

### **The St. Pierre Estate.**

It is March 14<sup>th</sup> 2002 on a very cold day so I thought that before age really takes over I would attempt to write my down my knowledge of St. Pierre from the time that I first knew it some seventy years ago. The large manor house and the surrounding estate was owned by the Lewis family of whom I know very little, only that they did own a pack of hounds which were the origin of the Curre hounds at Itton. Then in the early 1920's for whatever reason the Lewis family sold some of their estate, some quite good farms including Hayes Gate Farm, Broadwell Farm and the old village of Runston and other land including the St. Pierre Park.

The M.C.C. (Monmouthshire County Council) bought quite a lot of the land to create small holdings. The park, the lodges and the manor House was bought by the steel manufacturers, Lysaghts. The Lysaght family lived in some style with a full domestic staff a team of gardeners, the head gardener was Mr. Frank Harris who lived in the bottom Lodge, this Lodge was demolished when the A 48 was altered at Hayes Gate to enable the M4 motorway to be built. The top Lodge was occupied by the park keeper and there was a herd of deer in the park and once a year the police marksmen were invited to shoot so many deer.

As children coming home from Sunday school held at St. Pierre Church we would try and part the deer to have some each side of the drive, if we were successful then the deer would leap over the drive to try and get back together. We were not allowed to go into the park but we did pocket any conkers or sweet chestnuts that we found on the drive. The Lysaght family also owned a very large chauffeur driven car, Mrs. Lysaght was a real lady and when she came to the little church of St. Pierre she had her own pew at the front and she always came into the church through a little door from the big house, she did not use the door that the general congregation used, and this was not regarded as unusual, it was the accepted custom.

I could never make out how the boundaries came about, our farm at Green Meadow was in the parish of Mathern and my father never went to St. Pierre Church and my mother is buried at Mathern, I never knew if she had any religious beliefs and it is too late to find out now. As children we went to St. Pierre Sunday school and our teacher

was Mrs. Harris, the wife of the gardener who lived in the lower lodge. The Sunday school was held every Sunday at three o'clock before the main service. We did look forward to Christmas as Sunday school children we were invited by Mrs. Lysaght to the big house to a Christmas party with a real Christmas tree with candles and there was a present for each of us and we would sing a carol for Mrs. Lysaght and her sister, I never saw a Mr. Lysaght.

The times have changed, one of the things that I remember is the lodge at Hayes Gate which has now gone, but in the summertime there were always red geraniums in the front of the lodge. I also remember the deer in the park, the peacocks in the garden and the swans on the lake; it was a piece of real aristocratic English life. Maybe it could be criticised as there was inequality about it, but when I see and hear of the crime, the drug problems and violence so prevalent today they were I believe much better days.

Just to recap for a moment our son David is farming where his grandfather was farming seventy years ago, he was not making a lot of money then but he had an easier life than David does now, today it is a numbers game and you have to keep a given number to be able to make a profit. After a successful knee replacement operation I was supposed to retire, then I heard that he was getting over worked so I went back to help him out.

For a period before the last war there was a Mr. Farmer in charge of the park and my father sent some cattle there on tack, this was a system where your cattle grazed other people's land for a payment of so much per head per day. These days St. Pierre is better known as a Golf and Country Club and a lot of money is involved and what Mrs. Lysaght would have to say about this I fail to think.

When I lived at Green Meadow with my wife Winifred our children went to Sunday school at St. Pierre and our three daughters were married in the church at St. Pierre. For a time Winifred was a church warden at St. Pierre. I am not very satisfied with this latest effort of mine, this is an awful pen and age is getting the better of me.

Added December 10<sup>th</sup>. 2007. aren't I lucky to be still here and able to write, in fact I have a catalogue of the sale of St. Pierre dated 22<sup>nd</sup>. Of September 1919 conducted by the trustees of the late Captain Freke Lewis and it was a large estate of 2724 acres and that did not include the park, the main house and adjacent land.

I do treasure those days as a child going to St. Pierre Sunday school. Not long ago I had occasion to go to St. Pierre and I was able to look back over memories of seventy years ago. My short term memory is not so good, but memories of the days when we went to Sunday school as country children in the Lysaght days are to me very real. I remember the deer, the rabbits, the swans and the peacocks on the churchyard wall, the single bell in the church, we did not have much money but there was honesty and thrift and we had a great respect for things in life.

How lucky I was to be able to compare how it was in those days to what it is now as a golf complex with great wealth, but I would prefer the old days and I have no regrets of being born when I was.