. One of his son's (Doug) eventually became landlord of the Duke's head as I have said. Mr. Balchin's two youngest sons were Norman and Percy, both like myself, loving their cricket. Percy and I spent many an hour on the Green during school holidays, with bat and ball.

The house which is now the Chemist's shop, I think housed Mrs. Boxall, the infant's teacher at the school, and her sick husband. Afterwards, Mr. Dick Talbot came to live there. He was to become as I have said, the star of "The Red Barn" years later. He was also the C.O. of Brockham Home Guard during the war.



Church Cottages.

The next group were four timber-framed buildings known as Church Cottages which were demolished in the 1960s. In the first one lived Mr. & Mrs. Billings. In the second one, dwelt Mr. & Mrs Farmer with their two daughters and five sons. The third house in the mid-30s was occupied by Jack & Nancy Jones (nee Street) with their daughter Phyllis, while in the fourth house lived Miss Jeanes, and I remember a very young Vi Packham coming to lodge with her shortly before the war.

To retrace my steps back to Stan Farmer, he and I were always playing together on The Green at the time of our races organised by Mr Best! The older boys would

play golf, and they had a three-hole course round the Green, starting from the church wall. Some of them were pretty good, especially Harold Farmer who became a scratch player later on. Stan and I tried to emulate them, often getting in their way, and receiving polite requests to go elsewhere. Clubs were wooden shafted at that time, and Stan had a driver cut down very short. With that he had to drive, get out of the ditch and putt as well. I had the same problem, but my club was an iron, also cut down and presented to me by Percy Bradd, another gardener at the Manor. We could all hit the ball pretty straight, and I can't recall many windows being broken. It must be remembered there was very little traffic. There were no vehicles at all parked round the Green, and very few cars passing through. There were probably nearly as many buses as cars. But you did get quite a few horse-drawn vehicles. Apart from Holman and Budd's coal-cart, wending its way round the village, there were the various milkmen. Another well-known tradesman was Wally Potter from Pixham Lane, a greengrocer and fruiterer, who came over to Brockham two or three times a week to sell his wares. His horse and cart was to be seen regularly outside the Oak for quite long periods, so I presume Wally used to like his drop of sherbert! Talking of buses just now, I can just remember the old "East Surrey" specimens. They were open-topped double deckers, with winding stairs which you walked up out in the fresh air. They disappeared when London transport took over the route. I understand that one of the old East Surrey buses, obviously over-loaded, tipped over on the way up the Straight (Brockham Lane), tipping the upstairs passengers into the field. It would have been a field then, as there were very few houses there at the time. Another regular sight in the 30's was that of the gaily-painted gypsy caravans going up the road. Gypsy women would knock at all the doors, selling clothes pegs, paper flowers etc

The Post Office (now the Spar) housed the business of C E Stent and Son. Apart from stocking all groceries, they were also the village bakers. The bake-house was at the back of their other shop further along. Mr. Stent lived near the top of the Straight, while his son Harry lived on the business premises. I don't remember if there was one house, or two semi's next door, but I can recall Mr. and Mrs. Vinall living there.

Now to Rose Cottage, and to me the greatest character of all on the Green, Jack Tickner, (who lived there with his wife Rose, and son Claude) was a jack-of-all-trades! Chimney sweep, barber, taxi-driver – he had his own taxi – sold paraffin, bicycles and anything to do with them. He would mend your punctures for a copper or two, if you were too lazy to do it yourself. Jack would come straight in from sweeping someone's chimney, sit you in a chair and give you a trim on the spot. Claude who was a mechanic, had his own little business of re-charging accumulators for your radio, and of course anything else to do with the wireless. I used to enjoy going up to see old Jack, and would spend ages at his back-door or at

the end of his drive, listening to his tales of old Brockham, always told with sense of humour to make you laugh. He remembered standing there and watching the original Duke's Head burn down at the turn of the century!



The Old Duke's Head, destroyed by fire 30th November 1899

Another of Jack's jobs that I forgot to mention was that of school care-taker. He was a great entertainer, he would sing a song, and I recall him playing in Claude's dance band just before the war. Apparently he would do a comic act in the years gone by, either on his own, or sometimes with my father as a double-act. Dad said his part wasn't too difficult, as he didn't have to say much, but just stand there and be the butt of Jack's jokes while the audience would be rolling about. Jack made it up as he went along. No script! It was all in good fun. My dad thought the world of him, they were great friends.



Jack Tickner
with his taxi.
c.1928

As a taxi driver, he was not by all accounts a good time-keeper. George Sherlock told me that Mr. Anning said to him “You know I always walk to Betchworth Station every morning. In all those years I have only missed the train twice – Those were the two days I asked Tickner to take me.” He was a lovely old soul, and to me he was Brockham Green. At the other end of his drive, Jack had his garage and workshop. His garden was at the rear of these. Part of his workshop was used by Harry “Johnson” Risbridger, a very well known local carpenter. He was responsible for building the lych-gate paid for by Mr Poland in his Will. I stood watching him erecting the lych-gate one day, and he said to me – “I have put brand new shiny pennies in all the joints, so in years to come someone will find them and know when the gate was put up”. In fact – 1937.



Village Hall presented by Graeme Whitelaw of Brockham Park 1922. (Note the Veranda and Gas lighting)

The village Hall next door was very well used in the ‘30’s, with concerts, whist drives and a dance (to live music of course in those days!) every Saturday night. The steward of the village hall club in those days was Bert Finch who lived in Wheelers Lane. After the cricketers had finished their tea on a Saturday afternoon, Roy Friday and I used to sneak in, and Bert would give us any spare cakes they hadn’t consumed. As a point of interest, there used to be a fine portrait of Graeme Whitelaw hanging in the Reading Room. Unfortunately this picture seems to have disappeared.

What is now Surrey House was in those days Stent’s “other” shop and bake-house. Apart from other things they sold, as I have said, fireworks (when in season) and paraffin, which many people bought for their oil-lamps or heaters.

“North View” at that time was divided into two. In the first part lived Mrs. Harman and her son Bert. The other end was occupied by Mrs. Harman’s sister, Miss. Gabriel. I think the same apple tree is still in the garden of North View. We used to knock our ball over there on purpose so we could go in and snaffle an apple or two under the pretence of looking for the ball. I think Mrs. Harman got wise to us in the end, for she used to come out of her front door, and walk up to help us find the ball!

The notice on the little place next door proclaimed: “George Bailey, Bootmaker and Repairer”. Mr. Bailey lived over the bridge in one of the houses opposite the manor. He could be seen toddling up and down to his workshop two or three times a day, sometimes wearing a bowler hat. I understand this little building was constructed in the 1840s as the Office for the Builders of Brockham Church.

Mr. and Mrs. Iselin and their daughter lived in Ivy Cottage as it was then called. It was then covered in Ivy, which has long been stripped off. Mr Iselin seemed a very private man, but Mrs Iselin used to walk around with her daughter and pet dog, and was always very friendly and sociable.

I can’t remember who lived in Brooklands at the top of Tanners Hill, but I think their name was Roberts.

Over the road now to Birch Cottage, where lived George Sherlock, his sisters, and niece Ida. George’s shop was a few yards away where now stands Century Cottage. The shop was built for George by his father I believe, in 1908. He apparently started off as a gent’s outfitter, and in fact I can recall one of his shop windows always had gents clothes hanging in it. But he soon became a grocer, newsagent etc. Mr. Sherlock was very popular and well respected in the village. He sang in the Church Choir, and Ida was the organist for a number of years. One of his sisters, Alice, was a teacher at Brockham School all of her working life. When she retired, in 1936, the headmaster Mr. Pinnock, collected from all the pupils, and as many of her ex-pupils as he could trace, and she was presented with a bureau at a concert in the Village Hall held in her honour.

At the end of Providence Row, on the wall facing the road, was a board which stated “W H Phillips, Painter and Decorator”. Bill Phillips was a gruff old stick, deaf as a post (no hearing aids of course!) and he was also our rent collector. Among other people who lived in Providence Row in the early ‘30’s were the Prodgers with their son Roy. They moved along to the very end house by Court Farm Gate, when these houses were built. Dave Prodger was for many years the British Legion Standard Bearer. Another family was Mr. and Mrs. Fred Parker and their sons and daughters. One son was Bill, who became the father of Jim and Geoff, both still in Brockham. Bill was another gardener at The Manor. His father

Fred was one of many members of the Brockham Manor Bowls Club living round the Green, the others being Bill Phillips, Jack Howes, my father, Mr. Leach, Fred Chandler, Jack Tickner, Mr. Stent and his son Harry, Mr. Reid and John Henry Reid and George Sherlock. Round about the mid thirties I remember Bill Huggett, his wife Nell and their children Ivy and young Bill arriving in Providence Row. Ivy and Bill still used to walk through the fields to Betchworth School every day! Also at this time came Joe and Mrs. Overington, and their daughters Gwen and Connie. Later on, Rosebud was born. Sadly, she recently departed from us. Gwen and Connie are still in Brockham, and I think the three of us plus Stan Farmer and Pat Gunner are the only children who lived on the Green in the '30's who are still in the village.

A character at the other end of Providence Row was Miss. Page. She seemed to be into most things in the village. I remember on the morning of my wedding, she, although being around seventy, and a spinster, was calling across the road to me, telling me her recipe for a happy marriage, much to the amusement of Joe Overington who was passing by!

Yes, Brockham Green! I consider myself very lucky to have spent my childhood there! On summer evenings it would be a hive of activity. A couple of games of cricket on different parts of the Green, probably stool ball would be going on, for the elder girls had a team, and would often play matches. Various other games would be taking place, perhaps rounders or hot rice, or perhaps kids just sitting about. I can remember everything coming to a halt in, I think it was 1930, as we watched the airship R.101 going slowly along Boxhill. Unfortunately it crashed in France shortly afterwards, killing, I think, all on board. This more or less sounded the death knell for airships in this country.

Another familiar sight on Saturday afternoons in the early 30's was the red and white striped tent that Bill Parker and my dad used to wheel up on a truck from the Manor, and erect near Vicarage Cottage for the cricketers to use for teas and changing, as an alternative to the Reading room. Another of Mr. Poland's wishes!



Airship R.101

Perhaps, what I miss most of all on the Green are the three big elm trees, which succumbed to Dutch Elm disease in the '60's. They stood guard over the Green just in front of "The Meadows" and although other trees were planted in that area, it can never be the same. A part of Brockham went with them!



Also showing Sherlock's Stores, Providence Cotts. & River Cottage.

Among other memories of the 30's is Harry Breeses's fried fish and chip cart, which he wheeled down every Saturday evening, 52 weeks a year, from the first house in Oakdene Road where he lived, and stationed it outside the Royal Oak with the help of his son Alan. Visitors to The Green raised many a smile as the vehicle appeared round the church wall, with Alan taking the place of the horse at the front, and Harry at the rear pushing it along with an attachment fixed to his motor-cycle. But they stopped laughing when they tasted his fish and chips. It was the best you ever knew. Well-cooked, and a lovely brown, not like the pale sickly-looking stuff of today. It was no accident that Harry parked outside the Oak, as he always had a pint of mild on the shelf alongside as he slaved away!

Another part of Brockham, long gone, was Mr. Poland's boating pool situated at the end of the Bowling Green. This was open on Saturday afternoons until around 7 o'clock and on Tuesday evenings. It has now practically disappeared from view, and trees are growing through it.



Opening Day of the Boating Pool – c.1930.

Amongst the children are:- Bessie Aylwood, Ada Lucas, Gwen Taylor, George Farmer, Nellie Lucas, Hilda Rapley, Doug Balchin, Horace Houghton, Billy Glanfield, Joyce Wenman, Betty Pirt, Norman Moore, Jack Breese, Ernest Parker, Horace Tidy, Harvey Hopgood, Dolly Farmer, Harold Farmer, Jim Wakefield & many others now unknown!

Brockham, and its outskirts was much smaller population-wise, in those days. Until the mid 30's there was no Oakdene Close. Just a field. Oakdene Road was a dead-end when it reached the end of the old houses by the Brook. There was no Glenfield Road or Strood Green estate. Once you went past the original Spotted Cow it was just open fields until you reached Jubilee Terrace and Tweed Lane.

Before Nutwood Avenue, and the houses nearby in Kiln Lane existed, that area was known as the Brickyard and still is to some people. There was just a smattering of houses and bungalows there at that time. Most of the buildings in Brockham Lane appeared around 1933-ish. Before that there were probably no more than half a dozen houses or so in the whole lane, including the butchers shop at the top.

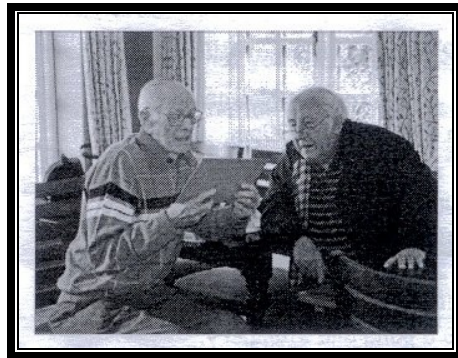
Old School Lane is practically unchanged. I don't think any new houses have been built there at all.

As regards the coach road, once you get past the Withy Bed, it has changed beyond recognition. It is all grown over with trees, and what was once a fairly wide road is now a narrow track. If you wanted to drive a car through in the 30's, you would have to pay two-pence at the house where Stan Farmer and his wife Jean live, in order to get through the toll-gate!

Well I think that brings me to the end of my recollections of Brockham Green in the 1930s, and to my astonishment, what started off as a few memories has developed into a large number of pages. But as my wife Freda said “If you don’t write it, nobody else will!” So to anyone who has had the patience to read it, I hope you will have found the details interesting and have a picture of how Brockham used to be some 80 years ago.

In conclusion I would like to express my thanks to my old school friend Alex Street for editing and attaching a number of photos from his collection of ‘Old Brockham’. Also to Mrs. Jane Warren for the interest she has shown on behalf of the Brockham Web-site.

Len Jordan - September 2009.



Len & Alex – deep in nostalgia – April 2009!