

Sir Osbert Lancaster. 1908-1986

Osbert Lancaster a writer, was best known for his Maudie Countess Littlehampton cartoons which appeared in the Daily Express for 30 years. He was also a painter, theatre designer, architectural historian, travel writer and was also known for his sardonic wit.

Osbert Lancaster also designed costume - this cockerel on display at the Victoria and Albert museum was made for the ballet La Fille Mal Gardee.

Born in Chelsea, he visited East Winch regularly. Educated at Charterhouse and Lincoln College Oxford, he was known in all the best London circles.

He had two happy marriages, his second wife was Anne Scott-James, the author and journalist, who was an authority on gardening.

He is buried in West Winch churchyard.

Sir William having bought the Lordship of the manors of East Winch and West Winch, the Lancaster family have the right to a say in the running of the churches in both parishes.

Spent his childhood holidays with his Grandparents at [East Winch Hall](#).

He wrote in his memoir:

"At East Winch station, lost amidst the un-by-passed fields of my Edwardian childhood... The platform, though I suppose no higher than most, appeared in the flat East Anglian landscape to be a raised island, isolated way above the surrounding elm-broken cornlands. Nor did it ever, at first glance, exhibit any sign of life, as the solitary porter's immediate duty was to open the level-crossing gates regardless of the passengers, alone with their luggage amidst the shiny tinplates advertising Stephen's Blueblack Ink and Venos Lightning Cough Cure. And it was only just as we were beginning to wonder whether or not this was the right day, that an aunt would suddenly emerge from the waiting room."

Even today East Winch is a very small village; at that date it was smaller still. Small, that is judged by the number of its inhabitants rather than by its extent. Strung out for a mile or more along the Lynn-Swaffham road it started at the Lynn end with the church, a decent enough 14th century Norfolk structure without, but scraped and scrubbed into insignificance within by the late Sir Gilbert Scott, standing on an outlying ridge of the Breckland, that scruffy, sandy waste which runs like some horrid birthmark across the homely face of East Anglia. Alongside, dank and laurel shaded, was the vicarage; beyond, down the hill, lay the straight village street, hardly differing in character from the rest of the highway, so widely separated were the cottages, four public houses (two of them no longer licensed since my grandfather had decided that the needs of the villagers were being, perhaps, too amply cared for), and the solitary village shop.

Half a mile beyond the point where it was entered by Station Road, an ordinary country lane crossing the branch line from Lynn some three quarters of a mile away, the street ended in a sharp fork, in the apex of which, facing directly up the village to the church, stood the imposing, globe topped entrance gates of East Winch Hall.

The gates once entered, were generally felt to be an overstatement. On the right lay a croquet lawn, screened from the converging road by a plantation of copper beeches; less than a hundred yards ahead was the house itself.