

F RYERN HOUSE, Worthing Road

Built before 1891 by Henry Smith, auctioneer. The land was sold by Robert Piper for £ 40. During the First World War it was used as a convalescent and nursing home, and later as a maternity home run by Mrs Greenfield, who owned it before marrying Mr Hart of College Farm. They sold it and purchased Abbots Leigh (See ABBOTS LEIGH). Fryern House has since been renamed Brookfield House.

Former Southwater resident, Ron Oulds, remembers:

"I lived at Fryern House for about a year with my mother and father when they gave up running 'The Shop' (now Mollycoddles) and handed it over to my mother's sister, Doris, and her husband, Bill Burchell. This was convenient for us all because my parents were having a new house built, a few yards up the Worthing Road, which they named Weston after a village in Staffordshire, near where my father came from; also because the house faced west ! All this took place in 1938, with the trauma of the Munich crisis looming over the country.

I never really discovered much about the history of the house except that my grandfather, Jim Laker, said it was built on stolen land, or probably a parcel of land which nobody made a claim to. To me, as a young boy, it was a delight: the rooms seemed so large, like a palace, with bell pulls everywhere with which the original owners would be able to summon the servants from 'down stairs'. A long narrow butler's pantry, complete with a trap door, opened to reveal — nothing much; probably just a cold storage area for wine or something. I do not recall there being any provision for stables, let alone a garage, but at the end of the garden, on the northern side, was a brick-built pig sty with hay loft over the top, which I enjoyed playing in with my school friends.

Beside the house was the entrance lane to College Farm (now overgrown) where my grandfather was born. I was often sent on errands to the farm to collect milk. I remember the farmer, Mr Hart, showing me his latest milk-cooling machine in the milking parlour, "Put your hand in there boy", he would command. I felt the warm milk trickling through my fingers. "Now put your hand down there," when the milk had passed through the cooler; I could feel the difference in the milk's temperature. I felt quite proud to have had privy to such an original invention.

Next door stood Tommy Standen's, the village butcher's shop and house. I often saw livestock being slaughtered and the meat being prepared for the shop. I would stand on tiptoe and peer through the open top of a stable door: this is something I would not care to witness today.

One aspect on Tommy Standen's life which did distress me was his breeding of spaniel dogs. Every so often, the poor little puppies would be gathered together to have their tails 'docked'. The noise that the puppies made, crying in agony, always upset me. I am so pleased that this practice was made illegal. The dogs had free range through the premises, and I witnessed several times the dogs roaming around the shop, licking strings of sausages and other meat prepared for the customers which was left hanging over the counter or the wooden chopping block!

Tommy Standen employed one young lad as an errand boy, a tall lad who had a permanent problem with his adenoids and walked around with his mouth permanently open. One day an irate lady customer called in the shop with some mince meat which had been delivered to her home. She complained that she found a tooth in the middle of the meat. Tommy Standen, unabashed,

just replied to his customer that it probably had fallen out of the errand boy's mouth while he was delivering her order. The butcher and his house keeper, Olive Tilley, fell about laughing, while the customer made a hasty exit.

At the back of the shop was a room that was at one time used as a toilet. A large wooden seat covered the recipient 'dunnycan', a galvanised bucket which was now full of brine, and soaking in it were scores of sausage skins. I had a regular job on a Saturday to unravel these skins ready for sausage making. Progress on my parents' house progressed at a steady pace. I would go and watch Mr Baker and Mr Lawrence and their assistant at work. One day a thundering noise came from above; an aeroplane roared away into the distance, the like of which we hadn't witnessed before. The builder at the top of the ladder shouted down, 'I reckon if there's going to be a war, we shall see a lot of them before long'. A prophet if ever there was! Shortly after that we turned on the wireless to hear Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain announce that 'Britain was now at war with Germany'. I was then ten years old. "

Ron Oulds 2005

