

PLACES AND ASSOCIATIONS IN 'YOUNG PHILLIP MADDISON'

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I hesitated a long time before sending this piece to the *Journal* having encountered many Society members who appear to know the ground at least as well as I do - some, far better - and there is no point in telling an audience what it knows already. I finally did so because so much knowledge of this kind tends to be ephemeral, and can be forgotten in a few years unless written down. Also because, however knowledgeable in its generation the present membership, there will surely be new readers constantly coming to the 'Chronicle' who, while knowing nothing of the area in which 'Young Phillip' is set, will sense that it is a real place and will wish to know more about the topography.

This seems highly probable, since it is frequently remarked that Henry is a writer in whom the 'sense of location' is very strong. Readers do actually say: "Where is this place he's writing about? I'd like to go there." James Farrar, after reading *Goodbye, West Country* wrote in 1940: "I would like to learn more details ... I had often wondered whether Ham was a real village or not, and although I looked it up on several maps I never found it, so I had concluded it wasn't. (*The Unreturning Spring* p.48 Williams and Norgate, London 1950). Henry himself, a perhaps not wholly unwilling sufferer from the curiosity of his readers, could tease them about it sometimes as when he wrote of himself in 1937: "... the last three or four books I had published, while as good as most country stuff, were not much good, although in time students would find delight in finding out about the author from the pages." (*The Story of a Norfolk Farm* p.16 Faber and Faber London 1941). In a foreword entitled 'How the Book Came to be Written' to a Puffin Story Books edition of *Tarka* published in 1949, Eleanor Graham, the series editor, noted with approval the fact that with a large-scale map Tarka's travels may be traced out over the actual country side. One even hears of a 'Tarka Trail' being mooted by the local authority!

A 'Tarka Trail' would owe at least part of its attraction to the natural beauty of Exmoor, the Burrows and the land of the Two Rivers. No comparable beauty exists in South East London, and we cannot imagine a 'Phillip Maddison Trail' being created by the local authorities there. It would nevertheless be possible, because a great deal of what Henry described in *Young Phillip Maddison* still remains, eighty years after the decade in which it is set. Many readers interested in this aspect of the London books of the *Chronicle* will already possess a copy of David Hoyle's pamphlet *The Ladywell of Henry Williamson*. For them, the notes that follow may serve as a supplement. To those who do not already possess Dr. Hoyle's pamphlet I would say: "Get a copy quickly: it is invaluable". (It is available from the Society's Publications Manager.)

My qualifications for this self-set task are simple. I was born in 1920, and grew up in Brockley (Henry's Wakenham') in the 20s and 30s. I learned the ground by wandering over it in much the same way as Phillip and his friends. Some may wonder why I chose *Young Phillip* and not one of the earlier or later London books, and the reason is, I think, partly because David Hoyle's guide has already dealt with much that is in those others, and

partly because of the wider ranging yet still fairly local travels here undertaken by Phillip and his friends. My interest in the identification of these more distant places will, I hope, be shared by others. Since the place names in the text are Henry's usual mix of the real, the invented and the allusive, intuition and imagination come into play in the attempt to pin down some of them. There is scope for differences of opinion here, and some of my attributions may not go unchallenged. In fact, when, at a later stage in the preparation I asked Joan Read, the Society's Lewisham antiquarian authority, for an opinion, she at once came up with evidence to dispute the placing of my very first entry. Further investigation is in hand and a report will follow in a later *Journal*, I hope. Meanwhile, I am deeply grateful for Joan's help on this and some other entries, which I acknowledge at those points in the text where she so readily gave it.

As well as the places, revealed or concealed on the page, this book is rich in other authentic touches, many of which I have been unable to resist commenting on - the 'associations' in the title.

The page numbers quoted all refer to the Macdonald hardback edition of 1984.

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Page 9 'The Socialist Oak'. The attempt to identify this tree will warn against over-confidence in exercises of this kind! My original note ran:-

'The name was new to me, but I knew the place, and the tradition persisted. There are two entrances to Hilly Fields from Vicar's Hill, and if you enter by the upper gate you will find a large oak standing some 25 to 30 yards into the Hill. It is the only one in that area, and must be Henry's Socialist oak. In that part of the Hill on Sunday evenings in the 1930s the Communist Party had a stand, and one Kath Duncan and her husband regularly harangued the dozen or so people who might stop awhile to listen.'

Joan Read disagrees with this placing, on the ground that in a contemporary painting, circa 1900, showing a panoramic view of the Hill, which may be seen and studied in the hall of the large red-brick school building which dominates the central crest of the Hill, the Socialist oak, so named, is shown as close to the school and the nearby tennis courts. This is powerful, and on the face of it conclusive, evidence. Yet it is not wholly supported by the texts: neither, though, is my own suggested placing. The question is too involved to pursue here, and I propose a separate short article which I hope the Editor will include in a future issue.

Page 9 'Pit Vale'. Actually Loampit Vale. (See any street map of the area, for this and other place names mentioned in these notes.)

Page 9 'The Obelisk'. Stood at the northern end of Lewisham High street, in the middle of the junction where the road forks, to the left to become Loampit Vale, leading to New Cross and on to Vauxhall and Westminster, and to the right to become Lewisham Road, leading to Greenwich and Blackheath. The Obelisk is now removed.

Page 9 'The Hill'. Actual colloquial name for Hilly Fields, the public park whose creation by the London County Council by purchase of ancient grazing land was so mourned by Richard, Phillip's father, and Mr. Mundy, vicar of 'St. Simon's'.

Page 10 'Cross Aulton'. Carshalton (pronounced Car-shawl-ton) in the county of Surrey.

Page 11 'The Heath beyond Pit Vale'. Blackheath, a very large open common, rich in historical association and local legend.

Page 11 'St. Simon's'. St. Peter's Church, standing at the corner of Wickham Road and Cranfield Road, in Brockley.

Page 11 'Randiswell Baths'. Henry's name for Ladywell Baths, a red-brick building in Ladywell Road. Still stands, though not used as public baths since the 1960s.

Page 12 'Reynard's Common'. This is Hayes Common, in Kent, about 8 miles to the south of Phillip's home, which merges into and is known as Keston Common as one walks from Hayes Station towards Keston. At Keston there was, and still is, a pub called The Fox, which explains Henry's name for the common.

Page 14 'The Electric Palace'. Almost certainly Henry intends the old King's Hall cinema, later re-named The Rex, and currently (1986) 'Studio's 6 and 7, a building in Lewisham Road next to an arch of the railway line from Lewisham station to Blackheath station.

Page 30 'Skerritt's Road'. Merrit Road, Brockley. The description 'slum-like dwellings' is (or at the time would have been) highly questionable in fact, though necessary for the purpose of the story.

Page 31 'The Free Library'. Stands in Brockley Road between Darfield Road and Crofton Park Station. (In the pamphlet mentioned in the pre-amble to these notes, 'The Ladywell of Henry Williamson', the Free Library is placed in Lewisham High Street. It may well be that in another context that location is correct - I am sure it is. If that is the case, Henry was in fact speaking at different times of two Free Libraries, one of which - the Lewisham one - was/is the Main Library for the borough, the other, by Crofton Park Station is a branch library. The two are about a mile apart. There can be no doubt that in this chapter, 'New Leaf' the location is as I have given it since a few pages further on (page 37) we have: 'Cranmer ran beside Phillip, away from the Free Library. Soon the fog hid the lights behind. They stopped outside the sweetshop opposite the Boys' Entrance of Wakenham Road School.' This would be a run of about a hundred yards: the boys would have had no reason to run all the way from Lewisham High Street to reach the same point.)

Page 34 'Cutler's Pond'. Lies at the junction of Bromley Road and Beckenham Hill Road, opposite 'The Green Man' public house. Real name South End Pond, it was also known for some 60 years as Peter Pan's Pool from a children's boating pool and little pleasure park (swings and roundabouts) which existed there. The pond was formed by a spreading out of the River Ravensbourne (Henry's 'Randisbourne') at that point.

Page 36 'Pennison the barber' and 'Sprunt's pawn-shop'. My original comment on these names was: 'In the 20s and 30s there were two shops hereabouts with names very like these, and memory almost persuades me that these are actuals.' The subsequent appearance (*Journal No. 11*, of a letter from Mr. F.W. Braddon of Lee, London, S.E.12 pp.53 and 54) supports memory as regards Mr. Sprunt, and I feel sure that research would confirm it as regards Mr. Pennison also. It will be noted from the text, by the way, that Henry, as he often does, refers to Brockley Road as 'the High Road'. Brockley High Road was, of course, the old name for this thoroughfare. 'Comfort Road' in the text at this point is in reality Comerford Road, at the far end of which is Comerford House, in which Henry places Phillip's birth.

Page 37 'Sweetshop opposite the Boys' Entrance of Wakenham Road School'. There are four shops between the corner of Merritt Road and the start of the cemetery wall. Before its destruction by a 'flying bomb' (V.1) in 1944/45, Brockley Road School (its real name) had a boys' playground adjoining Beecroft Road, with an entrance on the main (Brockley) road some ten yards from the corner. This is exactly where Henry places it. The arrangement of the school since it was re-built is very different, but all the roads named, and the shops opposite the school, remain in situ.

Page 38 'a pub called The Jack'. We know this name already from the earlier volumes as the haunt of Mrs. Feeney's husband. It is the colloquial name for 'The Brockley Jack', which stands in Brockley Road about a quarter of a mile on the Forest Hill side of Crofton Park Station. A well-known local landmark.

Page 38 'Joy Farm'. I did not know this from direct experience, but surmised from textual evidence that it probably occupied the area between the present-day Brockley Grove, Chudleigh Road and Ladywell Road. Joan Read has confirmed that this is correct.

Pages 38 and 39 Cranmer's speech. Henry's representation of Horace Cranmer's speech is everywhere a delight for its remarkable authenticity. At this point we are given more of it than usual. The use of an initial 'v' for an 'f' ('ver' instead of 'for') is particularly accurate for the period and later (it may be less common now) but is a rarity in literature. Likewise "off'r'm" for 'off of them', which in itself is further accuracy: few people would have said merely 'off them'. Also well caught is the way that Phillip, when with Cranmer, slurs his speech (a few lines earlier) in 'waik with me s'far's the Cemetery gates' - in a way that Richard would never allow him to get away with.

Page 40 'St. Cyprian's church'. St. Cyprian's church was the real name. The church was destroyed in the air raids of the winter of 1940/41. The tower which (as we are told later at the beginning of Chapter 9) was 'not yet built' in Phillip's boyhood had still not been built at the time of its destruction. The church stood in Adelaide Avenue ('Charlotte Road') about

200 yards on the Brockley side of Eastern Road. In 1986 a temporary seeming hall flanked by two hard tennis courts occupies the site. The pathway (elsewhere called the right of way) alongside the church, connecting 'Charlotte Road' with 'Ivy Lane' (actual name at the time, since re-named Ivy Road) is still there, although the 'iron cannon' to which poor Hugh Turney clings when (later, on page 115) Phillip and the Bloodhound patrol meet him on the path have been replaced by iron gates at each end of the passage-way.

Page 49 'Antill the builder'. My original remark here was 'I am fairly sure this was an actual name', to which Joan Read has commented 'Yard in Lewisham High Street next to railway bridge and site of old Conservative Club'.

Page 54 'the Salt Box on the North Downs'. Refers to the tea-shop of that (actual) name which stood on the Bromley to Westerham road (the A233) in the village of Biggin Hill at the top of (again the actual) Salt Box Hill. A steep hill for those times, down to the valley to the west of Biggin Hill.

Page 69 'Murrage's'. Real name Gamage's, a department store in High Holborn, central London. Closed, and the site redeveloped, in the 60s. (Also page 101 and later)

Page 69 'Richard alighted on the humped bridge over both the railway station and the Randisbourne brook beyond'
We are in Ladywell Road. The humped bridge, which was so narrow as to have become a serious traffic bottleneck, lasted unaltered until c.1937, when, amid what seemed locally unimaginable delays and chaos during the re-building, it was replaced by the present bridge.

Page 70 'Fordesmill' - Henry's name for Catford.

Page 71 'The Bull' at Fordesmill' - 'The Black Bull', a pub at Rushey Green, Catford.

Page 72 'Whitefoot Lane' - An actual name, still so called despite having grown to become a dual-carriageway road!

Page 72 (Richard speaks) ' . . we'll . . . make for Reynard's Common (and) . . . visit the Fish Ponds, and then we might go on to Green Street Green . . . '

The 'Fish Ponds' are the small lakes, known as Keston Ponds, fed from what I used to know as Caesar's Well, which Henry in *Donkey Boy* calls Caesar's Spring. They are also the headwaters of the River Ravensbourne (Henry's 'Randisbourne'.) Green Street Green is a real name, lying some 3 miles east, on the A21 road.

Page 83 'the Warm Kitchen'. The name for this part of Hilly Fields is remembered by Theodora, in *Donkey Boy* (Chapter 21, page 221) as having been bestowed by Hetty. But Hetty did not invent it: she in her turn hears it first from Mrs. Mundy, first wife of the vicar of 'St. Simon's' in *The Dark Lantern* (Chapter 21, Page 301). Of its further derivation we know

nothing. It is a strange name. The area it refers to is the flat field bordering Hilly Fields Crescent, where cricket pitches were once laid out, and usually referred to by local people simply as 'the flats'. For what it is worth, neither I nor any surviving local people among my friends knew the name 'the Warm Kitchen'.

Page 84 'Mill Lane'. The name at the time (Joan Read) of Cornmill Lane. Phillip's walk home to-day would be (from Cornmill Lane) up Elmira Street, Ellerdale Road and Vicar's Hill to the gate on the right into Hilly Fields, then past the oak tree across to the broad path (now a macadamed service road to the large red- brick school building) leading down to the gate at the top of Eastern Road ('Hillside Road' to Phillip.)

Page 110 'St. Anselm's College at Fordesmill'. A reference to St. Dunstan's school (styled College) in Stanstead Road, Catford.

Page 112 'West Kent Grammar School'. The original name for the large red-brick school building on the crest of Hilly Fields. (Among its first pupils was a Percival Wren, who had transferred there from the Roan School, and later became famous as the writer of 'Beau Geste'.) By the 20s the school had become Brockley County School, then later it was Hilly Fields School; it is now part of a comprehensive school spread over several sites and known as Crofton School Annexe.

Page 115 'Mr. Forster MP'. I have not attempted to discover whether a Mr. Forster was a member of the (presumably) 1906-1911 Parliament, but it seems very probable in view of the family ownership of land in the area. When I lived nearby in the 50s I paid ground rent on my leasehold house to Forster Estates Ltd. The name is commemorated in the Forster Memorial Park ('Forster Park' to local inhabitants) which lies to the left of Whitefoot Lane about a mile up the hill from its junction with Bromley Road.

Page 115 'The Seven Fields'. My original comment was: 'Unknown to me; they appear to have been the land to the south of Whitefoot Lane.' But Joan Read informs me that 'the seven fields' was generally the term for all of the Bromley Road from Catford to Downham. (Downham, not mentioned in the texts, was a village at the foot of Bromley Hill - see note for page 121.)

Page 115 'The passage way from Ivy Lane'. See under page 40 'St. Cyprian's Church'.

Page 117 'Peter the Painter'. Although Hugh Turney is referring to Peter Wallace, the indirect reference is to one of the anarchists involved in the 'Sidney Street siege' in Whitechapel, East London, c.1909. For years afterwards, any painter or artist was liable to be called Peter, and any Peter to have 'the painter' added. The reason was soon lost: I only re-discovered it much later in life.

Page 117 'As the Bloodhound patrol disappeared round the corner into what was known among certain individuals as Love Lane . . .'
In this context, the reference is to Ivy Lane (now Ivy Road) which was a

quiet little lane, not much frequented. As Joan Read reminded me, there was (?is) a Love Lane actually so called, leading off Belmont Hill, the road from Lewisham to Blackheath Village, but the whole episode of the encounter shows that it is not the street intended here.

Page 121 'Brumley Hill'. The long hill, on what is now the A21, about a mile on the London side of Bromley, Kent. Pronounced by some as Henry spells it.

Page 124 'The Green'. Rushey Green, at Catford. It has been for decades a very wide street rather than a 'green'.

Page 124 'They left the High Street and turned off through St. Mary's Churchyard'. The High Street is Lewisham High Street, and it and St. Mary's are undisguised actual names. The path through the churchyard still exists, and remains a natural short cut for anyone walking to Ladywell from the direction of Catford.

Page 136 'The New Cross Empire'. This was a variety theatre, one of the Moss Empires chain. It stood in Deptford, in New Cross Road, at the corner of Watson Street, almost opposite Addey and Stanhope's School. The theatre building did not outlast the decline of the music hall, and was demolished in the late 50s to make way for a petrol filling station, since closed and derelict also.

Page 156 'Rushy Green Ramblers'. It is admittedly a niggles, and of no importance, that 'Rushey' is mis-spelled here, and again on page 212, probably due to printer's error and poor proof-reading since it is spelt properly elsewhere.

Page 177 Mr. Todd's old pater's firm 'Rice's Nightlights, Candles and Motor Oils Ltd.' A barely veiled reference to the actual company, Price's Nightlights, Candles and Motor Oils Ltd.

Page 181 'The Convalescent Home at Dartford . . . It adjoined a real Lunatic Asylum'. Dartford (in North Kent) is an actual town. The Convalescent Home appears to be the actual Southern Hospital, on the southern slopes of the town just below the Darenth Mental Hospital.

Page 190 The Bereshill troop. 'Bereshill' appears to be Henry's name for Forest Hill.

Page 191 'Fordesmill Bridge Station'. Catford Bridge Station, from which trains still run to Hayes.

Page 192 'Farthing Street'. Actual name: lies between the villages of Downe and Green Street Green. Much of this area is designated 'Green Belt' and virtually unspoiled.

Page 193 'Mersea's Home Farm and Knollyswood Park'. See the Appendix regarding Phillip's coded list for page 225.

Page 198 'After two hours they arrived outside a strange station . . .'
The real name of this station puzzled me greatly. It is 'identified' on page 202 (in Mr. Purley-Prout's report in the troop magazine) as 'West Lennard'. But West Lennard is not an actual name, and taken alone contained no clue. After adopting and discarding several possibilities I now feel sure that the 'strange station' is intended to be West Wickham. This belief is not based on any process of logic, but on what we learn a few pages later after penetrating Phillip's coded list, namely that a certain Major Sir H.A.H.F. Lennard, Bart, lives at West Wickham. Given Henry's associative habits in the choice of pseudonyms ('St. Simon's' for St. Peter's, 'Charlotte' for Adelaide) this is intuitive but fairly strong evidence that West Wickham is the place. It is not really a two hours walk for a group of young boys from the camp near Oakley and Barnets Wood Roads, being only some three mile distant. But Henry no doubt relied on memory. Incidentally, to disembark the 1st Croydons there, instead of going on to Hayes, the next station, and a shorter walk to the camp, was a strange proceeding, but perhaps no stranger than the other behaviour of the extraordinary characters in charge of the scout troops at that particular camp.

Page 225 Phillip's list in code. Not difficult to unravel, with the clues Henry obligingly gives us in the next paragraph, if one knows the names it may conceal, but perhaps not so easy if one does not. The Appendix contains a plain language version for those who feel the need for one.

Page 234 'The Catholic church at the top of Comerford Road'. 'Comfort Road' is Comerford Road, connecting Brockley Road with Howson Road: Braxfield Road, in which Henry was born, is the next street, parallel with Comerford Road. The church is St. Mary Magdalen's, entrance in Howson Road. At that time another boy was growing up in Howson Road, David Jones (1985-1974) destined also to write a novel about the 1914-18 war. This was *In Parenthesis*. A completely different kind of work from Henry's, it was awarded the Hawthornden prize in 1938, some ten years after Henry's award for *Tarka*. David Jones was also a painter and designer of lettering: the Tate held a retrospective show of his work in 1981. Henry and he must have known of each other's work: did they, I wonder, meet in later life?

Page 242 'On Shooting Common, was only five miles from his home'. Shooting Common was an actual name, but it has now virtually disappeared from the map. It lay half a mile south of Bromley, Kent, to the east of the present-day A21 road. It was bounded on its northern and eastern sides by Hayes Lane. Much of the old Shooting Common is now included in Norman Park, approached along Hook Farm Road, a turning off the A21 about a mile south of Bromley South station. A further quarter of a mile south, and one sees Rookery Lane, next to the Technical College. It seems a fair speculation that this led at one time to the residence of Mr. Henry Norman, of The Rookery, Bromley Common, who figures in Phillip's coded list. (See Appendix) The local name for the A21 at this point is Bromley Common. The historical information in this note comes from a Half-Inch Ordnance Survey

map of 1901-1903 which I picked up in a flea market. If only it had been 2½ inches! Nevertheless, Shooting Common and 'The Rookery' are clearly shown - silent support for Henry's words at this point: "Rooks cawed across the lake in the new place he and Desmond visited one evening for the first time "

Page 251 'Farthing Street and the village beyond, where Charles Darwin's house stood '. See page 192 above. Darwin's house is at Downe.

Page 273 ' . . . do not let me contaminate Treyer and Freyburg's best with this dried Afrikaner biltong.' A deliberate change? Or a genuine alip for the names of the Piccadilly pipemakers and tobacconists, Fribourg and Treyer?

Page 299 'Uncle Charles: "Talk about the fat boy of Peckham!" An example of the strength of persistence of local legend. The 'fat boy of Peckam' (a district nearby) lived, I believe, in the 1830s and 1840s. He died quite young, at about 20 years of age. He remained a by-word for obesity, actual or threatened, in the conversation of local people for at least a century afterwards.

Page 314 "'We are going away to Beau Brickhill . . . "' 'Beau Brickhill' is outside the scope of this piece. It has been most thoroughly investigated and reported on by Tom and Joan Skipper in Nos. 6 and 7 of the HW Society Journal.

Page 318 'The Thomas Tilling bus depot'. Is still in being, though much extended, as Catford Garage, again on the A21, which at this point is called Bromley Road.

Page 318 'The Hippodrome'. Lewisham Hippodrome stood at the corner of Rushey Green and Brownhill Road. It survived as a music hall/variety theatre until the early 1950s, when it was converted to a cinema and re-named The Rex. The theatre building was demolished in the early 1960s, and a J. Sainsbury supermarket built on the site. Its present use is as offices for the Social Services Dept. of Lewisham Council.

Page 339 'The Roman Catholic Church in the High Street . . . '. St. Saviour's church in Lewisham High Street. Unlike the unfortunate St. Cyprian's, the tower of which was never built, this church has a very high tower indeed.

Pages 410 to 413 The 'bill' at the Lewisham Hippodrome. It may sound captious to say so, but I doubt whether a 'bill' such as the boys saw that evening was ever assembled at one time at a suburban theatre like the Hippodrome, or for that matter anywhere else except at a 'Royal Command Performance'. Perhaps the whole episode should be taken as in some measure Henry's tribute to the music hall as an institution and to some of the excellent 'acts' he saw and enjoyed at this period of his life.

APPENDIX - Key to Phillip's list in code on Page 225

The Rt. Hon. Dowager Countess
of Eesrem
Doowsyllonk Park
Vulpine's Vulgar
Kent

The Rt. Hon. Dowager Countess
of Mersea
Knollyswood Park
Fox Common
Kent

(But the code still conceals Henry's alias - the actual address is Holwood Park, Keston. See note on 'Reynard's Common' on Page 12.)

Major Sir H.A.H.F. Drannel, Trab
Lampbacon Court
West Lampbacon

Major Sir H.A.H.F. Lennard, Bart
Wickham Court
West Wickham

Henry Souman Esq
The Swizzery
Bee Yoho ley Common

Henry Norman Esq
The Rookery
Bromley Common

(See note re Page 242,
Shooting Common)

The Dowager Lady Ynasnud
Finished Stall Priory
Poemoaks

The Dowager Lady Dunsany
Dunstall Priory
Sevenoaks

(Note: I do not follow how 'Poemoaks' becomes Sevenoaks, unless Phillip had, say, Wordsworth's 'We are Seven', or another poem in which 'seven' was significant, in mind at the time. Dunstall Priory is actually at Shoreham, a nearby village.)

The Hon. Mrs. Edraw
Sq Norfolk Broadses Court
Easterbacon

The Hon. Mrs. E. Ward
Squeryes Court
Westerham

The Lord Yrubeva
Tall Yellow Leaves in Autumn
Close-n-borough

The Lord Avebury
High Elms
Farnborough

The Earl Epohnats
Drofsyne
Kent

The Earl Stanhope
Eynsford
Kent

(Although Phillip places them at Eynsford, in the Darenth valley south of Dartford and Farningham, the Stanhope's house was actually Chevening Court, near Chevening and the village of Knockholt. Some years ago the house was presented to the nation for use as a country residence for the Foreign Secretary in the same way that Chequers is used by the Prime Minister.)