

ROUND AND ABOUT IN THE PARISH....

In March 2017 I did an article on Tommy Layton who lived at Grindfield Farm, Brookhouse Bottom. A former Danehill resident contacted me to say did I know there was a Baron Layton of Danehill? (Walter Layton). Well, no. I had no idea, so I began some research.

Walter Layton came to live in Danehill in about 1938 and he made his home at Twittens, now called Twitten House, (Perryman's Hill). When Walter purchased this home he was Lord Layton - he was later elevated to the peerage and became Baron Layton of Danehill in 1946.

In about 1919 he was due to be offered a Knighthood but refused because he and his wife, Dorothy, didn't want a 'handle' to their names. Moreover Lloyd George's Honours List had become suspect because of the sale of political honours. However shortly afterwards, he became a Companion of Honour. The French made him an Officer of the Legion of Honour and the Italians, not to be outdone, made him a Knight Commander of the Crown of Italy. (Photo previous page: L.R. Sir Herbert Samuel, Walter Layton, Hubert Henderson, David Lloyd George, Maynard Keynes).

Whilst he did not consider himself first and foremost a politician Walter nevertheless stood for Parliament as a Liberal three times during the 1920's but was defeated, and it was said that he didn't really seem to mind. Walter's prime interest was in economics and in publishing. His first article was in 1905 in the Economic Journal on 'The Argentine and Food Supply'. As a committed Liberal he was asked to advise the Conservative Government in 1927, the Labour Government in 1929-31 and the National Government which followed. In 1921 he became the editor of the Economist and his association with them lasted until his death 58 years later.

Walter was horrified by the prevalent Fleet Street habit of heavy drinking. He was not a tee-totaller himself and after the war he got



to be reasonably knowledgeable about wines, but because of Dorothy's firm views on alcohol, there was none on offer. Visiting journalists found that when they accepted the offer of a drink they got lemonade rather than the whisky they longed for.

In 1915 Walter was one of the main people on whom Lloyd George, Winston Churchill and other Munitions Ministers relied. Walter supported the League of Nations and believed security could only be assured if the League of Nations was made effective. Between 1922 - 1935 he published nearly 150 articles on the need for reducing national armaments and pooling the residue to make it possible to resist aggression through the League of Nations.

This photo from 1948 shows Walter with Winston Churchill and Lady Violet Bonham-Carter at 10 Downing Street.



Walter worked extremely hard, and at times he suffered because of his overwork. Twittens which was set in woods and with a pond for swimming, which was accessible to him at the weekends, was to be invaluable during WW2. Here he could work on his papers out of doors and get exercise by bathing and scything the long grass in the meadow.

It was at Twittens that Walter spent most weekends and in 1941 he was often summoned for conferences on Sundays. His daughter, Ruth, then aged 18 and



living at Twittens often drove him to his meetings.

This photo is of Walter and Dorothy and their seven children.



A separate article will follow about Baron Layton and his association with Dame Margery Corbett Ashby (the Danehill Parish Historical Society's first President).

My thanks to Ian Etherton for informing me about Baron Layton of Danehill and to the Orion Publishing Group for allowing me to quote from the book 'No Ordinary Press Baron' by David Hubback and to use photographs. Attempts to trace the author were unsuccessful.

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