

In those days [1867] Coombe was very different-very much as I describe it at the opening of 'The Man of Property'. The site of the Forsyte House [Robin Hill] was the site of my Father's Coombe Warren and the grounds and coppice etc were actual, but the house itself I built with my imagination...The Comet is not quite right-the station Soames and Bosinney walked from is not Norbiton but 'Coombe and Malden'. This is also the station used by Fleur, Jon and Soames in 'To Let'...

[Extract from a letter from Galsworthy to the *Surrey Comet*, 1929, Kingston Borough Archives, reference KX1/1].



Coombe & Malden Station, 1908. K2-1533

John Galsworthy Chronology

1867 born in Kingston
 1876 sent to school in Bournemouth
 1881 sent to Harrow
 1886 family moves back to London
 1890-4 read Law at Oxford (New College)
 1895 begins secret relationship with Ada Galsworthy, wife of his cousin Arthur
 1897 publishes *From the Four Winds*, a collection of short stories
 1904 father dies
 1905 marries Ada following her divorce
 1906 publishes *The Man of Property*, first volume of the Forsyte Saga trilogy
 1918 refuses knighthood
 1929 accepts Order of Merit
 1932 awarded Nobel Prize for Literature
 1933 dies (31st January) at Hampstead

Further reading: *A Fair and High Locality* by Sue Lown and Patricia Panizzo, 1996; *All Change* by June Sampson, 1985.

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John Galsworthy in Coombe



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The larks sprang up in front of his feet the air was full of butterflies, a sweet fragrance rose from the wild grasses. The sappy scent of bracken stole forth from the wood ... and from afar on the warm breeze came the rhythmic chiming of church bells

“Robin Hill” in *A Man of Property*, ch.4

John Galsworthy 1867-1933



Coombe Warren. K2-455

John Galsworthy, author and Nobel prize- winner, was born at Parkfield, a large villa on Kingston Hill and as a child lived at three different houses in Coombe. The area is fondly remembered in his most famous work, the Forsyte Saga trilogy.

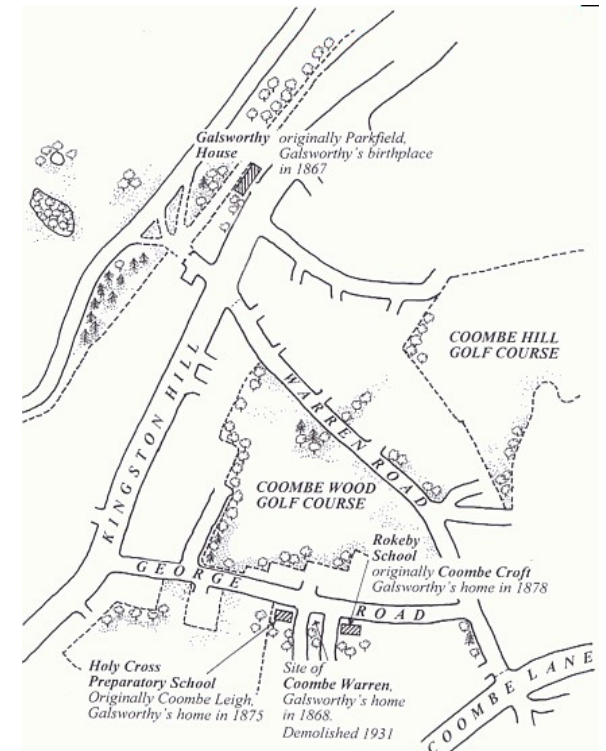
John was born on 14th August 1867 into a wealthy middle class family. His father, also John, was head of a firm of solicitors in Old Jewry, Central London. His mother, Blanche (Bailey Bartleet) lived at Claremont Villa in Claremont Road, Surbiton, before their marriage.

John and Blanche had four children. After their first child (a girl) was born they chose to live in the country air of Kingston Hill.

John junior, their second child and elder son, was baptised at St John the Baptist's Church in Kingston Vale on 15th September 1867 where John senior was a Churchwarden.

John Galsworthy senior began to develop property in nearby Coombe Warren. The first house was called Coombe Warren to which the family moved in 1868 (later renamed Coombe Court and not to be confused with another house called Coombe Warren built by Bertram Wodehouse Currie). In 1875 they moved to Coombe Leigh on an adjoining site (later called Coombe Ridge House) and a third house, Coombe Croft, followed in 1878.

Galsworthy clearly had happy memories of his youth in Coombe. Although he never returned to live in the area, he immortalised it in his work and the places that he knew and loved can still be seen today.



Parkfield, Kingston Hill

Galsworthy's place of birth, later a residential home for the elderly, now a nursing home called Galsworthy House.

Coombe Warren

Later Coombe Court, demolished in 1931.

Coombe Leigh

Later Coombe Ridge House, now Holy Cross Preparatory School.

Coombe Croft

Now Rokeby, an independent boys' school