

Madge's Field / Carn Pit Field

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This article discusses the field in which were held the celebrations in Effingham of King George V's Silver Jubilee in 1935 and King George VI's Coronation in 1937. Other community events may also have taken place in this field, but the two mentioned are the ones best known about.

Introduction

There are two main questions to be considered: which field was it, and how was it named? The scene is usefully set by examining the section of the 1934 Ordnance Survey map shown below.

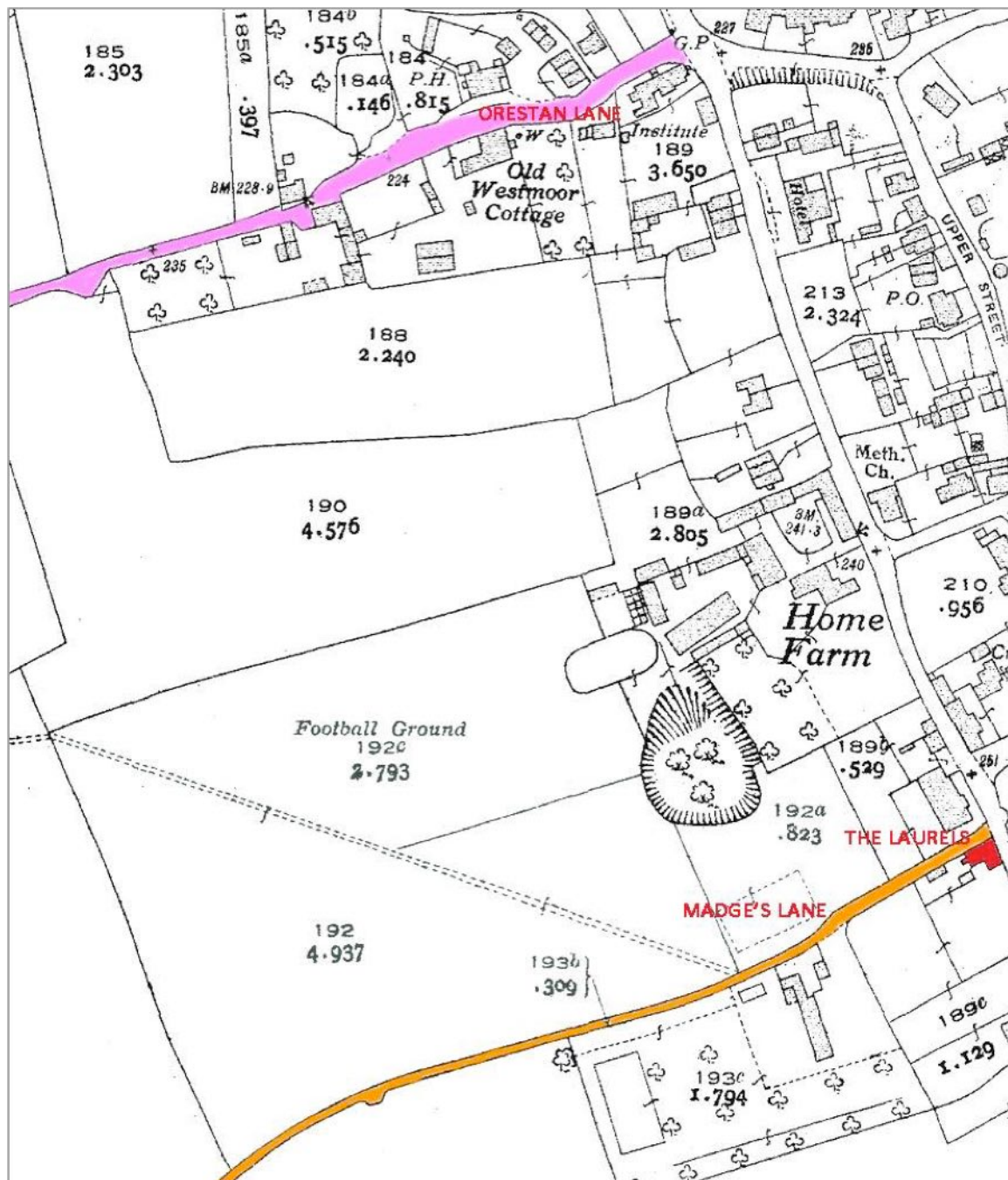


Figure 1 Part of Effingham lying to the west of The Street, highlighting Orestan Lane and Madge's Lane.

Near the top of the map in Figure 1 is Orestan Lane, highlighted in pink. Near the bottom is a footpath, highlighted in orange, which has long been known to residents as Madge's Lane. Two footpaths open to the public are reached from Madge's Lane. One – nowadays called Public Footpath 120 – crosses the fields in a north-westerly direction and eventually reaches Orestan Lane. The other – nowadays called Bridleway 121 – is a continuation of Madges Lane westerly, and eventually joins up with Guildford Road.

At the eastern end of this footpath is a house, coloured here in red, which was called The Laurels. Some residents believed it to have been one of the oldest houses in the village. It no longer exists, having been demolished in about 1950. For much of the first half of the twentieth century it had contained a butcher's shop. One of its early proprietors was (Ephraim) Frederick Conisbee, who managed the shop while living in East Horsley. He retired in about 1910.

The next proprietor we know of at The Laurels was George Madge who, in 1914, sold up his business and home at Sheepbell Farm in Great Bookham and moved into The Laurels, where he and his family ran a butcher's business until well into the 1930s.

It is on account of the Madges' presence at this shop for at least twenty years that the path running alongside the front of the shop became known as Madge's Lane. It is possible that the Madges owned the section of the path nearest to the shop.

By the late 1930s the property had become rather run down. During the Second World War it was uninhabited and used only for military training purposes.

Below we see a postcard photograph of The Laurels taken in the first decade of the twentieth century, showing Mr Conisbee's signboard and his meats hanging up in the window. The shop stood several yards east of where today's Bevan's Butchers is located. The view shows how narrow The Street was at that time, and how lacking in other shops. To enter Madge's Lane from this position one would approach the shop front and then turn right, heading westwards and soon entering open countryside.

At the far right of the photograph can be seen part of the ornate Lovelace-style wall along the boundary of Yew Tree House. Traces of this wall still survive today. Towards the bottom left of the photograph we can also see the turning into Crossways.

A clearer sense of the layout of the properties here can be found in the schematic diagrams in our article about the history of Effingham's Post Offices.



Figure 2 Looking south up The Street, with The Laurels on the right; at far right is the wall along the frontage of Yew Tree House; first decade of the 1900s.

Lena Bridger's evidence

Our principal recorded memory about the location of Madge's Field comes from the late Lena (née Keeling) Bridger. Born in 1894, she married in 1924 to Harry Nathan Bridger. Arriving in Effingham in about 1932, the Bridgers ran The Village Stores in The Street for over a decade until their retirement and were strongly embedded in the life of the village for the rest of their lives. These facts lend some authority to the following remark by Lena, tape-recorded by her daughter Mary Alfreda Rice-Oxley in about 1970-71:

'In Madge's field behind Curtis's and Orestan Lane magnificent mushrooms were there in the September mornings if you got up early enough.'

By 'Curtis's' she was referring to the land behind (to the west of) Home Farm at which the business C I Curtis Dairy Farmers Ltd operated from about 1935 onwards. Her statement, if correct, puts Madge's Field into some degree of correspondence with the area coloured in light blue in the following version of the map (on which Home Farm is also clearly marked).

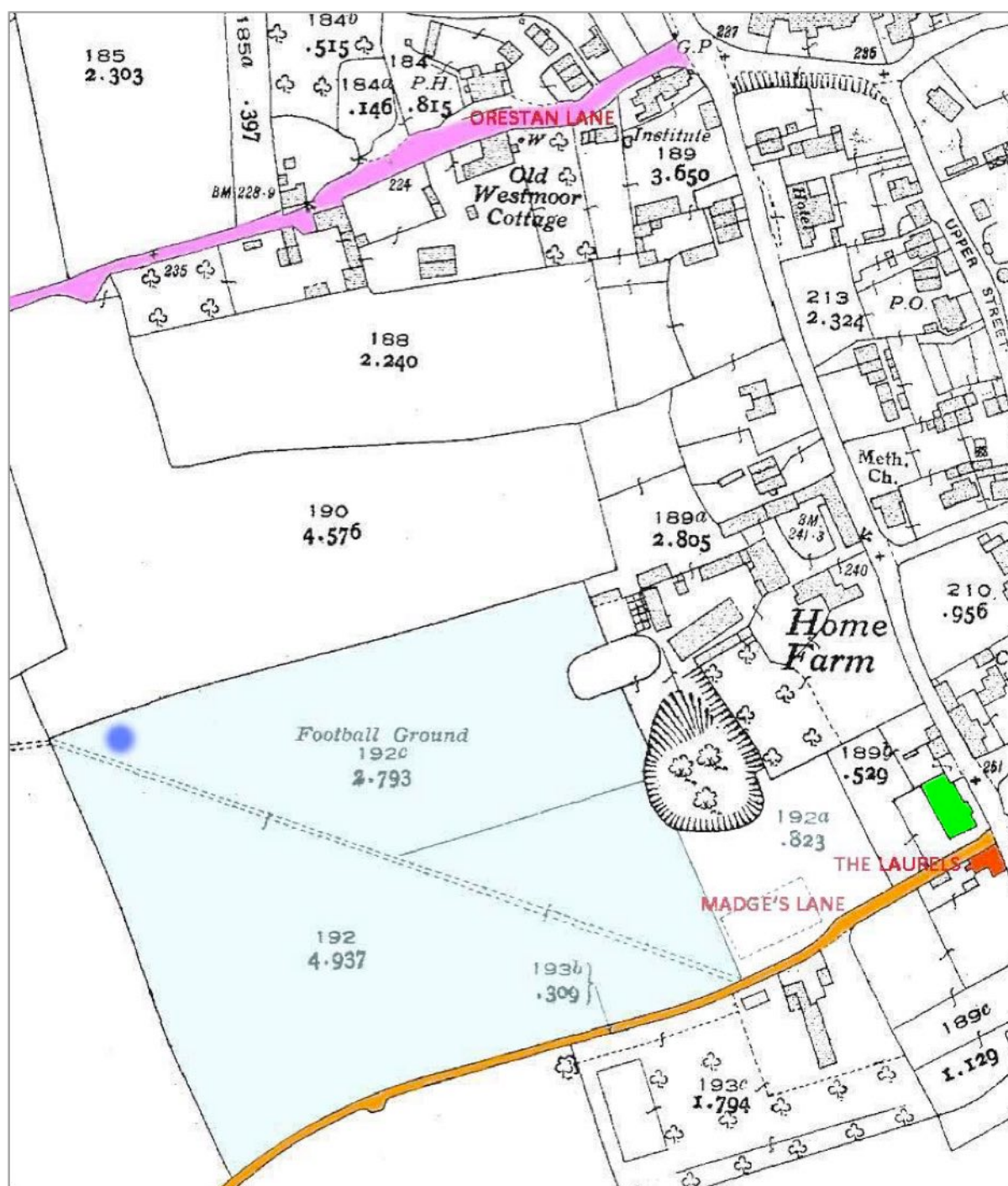


Figure 3 Showing in light blue the position of Madge's Field according to Lena Bridger.

This light blue area is 'behind Curtis's' and is publicly accessible from 'The Street' via Madge's Lane, to which it is conveniently adjacent. It is also essentially a single well-bounded field. Madge's Field probably did not include the plot numbered 190.

The plot numbered 192a lay within the curtilage of Yew Tree House (highlighted in green) and the dotted rectangle within it is believed to indicate a tennis court. The western boundary of that plot was constructed as a 'haha' (a trench designed to act as a physical boundary whilst giving the illusion of its absence) which can still be seen today.

We do not have any non-anecdotal proof that the light blue area corresponded to, or even overlapped with, whichever piece of land bore the name Madge's Field in the minds of former residents. Instead this area is only plausibly advanced as a candidate for Madge's Field.

The deep blue spot in Figure 3 shows the position from which was taken the following modern-day photograph, in which the boundary of the map's light blue area is marked in red:



Figure 4 Looking approximately south-eastwards from the position of the deep blue spot in Figure 3.

Mary Alfreda Rice-Oxley's evidence

Lena Bridger's daughter Mary made her own notes about Effingham's history. One of her (undated) self-typed documents entitled 'Effingham History' contains this text:

'Yew Tree House had originally been baker's and grocer's store of Tommy West with a tea garden behind. He also ran a taxi service. Later on it was owned by Mrs MacNair whose garden extended back into Madge's Field and up to Home Farm land, with wonderful mushrooms in the field between Madge's Lane and Orestan Lane. The 1935 Silver Jubilee celebrations were held in Madge's Field, a roasting hot day.'

This makes Mary's belief absolutely clear – that Madge's Field was entered directly from Mrs MacNair's back garden and that it was there that the celebrations took place.

Mary was born in 1925 and so could be expected to have remembered well these events which occurred when she was at least ten years of age. It is unlikely that her stated beliefs here were simply drawn from her mother's memories.

Charles Nottage's evidence

Before and during the War, monthly Parish Magazines were produced for Effingham. ELHG has seen just two issues, one from 1938 and another from 1940. We do not know how many there were altogether, but our 1938 issue (for August) was already Number 8 of Volume V, suggesting that the series had begun in 1934.

This August 1938 issue contains an article bearing the title *Effingham Football Club*, written by an Effingham resident Charles Nottage. At that time Mr Nottage was a Church Warden for St Lawrence Church and was living at 2, Browns Cottages in The Street, but from 1924 to 1929 he had been living at Home Farm House working there as the farm bailiff. Here is an excerpt from his article:



The original Football Club was formed over thirty years ago, but was difficult to keep going owing to lack of players; then, when the Working Men's Club was formed, it was revived through the energy and perseverance of the "Father" of the present Club, Mr. R. Street. The first ground used was Gaston Field, near the school; another was in Carn Pit Field (the scene of the recent Jubilee and Coronation festivities), through the kindness of Mr. Loxley, the tenant of the Home Farm, and for several years past the Club has had the use of about four acres of the Lodge Park, by the courtesy of Mr. Killick, the present tenant.

Figure 5 Excerpt from Charles Nottage's article in the Effingham Parish Magazine for August 1938.

Nottage's mention of Gaston Field is assumed to be a reference to Garston Meadow, which was the field immediately north of the Effingham Council School's playing field. His mention of Mr Loxley refers to Ernest Albert Loxley who was indeed the tenant of Home Farm, from soon after 1904 (when his father Uriah had died) and into the 1920s. Mr Loxley's 'kindness' must have applied to the Football Club's use of the field before the 1935 and 1937 celebrations, as he died in 1934. If Carn Pit Field was Home Farm land then that would suggest that it was the same land identified by Lena Bridger and her daughter as Madge's Field.

So, Mr Nottage's article is identifying the field of interest as Home Farm land and is moreover stating that football was once played there. This latter assertion gains strong support from the fact that on the 1934 OS map part of this field (plot 192c) was labelled 'Football Ground'.

Charles Thomas Sutton's evidence

Dr Charles Thomas Sutton was a major innovative force in the village sports clubs, especially for cricket and rugby. He served as Chairman of the Parish Council from 1961 to 1968 and was a Councillor for many more years, besides playing many other important roles. He and his family came to Effingham in about 1930 and lived here, at Winrush in Heathway near the Common, until his death in 1986. One might expect that he would have known his village well.

There exists an undated typed document compiled by him with assistance from other named residents and it bears the title *History of Effingham Cricket Club*. Its heading and one of its paragraphs are shown in Figure 6.

In an early part of the document Dr Sutton mentions Ralph Edgar Street as having died 'some years ago', which dates the document to 'some years' after 1967; it was perhaps written in the 1970s.

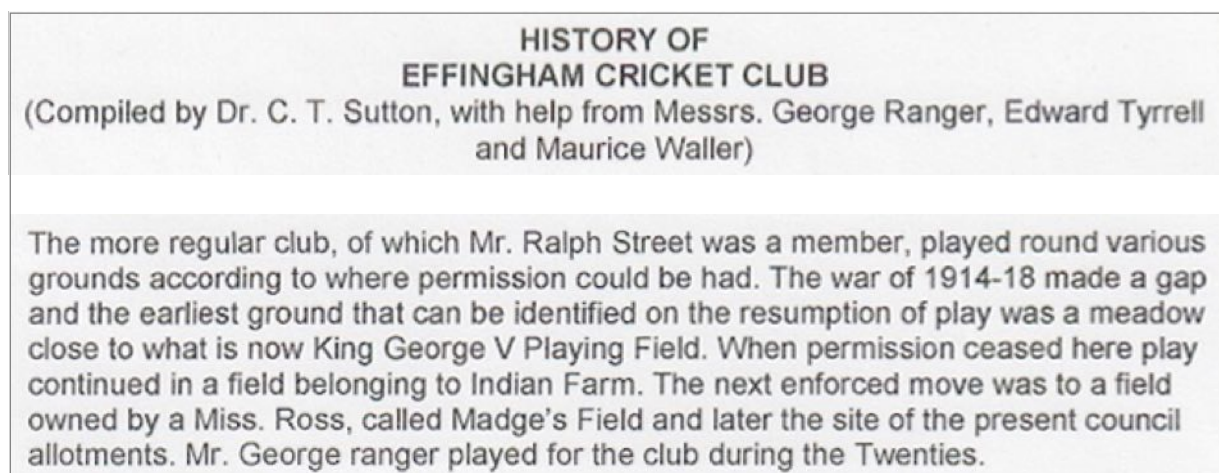


Figure 6 Excerpt from Dr Sutton's article about Effingham Cricket Club.

In the above excerpt it is stated that the Cricket Club had to move 'to a field owned by a Miss Ross, called Madge's Field, and later the site of the present council allotments'. Ignoring for a moment the naming of it, the field being alluded to is that shown on the map section below coloured in light pink:

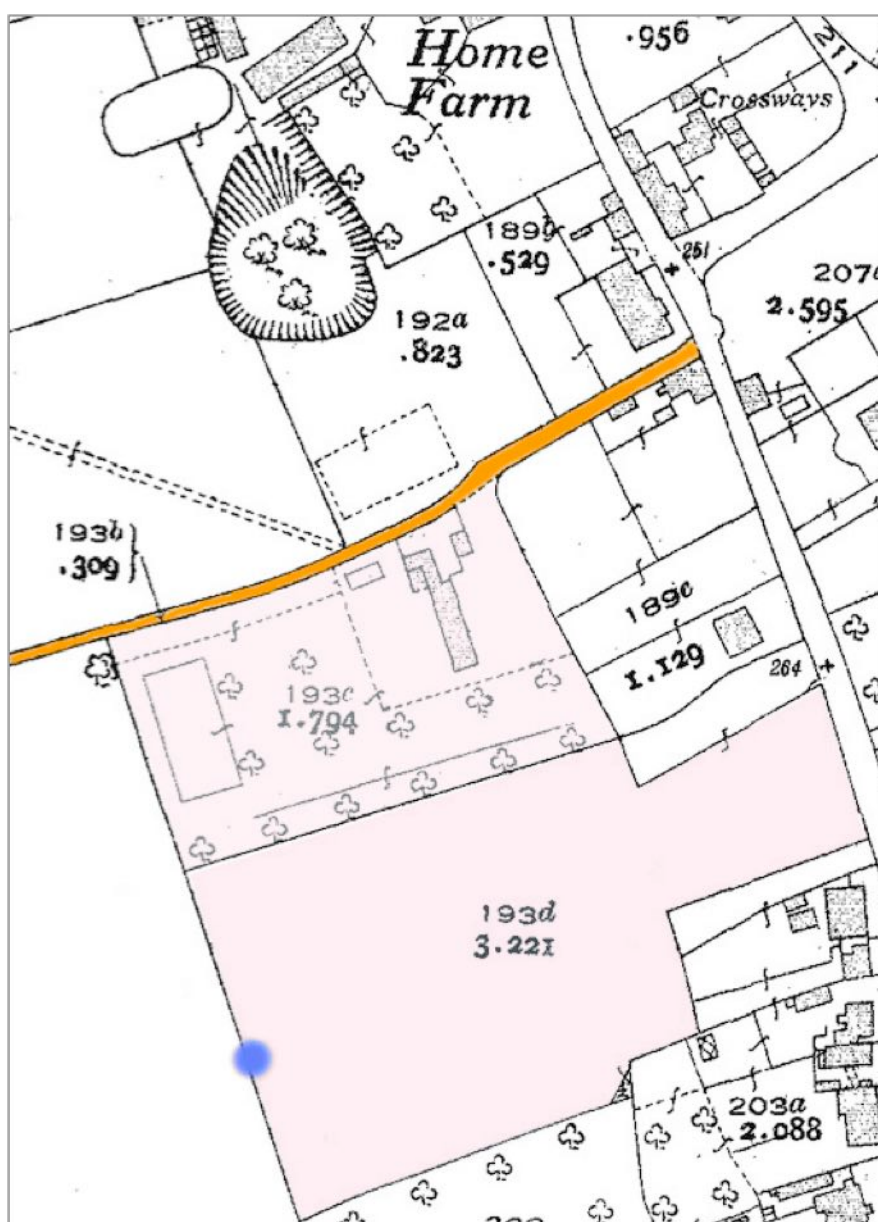


Figure 7 The field (in pink) referred to in Dr Sutton's article.

So this field lies on the opposite side of Madge's Lane. On the eastern side of The Street, a short distance south-east of the eastern-most corner of the field, there stood (and still does) the house named The Hollies. This was purchased for Miss Effie Jane Ross by her father James Aitchison Ross before his death at The Villa (later Grove House) in 1920, although she did not take up residence there until about 1922-23.

The field is believed to have been part of the Grove House estate purchased in the 1920s by Anthony Nicholas Diamantidi, with Miss Ross holding a tenancy over it. The main segment of the pink area was acquired from Mr Diamantidi by the Parish Council in 1953 to provide the present-day allotments.

So there is a problem with Dr Sutton's naming of it as Madge's Field: during all his life in Effingham it had been either Diamantidi's field or the Parish Council's field, with no connection to the Madge family having ever been independently asserted.

The deep blue spot on the map in Figure 7 shows the position from which was taken the following 20th-century photograph, in which the boundary of the light pink area is marked in red. Interestingly, some football goal posts are faintly visible. The northern-most part of the field was wholly open when this photograph was taken, but by 1934 it had acquired buildings and gardens, as shown on the map.

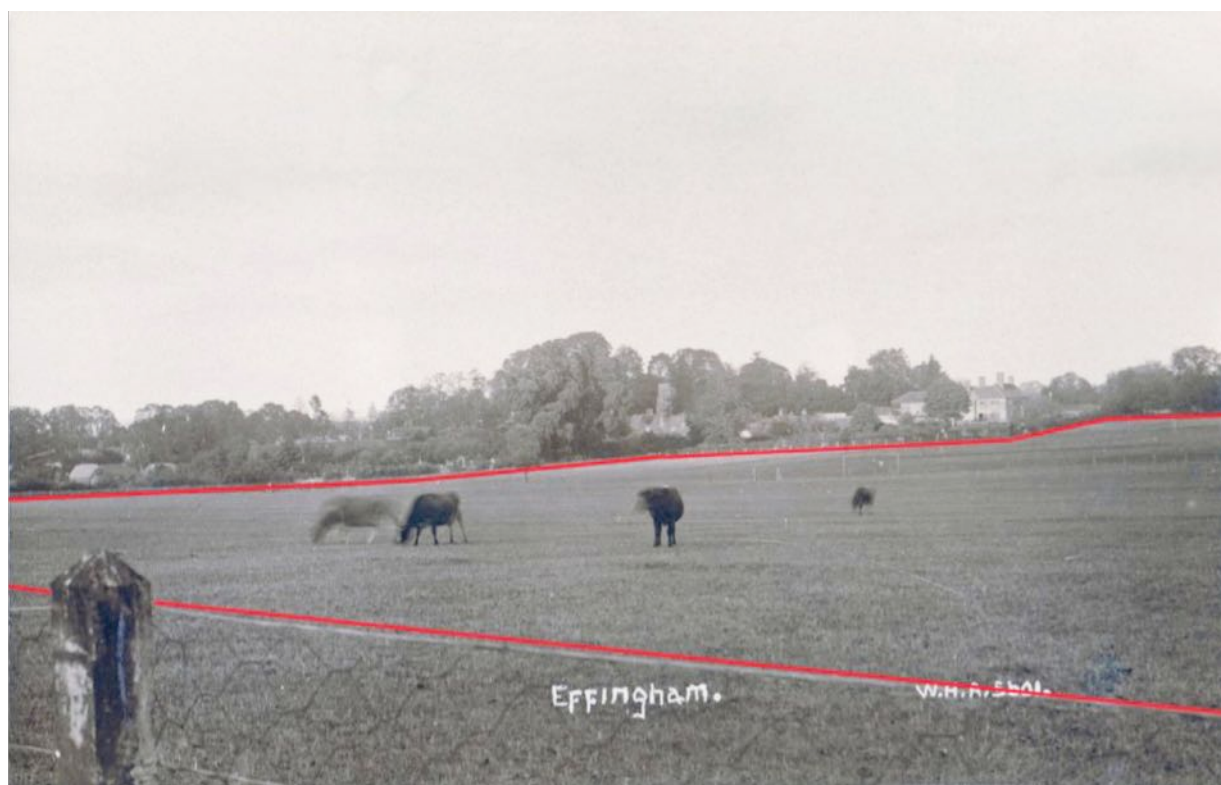


Figure 8 Looking approximately north-eastwards from the position of the deep blue spot in Figure 7.

Weighing the evidence

The above account employs a very sparse evidence base, restricted to what is currently available to us.

Dr Sutton's article can probably be discounted as telling us anything useful about the location of Madge's Field: he and/or his colleagues seem to have simply misnamed the field south of Madge's Lane on which the Cricket Club once played.

Lena Bridger's account seems clear in claiming that Madge's Field was the land behind Home Farm.

Lena's daughter Mary went further by stating that Madge's Field was contiguous with the back garden of Yew Tree House and by making explicit that this was the venue for the celebrations.

Charles Nottage's account is also clear-cut in placing the 1935 and 1937 celebrations on Home Farm land. He chose to call this land Carn Pit Field, as did the 1937 event's Programme, although the 1935 event's Programme called it Pit Carn Field. He had been a Parish Councillor as early as 1925 and during his time at Home Farm he had been living directly next to the field. His memories would therefore pre-date those of all the other persons mentioned here.

In the 1843 Tithe Schedule two sections of that field adjacent to the prominent chalk pit just behind Home Farm House are named as Pit and Pit Plot, the rest of the field being named Carriage Pit Field. The origin of 'Carn' in the present context remains an open question.

Conclusion

The conclusion, albeit remaining a cautious one until more definite evidence turns up, is that:

1. Madge's Field and Carn Pit Field and Pit Carn Field all refer to the same piece of land.
2. That land is where the 1935 Jubilee and 1937 Coronation celebrations took place.
3. That land is (approximately) the area shown in light-blue immediately north of Madge's Lane.
4. Madge's Field was so-called, somewhat misleadingly, only because of its accessibility from Madge's Lane; it belonged to the tenancy of Home Farm and had (as far as we know) no formal connection to the Madge family.

That the public had routine access to Madge's Field is a matter of public record.

As a final note, there were two local Madge's Fields! A second field by that name was located in Great Bookham and was the property of Sidney Madge. It is referred to in an article published by *The Dorking and Leatherhead Advertiser* on 11 March 1916 instructing citizens on where to assemble in case of a German invasion; for those in Little and Great Bookham the assembly point was to be Bookham's Madge's Field, whilst for those in Effingham it was to be the meadow adjacent to the school (ie Garston Meadow). Another article, published by *The Surrey Advertiser and County Times* on 15 July 1933, reports on an annual fête held on Bookham's Madge's Field by Bookham Women's Institute.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures 1, 3, 7: Sections of OS 1934 25" map annotated by Christopher John Hogger

Figure 2: from the Jimmy Coughlan Collection

Figure 4: from Jeremy Palmer

Figure 5: from Ralph Frank Wallace

Figure 6:: from Michael S Waller

Figure 8: from the late Mary Alfreda Rice-Oxley