

## SO MANY SECRETS

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A Narrative Documentary

CHAPTER 1: Forebears, family, Estate and farm.

Personal memories and historical records of: West Dean House, the Park, Estate, Home Farm and surrounding area. It Includes; legends, lore, myth and first hand knowledge from the forty five year association of my family with West Dean Estate, including the First and Second World War periods, plus reminiscences about the late owner Edward William Frank James. It also embraces concurrent people, events and situations, with observations and records of regional associated people and occurrences.

I believe that I am the only surviving resident, who lived inside West Dean Park boundaries, during the Second World War.

In 1899 my Grandfather, Jesse Stickland with his wife, Jane (nee Guy) took up the post of Head Cowman and partial farm management at Home Farm, West Dean Estate, for the non resident tenant farmer, Mr. Sautelle. They lived there with their eight children, including my Mother, Ada Florence. Harold Stickland, one of their sons, was killed in France during the war . My Mother's first husband, Albert Jupp of West Dean village, was also killed. In 1916, one daughter was born to them, called Alberta Florence Jane Jupp.

My Grandparents had during the late 19th. Century owned a farm between the villages of Stoney Cross and Penny Cross, in the southern part of Dorset County but a series of physical and financial disasters on their farm forced them out of business. For example hay and grain ricks caught fire and their cows got out of their enclosure and ate toxic-poison Yew tree leaves and berries and died. Jane Guy, my Grandmother, was the daughter of French immigrants who settled in Stoney Cross, and established there a Horticultural nursery. They were formerly onion growers on the Normandy-Breton borders on North Western France and before residing in England, my Great Grandfather would visit Southern England to sell his onions.

My enterprising Great Grandmother Stickland, founded and ran a bakery and provision's shop in her home at Penny Cross, one of the first countryside commercial bakeries. She also

walked to obtain supplies once a week to Dorchester, a distance of twelve miles each way, pushing a hand-cart.

My Mother worked during the war year's as a Nurse's Aid taking care of wounded soldiers. She was however, a skilled seamstress and milliner. After the war she went to London to ply her trade; leaving her daughter in the care of farmers at Skiff Farm, Wisborough Green, Sussex.

My Grandfather continued his employment by Mr. Sautelle until about 1922. During the First World War years all the young male farm workers were conscripted or volunteered for the military. So for more than five years my Grandfather and his wife milked by hand about sixty cows twice a day by themselves and generally took care of running the farm, with the aid of some elderly farm workers. I understand the milking of cows during that period was paid for by 'piece' work, that is, so much for each cow milked. By 1922 my Grandparents had saved sufficient money and with a loan from my Mother in the amount of eighty pounds Sterling, which she had received as compensation, from the British Government for the loss of her husband during the war, they were able to purchase a farm tenancy at Brookhouse Farm, Near Shipley, Billingshurst, Sussex. Apparently the moving journey was a real adventure for my Grandfather's family, from Home Farm, West Dean to Shipley. It was accomplished by use of a huge steam traction road engine, built on the same principles as a steam train engine. This was the same engine that was used for the motive force to drive a grain thrashing machine and a Gyrotiller to plough fields, towing a large box trailer and an open trailer used for transporting wood and coal for the engine. It only travelled at about five miles an hour and it was about a fifty mile journey. It was so slow, members of the family could jump on an off the trailers at will. I understand that the trip down steep Duncton Hill was frightening and hair-raising. It lost some road adhesion and control down the hill and ran in to a bank. After getting out of that problem the long train could not negotiate the bend at the bottom of the hill and the trailers had to be separated and towed round independently.

There were many stops along the way at pubs, inns and hostelries for workers and family member's sustenance, also, water and fuel for the steam engine. The journey took the whole day from dawn to dusk and two days in all, including loading and unloading. Note: This Thrashing Tackle was owned by Farmer Humphreys of East Droke, West Sussex.

The arrangement with Skiff Farm to take care of my Mother's young daughter did not work out and my Mother returned from London and they lived with my Grandparents.

Subsequently, my Mother took the post of house keeper with my Father, Charles Alfred Dunk at Home Farm House #126,(every house owned by the Estate was numbered) on the West Dean Estate. In late 1926, my Father married her and I was born in 1929.

During the 1930's as a young and growing boy, I spent many happy and exciting times in West Dean House, around the Park grounds and the surrounding Estate. I was the only child living inside the enclosed park, having access to almost everywhere inside the boundaries of the Park. Today, being the only person living, with first hand experiences and understanding and consequent genuine memories of events and people there during the 1930's and early 1940's, in particular, those of the Second World War years and I desire to record all I can.

My Father had taken over the post of Head Cowman with farm management duties from my Grandfather in 1922 (He was not related to my Grandfather's family). Shortly after the farm tenancy was sold to Charles T. Coker, an established farmer, who lived at Binderton Farm adjoining the hamlet of Binderton nearby. This employment ensued until the retirement of Coker in 1943.when all the implements of the farm and the livestock were sold by auction. My Father stayed on the farm in the employ of the new owner but most of the milking cattle were gone and there was the 'futile' attempt to successfully convert and cultivate the cattle grazing land to arable at the shallow wet-soil lower levels near the Lavant river, including the Park Field and the almost soil less Chiltdown field above the railway station. This field was ploughed over and barley planted, which grew sparsely and suffered from a blight; possibly due to the chalk rock near the surface.. These acts were mainly to receive the generous but flawed Government subsidies for cultivating any acreage, whether productive or not.

The adverse result of this reckless cultivation was the destruction of the nutritious natural feed for milk cows, such as, a variety of long established grasses, clover, meadow flowers and herb plants My Dad had always kept the cow's grazing meadows in tip-top condition by using them in rotation and organically fertilizing with 'aged' manure. The latter action was an immense contribution to production of lush, fresh-grass and our consequently high and quality milk yields.

My Father's role as Head Cowman and Farm Manager was reduced to general farm worker and there was dissent between him, the new farmer and his Son and his employment became tenuous. (More details of this later) My family and I then moved from Home Farm House in the autumn of 1944.

During his early years my Father was in the Royal Horse Artillery Regiment. This period ran from the late 19th. century and he was engaged in The Boer War, South Africa. Then he was moved to and was stationed in India for about five year's duration. In this time he learned to converse in the Urdu and Hindi languages. He passed on men's' titles to me like: Punkah Walla, Chai Walla, Charpoy Walla, Dhobi Walla and Tiffin Walla. They were his servants in the bungalow where he lived. Apparently his rank of corporal and army salary and the low exchange value of the Indian Rupee, allowed for such an entourage of workers.

In particular he was associated with the defense of the Khyber Pass from possible invasion by German forces. A military disciplined man, he always ran Home Farm like clockwork. In 1993 I met Jim Hellier , a retired Farmer from Chilgrove near by and he told me that my Fathers' cows produced the highest average milk yield per cow in the nation. This was wonderful news to me. My Dad had died in 1954.

He always rotated the cow's grazing from the Park Field to Pump Meadow, the Long Meadow and the Far Meadow. Each of the sixty or more cows had a name given by him and he knew each one by sight from their individual markings. The cow's names were on a board over their heads and each cow was trained to know its own stall in the milking parlour. If any cow trespassed on another's stall, they would get an angry rebuff and a shove from my Father or a sharp horn in the side from the offended cow. Cows never had their horns removed surgically in those days.

My Father was born in June, a Gemini (the Twins) he was able to run 'two lives' and was by nature a very secretive man. He could be relied upon by his superiors to be discreet in carrying out their orders. He certainly tried to impose his prudent behavior on me; as we shall see in later episodes. Unfortunately, his secrecy ran into not recounting memories of his family and I only heard snippets of information about this. They lived in East Sussex, near the town of Lewes, that's all I know. Sometime during the late 19th century, his family had been involved in a religious dispute (feud)). A family split between the Baptists and the strict order of the associated

Zoar Chapelists occurred. Then Reverend Ivy Holmwood, his half-sister, went to Canada, another sister married someone called Parker and they went to Taranaki, New Zealand and my Dad joined the army. My Dad's brother, Benjamin, went to London and became a coach driver for a wealthy family who lived in Park Lane, London; until cars took over in the early 1920's. The men of the family, it seems, were all experts with horses. Like a lot of workers back then, their trades were passed down through families. My Dad was very competent with all animals, especially horses, as he had spent his whole life tending and using them.

My Dad's father was a Stage Coach driver between London and Brighton and I was told he died in middle age from falling off a wall when drunk on the route. This affliction apparently was an occupational hazard in his profession, due to the practice of inns and hostelrys along the highways, plying the drivers with free drinks and food to get them to stop and let their passengers out to eat, drink and perhaps stay the night. Anyway after his death, his wife, my Dad's mother, married a Mr. Holmwood, they had children together and that is where the two family name's Dunk and Holmwood came from.

Incidentally, my Dad could play a small accordion very well and had a very good singing voice for popular songs. He usually played and sang for the family at Christmas. Apparently he entertained the troops of his regiment when they put on shows. He was also a very skilled player of card game's, he had a photographic memory and could remember who had already played each card. He played at competitive Whist drives in the village hall almost every winter's week, staying over at The Selsey Arms pub for a few drinks before he bicycled home. He smoked a lot as well, like his contemporaries and this came back to harm his health later in life. Even after such a night out he was always up at 3-30 am, ready to call the cows in to be milked.

Time off for my Dad was always dictated by the essential need of the cows to be milked twice a day, like clock work he brought them in at 3-30 am and 3-30 pm from the field to the milk parlour seven days a week The two under cowmen, Mr. Thompson and his son Ron would then arrive to do the milking by hand. Note: hand milking went on until 1937 when electricity was installed and Gascoigne electric suction milking equipment was provided. Milking machines were a boon, speeded up milking time and the work was much easier on the cowmen, although final-hand 'stripping' of milk from the cow was still executed by hand and a lot of extra clean up of equipment was needed.

My Dad carried out the final milk processing procedures, including all the cooling and dairy clean up required. These duties took place twice a day, all this on his own. Everything was kept clean and spotless, this work took place in the flint built square shape dairy between the stables and our house. Finally, the milk was taken in milk churns up to West Dean main road for collection by the milk lorry.

He seldom had a day off work, he did have one big pleasure however and that was going to Chichester market most Wednesday mornings. After milking and dairy work was finished, he would harness up the Cob horse Polly to the dray cart which had a double seat up front. There was often an unwanted bull calf to be taken in the Dray to the slaughter house in Green Lane, Chichester. Cow calves were retained and raised for their milk and calf producing qualities. I went with him during school holidays and he would park in North Street, Chichester, just beyond The Assembly Rooms. Ted Gobey, who lived 'rough' in the open air with his dog in the church yard at North Gate, would be waiting for my Dad to arrive and receive a silver sixpence piece for minding the horse and Dray and of course me, if I was with him during school holidays. I had conversations with Ted and I gathered for one thing that his dog slept with him and not only guarded him but kept him warm during cold nights.

The reason's for my Dad's stop was first to call at Howards the butcher to discuss terms for the sale of the bull calf and second to nip through The Assembly Rooms' arches to The Old Cross for a quick drink and a chat with farm associates from local farms. Then we would proceed with the calf to the slaughter house in Green Lane and thence on to the Cattle Market. This 'new' market had been built so that cattle were not sold in the streets of Chichester as they had been formerly. However, I can remember when sheep, chickens, ducks and geese were still sold in pens in East Street, on the north side right in front of the shops, up to about 1935. Large herds of cattle and flocks of sheep were driven from the holding area in Westgate Fields along Market Avenue to the market.

Upon reaching the Cattle Market my Dad would also visit The Bull and Market Inn pubs to 'hob-nob' with more farm people and I would wait on the Dray. He would bring me a lemonade soda and a bag of Smiths' potato crisps. The Cob horse would have a bag of crushed oats suspended over its mouth and would be given a drink of water, from the market horse trough. On the way home my Dad would hand me the reins when we reached the outskirts of the

City and his head would fall on his chest, then he would doze all the way home. Actually, if I was not with him, when he was dozing, Polly the Dray horse would wend her own way home, keeping to the left hand side of the road.. One has to remember, there was very little traffic on the road in those days.

Once around 1938 I heard there was a cow to be slaughtered in the farmyard. A cattle truck came and parked there. I was barred from watching the proceedings but disobediently ran inside the pig sty's to peer out and get a surreptitious view. A cow was driven into the yard from the field staggering and falling around; very typical of what we have seen in recent years, on the news reels, when cattle suffer from 'Mad Cow's Disease.' This cow was summarily dispatched by an attending Veterinary with a bolt gun pressed to its forehead. The cow when shot collapsed instantly but was still moving, so, a hazel nut tree stick was inserted in the hole in the forehead and twisted round in the brain, until it was lifeless, Then the carcass was winched up into the truck and taken away: In view of what we know today, I trust not for human consumption.

On a recent visit to Home Farm I noticed that the row of flint built pig sty's on the south side have all been removed, also the Stock yard opposite, where bullocks were kept for fattening. On the east side was a row of stables, especially constructed for racehorses. They have disappeared as well. These stables were rented out to racehorse owners for Goodwood race week every year. 'Stable Lads' would stay with their charges day and night and would in fact sleep with them to prevent 'nobbling'. IE: Competitors injecting the race horses with a retarding drug. My Mother would cook dinners for them every night of their stay, in two or three sittings. They made sure their horse was padlocked in its stable for these short periods.

The dinners would consist of; on different evenings: roast duck, chicken, beef or lamb, accompanied by fresh vegetables from our garden and followed by rice and jam puddings, treacle tarts and apple and plum pies. Of course fresh whipped cream with sugar was available too, followed by tea. Amazingly, this was accomplished on the 19th Century cast iron 'range' cooker and a Kerosene stove. The occasional jockey dropped in, little tiny fellows and they ate very sparingly in order to keep their weight down. I understand my Mother had some fame in horse racing circles during those days for her cooking. I was able to join in with these meals and enjoy the horse and horse racing adult conversation with a few bawdy jokes thrown in; it was great fun for me. The stable lads and jockeys led isolated lives with their horse duties and

seemed a lonely lot; when they came to dinner, they all called my Mother, 'mother'. I guess they not only appreciated the home cooking but equated their own mothers with mine in the matter of familial hospitality.

Some race horses were walked up to Goodwood race course led by their Stable Lads. Wood chippings from the Estate saw mill were laid down to protect their aluminium light weight racing horse shoes, along the side of the hard asphalt West Dean to Singleton village road, right up to Brown's farm at the bottom of The Trundle Hill; there they progressed up through the soft-grass covered valley to the race course. Some race horses went by enclosed horse box lorries and I was lucky to sometimes to get a ride up to the race course. Instead of walking up through the woods and out through St. Roches gate. The car park for these trucks was opposite the Winning Post behind all the rich peoples' cars; Rolls Royce's and Bentleys etc, some with flags on their front wings and others with a heraldic shield over their front glass wind screens. The occupants would be having their lunches out of giant hampers perched on the back of their cars: some with tables and chairs and table linens and, of course, wine bottles and wine glasses. All this with sometimes a chauffeur 'Flunky' dressed in boots, gaiters, breeches, jacket; topped by a peaked cap, assisting with the service. To me; amazing opulence! Another advantage for me was to be able to look through a gap in the fence and watch all the race finishes, enjoying the exciting fervency of the shouting 'bookies' on the opposite side of the race course, dealing with the betting and the cheering spectators looking through their binoculars.

On one occasion I remember, when I went with in a horse box truck and we parked opposite the paddock; I crossed the race course by joining a crowd of spectators heading for the paddock enclosure between races. No one noticed a small boy about nine years old, wearing nice clothes my mother had dressed me in. A Vyella fabric shirt, raglan sleeved jersey, knitted heather colour knee length stockings, with turn down tops, all made by my mother and short brown corduroy trousers and new leather sandals. All the adults had cardboard passes hanging by gold string from lapels, in the case of men and from hand bags in the case of ladies. The gatemen wearing their traditional black bowler hats at the gates each side of the racecourse did not challenge me and I disappeared into the milling crowd in the paddock, even ventured into the paddock grandstand. Then I wandered into the winning horse area, where the owners and trainers were all congratulating themselves and saw a large silver winning cup presented. I followed the jockey carrying his saddle up the steps to the weighing room and marvelled at the huge weighing



machine with the giant dial. I witnessed the weigh-in and removal of weights from the jockey's saddle. Clearly this had been a handicap race. However, pretty soon after I was ushered out of the weighing room in no uncertain terms and told never to go in there again. It seems amazing today that no one ejected me from the paddock area, I guess all the officials thought I belonged to someone eligible. I then thought it was about time I left and went over to the paddock stables past the results board and sought out my Stable Lad friend and his horse and we went back to Home Farm. Quite an adventure for a small naughty boy and I did not tell my parents about it or anyone else until now; another personal secret! During Goodwood Week there were always aristocratic visitors who stayed at West Dean House, of course, during these times I was banned by my Father from going down there. Quite often these favoured people would drive up through St. Roches Arboretum and out through St. Roches ornate wrought iron gates, then proceed to the racecourse.

Sometimes I would walk up to Goodwood race course with the stable lads and their horses by the main road and Trundle Hill route. On arrival I would simply take in the atmosphere and sights and sounds of the event, outside of the paid-entry areas. There was always plenty of action in the road behind the main Grandstand and the Royal Box vehicle access gate. Every so often a big limousine would be allowed through the gate and well dressed people I didn't recognize would be driven in. The Touts and Tipsters were very active, moving about in the crowded road. One in particular was outstanding, dressed in the full regalia of an East Indian Maharajah. His shout was: "I gotta horse!". He had a famous name but I forget what it was. If one fancied a tip from him, it would cost one a pound sterling and on your race card he would mark his selected winners. Of course, if one didn't win, it was never possible to find him and complain after the race day was over; he would be long gone, having changed into plain clothes.

In September 2008 when I was visiting Home Farm for lunch at the park restaurant, there were some men digging in the garden of Home Farm House (#126) and I asked them if I could come close and look into the trench. There were some very large ancient foundations exposed at the bottom of the trench. This was on the northwest corner of the house. I have worked on many Roman and Medieval archaeological digs in the past and have always been interested in ancient buildings; the salvaged building materials of flint and non-local sandstone, used in the construction of Home Farm House had always intrigued me. The debris in the trench looked like-medieval or before. Sometime in the distant past I was once told there had been a flour producing

water mill on the site. A large discarded mill stone was an ancient and permanent decorative seat feature in our garden and a second broken millstone lay half buried in the soil nearby. When I was a child and lived there, I often dug up 18th. and 19th century relics, potsherds and bottles etc. This probably contributed to my adult interest in archaeology and collecting.

There was a wonderful 19th. Century-built saw mill on the north east side of the farm buildings when I lived there, presumably it was demolished in modern times. I hope the magnificent Kerosene engine and the 19th. Century saw and milling machinery were preserved. The stock yard, racehorse stables and the 19th century pig sties are no longer there. The cart sheds are still there and the Granary supported by the Steddle stones. Note: The granary has been moved since my time there and is now situated on what was the farm 'dung-manure pit. Probably the reason why it appears to have sunk below ground. Also, the granary has been re-thatched with reeds and not the original straw. The stables for the farm horses remain. It is a fine 19th century building of hand knapped flints and crown-beam and rafters, mortise and tenon, wood peg and wedge construction. The remains of the ropes for my swing are still in position on a beam, seventy five year's later. The superbly built knapped flint and Welsh slate roof, animal feed, grain and general purpose barn has been preserved. Although I think an example of the hand cut chalk rock blocks used for lining the inside walls could have been left exposed and not painted over. This building technique was expensive and unique but at the time thought to maintain air- moisture levels and deter insect life. This is an indication evident on the Estate to illustrate their 'modern' thinking in the 19th century.

When I was about four year's old I planted a walnut nut in a pot, this came from a tree in the Walnut Tree field on the west side of the railway alongside Chalk Pit Lane. When it had grown to an appropriate size, I re-planted it behind the farm dairy in our garden. It had grown quite large when we left West Dean in 1944 but had never produced any nuts. It was a great pleasure for me to see that this tree was still there when I visited Home Farm in the autumn of 2008; it had grown into two large trunks about twenty five feet tall and it was abundant with nuts.

Little Home Farm which was opposite The Selsey Arms public house and near the village Church of England school, delivered milk to the village residents and West Dean House, except us and our farm workers who obtained their own from Home Farm. Every Friday the Cripps

family from Chichester, would offer fish around the village. Bread was delivered daily by a van from the 'wood fired, bakery and provision's store, situated at the bottom of the lane by the side of The Selsey Arms pub.

During the 1930s and before and through the early 1940s, when I lived at the farm; cart horses were used for ploughing and discing, harrowing and mowing hay and grain crops. A tractor was purchased in 1937 and this greatly speeded up the field work, especially ploughing, then the number of ploughshares was increased to three instead of one behind a single horse. The horses remained but the tractor just speeded up the work. In any case the cart horses were the only practical way to bring in the harvest and hay in the Sussex wagons, draw the two wheel carts to pick up root crops and spread manure. The tractor did not receive a trailer until later.

The Sussex wagons when used for the harvest were very heavily loaded and usually required two cart horses in tandem to pull them over the rough fields and up and down hilly terrain. First the harvest of wheat, oats and barley were cut by the cutter-binder and bound automatically with binder twine, these so called 'sheaves' were then stacked by hand, called 'shocking', into conical 'shocks' for drying. During the Second World War years there was a shortage of men because many had been conscripted for the military. From the time I was about ten year's old. I worked during the summer harvest time with the title of: 'Stand Hard'. I led the cart horses and on the command of 'stand hard' from the loaders, I would bring the horses to a halt, this enabled the men and sometimes the war time Land Army girl with pitchforks to pitch up the sheaves to the waiting men on the wagon and they neatly stacked them for the maximum load. The farm owned three cart horses, two were a Clydesdale-mixed breed of chestnut colour with white markings and one had some Percheron breed influence and was black. There was one other horse at Binderton farm which we occasionally used and our horses went to Binderton farm to help bring in the harvest. Weather was a big driving force to expedite bringing in the harvest and in dry conditions it was not unusual for workers to work in the fields from sun up to sunset.