



**THE EVILL VICARS OF DORMANSLAND:
 Revd. H(enry) Marten Evill Th.A. (A.K.C.L.)
 Revd. William Ernest Evill B.A.**

St. John's Church, Dormansland, was officially opened on 14th April 1882 by Archdeacon Burney as a chapel of ease to Lingfield. The Board of Vicars in the porch of St John's incorrectly records the first Minister as Revd. Henry Marten Evill. Church Registers and Clergy Lists confirm that the first appointed 'Curate in Charge' of St John's was Henry Cromwell Beckwith Field M.A. who signed the baptism register on July 9th 1882 and remained in post as Curate in Charge of St John's until Feb. 25th 1883. Henry Marten Evill succeeded Revd. Field.

Henry Marten Evill and William Ernest Evill were brothers (William Ernest was the elder of the two). They were the two eldest children of William & Fanny Evill of Battersea. Their grandfather, another William Evill, was a successful silversmith in Bath, Somerset who in 1834 bought out and developed J. Schweppes & Co., soda-water manufacturers with a partner, John Kemp-Welch. Then in 1848, after moving to Battersea, William Evill and John Kemp-Welch took over Orlando Jones & Co., the patentees for extracting rice-starch for use in laundering. They then built their Orlando Jones Starch Factory on the north side of York Road, Battersea. The company also built about thirty cottages for their workers on the road approaching the starch works. Grandfather William's son, also William, trained as a Civil Engineer but turned to managing the Starch Factory in Battersea. He and his wife Fanny raised their family of five sons and seven daughters in Battersea. In 1860 they needed a larger house for their growing family and moved to Lyncombe House, Clapham, "the house was named after the beautiful valley in which my wife lived in Bath". William made several additions to Lyncombe House, including a "capacious music room where his huge musical brood and associates from the St. John's College formed an orchestra". St. John's College was the first teacher training college in England.

Lyncombe House was near Clapham Station and Evill spoke of the peaceful railway at that time, only one stopping train a day. The emergence of Clapham Junction in 1863 gradually swamped the residential area including Lyncombe House. William and Fanny moved to Waterloo Rd. Lambeth.

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Orlando Jones Starch Factory, showing the row of worker's cottages along the entrance road



Trade token

Revd. H(enry) Marten Evill Th.A (Associate of Theology, Kings Coll. London) second child of William & Fanny Evill. Born in Battersea in 1853, he was known as Marten.

He was ordained Deacon in 1881 and was appointed that same year as Curate of St John's Waterloo Rd. London, 1881-3.

Marten Evill married on 6th September 1881 Dora Janet Ram, daughter of the clergyman and religious and temperance writer, Revd. Stopford James Ram. Their marriage was conducted by the groom's brother William Ernest Evill, then Curate of Coulsdon, Surrey.

Marten and Dora lived at 16 Waterloo Road where their first child Constance Dorothy Stopford Evill was born, on 8th October 1882, she was only known as Dorothy.

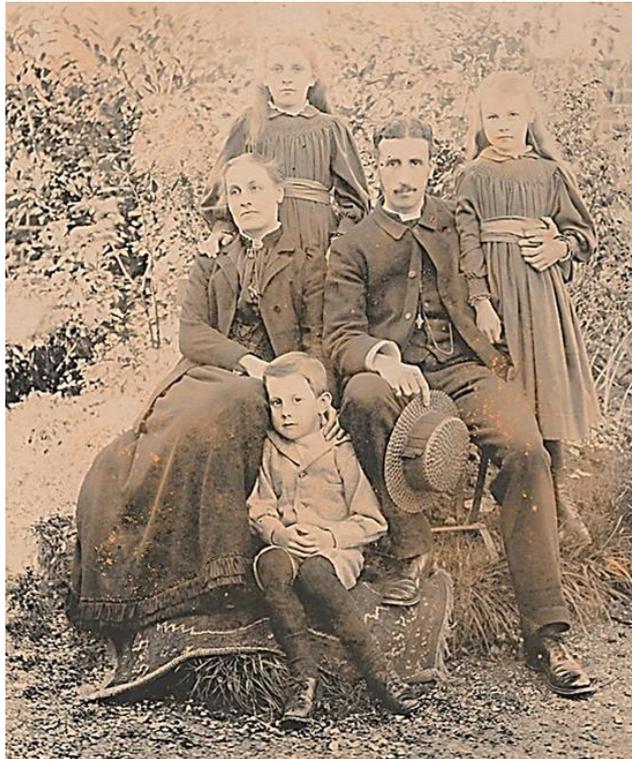
Revd. H. Marten Evill was appointed Curate of St John's Dormansland 1883-5, then Perpetual Curate, 1885-90. Writing in the First Parish Report, published Easter 1886, Revd. Evill began "I have now completed the 3rd year of my Ministry in this Parish".

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The Report details the many organisations and activities that sprang up around the church in those early years: The Whitsun Monday Sports (Revd. Evill gave a prize Clock), Brass Band, Sunday School, the Sick and Poor Fund, Coal Club, Soup Kitchen, Band of Hope, Mothers' Meeting, Lending Library, the Institute and Cricket Club. Marten Evill conducted the baptism of his second daughter, Gwendoline, who was born in Dormansland on 6th July 1886. His son, and last child, Chetwode Percy was also born in Dormansland, 6th May 1887, although baptised by a visiting clergyman. The Electoral Rolls show that Marten and Dora lived at Woodgates Farm, on the Ford Manor estate, before moving to the newly built St John's Vicarage in 1888.

Although the family were to move to different parishes before settling permanently at 'Perrymead', Dilwyn, Herefordshire, they continued close contact with their friends in Dormansland.

Dora Janet Evill died in 1915. Revd. Henry Marten Evill died in 1941.



Revd. H. Marten Evill & Dora Evill with their children: Dorothy, Gwendoline and Chetwode, c. 1894 (after their move to Hope under Dinmore)

Marten and Dora's children

(Constance) **Dorothy** (Stopford) **Evill** was born in 1882, she remained with her parents, inheriting the family house, 'Perrymead', on the death of her father, H. Marten Evill in 1941. Dorothy died in 1969.

Gwendoline Evill was born 6th July 1884 in Dormansland and baptised on 4th August 1884 at St John's Church, by her father Revd. Henry Marten Evill. Gwendoline was a prolific letter writer. Some of her correspondence from the period of the Great War has

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survived (thanks to her cousin Penelope Douglas) and is shown below. She continued to live with her sister Dorothy at 'Perrymead' and inherited the house after Dorothy's death. Gwendoline died in Herefordshire, December 1973, age 89.

Chetwode Percy Evill was educated at Haileybury and Kings College, London. He went to India in 1911 and became Asst. Engineer on the Bombay and Baroda Railway then volunteered for active service and gazetted 2nd Lt in January 1915. Chetwode served with his unit, Faridkot Imperial Service Sappers in East Africa from 1915 to 1918. He died on 17th July 1918 at the Station Hospital, Meerut, India, of fever contracted in East Africa. He was twice mentioned in Despatches and awarded the Military Cross for gallant and distinguished service in the field.

Reverend William Ernest Evill B.A.

Revd. William Ernest Evill, was born in Battersea in 1853, the eldest son of William & Fanny Evill. William was an accomplished musician and composed music for hymns. He was also a prominent amateur chess player, a committee member of the Kent Chess Assn.

The two brothers were always close friends. William married Edith Eleanor Ram in 1884, the second daughter of Rev. Stopford James Ram and sister of Dora, Marten's wife. As William had officiated at Marten's marriage in 1881, so Marten officiated at William's marriage at Malden, Surrey.

Although listed on the Board of Vicars in St John's Church, there is no official record of William's appointment to the Dormansland Benefice. His name appears often in St John's Records: as a visiting priest and as a contributor to various church funds.

William Evill apparently discharged the duties of parish priest in Dormansland without official appointment. He began recording the church registers on 6th March 1889 (Ash Wednesday). The Service register contains the note: "Rev Evill had not the advantage of set forms for record of services, he made his own columns and gave number present for each service, also text and sometimes comments e.g. "wet night 33 present", on Easter Sunday he made no attempt to count "Very large congregation". His brief stay in Dormansland may have been temporary cover for his brother's absence for an unknown reason. There was certainly a brief interval between William leaving the Rectory of Winterbourne – Came in Dorset in 1889 and taking up his appointment as Curate of St James, Dover, Kent 1890-1894.

William conducted a special service on July 7th 1889 at 3pm, to celebrate the completion of the refurbished Sanctuary and Chancel. It was the first recorded "Flower Service", 200 were present. Revd. Marten Evill was the Preacher. A faded photograph of the decorated church survives in the Parish Archives.

Edith Eleanor Evill died July 1926. The Rev. William Ernest Evill then of 14 St Dunstan's Terrace, Canterbury, died 22 August 1935. William and Edith Evill had no children.

From the collection of Dorothy's correspondence

From Fred C. [Corfield] dated 27/2/14

"My Dear Gwen doline Many thanks for your last letter, its so nice of you to write. No, you had nothing to say, but it was very acceptable all the same and I haven't a word to say either!! Words as you know so often fail me!

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I got back from a weeks leave last Monday at 3 AM, which we enjoyed no end... we honeymooned in Town and did ourselves proud and went and saw 'Peg o' my heart' it was awfully funny and I don't think I ever saw a better show, the house was crammed and we just managed to get the last 2 seats..."

From William Farhill ST CLAIR (lived Beacon Cottage, Dormansland) **Dec. 18th 1914**

"Dear Gwen It was very good of you to think of writing to me. I have only just got your letter but even then it was very welcome.

I had the most extraordinary luck out at the front. I was hit in the stomach by a spent bullet. Thank goodness it was spent! It did not really affect me much at the time, but about 6 weeks afterwards all the nerves in my legs refused to work. My left leg suddenly became paralyzed and I fell into the ditch when I was marching. The pain was awful but soon went when I got a chance of resting. It left me quite lame for about a month. However I am all right again now and waiting to get out to the front again.

I am now with the Reserve Battalion making myself as useful as I can in training recruits. Poor things – they little know what they have got to go through when they get out there...."

From Arthur David MUSGRAVE (lived Apsley Town) **Xmas Day Dec 25th 1914**

Refers to the Christmas truce of 1914

"...We have had awful wet lately, but last night it froze and this morning everything is covered with hoar frost, so that we think we have quite a Xmassy appearance.

There has been no shooting today, I think by tacit consent though no official plan was made. I am amused at the Dean of Hereford having carried you to a temperance meeting. Dear old man, I hope he is keeping well. I suppose Chetwode is holding the fort in India..."

From W.F.ST CLAIR, 30 Jan 15

"...We have had a very unpleasant time here lately owing to the snow. You will understand this when I tell you that we are still in tents. I believe we are the only Battalion left that is still in this unfortunate position most of them are in huts by this time.

I see by your letter that you are writing from your home address. Have you given up your nursing or is it only that you were off duty when you wrote?"

Typewritten Letter from STOPFORD (Gwen Evill's cousin) from HMS ALECTO
Gwen was like many women of the time knitting for the servicemen!

"...The four tubes of corrugated wool are I presume Mittens; or may be worn as Tummybands if so desired. The third pair of articles have been identified beyond doubt as Mittens whilst the long winding sheet of wool will doubtless be capable of conversion into a dozen scarves. Many thanks for the kind thought. Also for the photos which recalled to me the pleasantdajs (I mean days) spent in your hospitable house. Ah! Me how long ago it all seems... I have but to close my eyes to conjure up a vivid picture of you and I marking out the tennis lawn. You in an accordion pleated skirt and fascinating soup-stained blouse; the whole surmounted by a Wideawake hat from which peeped out your rebellious curls. Ah! Me as before. Myself with my handsome countenance bronzed by the summer sun my curly locks fanned by the balmy breeze ... Wasn't it beautiful? And now what do we see? You as a sweet Lady Bountiful,

knitting woollen garments in the intervals of emptying slops at the local hospital. Myself in command of one of His Majesty's Ships doing, I hope, my little bit for King and Country and content to risk my life for a paltry £400 per annum..."

From W.F.ST CLAIR Headquarters, 81st Inf. Brigade, B.E.F. 13 Oct. 15

Dear Gwen "...I suppose Dormansland is just the same as ever as there is never any news in the letters I get from Home!!

The only difference I know of is that Dad has been given a job at last. [James Latimer Crawshay St. Clair, Col. Home Service 1915-1919] He has waited a long time for it and really deserved it. He is now at Aldershot acting as President of all the Courts Martial in the district which seems to be extremely numerous..."

Yours sincerely

Bunty

P.S. I am not called Bunty any longer but that doesn't matter.

From W.F.ST CLAIR , 28 Oct. 15

"...your letters don't contain a word of drivel as you call it. They are most interesting so please let me have some more, if you have time.

Dad is certainly 10 years younger since he got the job. I was at home last week for 8 days and was very glad of the change, as I had been in this country for nearly 5 months... I only had time for one ½ day pottering round Wilderwick when I was on leave. Bay and I did two Matinees which were very good." [presumably Audrey Bay St. Clair, his sister]

Please write again soon

Yours v. sincerely

W.F. St Clair

From W.F.ST CLAIR, Jan. 7th 1917

"...Dormansland seems to have disappeared once more into oblivion. I haven't heard much about it although I am by way of living there. Bay has now taken to farming. She has let herself out as a farmhand and does about seven hours work a day.

To use a good old Scottish expression she is. "Shawin Neepswi a haugh" which being interpreted means 'cutting off the tips of turnips with a hook'. This she is doing amongst other things including bedding down cattle etc. I admire her for this, don't you? She is what you might call 'doing her bit!

From W.F.ST CLAIR Jan. 24th 1917

I heard from Bay yesterday and she seems very much annoyed because some one has stepped in and said she is not allowed to do farm work unless she takes wages for it. Of course, Dad will not allow her to take wages and also Bay thinks she is not doing it the right way if she does so. However I don't think she has ceased work yet from what I hear.

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Acknowledgements & Sources

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Cambridge University Alumni

Oxford University Alumni

U.K. Clergy Lists: various years

Project Gutenberg: 'All About Battersea' by Henry S. Simmonds

A Chess Biography Tim Harding

Survey of London English Heritage 2013

De Ruvigny's Roll of Honour, Vol 5

Ancestry.uk

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