

THE GREAT DANES OF SEND MANOR

Iain Wakeford 2016



Send Manor, the home of Gordon Stewart.

If you go to the British Pathe website (www.britishpathe.com/video/great-danes) you will see their wonderful film of 'Great Danes, filmed at the famous Send Kennels, Ripley, Surrey' in 1930.

The kennels were the brainchild of Gordon Stewart, a wealthy businessman who moved to Send Manor at Send Marsh in the early 1920's and set up the kennels to indulge his love of what he believed to be the 'most intelligent of creatures'.

In 1912 Gordon Stewart had visited the London Motor Show where he met a young motor engineer by the name of William Morris displaying a mock-up of his proposed four-cylinder 'Morris Oxford' car. Gordon Stewart was impressed (even though the mock-up had no engine), and immediately ordered four-hundred models and secured from Morris the rights to be sole agents for all his cars in the London area.

By the end of the First World War, Gordon Stewart's Company – Stewark & Arden Ltd – had six staff with a turnover of £32,000 per annum, but by 1923 that had risen to £1million with showrooms and workshops in Acton, Catford, Croydon, Golders Green, Harrow, Ilford, Southend, Staines, Sutton and Tottenham later being opened.

By then he had married and settled at Send Manor, but the true love of his life appears to have been his Great Danes. There was a quarantine area for dogs imported from abroad and a hospital where any sick animals could be treated.

The kennels were designed to look like Swiss chalets - with the whole complex created in the style of an alpine village. At its peak they housed over five hundred dogs (all five 'colours' of Great Dane being bred here), with twenty-five men employed in the building and maintenance of the kennels alone. There were ten kennel boys, thirty kennel maids, three dog trainers and eight managers of the various sections. There were two office girls, five cooks and kitchen staff, and together with the servants at the house (three gardeners, two chauffeurs, a maid, a cook and a butler) there were apparently over ninety people employed at the site! He even had two Morris fire-engines – one stationed at the house and the other in Ripley for use by the local volunteer brigade.

Five hundred dogs needing to be fed two meals a day meant one-thousand meals – part of the diet including eggs (thousands of them). So Gordon Stewart set up a poultry farm – the British Poultry Development Company – and built sheds and buildings behind his house to

house the chickens and thousands of pigeons, which when no longer able to lay were slaughtered at the abattoir on site. The birds of course also needed to be fed, so Gordon Stewart acquired a Grist Mill that also supplied wheat and flour and other ingredients for the Great Danes (as well as the wider area). There was even an incinerator to burn all the refuse from the site (to control disease) and as the village had no electricity he had his own generator as well.

In the January/February 2009 edition of Send & Ripley History Society Newsletter, 92 year old Mrs Divina Milton recalled working at the farm. She came originally from near Peterborough where in her late teens she worked at a poultry farm, but the farm closed around 1935 and her old supervisor (who had moved to work for Gordon Stewart at Send) asked her and several of her colleagues to move here and work for the British Poultry Development Company.

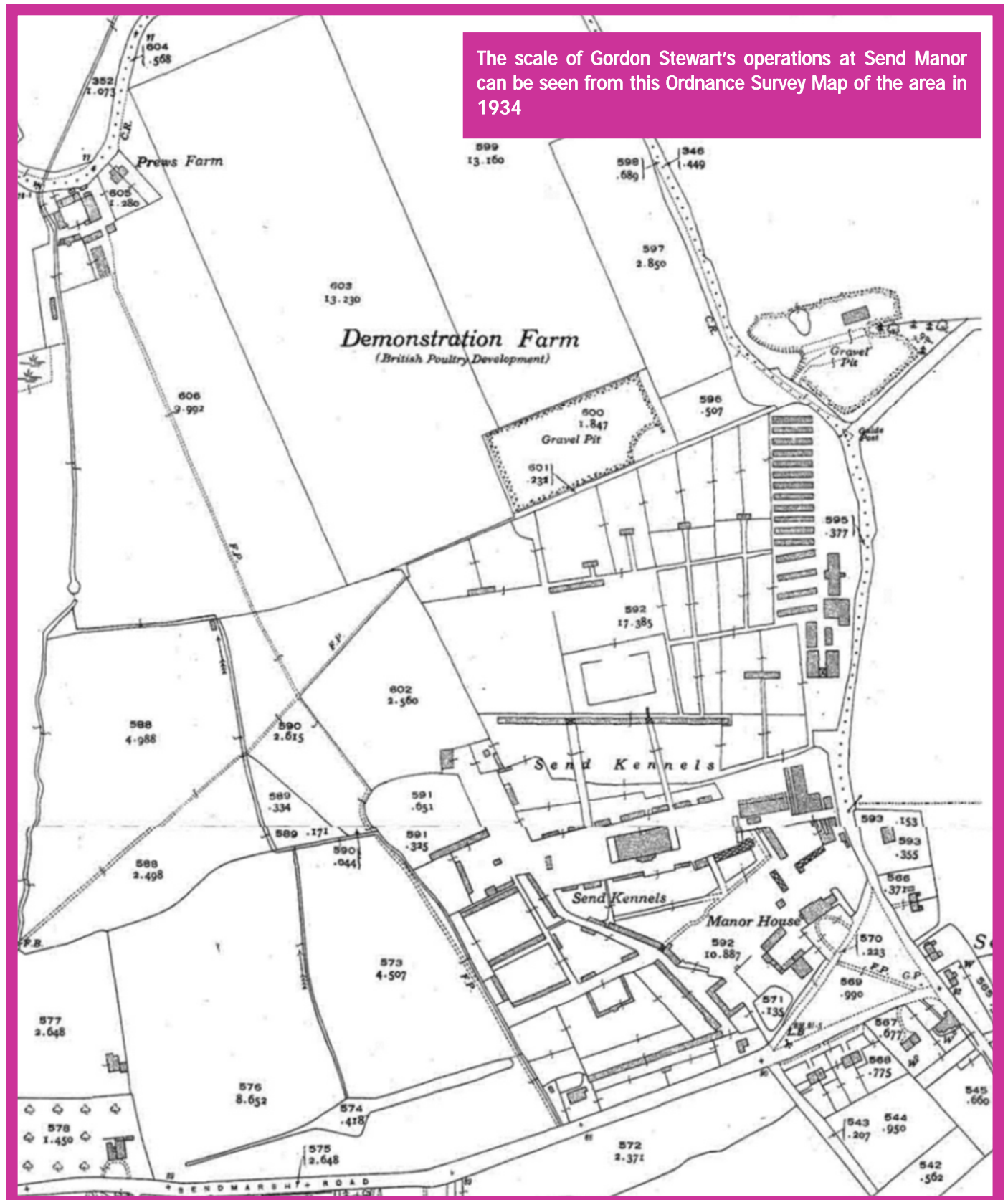
'The chicks were born and reared in incubators until they were 4 weeks old, they then progressed to the sheds where they would stay until they were big enough to be put out into the fields. I looked after about 4 or 5 sheds, it was my job to change the water, put out the feed, clean out the sheds and generally ensure they were fit and well. Sinclairs Farm at Burnt

Common collected the chicken manure about once a month by lorry. The chickens were kept for egg laying, then slaughtered for eating when egg production fell. We had an abattoir on site with a plucking machine, as there were too many to do by hand.'

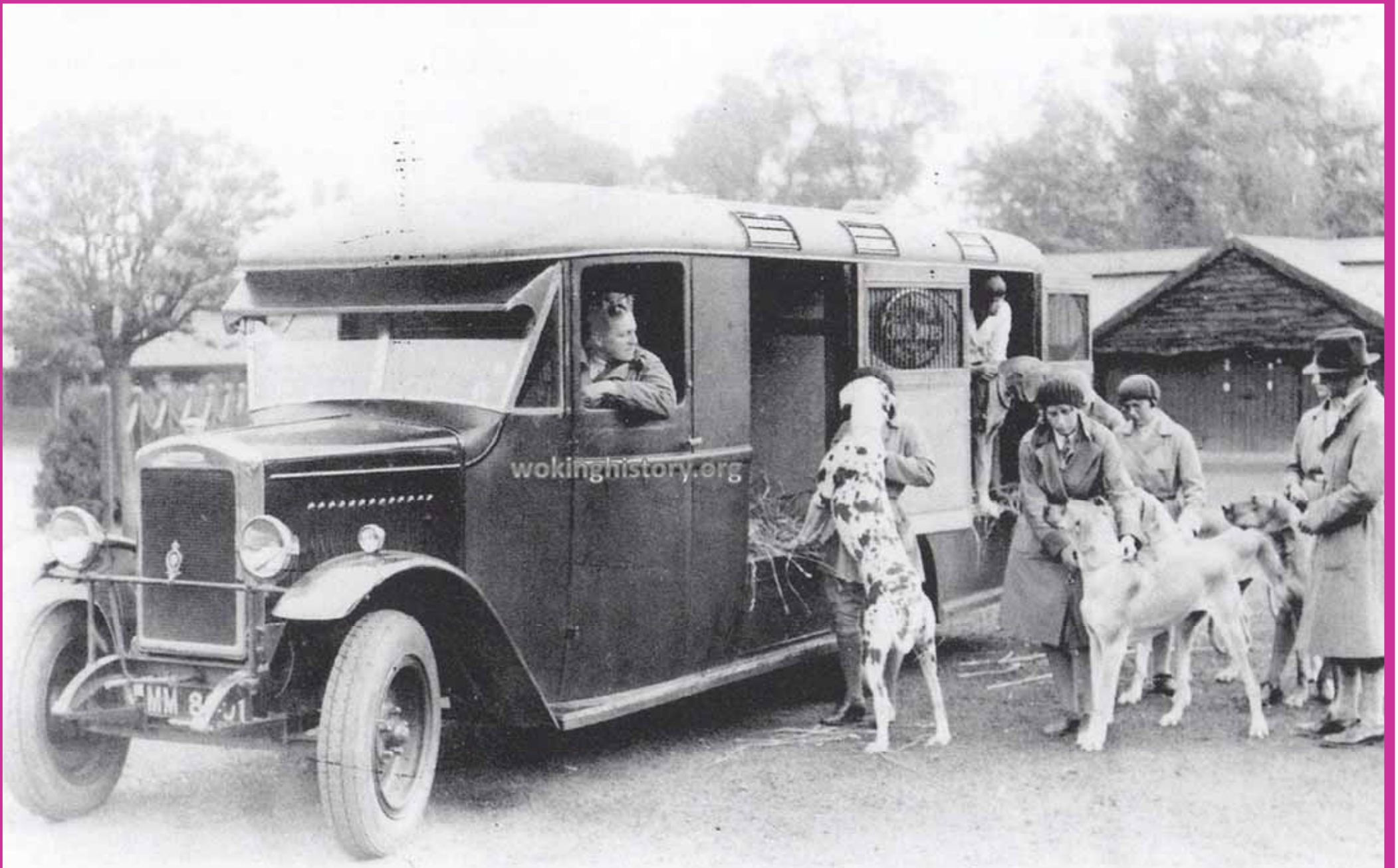
'We started work at 8am and finished at 6pm, the pay was 30 shillings a week. I had to go in every day, including Sundays, to ensure they had clean water and feed.

The British Pathe film was not the only brush with show-business that Gordon Stewart got involved with. In 1932 one of his friends asked if one of his dogs could take the starring role in a film based on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's 'Hounds of the Baskervilles'. This led to another film being produced with the 'Swiss' village at the kennels being used as the set for the 'Pied Piper of Hamelin'. A local rat-catcher called Jack Townsend was apparently alarmed to be called by Gordon Stewart one day and asked to supply (and train) hundred of rats to star in the film!

Gordon Stewart also wrote, directed and produced a film called 'Alert Today, Alive Tomorrow' for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (of which he was a founder) and his interest in film and theatre led him to buy the Strand Theatre in 1946 (for £150,000). Sadly Gordon Stewart died in 1952 and his wonderful kennels and other complexes fell into ruin – a sad end to what had obviously been quite a local enterprise.



All five 'colours' of Great Dane were kept at Send Manor, with up to 500 dogs kennelled at the site at any one time.



HOW OLD IS KINGFIELD ROAD?



The name 'Kynfeld' was first recorded in the 16th century – the 'kyn' not necessarily representing the 'King' (or even royal), but possibly 'Kyne' or 'Kine' (as in Cattle)! But that obviously refers not to the road, but the large medieval open-field where the Elmbridge Estate is today.

The name is possibly much older than that, as it was also the name of a large tithing (in Saxon times the area occupied by 'ten thanes' – ten families who would each send a representative to the local 'Hundred' Court). Oddly perhaps the Tithing of Kingfield didn't correspond exactly to what we now think of as Kingfield, but stretched across the Hoe Stream to the Guildford Road and White Rose Lane and up onto the heath where Woking Town Centre is today. Where the Kingfield Arms, the shops and the school are today was not part of Kingfield Tithing, they were in the neighbouring area of Shackleford – the boundary with Kingfield being at the corner where the road turns towards the pond and the green (first recorded as Kingfield Green in 1765).

On the 23rd March 1932 the new 'Kingfield Central School' was established and perhaps it was then that the authorities realised that the new secondary school (taking over from one established at Westfield just over five years previously) was not officially in Kingfield, let alone 'Central' to it, so that the following year the Highways Committee finally resolved that 'the highway between Elm Bridges and High Street, Old Woking, opposite the new Baptist Chapel be designated 'Kingfield Road'.

The road is obviously an ancient one, but its only official been known as Kingfield Road since 1933.

Remnant's Map of 1719 shows the houses of Kingfield (clumped around the Green) with the dotted line showing the boundary of the tithing of Shackleford crossing what is now Kingfield Road west to Loop Road and then south to the junction with Vicarage Road.



WEST BYFLEET 'ON THE UP' IN 1932



By the early 1930's the village of West Byfleet was starting to expand and establish its dominance over its 'parent' village of Byfleet and the surrounding villages of Pyrford and Woodham. The transfer from Chertsey of the administrative offices of the Chertsey Rural District Council to the village in 1929 probably helped emphasise its

new-found importance, but soon after Chertsey Rural District was abolished with Byfleet, Pyrford and West Byfleet becoming part of Woking UDC and the 'rump' of the old area being renamed the 'Bagshot Rural District' (which for a time, rather confusingly, continued to have its headquarters at West Byfleet).

From most people's point of view, however, it was probably not the new council offices that mattered, but the opening of Sainsbury's in Rosemount Parade in 1932 that showed that the village of West Byfleet was definitely 'on the up'.

INVOICE 10-10-1932

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