

A History of Rowhill Grange

By

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Frontispiece:- the house in 1954

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Introduction

I have named this booklet “A history” rather than “The history” as it is mainly an account of the occupation by the Wates family, from 1928 to 1978, of the house called Rowhill Grange, in Wilmington, Kent. I have however been able to include such information about the earlier period as has been possible to glean from the old deeds retained by the family. I have only carried out a limited amount of additional research.

The structure is not entirely chronological so, to save the reader who only wants an overview from reading through the whole booklet, I set out here a brief history.

I like to think that the name Rowhill comes from the row of hills which stand out when viewed from various vantage points in the neighbourhood. In particular the wooded hills can be seen from the Queen Elizabeth Bridge when crossing the Thames from Essex. However, apparently it is derived from the Old English rüh hyll, meaning rough hill. It appears in various old documents as Ruehille, Rowehulle, and Roughull. Rowhill Wood seems to have been a distinct wood, maybe for several centuries, forming part of various large estates in the area.

It was not until the end of the 1870s that any development took place. An entrepreneur then bought it, split it up into substantial lots, constructed the road now known as Rowhill Road and sold off the lots. One of the lots was purchased in 1885 by John and Alice Alexander, who, at the same time, bought farming land fronting what is now Top Dartford Road. They then built the house on the site of, and incorporating part of, an old woodman’s cottage, cleared part of the wood to lay out the gardens and construct the main entrance drive to Rowhill Road and erected a lodge at the entrance. They would also have constructed what was then a back entrance driveway to Top Dartford Road and presumably also the pair of semi-detached cottages on that driveway.

At some stage they must have added the western extension, but otherwise little in the house or garden changed for the next 100 years. Mr Alexander died in 1915 and sometime after that Mrs Alexander retired to the south of France and the property was let. In 1926 the house, including the drive to Top Dartford Road, was bought by Mr and Mrs George Collins, who had rented it from 1924.

He was a silversmith in the City of London and later a Sheriff of the City. They only owned it for a short period, sold off the lodge and plots along Rowhill Road where the bungalows now are, and in 1928 sold the main house and gardens to Mr G Leslie Wates

Mr Wates was a successful solicitor with practices in Woolwich and the City of London. He and his wife and four children had been living in Eltham. They created a wonderful family home at the house which was enjoyed not only by the children and later their grandchildren but by many other friends and relatives.

Largely to guard against possible development of adjacent land, Mr Wates bought it up when opportunities arose and the price was reasonable. By the 1940s the estate, of about 45 acres, comprised a large part of Rowhill Woods, including the orchards of the Little Mount with the house Rowhill Mount, the Great Mount with the cottage there and Woodlands (later Pax Wood). He also acquired the field between the house and Top Dartford Road, being part of what the Alexanders had originally owned. To make full use of the land, as a hobby and without ever making a profit, it was farmed – pigs, chickens, fruit, vegetables and corn.

Mr Wates died in 1958 and his obituary, published in ‘The Times’, is reproduced in Appendix I. Mrs Wates continued to live there until 1976 and the estate was broken up and sold, shortly after her death in 1978. The house and gardens were bought by Mr and Mrs Michael Feasey who later converted it into the hotel and restaurant.

Mrs Lucy W. Wates, my grandmother, wrote a biography of her husband. As Rowhill Grange and the life and activities there formed a very important part of his life, the biography naturally includes much about it and its history. There was therefore little point in my rewriting it and extracts from her book form the central part of this history. Copies of that book are still available for sale. I have supplemented her account with box insertions and footnotes, and have added chapters with information obtained from the deeds, the farm accounts and correspondence.

The hotel, as it is now, will be known to many guests, so I have attempted to describe the house and gardens as they were in former times, to preserve these memories.

In order to give some idea of monetary values I have included in square brackets the equivalent amount in 2010. This is after allowing for inflation although this does not necessarily give a true comparison.

I have referred to my grandparents by either their first or surnames as appropriate in the context. I have generally used first names only for other members of the family, who are also so referred to in the extracts from my grandmother's book, and who can be identified from the family tree in appendix III

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Notes on the history of Rowhill

Notes by Horace Balls found with Mrs Wates' papers

In the 17th century Rowhill Woods were part of an estate which had a mansion at Barn End (This mansion was pulled down in 1743, though sections of the garden wall remain). The estate belonged to the Blaythways.

In 1637 Anne Blaythwayt, who had inherited the property, married Lancelot Bathurst of Horton Kirby but they had no children. She died in 1668 and her husband had the estate. He married again and died childless in 1678. His widow married William Bathurst, a cousin of her first husband. They had a son, Edward, who inherited the property and pulled down the old mansion and built a new one (afterwards called Wilmington Hall¹). When he inherited a house at Goudhurst he sold the Wilmington property to the Austen family of Sevenoaks².

The Austens owned it until 1837 when the property was sold in lots at an auction. Rowhill Woods were bought by Isaac Minet of Baldwyns.

In 1887³ the Baldwyns estate was sold and Rowhill Woods were bought by John Alexander⁴, who was born in Northern Ireland in 1844 and died at Rowhill in 1915.

Notes on the Baldwyns estate

taken from the following website <http://maypolehistory.wetpaint.com/page/Baldwyns+Manor>

The estate comprised the areas of Joydens Wood and the old Bexley Mental Hospital, where the manor house is situated and now renovated, and the Maypole Estate. Isaac Minet became the owner in about 1810. He was High Sheriff of Kent in 1827 and died at Baldwyns on 14th March 1839, aged 72. Charles was the eldest son, although the tithe map of 1842 shows that the lands were in the possession of Thomas Minet.

Charles Minet died in 1874 and is buried in Wilmington churchyard (the only member of the family buried there) and an auction of the estate took place on 26th May 1876. The estate was for sale in three lots, described as Baldwyns, Maypole Farm and Rowhill Wood/Rowhill Field. It seems that the sale was not successful on that day.

¹ The site of which is now Wilmington Grammar School for Boys

² Apparently distant relatives of Jane Austen

³ This is incorrect. The date was 1877

⁴ This is incorrect. See below.

the present public footpath). The plan attached to the conveyance shows the public footpath leading from Puddledock Lane to Barn End Lane (Rowhill Road did not exist at that time). Excluded from the sale was an area of one acre conveyed to the Commissioners of the Navy for a telegraph station⁵. The area of land sold was about 118 acres. The document describes the land in more detail, referring to small pieces of woodland, one large area of 93 acres described as “coppice or wood ground...called Rowhill Almonds Wood or Almonds Spring”, seven acres of “woodground” called Nepden, another four acres called Almonds and one acre of arable land “more or less converted into woodland”.

The boundaries of the wood are shown on the above plan with a thick black line. This plan is referred to below in describing different parts of the wood. The plan is for the purpose of showing boundaries only, as other features are from a later date, the plan coming from a 1961 Ordnance Survey map.

Stanhill Farm was also sold to Isaac Minet at that time, as there is a letter from the land tax assessor for Wilmington, dated February 1838, addressed to Isaac Minet, Baldwyns, confirming that the land tax on Rowhill Wood and Stanhill Farm, parts of the estates of the Austen family, had been redeemed, and he also refers to it in a codicil to his will.

Isaac Minet died on the 14th March 1839 and left the whole of the Baldwyns estate to his widow, Susan Minet, for life and then to his son, Charles. Susan died on the 15th March 1869 at Baldwyns. There is a certificate that legacy duty was paid, following her death, on woodlands comprising 299 acres with an annual value of £152[£11,000]. This must have included other woodland besides Rowhill. It is described as being ‘in hand’ so was not tenanted.

On 25th October 1870 Charles Minet mortgaged all the estate to secure a loan of £18,044[£1,350,000]. The estate comprised a total of 790 acres including the 118 acres at Rowhill Wood

Charles Minet died intestate on 27th February 1874. He had six children and it seems to have been necessary to obtain a Court order for the estate to be sold and the proceeds divided. This was obtained very promptly on 18th April 1874. On the 31st January 1876 the mortgage was paid off. Unsold parts of the estate were auctioned on 18th June 1877. Lot 2, comprising Rowhill Wood, was bought by William Gilford of Redhill, Surrey, for £6,350 plus £2,000 (being the valuation of the timber and fixtures) making a total of £8,350[£612,771]. The one acre comprising the telegraph site was included, although there is no indication of how this came back into the ownership of the Baldwyns Estate. Included in the sale was also a 15 acre field, being the field immediately to the east of the wood and including what is now the north end of Rowhill Road. The land was conveyed on 31st December 1877.

⁵ See page 54 for further information concerning this

The plan attached to the conveyance shows a network of paths through the wood, none of which relates to subsequent paths except for the public footpath, and the summit of the Great Mount (although not described as such). It is all described as woodland, and no buildings are shown.

Division of the woods and construction of the road

Mr Gilford would seem to have been a property speculator. He also bought, in effect, the whole of what is now Hextable and this was conveyed to him on 8th October 1877. This included all the land to the south of what is now Puddledock Lane and Top Dartford Road, but also 3 acres of a hop plantation, being part of Perry Field (this is where the house now known as Perryfield is situated). He then constructed the road, now known as Rowhill Road, all the way from Hextable Crossways to Hook Green Lane, and sold the land on either side in lots, with rights of way over the road and obligations of maintenance, it being anticipated that the road would ultimately be taken over by the local authority. The road remained in the ownership of Mr Gilford, where it presumably still lies.

There is a newspaper cutting in the archives of Dartford Library advertising the auction of the land to take place on Monday 17th June 1878 at Auction Mart, London in 12 lots. The land is described as:- “A most valuable Freehold Building Estate known as ‘Rowhill Mount’ of famous historic interest⁶.....comprising 117 acres of undulating woodland, finely timbered, intercepted by a new road...”. The lots are all described as timber and coppice wood except lots 11 and 12 which are described as Rowhill Field – arable. Lot 1 includes the words ‘and The Little Mount’, and lot 8 ‘and The Great Mount’.

Lots 1,2 and 3, being what later became Rowhill Grange and Rowhill Mount, were conveyed to the United Westminster Schools for £3648[£289,000] on 27th January 1879. It would be interesting to know why they bought it. As a charity one would expect it to be as a long term investment but they sold it off fairly quickly.

The plan attached to this conveyance names the two hills as The Great Mount and The Little Mount.

Lots 8,9 and 10 being The Great Mount and what is now Oakleigh Farm and adjacent land, were sold to Adelino Brunetti. The area being the properties later known as Woodlands and Hazelwood, comprising about 12 acres, was sold to William Ratcliffe of 54 Tabernacle Walk, Finsbury, cabinet manufacturer, being conveyed on 30th June 1879⁷. The rest of the wood, comprising about 28 acres, was sold to William Henry Liversidge of Turret Lodge, Victoria Park Road, South Hackney. He also bought a plot of about 4 acres, being the land on the other side of the footpath at Hazelwood.

⁶ The famous historic connection refers to the Romans. See page 55

⁷ This date comes from the Woodlands conveyance of 1930

On the 9th October 1883 the Little Mount and an area of about 12 acres was conveyed by the United Westminster Schools to Enos Read, a farmer from West Wickham, for £1,500[£118,000]. The land is described as a portion of “Row Hill Wood”. On the 16th February 1885 a further strip of land, to the north-east of that already sold, comprising about 2 acres, was conveyed to Enos Read for £200[£15,733]. These together comprise the area shown as The Little Mount on the above plan.

Original Rowhill Grange estate

On the 20th April 1885 the remainder of the land owned by United Westminster Schools, about 22 acres, was sold to John Alexander of 3 Great Tower Street in the City of London. The conveyance is not available, only a contemporary document dealing with the maintenance of the road, so the price paid is not known, nor whether the United Westminster Schools made a profit on their investment.

In the meantime, John Alexander had purchased all the land to the south of the woods lying to the north of Puddledock Lane and Top Dartford Road.

This land appears to have been part of an estate subject to a marriage settlement, on the marriage of Campbell Sawers and Jane Jessop Sawers, in 1850. It may have belonged to her family. After Campbell Sawers’ death, on 26th August 1866, his wife had a life interest until 1876, when his only son, Campbell George Sawers, became entitled. On plans on other title deeds he is shown as Capt Sawers. On the 28th October 1884 he sold it to John Alexander for £3,570[£290,000]. Mr Sawers was then described as ‘late of Bearsted but now resident in the United States’. The land was described as three parcels of land in Wilmington, comprising WoodField 29 acres, and two other fields of 16 and 7 acres.



Plan 2 Rowhill Grange estate of the Alexanders

This plan shows part of the Rowhill Grange estate as owned by the Alexanders between 1884 and 1926, although the features on the plan are from a later date.

The Alexanders must have had a town house elsewhere and have used Rowhill Grange as an occasional country residence, as they were not in residence either for the 1901 census or that of 1911. In 1901 there is a gardener, Mr John Best, and his wife living in one of the cottages, a coachman, Mr Alfred Powell, and his wife and son in another. In the main house were Mr and Mrs John Hazeldene, as butler and housekeeper, Elizabeth Eyls as kitchenmaid and Rose Bailey as housemaid.

In 1911 there is a gardener, Mr Alfred Steed, and his wife and son living at Rowhill Grange Lodge, also described as The Lodge, Rowhill, probably being the cottage at the driveway entrance later known as The Old Lodge. There is a separate entry for Mr and Mrs Charles Stubbings and a son, just described as Rowhill Grange but presumably one of the cottages. Mr Stubbings was not in residence so, if he was the coachman, he may have been with the Alexanders. In the main house there was just a single servant, Daisy Chancellor(?), aged only 15, described as caretaker, so it seems the house was not being used at all.

In 1905 Mr Alexander settled the whole estate on himself and his wife, Alice Maud Alexander, for life and then to her estate. He died on 21st July 1915.

On 20th September 1923 Mrs Alexander leased most of the arable land to Ernest James Allen until 28th September 1929. The part presumably excluded was the driveway.



Photo 1 The house in the early 1920s.

Photo courtesy of Dennis Molyneux www.molyneux-photography.co.uk

On the 27th February 1924 she agreed to sell the whole of the estate, subject to the lease, to Daniel George Collins, for £9,000[£400,000] but it seems there must have been a delayed completion date as, in the meantime, she leased the rest of the land to him. Mr Collins sold on the 52 acres of arable land, excluding the driveway, to Roberson Thomas of Swanley Bottom, farmer, for £4,200[£190,000], the sale being completed on 4th November 1926. Mrs Alexander's address was then Chalet Rustique, Boulevard de l'Observatoire, Monaco, France. Mr Collins is described as of 118 Newgate Street in the City of London, manufacturing silversmith. On the same day the rest of the estate was conveyed to Mr Collins' wife, Elizabeth Margaret Collins.

The deeds of the house itself have not survived and the above information is extracted from deeds relating to the surrounding land. Mr George Leslie Wates' surviving correspondence, however, reveals that the house, garden and woodland behind the house, totalling about 19 acres, was conveyed to him on 6th September 1928. The correspondence does not mention the price agreed but Mrs Wates, in her biography below, states that it was £5,595 [£263,000]. Negotiations had commenced in May.

The land upon which the bungalows in Rowhill Road were built was retained or had already been sold (there is evidence that Alperton, the lowest bungalow,

was built in about 1930). Mr Collins also retained the frontage from Alperton to Woodlands Lodge, presumably in the hope of selling it for development, but a 40 foot strip of land across it was included in the sale of Rowhill Grange as access to the road. (See plan 3 on page 45)

In 1934 Sir George Collins (he had been knighted on the 6th October 1931 upon completing his year as a sheriff of the City of London) offered, on behalf of his wife; to sell the retained land to Mr Wates for £1100[£60,000]. This, however, was building value which Mr Wates was not prepared to pay, and which he in any event did not consider existed (possibly as a result of the new Town and Country Planning Act 1932). In 1936 he applied for permission to build 12 houses on the land but this was rejected. However, he must have succeeded in obtaining permission to build on the two plots between the bungalows and the accessway. One of these was Birdswood, probably built in 1940, which he let to Mr Osmond and is mentioned below⁸. The other, Green House, was let to Mr Campkin. Sir George tried again in 1947 to sell both the two houses and the remaining land to Mr Wates, equally unsuccessfully. At that time he was living in retirement at Felixstowe. In 1954 Lady Collins unsuccessfully tried to obtain planning permission for the erection of a bungalow on a small plot adjacent to Woodland Cottage, with a view, if successful, to obtaining permission for more bungalows. See page 53 for later history.

⁸ See page 19

Extensions to the estate

The Barley field and Mr Baines' house

Mr Thomas presumably sold off the plots along Top Dartford Road for building. He must also have sold the land along Puddledock Lane, but retained the land to the west of the driveway, which was always known as 'Thomas' Field'.

In 1933 he sold the field, which is shown hatched on the plan on page 9, and which was known by the Wates family as the Barley Field, to Mr G.L. Wates for a total of £1,321.2.6d [£71,900]. This was done in three transactions – a conveyance of the lower part and triangular piece at the end of the drive on 3rd November to Thomas Baines; a conveyance of that land by Mr Baines to Mr Wates on 6th November, on the basis that Mr Baines was nominee for Mr Wates, Mr Wates having paid the price; and a conveyance of the upper part of the field on 1st January 1934. Thomas Baines was the brother of George William Baines, Mr Wates' gardener and chauffeur⁹. Thomas is described as of The Bower Road Nurseries, Hextable, nurseryman. George Baines witnessed his signature and gave his address as Rowhill Grange.

It is not clear why the transaction happened in this way. Correspondence from June 1933 indicates that Thomas Baines was purchasing for his own account, so maybe there was a last minute change of plan.



Photo 2 The Barley Field from the east with the house and barns in the background

⁹ See page 32

The plan mentioned above shows the public footpath running along the eastern boundary. In fact at that time the footpath was along the hatched line on the plan. It was subsequently moved to the new boundary.¹⁰

The land bought included a plot giving access to Top Dartford Road, of width 20 feet. On the 12th March 1934 the plot to the east of the access was conveyed by Mr Thomas to George Baines for £56/[£3,000]. He had a house built on it, known as Effingham Villa, by Mr W.G.Cooper¹¹ for £456.10.0/[£24,900], the money being provided by a mortgage of £400 from Woolwich Equitable Building Society on 29th June, and the balance plus legal expenses by Mr Wates. He bought a further strip of land of 10 feet. to widen the plot, for £20 in November 1934.

Further transactions took place in 1937. A 30 feet strip to the west of the access was purchased by Thomas and George Baines, being conveyed on the 16th July, but, on the 20th July, was conveyed to Mr Wates, who had provided the money. It seems from a note on the conveyancing file that Mr Wates wished to keep his ownership of the access secret. On the same day a 40 feet strip to the west of George Baines' house was conveyed to him for £90. He borrowed £100 [£5,030] from Woolwich Equitable Building Society for this and the £20 purchase in 1934, which, it would seem, may have been provided by Mr Wates in the meantime.

The Great Mount

Except that Mr L.Glyn is shown as the owner of this land on the plan attached to a conveyance of The Little Mount in 1899, there is no information between the sale in about 1880 to Mr Brunetti and a conveyance by Lewis Edmund Glyn to Christian Frederick August Muhlenkamp on 1st February 1904, at a price of £3,350.[£282,000] This comprised the whole of the area conveyed to Mr Brunetti, namely the Great Mount and land to the west. Mr Muhlenkamp had already bought Woodlands (See page 23).

The census returns are not clear. In 1901 there are two properties described as Rowhill Nurseries, one occupied by Thomas Allman, nurseryman, and family, and the other by George Bellingham, general labourer, and family. In 1911 there is Swanley Poultry Farm occupied by Arthur Gilbert and family. Either or both of these might relate to the farm later known as Oakleigh Farm. George Bellingham was aged 49 in 1901 and he had a son, George, aged 22. It is probably this latter George who was later a tenant of Rowhill Mount (see below).

¹⁰ See also page 108

¹¹ This was the trading name of Mr Wates' friend Harry Gough Cooper. See page 64.

Mr Muhlenkamp died on 29th October 1915. By his will, dated 26th February 1915, he left his Wilmington property in trust for his son, Percy, for life. The trustees of the will were his son, Christian John Muhlenkamp, and John Stone, presumably a solicitor. Following Christian Muhlenkamp's death on 22nd April 1935, Hubert Clive Stone, presumably a partner and possibly John Stone's son, was appointed a trustee. Percy died on 26 August 1926 and there is no evidence with the deeds as to who was entitled to the estate thereafter. The schedule to the deed includes land in Wilmington, containing about 35 acres together with cottages, glasshouses, outbuildings and erections, and forming part of the estate known as The Great Mount, Rowhill Wood.

An affidavit was required in 1942 in connection with the northern boundary. This was provided by Alfred Bartum Osmond of Birdswood, Rowhill, who stated that he had occupied the land from 25th March 1922 until its sale in 1940.

Mr Wates purchased The Great Mount, with a new boundary being drawn between the hill and the farmland, for £1,700[£65,000], the conveyance being dated 10th March 1941.

From correspondence at the time of the negotiations to purchase it seems that, of the 33 acres owned by the Muhlenkamp trust, the 9 acres purchased, including the lodge (Great Mount cottage), had been let to Mr Osmond for £55[£2,340] per annum; 19 ½ acres including farm buildings were let to Miss Bellingham¹²; 2 acres comprised wood on the other side of the public footpath, and the remaining 2 ½ acres were divided between the houses Beaconhill and Temple Sheen. Miss Bellingham's buildings, according to Mr Wates, were in a very poor state and probably unlettable.



Photo 3 Aerial view of Great Mount Cottage

¹² Sister of George Bellingham who leased The Little Mount – see below

The first two extant letters relating to the negotiations are headed Birdswood. This is clearly not the house now known as Birdswood. Mr Osmond also gives his address after he had vacated the lodge as Birdswood. It can perhaps therefore be deduced that the lodge must have been known as Birdswood, and that when Mr Osmond vacated, which gave rise to the property being available for sale, he moved to the property now known as Birdswood, and took the name with him.¹³ This is also evidenced by the plan on page 126.

Beaconhill was let to Harry Gough Cooper (see page 64) from 1933 to about 1940. He lived there at the time that he started his building business which ultimately grew to become one of the major building companies in the area. In 1935/6 he made an offer to buy all of the Muhlenkamp land with a view to constructing a house for himself. but his offer of £4500[£244,000] was rejected. Mr G.L. Wates then made an offer of £5000 which was also rejected as the trustees were looking for development value. When negotiating in 1940 it seems Mr Wates would have preferred to buy all the land but could not agree the price for the farmland.

The Old Lodge

In 1927 Mr and Mrs Collins sold The Old Lodge to Robert Walter Lovesay, of 124 Forest Road, Dalston, for £600[£27,900] the conveyance being dated 4th October. Presumably they also sold the bungalow plots along Rowhill Road at about the same time but there are no documents relating to them.

Mr G.L.Wates bought it from Mr Lovesay on 13th October 1934 for the same price of £600.[£33,200 – worth more then because of deflation]

¹³ He rented this from Sir George Collins. See above page 15

The Little Mount and Rowhill Mount

As stated above, the Little Mount was bought by Enos Read in 1883. In 1885 he also bought about 10 acres of land, to the west of the new road, formerly known as Perry Field. This land had passed through three owners after being sold by Mr Gilford in 1882.

On 29th September 1893 he mortgaged both properties to secure a loan of £1,600[£138,000]. He is described as a fruit grower of Hextable. The back sheet of the mortgage describes the land as plantation land. The loan was perhaps for the purpose of building the house.

That loan was repaid in 1898 and, in November of that year, he gave The Little Mount, but not Perry Field, to his daughter, Charlotte Elizabeth Lane, the wife of Hezekiah Lane. This was, in effect, a sale for £1000, the price being provided by way of a loan from Reuben Lane (possibly Hezekiah's father) with the debt being taken over by Charlotte Lane. Enos Read's address was then Portland Villa, North Street, Bexleyheath, and his daughter was also of North Street. He was described as a market gardener, and both Reuben and Hezekiah Lane as builders.

In February 1899 the property was sold by Mrs Lane to William George Burgess Esquire, of Bank House, Eynsford, for £2,300[£202,000]. The property was described as a piece of land known as 'The Little Mount'. The house, barn and greenhouse are shown on the plan attached to the conveyance.



Photo 4 The Little Mount from the south-east. Date probably about 1920

Photo courtesy of Dennis Molyneux www.molyneux-photography.co.uk

From a plan attached to the 1904 conveyance of The Great Mount, Mr Burgess is also shown as the owner of Perry Field, which perhaps he acquired direct from Mr Read.

According to the 1901 census, the house, described as The Mount, Rowhill, was occupied by George Burgess, fruit grower, his wife and four children. One of the children was William George Burgess, aged 32, auctioneer. Thus it seems that the property, although farmed by the father, was either bought by the son, or put into the son's name.

On 23rd June 1906 Mr Burgess, then described as an auctioneer of Swanley Junction, sold The Little Mount to the Reverend John Neighbour, late of Nottingham but then of Wilmington, Baptist minister, for £3,100. [~~£260,000~~] Mr Neighbour mortgaged the property to Messrs John Mullings and Richard John Mullings, solicitors of Cirencester, to secure a loan of £3,000.

John Neighbour started his Baptist ministry in Cirencester where he met his first wife, Millicent, whose father had a business there. Before becoming a minister he was a market gardener. While he held a pastorate in Nottingham he had trouble with his voice and decided to return to market gardening, which is what brought him to Kent and the purchase of the property. However in 1909 he accepted the pastorate in Princes Risborough. For reasons not known his wife either stayed in the house or returned there, as she died there on 22nd February 1912, the address on her death certificate being Rowhill Mount, Wilmington. (Information obtained in 2002 from John Neighbour's son by a later marriage).

There are two entries for the property in the 1911 census. One shows John Neighbour as the head of household, but with just his wife, Millicent, aged 37, in residence, described as manager of the home. The other is Joseph Walker, aged 25, nurseryman, working for his own account, and his wife and baby son, so it seems the property was let to Mr Walker but there was some arrangement for Mrs Neighbour to live there.

There is also a letter from John Neighbour to Mr G.L.Wates in 1929 in which he says that following a breakdown in health he bought the property, with his father-in-law's assistance, "for outdoor life and work". The £3000 was therefore presumably put up by his father-in-law and possibly loaned through the medium of a trust, and it was the trustees who really controlled the property as mortgagees.

In 1922 Mr R.J.Mullins, (Mr J.Mullins having died in 1916), leased the property to George Bellingham, who was already in occupation.

From correspondence it seems that in 1929 the mortgagees were interested in selling and Mr Wates approached them and John Neighbour, offering to purchase part of the land adjacent to Rowhill Grange but not the house or the road frontage. They were only prepared to sell the whole.



Photo 5 Rowhill Mount - 1947

On 14th February 1934 the property was conveyed by Mr Mullins to Mr Wates for the price of £1,800[£99,000] subject to Mr Bellingham's occupation, a substantial loss on the price originally paid by Mr Neighbour in 1906. Some negotiations must then have taken place with Mr Bellingham and he vacated the orchard. However his mother, and possibly other members of his family, remained in occupation of the house for a few months, for which it seems they may not have paid any rent as Mrs Bellingham was alleged to be penniless.

In July 1934 it was vacant and Mr Wates instructed Mr Partridge of Phillip Champion & Sons, Dartford, to find a tenant. This does not seem to have been successful, but in October 1935 electricity was installed, and it was let from March 1936 to Dr B.Matheson. For subsequent history see pages 50 and 74.

Woodlands and Hazelwood

The area comprising what is now Pax Wood (but originally Woodlands) and Hazelwood was sold to William Ratcliffe in 1879. The next piece of information available is a conveyance to Mr Muhlenkamp on 12th October 1902 by Arthur Linbrick and Thomas William Hutchinson (1) (possibly mortgagees) and Thomas and Ellen Denne (2)(possibly the owners). This presumably did not include Hazelwood, which according to the 1901 census was occupied by Mr Davis.

There is no entry relating to Woodlands in the 1901 census. This would suggest that Mr Muhlenkamp built the house known as Woodlands and Woodlands Lodge. However Mrs Wates describes¹⁴ it as a heavy Victorian house not desirable even for an institution, which perhaps indicates that it was built by the original owner and was vacant in 1901. In 1911 Mr Arthur Burrige, gardener, occupied the Lodge with his wife and daughter. Mr Muhlenkamp (described as a widower and merchant hosier) occupied the main house with his son, Percy, (described as a brewer), daughter Maria, a maidservant and a couple, Mr and Mrs John Crane, cowman on farm and cook. There was a separate entry for Mr Alfred Streetly, coachman, so he presumably lived in the coach house.¹⁵

From the deeds of the Great Mount (see page 18) we know that Mr Muhlenkamp died on 29th October 1915 and that Christian John Muhlenkamp and John Stone were his executors. On the 17th October 1919 there is a conveyance of Woodlands to Maud Fellows and, on 1st June 1933, a conveyance by her to Leila Isabel Mercy Whitehead and Florence Marion Whitehead.¹⁶

Part of Woodlands was conveyed by them to Mr G.L.Wates on 17th January 1936, for the price of £600 [*£32,500*]¹⁷. The Whiteheads' signatures on this document were witnessed by W.E.Cudmore of Sotik, Rowhill¹⁸. Their address was given simply as Hazelwood, Wilmington.

Hazelwood, Wilmington was also the address on their letterheading. Mr Wates' address was always Rowhill Grange, Wilmington and others just said Rowhill, or Rowhill Woods. The road was not referred to as Rowhill Road at this time, but just as the Private Road. By 1947 the name was being used as there is a title redemption final notice of 1st January 1947 addressed to Woodlands, Rowhill Road, Wilmington.

¹⁴ See below on page 45.

¹⁵ It was the coach house that later became Pax Wood – see page 129

¹⁶ See page 64 for information on the Miss Whiteheads.

¹⁷ See page 45 for the background to this.

¹⁸ This is one of the bungalows in Rowhill Road, and Mr Cudmore was their chauffeur.

At the time of the 1911 census Hazelwood was occupied by Mr Herbert Stanley Davis, of “independent means”, and members of his family including a son who was a solicitor and two servants. In 1901 his mother and daughter were also there.

The wood to the north of the road, together with that to the east of Hazelwood, on the other side of the public footpath, had been sold to Mr W.H.Liversidge by Mr Gilford in about 1880. It seems that Mr Liversidge died around 1920 as there are auction particulars for all this land to be sold in four lots on 10th May 1920, at Cannon Street Hotel, London EC4.

All the lots were probably bought by the Miss Whiteheads, as later all of the woodland at Rowhill was owned either by them or by Mr G.L.Wates, although there is reference in a letter¹⁹ from Miss L.Whitehead in 1935 to a Mr Case owning eight acres somewhere along the road. Their father, Sir James Whitehead of Wilmington Manor, died in 1917 so it was probably after that that they bought Hazelwood.²⁰

¹⁹ See page after 45

²⁰ See page 53 as to subsequent history of the woods

Extracts from “The Life of George Leslie Wates” by Mrs L.W.Wates

History of Rowhill Grange and the Alexanders



Photo 6 Lucy W.Wates

The Grange was built in 1882²¹. The land on which it was built was part of a very large estate which included the Joydens Woods and the whole of this hill²² and the district around it. Only twenty acres were bought by Mr and Mrs Alexander, who built the house for their own occupation.

On the spot where the Grange now stands was a woodman's cottage in which Mr and Mrs Alexander lived while the house they had planned and intended to build was being erected on the northern side of the estate, probably within view of the Thames before trees had obscured it. The Alexanders liked the cottage so much that they changed their

minds about the site and began to enlarge the cottage, extending it in almost every direction, making the cottage the core of the house.

We discovered this when in 1934 we installed electricity. We had arranged for this to be done when we were on a long family holiday in Devon. The engineers had promised that all the wiring would be completed by the time we returned and that we should be able to switch on the light in any of the rooms, instead of having to strike a match and light the gas jets. All was ready except in the 'office' where an apologetic foreman explained that they had found double floors and other obstructions to what would otherwise have been a straightforward job, the house appearing to have been built round another. Eventually this difficulty was got over but it made us curious as to which part of the house was the original cottage and which were additions.

Mr Alexander was a meat-purveyor from the Argentine. He left a sort of trademark behind him in the form of a large map of the Argentine hanging in the WC downstairs. Also we think that he, with his large joints of meat, was responsible for the great hooks and the slate shelves in the cellar. The map was kept in its place by the Collinses and we left it where it was for some months

²¹ This could not be right as Mr Alexander bought the site in 1885

²² She means here Rowhill or Rowhill Woods.

after we came to the house, just because it was inoffensive and too much trouble to remove.

The Alexanders were childless and rich and lived in some style. Various old folk in the neighbourhood would tell me tales of Mrs Alexander's charitable activities and of the respect with which she was held. She was interested in horses and bred a certain breed of pony which grazed on the fields bordering Dartford Road, and for which she had built the extensive stables, hay lofts and barns. The Alexanders were as the squire and his lady in Hextable, employed a number of servants on the estate, and went to church in their carriage and pair, so I was told!

Times have changed since then²³ but some of the older folk in the village gave one the impression that they considered Mr and Mrs Collins and ourselves as inferior, and they looked nostalgically back on the good old days of horses and carriages and a troop of underpaid household servants fifty years previously

Mr Alexander died quite suddenly in this house, and when the First World War broke out his widow left the house and lived for some years in the south of France, letting Rowhill Grange and allowing Belgian refugees to use the outlying buildings as a poultry farm. It was they who built the little chicken house in the wood and it was during those years that the grounds became so overgrown and neglected.

There was an interregnum of about ten years, then we heard of it and rescued it from becoming a building estate for which Mr Collins intended to sell it. In fact he had sold some of it as bungalow plots in the private road²⁴ which must once have been a pretty country lane leading from Hextable to Wilmington.

We had the pleasure of a visit from Mrs Alexander after we had been



Photo 7 Alice Alexander

²³ This was written in the 1960s

²⁴ Now Rowhill Road

living at Rowhill Grange for about three years. She was accompanied by our very good friends Miss Leila and Miss Florence Whitehead.²⁵ In the past the Alexanders had been their neighbours and had remained close friends. Mrs Alexander was a tall commanding figure even in her seventies. She had strikingly large brown eyes, her hair not entirely grey. I felt a great respect and almost affection for her because she had been the designer of the garden which was giving us so much pleasure, and for the vision she had in shaping the lawns, planting the conifers and rhododendrons and retaining some of the original woodland trees.

²⁵ See page 64

Descriptions of and life at Rowhill Grange

Purchase

At home at Sunnyside we had continued our peaceful but busy lives. Always in Leslie's mind was the thought that we might move into a larger house, a small estate where we could have a farm, a tennis lawn and all those things attractive and healthy for a growing family. We spent some of our weekends on expeditions into the country looking for this ideal home. Eventually we found what we wanted, except for the little stream which he had found so attractive on Mr Johnson's estate.²⁶

We had lived for twelve years at Sunnyside and altogether sixteen in Eltham. Those years were not exactly cloudless as there had been illness and domestic worries in our home, and the War of 1914-1918 overshadowing our lives, but we had survived. Our children had grown to school ages. Leslie and I were middle-aged and wanted to settle down in a home for the years that were left of life together.

We bought Rowhill Grange in 1928.

We had seen and inspected other desirable residences, rambling Victorian Mansions with grand staircases, kitchens like dungeons with barred windows, houses facing north (often sunless), houses with formal gardens, suburban and snobby. We always despaired of finding our dream house.

Then an invitation came to me to take tea with a Mrs Collins, whose husband, a silver merchant in the City, was an acquaintance of Leslie's. After some hesitation, and a pre-conceived objection to being in the vicinity of Dartford, I accepted the invitation and, on one June day, I was driven in the Lancia by George Baines, our chauffeur, to see Mrs Collins who had sent the invitation.

Taking the Maidstone road we enquired at Swanley for Wilmington and, after a few more enquiries, found ourselves in Hextable on the steep drive to Rowhill Grange. The drive was bordered with small lime trees and grassy verges. There were two cottages on the left and woodland on the right. Then the drive curved round to the right skirting the wood and disclosing on the left well-kept lawns and small yew trees, rose beds and a luxurious cherry tree which almost obscured the view of the house. The stables and barns were directly before us – thatched and serviceable. At first glance they might have appeared as the main house, but, as I said to myself, "Picturesque, but the windows would have to be enlarged." Then I looked up to the left across the smooth lawns and there was the Grange! It stood there looking out on the lawns, then interspersed with various little beds of flowers, and there was the little wood in the background

²⁶ This is a reference to Broadstone, Forest Hill, Sussex, the home of Walter Claude Johnson as to whom see page 71



Photo 8. The house and barns – early 1930s

and the thatched stables on its left. It seemed to be high on its foundations and its terraced steps. It seemed frank and open and looked as though it would like to have children running around it and looking from those large windows. I think I loved it from that moment.

On the lawn, by a standard rose bush was a little lady with a pair of secateurs in her hand as if pruning the tree, but was she? When the car stopped she came forward to meet me. "Oh, Mrs Wates, I am sorry you came in that way. That is the back entrance. You should have come in from the private road at the front entrance." I said I thought the 'tradesmen's' entrance looked very pleasant, with its avenue of lime trees and the little wood on the right and, indeed, the impression of the house which came suddenly to view was more imposing from that direction.

She gave me tea, and showed me all over the house, and I admired it all, but the sight of the expensive furniture with which the rooms were furnished, gave me a slight feeling of inferiority, and I had to remind myself that it was the house, and not the furniture, which was of importance to me. I had already fallen in love with the house, the view of the wide sloping lawn with the cherry tree and the monkey puzzle and the quietness of it all. When I returned to Eltham I said to Leslie, "I've seen our house!". When he had seen it, he agreed that it was 'our house' and if the price were not too high we would buy it and live in it.

It is strange that on that first visit I did not notice many details of the building I had come to see, the position and layout of the interior and its surroundings. But the general impression, the conviction that it was 'our house', was very definite.

After seeing it and making a more detailed inspection of the gardens and the nineteen acres of farmland, and orchard with its rough woodland background, and after a little discussion over the price, we bought Rowhill Grange for £5,595[£263,000]. This seemed an enormous sum to us but, as the bank was willing to increase our loan from £4,000 to £10,000 we thought that it was safe to invest in this property we liked so much, and where we intended to live for the rest of our lives.

It was a big step to take. It involved so much more than possession: extra staff for the house and garden, more equipment for the gardens and more furniture for the house. As before, in our previous move to Sunnyside, we stretched our furnishing plan as far as it would go but, after the equipment of its previous owners, it looked rather sparse.

When our furniture had been brought into the house, its sparseness accentuated by the size of the rooms it had to fill, we settled in the largest room, thereafter called the Common Room. With our dog, Dusty, we sat in a row on a roll of carpet and took our first meal in our new home in blissful anticipation of

adventures, and unconscious of troubles to come.



Photo 9 Dusty on the terrace with steps to the West Lawn behind - about 1930

It was early September, holiday time, and we all went to explore the lie of the land about us in this, what was to us, a practically unknown district. After the comparatively restricted space of North Park, Eltham, it was hard to believe that one could walk for some distance in any direction, even out of sight of the house, and yet feel that we were on land

which we could call our own. We were not far from Dartford Heath, which we knew from memories of car rides and picnics, and Dartford itself was within reasonable distance for shopping. Hextable was at that time little more than a group of small houses with a post office, grocery and chemist; the business was mostly centred around the Horticultural College for Women. This college was, to a certain extent, one of our incentives for buying Rowhill Grange.



Photo 10 Leslie clearing

When we came to inspect the condition of the estate in more detail, we found that it had been much neglected. Apart from the lawn and the flowerbeds very little had been cared for. The wood at the back of the house was just a thicket of shrubs, young chestnut saplings, brambles and burdock, so thickly growing together that it was almost impossible to push through the jungle. Although we have never got free of brambles and nettles, thanks to Leslie's hard work during weekends, large spaces were cleared, the elder children helping with rakes and billhook to cut down the head-high thistles growing in the paddock, until patience gave out. This was gardening worth doing! Who knew what treasures might be hidden beneath these forests of weeds! It was all very exciting!

Staff at Rowhill Grange

Miss Victoria Wade was the very efficient cook-housekeeper in our employ. She was all willingness and, in fact, eagerness to undertake the running of the big kitchen and extra staff; otherwise I might have hesitated to increase my responsibilities as the mistress of Rowhill Grange. Miss Wade was a Devonshire woman, tall and buxom. She liked the big kitchen with the Eagle Range, the big larder with its slate shelves and old-fashioned ice box, and was quite prepared to manage two extra servants, Vera (an importation brought by Miss Wade herself) and Lily Hawkes from the village, and the boot boy, Albert Drury. In fact I think she was eager to manage all of us. She was with us for six years and, during that time, we arranged for her to drive a little Austin 7 car and do a little trade with people from Eltham, Bexley and around about, with eggs, vegetables and also chickens, which she herself had prepared for cooking.²⁷ As for me, I rarely appeared in the kitchen until she had departed, when I took on the management myself.



Photo 11 Miss Wade at the front door 1934

²⁷ The round was subsequently taken over by Mr Hopper. See page 66



Photo 12 Lily on The Little Mount with Dusty



Photo 13 Mr Baines and Dulcie

When we first came to Rowhill Grange we brought with us Mr George Baines as chauffeur and gardener. He lived in one of the two cottages with his wife and two children, Dudley and Dulcie. He worked at Rowhill for several years but later went into partnership with his more business-like brother and left us. Leslie did all that he could to help him financially with the project but eventually, through various misfortunes, this partnership was abandoned. George Baines remained in his bungalow on the Dartford Road.²⁸

His successor was Mr Leonard Hopper who also succeeded to the cottage with his wife and two children, David and Joyce. Mr Leonard Hopper worked for us for 35 years, the most faithful, considerate, and unselfish servant ever employed, one of “nature’s gentlemen.” His wife’s father had worked on the estate in former times, before the advent of the Wates family, and it seemed quite suitable that he should follow on, living in the same cottage as his father-in-law had done.

²⁸ His last day of work was 30th June 1934. He moved into a bungalow built for him in Top Dartford Road. See page17 and following



Photo 14 Mr and Mrs Hopper - about 1940

He was a gardener pure and simple, and loved his plants and flowers as children, as well as all the human children on the estate, from the sons and daughters of the Wates family to the grandchildren who came in later years. He was with us through the sorrowful time of his employer's death into the succeeding blank years of the sixties. Eventually he became too feeble to carry on but remained loyal and devoted to the end of his service.



Photo 15 Mr Hopper with Lucy and grandchildren Brian and Alec 1945

It was Mr Hopper's father-in-law who told him of the job. He had been employed as gardener since July 1920 by the rector at Caundle Marsh, Sherborne, Dorset who, for financial reasons, had to terminate his employment. In his letter of application dated 1st January 1934 he gave his age as 40 and stated that he was married, with a boy of 11 and a girl of 6. He had been employed as a gardener and handyman and had knowledge of cars although he was not a skilled mechanic. There is a letter dated 26th January rejecting his application because of lack of experience with cars. However, something must have changed after that as his employment commenced on 1st July.

He used to talk about his former employment, where he was very happy, and his family recollect that he spoke very highly of his employer.

The cottage that he took over from Mr Baines and where he lived throughout his employment, was the right hand one of the pair of semi-detached houses at the head of the driveway from Top Dartford Road, later known as Rowhill Grange Lodge.

His wife, Rose , helped out in the house. Whether her father, Mr Clarke, actually lived in the cottage is not verified. According to his family, Mr Hopper worked as an under-gardener at an estate in Udimore, Sussex before moving to Dorset. Mr Clarke was possibly head gardener there and that is how they met. Rose died on 23rd October 1951.

In those days, before the introduction of stainless steel, table knives had to be polished by rubbing on a knife board and sprinkling with a coarse powder. This not only polished them but helped to keep them sharp. Boots and shoes were cleaned in the remote regions of the kitchen, and coal had to be brought in for the great Eagle Range; wood had to be sawn up by hand and many other menial chores had to be done. Albert Drury, the fourteen-year old boot boy, did all this for us. He lived at Crockenhill and would sometimes walk the four miles from his home in order to save the bus fare from the ten shillings per week which was his wage. In later years this young man was given other duties and earned a larger wage. He was destined to play a more important and responsible part on the Estate than he, or we, dreamed of in those early days. His talents as an engineer were a valued addition to his duties as a bailiff.

There had been much initial cleaning and scrubbing organised by Miss Wadeand, in this connection, I am reminded of a curious incident which remained an unsolved problem for many years. Our Miss Wade, with all her efficiency, was a romantic soul, attracted by mystery and intrigue, and she followed with intense interest all types of crime which were published in the papers. We had discovered in a small cupboard, high up on the wall of the large

bedroom which was Leslie's and mine, a large packet of arsenic powder, probably put there to be used for weed killing.

One day, after cleaning operations, I noticed that this packet was missing. There had been a notorious case of murder by arsenic poisoning which was very much in the mind of the public just at that time and, of course, talked of a great deal in the kitchen. I asked Miss Wade if she knew what had become of the packet of arsenic. She said she had removed it as she thought it was dangerous. When I enquired as to its whereabouts she said she had buried it and refused to tell me where it was buried. After some hesitation I did not pursue the matter further. It passed from my memory and, to this day, I know not where that arsenic is buried, if it ever was!

Years afterwards I came upon a little story which might have been a solution to the problem of the arsenic stored away in the secret cupboard. I was talking to Hopper in the garden. He told me that in the days of our predecessor, when his father-in-law had been employed here as a gardener, he and the cook were always at loggerheads and there were many bitter disputes between them. At that time, ten years previous to our coming to Rowhill, a few hens were kept to supply the household with eggs. One day some of these hens were found dead in their runs. It was proved that they had died of arsenical poisoning. Mr Clarke, the gardener was suspected of having put poison in their food out of spite to the cook and he, poor man, was dismissed on suspicion. There was no proof of his having committed this crime and I guess that perhaps the cook was the more indispensable servant and therefore evaded suspicion. Perhaps the packet of arsenic had been hidden away in the little cupboard as a sequel to this episode which had caused so much suspicion and doubt.

During the first years of our life at Rowhill there were sometimes as many as seven men employed on the estate. Some I have almost forgotten, but some left an indelible impression on my memory. There was old Mitchell, one of the earliest, who kept the lawns mown and the flowerbeds weeded and who was always accompanied by a bottle of cold tea which he hid behind a bush, wherever he was working. And there was a young man, Stephen, a typical poacher type, his skin a warm brown and his eyes very blue. (I persuaded him to come with me to Sidcup Art School to earn a few shillings as a model). My husband sometimes, on a Sunday, would walk round the estate with him, through the woods in which he had roamed since his boyhood, and I truly believe that the interest Leslie showed in him, and his stories of the district, was a deterrent to his poaching instincts.

Several of the staff lived in the cottage at the end of the drive of Woodlands²⁹ at one time or another, but the one I remember best was Mozer.

²⁹ See page 45

Mozer was the pig man, so bent by the carrying of two big buckets of pig swill that our children, though not unkindly, dubbed him the 'Missing Link' and, as he lurched his way along, he certainly bore out this description of an aboriginal man bent almost to the ground with his load.

One winter day, when woods and paths were thick with snow, the lower drive being almost impassable, Mozer's wife came into our kitchen, coatless, and in great distress, crying pitifully, "He's dead, my husband's dead. He had a cold and when I went to ask him if he wanted breakfast, there he was lying dead. I think he's dead. Will you please come over and see if he is?" Trembling, I threw on a coat and returned through the woods with the poor woman to the cottage. In the deep snow, were the prints of Mozer's heavy boots, made as he returned from the feeding of his pigs the night before. Mrs Mozer walked ahead of me sobbing, I followed, not knowing whether I was to see a dead or a living man. When I walked into the house trembling, and into the bedroom, I saw, without any doubt, a dead Mozer lying on the bed! We telephoned for the doctor from Dartford. He came grudgingly as the roads were almost impassable with frozen snow. His laconic verdict as he walked into the bedroom shocked me, "Oh yes! He's dead right enough," and poor little Mrs Mozer shocked me still more as she wailed, "Oh dear! Now I shall have to give up my dear little house." She could hardly be blamed for what was to her the obvious result of her bereavement. Needless to say, Mrs Mozer stayed on at the Lodge for several more years and I painted her pretty daughter, Ivy (the best portrait I have ever painted!)

Mr Mouzer (this is the spelling in the books) was originally employed when the pigs were taken on right at the beginning but he left on the 31st December 1930 "to better himself". Mr Wates gave him a testimonial in which he stated that he was very hard-working and loyal and had control of a number of chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys. At that time he occupied the first semi-detached lodge at the top of the drive from Top Dartford Road. It seems that he did not succeed in bettering himself as he returned on 1st April 1939 and then occupied the Woodlands Lodge. The last entry in the time record is 10 hours in the week ended 10th February 1940. His successor, Mr Scott, occupied the cottage from about September 1940 according to the farm accounts, so it would seem that Mrs Mouzer could only have continued to occupy for a few months rather than years.

The death of Mozer was indeed a tragedy, so sudden and unexpected that it cast a cloud over us. The members of our staff were not only employees but friends, and there were few cases of ill-feeling or dissatisfaction among them.

Estate and farm and life at Rowhill

It was not until we had been established for some months at the Grange that we realised what a tremendous task of redemption we had to undertake in order to restore the ground to the condition which its designer had intended, and we ourselves desired. In every direction we saw possibilities of development.



Photo 16 The Rock Garden as it was in 1929 with the barns behind

The most intriguing of all was the sunken garden - Mrs Alexander's 'symphony in red', as we heard later from her own lips when she visited us. As we looked down from the level of the lawn across the drive we saw that the ground sloped steeply away to a lower level which was nearly hidden by a mass of plants, shrubs, weeds, with trailing brambles spread like a net over all, and it was impossible to see any sign of planning in it. It was a challenge and we accepted it. The red and pink rhododendrons, which flowered there in the spring of 1929, were a sign that it was a task well worth doing. The sign that it had been cultivated was the wide stone steps, two only visible through the undergrowth down into the dell. We started in earnest that spring and hacked away the undergrowth.

I remember my father, who was staying with us at that time, neglecting church one Sunday in order to help, in the excitement of chopping away with a billhook explaining as he did so, “More steps! More paving stones!” At length, quite a labyrinth of paved paths was disclosed, and a small pond with rank reeds and rushes growing through a cement base, which we did not discover until someone put a foot through it into water.



Eventually the sunken garden was redesigned as a birthday present for me, the pond enlarged and stocked with goldfish, but these unfortunately disappeared in time, some eaten by cats and, we strongly suspected, secret visits by a heron in the early morning. The willow tree which draped itself over the pond has grown from a small sprig dug up from my brother, Reginald’s, wonderful garden near Twyford in Berks.

Photo 17 The Rock Garden as it became - photo from 1954

Our greatest problem was what to do with the old-fashioned thatched stables and out-houses. We had no horses or ponies and no use for either. These were already the days of cars and we always had at least one of these in the garage. We decided to get some livestock of sorts.

“Poultry,” said I. “Pigs too,” said Leslie, “and a man to look after them.” So we started our farm and had a farm hand, Mozer, and, after various experiments, Mr Norman Dale was engaged in 1931 to look after it.³⁰

³⁰ See also page 83



Photo 18 The stables about 1929 with the dog Dusty

In his letter of application, in reply to an advertisement, Mr Dale stated that he was a farmer's son, aged 40, married with a life experience with pigs, poultry, garden, handyman and general work. His address was in Twickenham and last employment in Hampshire.

Mr Dale was a skilled farmer, a man who had suffered misfortune when independent and was glad to find in Leslie a sympathetic employer. He was with us for many years, living in one of the cottages with his wife, and daughter, June. He was devoted to Leslie but I had the impression that he had little regard for me.

That impression was dispelled many years later in 1956 when, one afternoon, I met him crossing the lawn on his way home to tea. He looked very strange and ill and appealed to me to help him to his house. "I feel I cannot walk that far," he said. I let him take my arm; he was a big man and leaned heavily upon me. This was the first indication to us of his serious illness. It was the beginning of lung cancer. Dale went into hospital for several weeks and returned to us hoping to work again but the disease had taken too great a hold on him and he died³¹. Leslie went to the little house to say good-bye to him. To my surprise Dale asked to say good-bye to me too, and I felt that I must have been mistaken in my impression of his dislike of me. We missed him very much.

The family of pigs so grew and flourished that it acquired the name in Maidstone market of the Rowhill Herd. Leslie was fonder of the pigs than I was. The old boar would come sidling up to him to have his ears scratched with the

³¹ He died on 22nd June 1956

special stick his master always carried on his walks around the garden and farm, and Leslie felt that he was now a real farmer and he enjoyed it. The farm, the garden and the woods were a great relaxation from the responsible and often difficult work which awaited him when he went either to Woolwich or to London.³²

The following is an extract from Barbara's "History of a Marriage" written in about 1995:-

Father finally owned a registered herd of Middle-White pigs, now a 'rare breed'. He was very proprietary about these pigs and organised Sunday afternoon expeditions to inspect them and indulge in "back scratching". However, he could not really take credit for the buying and selling of the stock. Mr Champion, one of the local auctioneers, must have kept an eye on him.

After the war he continued with 'weaners' and store pigs and built a modern 'pig palace' ("with the best view in the place" said Mother). By then Mr Dale was in charge of the estate and, being a pig man himself, was justifiably proud of the herd and its reputation.

The poultry yard contained a hundred or so hens, some of which were produced from an incubator managed by the indefatigable Miss Wade. She began to take a prominent part in the affairs of the farm and, in my little open Austin Seven car, she drove round the neighbourhood even as far as Bexley and Sidcup, selling eggs, capons (which she prepared herself) and vegetables grown by Mr Baines, the gardener. This procedure we called 'the round' and I firmly believe was thoroughly enjoyed by Miss Wade and, indeed, by the customers she supplied.

Over the years the farm, with its pigs and poultry, its gardens and grounds, was always being 'improved'; apple trees planted, lawns extended, the whole extent of the old brick terrace replaced by concrete blocks, the woods cleared of brambles and the drive resurfaced.

³² According to a Kentish Independent newspaper cutting, in February 1938 a pig that won first prize at the Dartford Show was, after being slaughtered, displayed at a butcher's shop in Woolwich and was the subject of a competition to guess its weight – 692 lbs.

Apart from the work in the garden and the interest in the farm, summer months were always a busy time, with tennis parties and an occasional larger party connected with the scouts or guides. Leslie did little in the arrangements for these affairs but was always interested and gave advice or help. I, who had a good deal of responsibility in the organisation and entertaining, was happy to feel his wise control and judgement on which I could rely and to which I often appealed.



Photo 19 Girl Guides 'District Nurse Appeal' 1932

He liked sometimes to entertain the office staff with tea on the terrace and a roam through the woods. It gave him a chance to have personal talks with them. We had one of these little parties every summer and they were always very pleasant, and one felt that the guests had a real affection for the 'boss' when they chatted together on the terrace.



Photo 20 Staff of Woolwich Polytechnic on the new terrace – about 1938

Leslie was always driven to Bexley Station (which we used in those days, rather than the Swanley Station) by a uniformed chauffeur, who did little else but look after the car and farm machinery. I had soon learned to drive my own car and rarely required his services. In fact, it was one of the joys of my life to drive the little Austin Seven, a joy that I missed in later days more than can be told.

On the whole we were well organised and life was full of interest. Rowhill was a good place to return to after a spell of school or college life, to invite our friends and to watch the gradual improvements which were taking place, and perhaps to assist in them.

After some years the scrubby trees in the woods behind the house had grown above our heads and, after a little clearance tracks and paths were made and we were able to walk freely through them. We planted bulbs among the trees and gave names to various points for the purpose of identification (British Museum, Ponders End, etc.).

Marigold Clow (neè Blomfield - see page 76) wrote:- “ As children, we often enjoyed playing outside in the wood to the north of the house. The Wates children had laid it out as Central London – Piccadilly, Marble Arch, Trafalgar Square etc. It was the only “London” my sisters knew at the time!”

Year by year the trees grew taller and spindled up into the sky, waving in the breeze and lashing one against the other in stormy weather.³³



Photo 21 Lucy and Leslie Wates outside the Common Room with Twinkle - Christmas 1938

³³ Compare photos nos Photo 101 The house 1929 and Photo 103 The house 1978

Extension of estate

It is only in later post-war years that the shortage of dwelling houses has been so keenly felt. A large part of the out-lying country around Hextable was available to purchasers, especially the wooded hill between Hextable and Wilmington. Many folk in Hextable hardly knew of its existence. Except for a few bungalows which had been built by reclusive people, it was wild woodland, not much used except for exploration by small boys and a derelict acre left undeveloped by Mr Muhlenkamp, a German owner, during the 1914 - 18 war. Indeed, the private road which ran through the wooded hill was almost unknown to many of the dwellers in Swanley and Hextable.

I was a member of the then 'new' organisation, the Woman's Institute. One of the members, hearing that I lived near Rowhill Road, exclaimed in horror, "I wouldn't go through them woods if you paid me." So whenever the chance came to us, as it did when we bought half the Woodland estate, we took it, and eventually enlarged our property to nearly 50 acres. The land which had once been a thicket of shrubs grew into woods with tall chestnut trees, their slender trunks swaying in the breeze and little paths winding between them, very useful for certain games and a pleasure to our visitors, who loved the carpet of bluebells in the spring and the daffodils, some of which Leslie and I planted in spare time during weekends in autumn.



Photo 22 Daffodils 1978



Plan 3 Rowhill Grange estate of the Wates family

This plan shows the whole estate as it ultimately became with the dates of acquisition of the various parts.

Woodlands

Woodlands was the property of the Fellowes³⁴ family. We had visited their large house but had made only very slight acquaintance with them and, very soon after we came to live at the Grange, they decided to sell the whole property of some twelve acres. The Miss Whiteheads, living at Hazelwood next door³⁵, fearful lest the land might be bought for building purposes, acquired it³⁶ and subsequently suggested that we buy approximately half³⁷. The house, a heavy Victorian building, they decided to have pulled down, as no one really wanted it. It was not a desirable house even for an institution.³⁸

³⁴ The correct spelling is Fellowes – see the deed referred to on page 23

³⁵ They lived there until 1952, when it was sold to Mr W.J.Whitehouse, and they moved to 106,Birchwood Road

³⁶ In 1933 – see page 23

³⁷ This happened in 1935 and £600[£32,500] was paid. The demolition was part of the deal between them, the dairy and stable block only being left at Mr Wates' request.

³⁸ The plan on page 126 shows the position of the old house

Both Mr Wates and the Miss Whiteheads were very keen to avoid any further development in the woods, which was the reason for their buying up all the land when it became available. After the acquisition of the Great Mount in 1941, by Mr Wates, they owned all of the original Rowhill Woods between them, except for Oakleigh Farm and the bungalows along the road.

The purpose of the transfer of half of Woodlands was to share the burden of having to put up the money to buy the Fellows family out.

There is a letter from Leila Whitehead to Mr Wates of July 1935, reporting on a meeting of the Town Planning Committee of Dartford Rural District Council to discuss schemes for limiting development. This was before the Green Belt policy. It is worthwhile quoting from this letter:-

“I pointed out that to register any private land as permanent open space would seriously depreciate its value but I should appreciate any scheme which would ensure the last remaining beauty spot in Wilmington from being ruined by ‘cottage and villa development’. I stated that we had been practically forced to buy over 50 acres to preserve the rural amenities around us, and that [Mr Wates] had also bought much land for the same purpose; but that there were still certain properties which might at any moment come into poor class of development and so spoil all that we had done. Old Mr Case is in very bad health and not likely to live long – that would mean 8 acres developed we know not how. Sir George Collins is on the war path over his small piece to build 12 to the acre [that part of the road frontage that he retained and which had not already been sold for the bungalows]. And all the land belonging to the Mulenkamp Trustees might at any time be sold up”.

Eventually the site became absorbed by the woodland around it, the once smooth tennis lawn became a field and the rose garden stifled by quick-growing chestnut saplings.

A well, one hundred and thirty feet deep, was found near the house and great cellars filled with wine bottles, some still containing liquid. The Miss Whiteheads, fearing that this might by chance be alcoholic, poured it all down the drain. These great ladies had firm principles on the subject of alcohol!

Thus the part of the Woodlands estate adjacent to our original property fell into our hands. We had the site of the old house; the well which we filled in; the gardens; the rough but picturesque meadow bordered by magnificent oaks sloping down to Rowhill Road; the kitchen garden plots surrounded by box hedges (remnants of which still remain) and also the old farm buildings. The hayloft over the stables served me as a studio for several years. The old substantially-built dairy stood empty for many years but was eventually renovated and used as a cottage.³⁹

³⁹ This was done in 1952 partly using a war damage grant. The work was done by Jim Grant. After initially being let or used by a farm worker it was used, and still is, to house the caretaker for Pax Wood (see p.129)

With this acquisition the little lodge at the end of the Woodlands drive, which was the lodge of the old house, became our property, and we used it to house one of our farm staff.

The Old Lodge

The Old Lodge, as we called it, was the original gamekeeper's lodge, built at the same time as the Grange and situated at the entrance from Rowhill Road. We did not buy it when we bought the main house as it had been sold by our predecessors to a young couple with two children, who occupied it for a year or two after the Grange became ours, but circumstances compelled them to leave the district, and we bought it from them so that it became, as it originally had been, part of the estate.

At first we used it for a member of the staff. Then we let it to various people and, if its walls could speak they could tell a very varied tale of the different characters that lived in it, loved it, criticized it, altered it or abused it, but I do not think anyone ever hated it.



Photo 23 The Old Lodge (1978 photo)

It was a temporary home during the Second World War for Helen⁴⁰ and Jim and their two small sons; for Dr. Cartwright and his charming wife, Lilia; for Ainsworth's⁴¹ wife Marianne; for refugees with children from London to escape the bombing; for bombed out people from the near district; for Walla (see page

⁴⁰ Mrs Wates' younger daughter – see Appendix III

⁴¹ Mrs Wates' elder son

60) who lived and revelled in it with her many friends and, later, in calmer days, for a farm manager, Adrian Mansfield and his family.

How many times it has changed hands would be difficult to say! It survived the bombing but had a narrow escape when an unexploded British shell became buried under the back door step⁴². It is now almost a period piece but it played quite an important part in the history of our life at the Grange.⁴³

The tenant from about 1949 until 1956 was Mr Wilfred.G.Kelly with his wife, Doris, and children. He was an artist and also had the use of the hayloft in the stable block at Woodlands after Lucy ceased using it herself (see page 45). He lectured in art, and according to a reference given by Leslie in 1951, Lucy attended some of his lectures and was very impressed with his knowledge and ability as a lecturer.

The Little Mount and Rowhill Mount

Behind the Old Lodge and its small garden stretched the orchard and the hill rising steeply to the Little Mount, with its thicket of old stunted apple trees and old plum trees, the remains of an orchard. This hill was topped by an enormous chestnut tree - so tall that it could be seen for miles around - and was generally called One Tree Hill by the people of Hextable and the surrounding district. It was more of a landmark than the neighbouring hill called the Great Mount.



Photo 24 The Little Mount from the Great Mount 1940

This hill never seemed to me to be as high as the Little Mount, although old documents told that it had been chosen as a site for one of the signalling stations

⁴² See also page 127

⁴³ Following the sale in 1978 it was demolished by David East to make way for his house Heatherbank

used during the Napoleonic Wars, so was certainly to be considered as a vantage point against an enemy.

The Little Mount belonged to Mr Bellingham, who kept pigs and grew fruit trees. The little pigs could sometimes be seen rooting in the soil near the wire netting which was the boundary between us and this nine acre estate, and I used sometimes to fear that they would root their way into our cultivated garden! There was a rumour that it was to be sold as a building estate so, after some negotiation with Mr Bellingham, Leslie bought the 9 acres of orchard and rather ugly house for £1700.⁴⁴



**Photo 25 View from the Little Mount towards
Swanley Village 1933**

The hill became a favourite walk for visitors. They were taken up to see the view away over to Swanley and Crockenhill and beyond, to Poll Hill, and over to Swanley Village with its church spire and woods.

⁴⁴ See information from deeds on page22. Mr Bellingham was the tenant, not owner, the acreage was 14 and the price was £1800 [*£99,000*]



Photo 26 Leslie, Marianne, Barbara, friend and Ainsworth on The Little Mount 1937

We picnicked on the hill in summer, tobogganed down it in snowy winters, and Irene Martin du Pans, when staying with us one spring, even climbed the huge chestnut tree.



Photo 27 Marianne skiing on The Little Mount 1939

To the north the river Thames could be seen between the trees and, round about it in spring, the apple trees bloomed in the orchard. Later we watched from the hill the oncoming raiders in the air battles of Britain and saw our barrage balloons, like a thousand pearls, lit up by the setting sun.

After we bought the hill, the house, Rowhill Mount, became the home of a succession of people, let to a doctor⁴⁵ and his wife and family, and later to a businessman⁴⁶ hard hit

⁴⁵ Dr.B.Matheson for two years from March 1936, then Mr Hall for three years

⁴⁶ I assume this was Mr Simon Thwaites

by the war. He worked for a chocolate firm with its main business interests in Holland, and Leslie took no rent from them for the four years of their residence.⁴⁷

They introduced into the garden a caravan in which lived an elderly man catering for himself and spending his time in cultivating the garden, which flourished under his care.⁴⁸

The Great Mount

On the other side of Rowhill Road, opposite the bungalows, our woods extended to about 100 yards in depth with a frontage of about 400 yards, and this land included the Great Mount.

This was bought in 1941. From correspondence it seems Mr Wates would have liked to buy the land that is now Oakleigh Farm also but could not agree on the price. He paid £1700 for the land bought and he stated in one letter that his main purpose was to acquire the “very small four-roomed cottage”

The cottage was used to house Albert Drury and his family and it was their home until after his retirement.

This area had been owned by a German family. Mr Muhlenkamp had obviously intended to build a house there, for the south side of the hill was faced by a stout wall with stanchion holes in it and an arched space which might have been intended for a furnace to heat a large greenhouse or conservatory. There were also other signs of intended building, and a large space for the house itself and a plan for a garden.

This scheme was stopped, owing to the spy scare in the First World War. Anyone with a German name was hounded out of the country or arrested. Mr Muhlenkamp thought it best to leave the country and, as far as we knew, he never returned. For years the land was derelict until we bought it from his niece⁴⁹ to whom it had been bequeathed. It was called the ‘Roman remains’ by adventurous and trespassing village boys.

⁴⁷ As to subsequent history see under Ainsworth on page 74

⁴⁸ This was Mr Wood and the ‘caravan’ was in fact an old railway carriage. For subsequent history see page 125

⁴⁹ It was bought from the trustees of his estate. See page 18



Photo 28 The wall on the Great Mount

The plan attached to the abstract of the 1904 conveyance to Mr Muhlenkamp shows the building (being the site of the present Oakleigh Farm), the cottage (now Great Mount Cottage) and the large conservatory on the side of the hill already in place, thus contradicting the story. The plan should be an accurate copy of the plan attached to the original conveyance. Mr Muhlenkamp had already bought Woodlands in 1902.

An assent dated 17th October 1940 by the executors of Percy Muhlenkamp to the trustees describes the land as “The Great Mount”, Rowhill Wood which he purchased in the year 1904, together with the 2 messuages or dwellinghouses since built by him and the two cottages glasshouses and all other buildings erected. It can be deduced from correspondence that the two houses since erected were Temple Sheen and Beaconhill, so the other buildings were already there in 1904.

In 1980 Ainsworth Wates supplied information in connection with a planning application for the Great Mount Cottage. In this it was stated that the land was owned by Muhlenkamp at the beginning of the century, and that he had planned to build a house. He built the lodge, namely the Great Mount Cottage, dug out the side of hill and levelled out land for the house but only built a retaining wall. He then went bankrupt and no further building took place. The site of the house was at one time used for growing vegetables and for poultry. This information reflects what was believed in the family, but in the light of what is written above would seem to be inaccurate.

On the rest of this woodland site grew many chestnut saplings which were cut down and sold for pit props and, later, props for wartime shelters. When these were cut every seven years the woods looked very bare, except for a few major trees such as oaks or elms which Leslie had warned the woodcutters to avoid felling, but I remember how the foxgloves grew there in profusion and, together with luxuriant bracken, filled up all the defacements caused by the felling. This

bit of woodland was later lent to the Scouts and was used by them as a camping site for many years.



Photo 29 Coppicing at The Great Mount 1941

The woodland to the northeast of the Great Mount was owned by the Whitehead sisters (see page 24). In 1945 they had in mind selling part of it but, as they did not want to sell it for housing, they offered it to Mr Wates. However, the asking price of £2000 was really for development and not the value of woodland so Mr Wates declined it. It seems they did not sell the bulk of it then, as the writer remembers walking there with Mr Wates later, Mr Wates having permission to walk in the woods belonging to them. If he had bought it at that time the future development might have been prevented. One plot, however must have been sold, namely the strip along the road between the public footpath and the Great Mount, as that was owned by someone who used it for breeding butterflies.

When the Whiteheads did ultimately sell (possibly in 1952 when they sold Hazelwood to Mr W.J.Whitehouse) one plot was bought by Mr Crocker, (who used it as a pig farm, the consequent effluent and smell causing much problem in the neighbourhood), and the other by Mr Brise, who used it initially for pig farming and then for the manufacture of go-carts, presumably without planning permission. They also both bought plots on the road between Woodlands Lodge and Birdswood from Lady Collins, where they erected houses, planning permission being obtained on the basis that they required houses in connection with the other land. Mr Crocker and Mr Brise ultimately sold the land for development, and three houses were erected on each plot. This type of development would probably have met with the approval of the Whiteheads whose objection was to the small plots sold by George Collins.

Signalling station on the Great Mount

It was said that the Great Mount had once been used as a signalling station according to an account of investigations by Miss A.G.Hardy of Cranbrook. She was a member of the Kent Archeological Society and was seeking information on the semaphore signalling that had been invented after the Napoleonic Wars and the threat of invasion from the continent.⁵⁰

It seems that in 1816 the Admiralty granted Admiral Sir Home Popham permission to set up a line of semaphores between the Admiralty in London and dockyard at Chatham. One of these was at Southwark, the next at Telegraph Hill, Nunhead, “thence the line ran slightly southward to Red Hill,... just over a mile northwest of Chislehurst Church, and from there to Row Hill, or Rue Hill, near Wilmington.” “The next station was at Betsham and the last before Chatham itself was Gad’s Hill, where there is an eminence still known as Telegraph Hill.”⁵¹

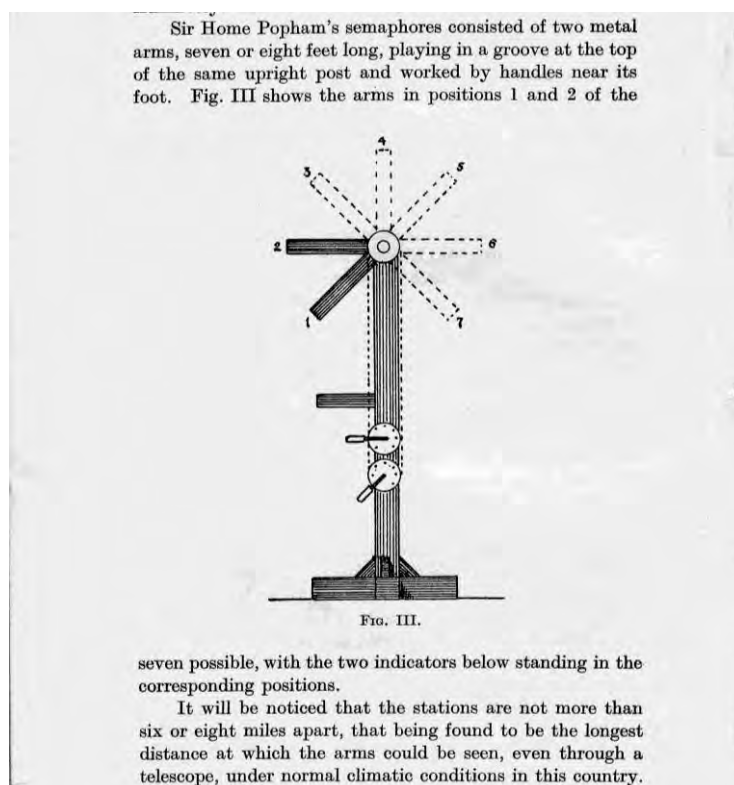


Photo 30 Extract from Miss A.G.Hardy's book on the semaphore

Nothing remains of the semaphore signal which was on the Great Mount, not even the boundary stone marked by a broad arrow, but there is a small clearance on the top of the hill which might have been the space where it was set up. This space is now the position of a trig point used as a measuring point by surveyors of the County.

⁵⁰ This is verified by the deeds – see page 9

⁵¹ Extracts from ‘The old telegraph from London to the coast of Kent’ by Miss A.G.Hardy

Wild flowers

Wild flowers grew in quantities all over the uncultivated parts of the Estate: foxgloves, coltsfoot, pimpernel and small daffodils grew in drifts in unexpected places and, of course, the bluebell and many other native plants. In one of the unfrequented corners of the grounds once, in early days, we discovered a group of bee orchids. Leslie valued these and used to go and see them every year in their flowering season, daring anyone to pick or disturb them. He was really distressed when they disappeared, as most of these wild flowers have (wild flowers are shy things and also they become overpowered by the stronger growth of brambles and stinging nettles). Lilies-of-the-Valley grew wild in some parts of the Great Mount, and there was one charming little flower which grew in small groups on the Little Mount but it avoided my attempt to paint it for my husband's birthday collection, as it always closed up when in shadow. One had to sit by it when the sun was full on it and sketch quickly. (I do not know its name). Honeysuckle entwined itself among many of the lower trees and shrubs. Now we value the two or three of these plants which are left. The conifers planted by our predecessors became great swollen bushes. Trees closed in upon the garden to an almost frightening extent and, in winter, became burdened with white masses of snow.



Photo 31 Top drive in snow 1940

In spite of the disappearance of some of the wildness of the Estate, Rowhill was always beautiful and we revelled in its beauty, although some of the younger members of the family may have not have appreciated it until they were of mature age and had been through four or five years of War.

The Dene Hole

Our friends the Miss Whiteheads, living at Hazelwood, were our nearest neighbours. These ladies, who had lived for many years nearby, had interested themselves in the history of the district. They told us that somewhere in our woods there was a 'dene hole'. It had been overgrown with brushwood and even the battered wooden railing surrounding it was difficult to find. Naturally we were thrilled with this discovery and were curious to know why it was there and what it was used for.

We had heard that our house and land were on the site of an ancient British settlement – Caswallon or Cadwallen – which was said to have been the position of the last stand of the ancient Britons against the invading Romans. This could quite well be imagined as true as, from its two hills, the river

Thames is quite visible, and the land on the south side of the river, two miles away, is traversed by the old Roman road called Watling Street. It would have been quite possible to see an advancing number of people. Being very familiar with the layout of the estate we had noticed several signs of fortifications, built-up banks which would have no other significance than for the purpose of earthworks for defence, but our ideas have never been proved.

This story may have come from the introduction to an edition of Dunken's 1844 History of Dartford. Caswallon is the name of a person and not a place, being another name for the British chieftain Cassivellaunus, referred to in Caesar's account of his second invasion of Britain in 54 BC. However, Cassivellaunus' base was north of the Thames. Caesar's account of his first invasion, in 55 BC, refers to the Britons, after being repulsed, concealing themselves "in woods, as they had secured a place admirably fortified by nature and by art." Certain assumptions are made to suggest that this might have been Rowhill, but Caesar states that he had advanced only twelve miles from the coast, so it seems extremely unlikely.

The article in the book does also suggest that The Great Mount is partly artificial, the upper part being "heaped on the summit of a lofty natural elevation and forms nearly a complete circle". Maybe there was a British fort, but not one which was attacked by the Romans.

Having heard this story about the ancient Britons we at once connected the presence of the dene hole with this, but with little justification. The use of the dene hole has never definitely been proved. It may have been a hiding place from enemies, a storage place for food or have been dug for chalk which was needed on the surrounding land. In many places in Southeast England these deep pits have been found, and in Joydens Wood there are several which have been filled in and built over. There was one other on our land, at the foot of the northern side of the Little Mount, but that had been filled in by the previous owner. The one of which the Miss Whiteheads told us was in fairly good condition. They also told us that an ancient British trackway ran right through the wood and was said to have been a portion of the native route towards the coast.

We made good financial use of 'our' dene hole during one of the Scout fetes held here. Our friend, Mr Gough Cooper⁵², rigged up a pulley attached to a seat which could be hauled up and down safely so that adventurous visitors were able to descend the 35 to 40 feet to the bottom to inspect the wide chamber into which the shaft broadened out. They paid 6d for this adventure and the local Scout movement benefited considerably that day!

Since that time, which was about 1932, the dene hole has been a source of interest to many and, from 1961-64, it was thoroughly explored by Mr

⁵² See page 64

Raymond Le Gear and his friends, and an account of what they discovered there has been written.⁵³ The most exciting find was the harness of a horse and the bones of the animal, the pattern of the harness dating back to the 17th century.

In 1953 Mr and Mrs Wates' grandson, Gavin, at the age of 13, with his brother Alec and two friends, conceived the idea of going down the dene hole using a ladder. This took place when the grandparents were away. Gavin went down but only discovered a lot of rubbish and fallen earth. Unfortunately for them the ladder got stuck when they tried to pull it up, with the result that Gavin had to confess the escapade, thus incurring the extreme displeasure of his grandfather and being banned from Rowhill for some two months !

Later in about 1962 he explored properly and with permission by using a pulley and was able to make a successful exploration.

⁵³ A copy of the report is in the archives at Dartford Library. The excavation was from 1963-65. They placed the date of the dene hole as later than those in Joydens Wood which were before 1280.

Family, friends, and guides and scouts

Barbara and Hextable Horticultural College

Barbara⁵⁴ was about to leave St. Felix School. Her future career was under consideration; she herself had said that she would like to lead an open air life and we thought that the Ladies' Horticultural College at Hextable might be a solution to the problem of her future. So, after she left St. Felix, very nearly Head of the School, Barbara was interviewed by Dr. Barrett, the principal of the Horticultural College, and accepted as a student. She spent four years of her life there, donning the khaki breeches, white shirt, and thick woollen stockings which comprised the uniform of the students in their working hours. I wondered whether she liked the idea of living at home and cycling every day to College.



Photo 32 Barbara and Leslie in the woods December 1936

It was certainly a joy to her father and to me after those years of absence at Boarding School. During her last year at the College, when she was Head Student and it was necessary for her to live as a boarder in one of the hostels, we were constantly in touch with her and her friends, some of whom have told me since how they enjoyed Sunday teas in our Common Room at Rowhill and eating Miss Wade's delicious cream cakes. One of these in particular, Joan Schofield, who became a family friend, was a clever girl with a pungent wit and a kindly heart, and remains in our orbit still⁵⁵.



Photo 33 Joan Schofield on the terrace 1940

Barbara left the women's college in 1936 with a B.Sc. in Horticulture, and took a situation at East Malling Research Station where she met Guy Argles.

⁵⁴ Mrs Wates' elder daughter – see Appendix III

⁵⁵ Sadly, perhaps not long after this was written, she was murdered at her home in Manchester by someone who broke into her house to steal her car

Helen's social work and Scouts and Guides



Photo 34 Helen – about 1936

Helen's interest was with people, especially children, and she got in touch with matters concerning 'Social Service', first with local work, guides and brownies, and then with the wonderful Mission which was conducted by the Rev. James Butterworth in Camberwell, called Clubland. She was connected with this for several years, her father also, and we once invited the Club to Rowhill where the boys camped for a week. In the course of a conversation between my husband and some of the boys, a comment was made by one of these boys on the injustice of one man being able to

own all this land, and Leslie was amused and very interested on this judgement of social

status, of the growing sense of inequality in society.

Helen was 'feeling her way' through these experiences to find some definite training for Social Service. Eventually she found an opportunity in a Mission in the Isle of Dogs where she spent three years working among the very poor, old and young.

It was during these years at the Isle of Dogs that she once brought to Rowhill a party of little girls to camp in the woods. I was shocked when Helen told me that most of these children had never been in the country before.

Scouts and guides

The story of Pax Wood⁵⁶ really arose from our family interest in the Scout and Guide movements and our decision to use the land in their interests. Lord Baden-Powell was still living and his wife was an active President of the Guide Movement. A number of enthusiastic supporters, as Captains, Akelas, Brown Owls and their helpers, sacrificed their evenings and week-ends to the movement. Rowhill Woods and open spaces were just what were needed for their work and Leslie was very happy to help them. Although he himself had never been a Scout, this was an outlet for his sympathies with the young.

Mr Claude Honor Johnson had left a certain sum of money in trust to him to be used for any charitable purpose which he thought desirable. He only stipulated that the money should not be used to aid any religious sect.⁵⁷ Leslie thought the

⁵⁶For this and further records relating to scouts and guides see page 129

⁵⁷ This is not correct. The wording of the will is "...for such organisations, movements, associations or societies for the help and encouragement of boys and girls in London or the Home Counties..." Mr Johnson was the son of Walter Claude Johnson as to whom see page 71.

Scouts and Guides, who accepted as members young people of all denominations and creeds, need not be included in that category, so he used the money for various needs of the Scout movement, such as camp equipment, permanent camp sites and hire of vehicles for taking Cubs to camp. He took great pleasure in dealing out this money, always enquiring very carefully as to its use.

I also was drawn into these activities and was inveigled, in my ignorance, in taking up the duties of a District Commissioner for Guides. I knew very little more than the principles of guiding and was careless about the duties which lay upon me when formally inspecting a company of Guides and detecting discrepancies in uniform, holes in stockings etc.

One of my duties, and I think the most worthy of remembrance, was to visit a Company of mentally weak Guides in Darenth Hospital. This Company was captained by Miss Madge Wallis (hereafter called Walla), a brave soul, a



Photo 35 Madge Wallis

member of the first Women's Corps of Volunteers to go out to France in the First World War, and a Captain in the Second. Between the two wars she did wonderful work among the mentally sick, often restoring them to partial normality. Walla became a lifelong friend. She married a fine Scotsman who was in the Air Force during the War and was awarded an O.B.E. for his skill in the care and training of disabled men. (He became Inspector of Health for the Scottish State for many year). As already mentioned, Walla lived in the Old Lodge on the Rowhill Estate for a few years and many were the gay little parties held there with her as hostess.

It was through this connection that we gained a faithful servant and friend who from early days had known no home but Darenth Hospital. She was Joyce Shepherd and she reigned in the Rowhill kitchen for over 30 years.

Domestic staff

In addition to Joyce others came from this source, including Sarah, who lived in, and Edie who helped periodically on a daily basis. The writer has a vague memory of Sarah, who must therefore have still been around for a period after the war, and a better memory of Edie, particularly as she used to visit Joyce after she was no longer employed. He remembers her taking him for a long walk with the pram all the way to Dartford Heath, to visit the teddy bear factory in one of the Nissan huts there, where she also worked. She had red hair and a crooked mouth, making it difficult to understand what she said.

Memories of Joyce are in appendix II

There is reference elsewhere to Mr Hopper's wife, Rose , working in the house. Later, in the 1950s and 1960s, there was Mrs Reeves who came to help with the housework. Her husband had worked on the railways and she occupied one of the railway cottages in Station Road, Swanley, which has since been demolished. Her son, Leslie, was leader of Swanley Town Council for many years as an Independent.

Garden parties

Every year, sometimes twice in the year, Garden Parties or Fetes were held in the gardens of the Grange, usually for the Scout and Guide Movements. They were moneymaking affairs. A small committee was formed to organize them and it was always the first question: "Whom should we ask to open the Fete?" This was usually done from the Terrace, where a few local celebrities sat in state, the audience on the lawn and in the drive below.



Photo 36 Miss Laye with Lucy on her left, Leslie far right and Mr Shewell-Cooper far left

Things happened on these occasions more entertaining to the audience than to the celebrities. When the elegant and beautiful actress, Miss Laye, came to open a Scout Fete, a local and good-natured farmer embarrassed us all, especially the adoring male section of the company, by rushing in at the last moment, holding out a horny palm and saying, "Sorry I'm late, Miss Laye, but me muck-heap was on fire!" This was rather a denouement in what was intended to be an elegant and dignified occasion.

The popular and delightful Elsie and Doris Waters once stood on the Terrace to open a Scout Fete, entertaining us all with their kindly and amusing addresses to the audiences. I do not remember whether we made much money for the Cause for which these Fetes were run, but we all seemed to enjoy ourselves and did not grudge the time spent in clearing up the chocolate paper and ice cream cartons afterwards. We made many friends who took their place in our family circle in various degrees of friendship.

Miss Laye came in 1938 and Elsie and Doris Waters in 1936. Through his solicitor's practice Leslie had contacts in the acting world which helped in arranging these. It was not the scouts who were benefiting but the Swanley and Hextable Memorial Hall (also known as the Five Wents Hall). He took a great interest in the hall, served as a trustee for many years (as did Ainsworth later) and was a substantial benefactor. Mr Shewell-Cooper (see page 83) and Harry Gough-Cooper (see page 64) were involved with the fund raising.



Photo 37 Elsie and Doris Waters, with Lucy's father William Ainsworth on the left, then Mr Shewell-Cooper and Harry Gough Cooper behind.

EVELYN LAYE AT ROWHILL GRANGE.

FAMOUS STAR OPENS GALA AND FETE.

"FOR SHE'S A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW."

Miss Evelyn Laye, of stage and screen fame, needed no introduction as she stepped on to the terrace at Rowhill Grange on Saturday to open the gala and fete in aid of the Swanley and Hextable Memorial Hall, and was immediately given a very cordial reception. Mr. W. E. Shewell-Cooper, who presided at the ceremony, said that all present, most of whom had seen Miss Laye in her London successes, were anxious to meet her on that occasion and he felt that they were exceedingly fortunate in the ready willingness with which Miss Laye had consented to come and open the fete.

Master Jeremy Shewell-Cooper presented a bouquet of sweet peas to Miss Laye, who, in declaring the fete open, said it gave her

enormous pleasure to do so. Unfortunately, owing to the demands of the theatre, her stay would be only a short one, but she would be with them in spirit as she journeyed back to London. Miss Laye hoped that a lot of money would be spent and that the result would meet all the requirements.

A VILLAGE TRIBUTE.

Mr. F. W. Ladds, J.P., on behalf of the Memorial Hall management committee, expressed very hearty thanks to the organisers of the fete and to Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Wates for the generous use of the grounds at Rowhill Grange. They were also much indebted to Miss Laye for coming to open the fete. As the residents of two small villages they had followed with great interest Miss Laye's successful career, and had frequently applauded her performances. There they had no footlight or spotlights, but only the natural setting, but their gratitude had never been excelled at any of her greatest triumphs. (Applause.)

Mr. W. Gough Cooper seconded the vote of thanks which was carried and endorsed with the singing of "For she's a jolly good fellow."

As Miss Laye proceeded to make a tour of the stalls and side-shows a selection of her well known songs from "Bitter Sweet," &c. were broadcast in the grounds.

The company present at the ceremony included the Mayor and Mayoress of Dartford, Alderman and Mrs. W. A. Ward, Mrs. Alec Webb, Deputy Mayoress, Mr. and Mrs. G. Leslie Wates, Mr. and Mrs. Passmore, Mr. J. J. Hurtle and Miss Hurtle, Mrs. Gerald E. Burgess, Mrs. Thorpe, Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Ladds, Mrs. Edwards, Miss Morgan, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Wood, Mr. and Mrs. Austen Smith, Mr. and Mrs. E. J. Hobbs, Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Shewell-Cooper, Mr. and Mrs. W. Gough Cooper, Mr. and Mrs. R. Chambers, Mr. and Mrs. Blight, Mrs. Milner, Mr. Denis de B. Lipscombe, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon, Mr. J. Grant and Mr. Norman Clarke, hon. secretary.

KEEP FIT DISPLAY.

Entertainment during the afternoon included a display of "Keep Fit" exercises by Erith ladies trained by Mrs. E. C. Taylor, "Keep Fit" instructress under the Kent Education Committee, and also a display of dancing by the Bexley Heath School of Dancing, trained by Mrs. I. M. Snook, both of which were much appreciated. A gipsy encampment arranged by Miss Grace Milner was also one of the attractive features of the event.

STALLS AND SIDE-SHOWS.

The stalls and sideshows were in the charge of the following: Chairman of Sideshows Sub-committee, Mr. R. Chambers; chairman of Displays Sub-committee, Mrs. Guy Taylor; chairman of Tea Sub-committee, Mrs. A. V. Phaisey; chairman of Transport Sub-committee, Mr. W. H. Gough-Cooper; chairman of Ground Sub-committee, Mr. Denis de B. Lipscombe; children's sports, Mrs. J. Arnatt, gipsy encampment, Miss Grace Milner; white elephant stall, Mrs. W. Gordon, produce stall, Mrs. E. C. Blight; fancy stall, Mrs. W. Gough-Cooper; wireless and broadcasting, Mr. G. Ainsworth Wates; coconut shies, Mr. Eric Pritchard; houpla, Mr. F. G. Wiltshire; black and white, Mr. G. Hodgson; darts, Mr. A. H. Pritchard; skittles, Mr. A. V. Phaisey; stake your claim, Mrs. J. W. Wood; pennies in the bowl, Mr. J. W. Wood; spinning wheel, Mr. J. Knapp; goldfish, Mr. A. E. Hewett; quoits, Mrs. A. E. Hewett; human dandy, Mr. A. Springate; revolving horse, Mr. F. W. Ladds; lucky dip, Miss G. Milner; post office, Mrs. J. Pritchard and Miss Kathleen Chambers; shooting gallery, Mr. R. G. Ellis.

Local friends



**Photo 38 Miss Florence (on the left)
and Miss Leila Whitehead**

I have mentioned the maiden ladies, daughters of Sir James Whitehead, at one time Lord Mayor of London⁵⁸, who lived very near us and with whom we shared the Woodlands site. Miss Leila and Miss Florence were well-known and loved in the village of Wilmington as the superintendents of a sectarian mission, and were much respected by people of the neighbourhood. We discovered in our acquaintanceship with them that their father was the first Lord Mayor to have invited a nonconformist minister to the annual Lord Mayor's banquet. This Baptist Minister was my uncle, the Rev James Baillie, at one time well-known as the minister of Bloomsbury Baptist Church in the late eighteen hundreds. They were true friends of mine and we had many happy tea-time chats together, although we did not always see eye to eye.

In Hextable village lived the Milners, a widowed mother with five grown-up children, one of whom was Grace, who became a frequent visitor to Rowhill and who charmed me with her dark beauty and sunny disposition. I met Grace when looking for a music teacher for eight year old Bernard.

In Old Swanley Village lived the Austin Smiths and the Mills family and dear Granny Finn, one of my first friends. She kept a various assortment of pet birds in an outdoor aviary, which used to fascinate me. The Gordons, father, mother and two attractive girls, also lived in Old Swanley Village.

Among our friends, two at least were to reach knighthood. One, after a distinguished career in the Air Force, was appointed Black Rod, officiating on State Parliamentary occasions⁵⁹. Another, Timothy Bligh, did great things in the Navy and eventually became Secretary to the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan.

Nearer us, and rather later comers than ourselves, were the Gough Coopers. Leslie played golf on Dartford Heath with Harry, the elder brother. He admired him for his business capacity and helped him in his initial business ventures. He became, from small beginnings, a successful builder and strewed many parts of

⁵⁸ Sir James had lived at the house which he named Wilmington Manor and which is now part of Wilmington Grammar School for Girls

⁵⁹ This was Sir George Mills who lived in Victoria Hill Road, Hextable, and then at Lullingstone

Kent and South Africa with patches of modern suburbia, thereby amassing a fortune.⁶⁰

With all these various families we played tennis, croquet etc., and entered into the activities of village life.



Photo 39 Friends setting out to play tennis – 1935

Most of our friends were young, and Leslie and I, in our fifties, tried to be young with them. Saturday night dances were organised at the Village Hall. Having been built for the YMCA some years before, according to their principles frivolous entertainment had to stop by 12pm. Sundays were prohibited for that kind of function, but sometimes a favoured few would be invited to Rowhill Grange to finish off an enjoyable night with more dancing and more coffee, but not alcoholic drinks, *no!* Not in the house of Mr Leslie Wates!⁶¹ Some of our pleasantest hours were spent in the friendly atmosphere of our Common Room, drinking coffee and eating biscuits, dancing occasionally to the gramophone until the early hours of Sunday morning. But these occasions were just halts in the usual work of life, the exceptions to the daily round of business and the common tasks of housekeeping.

Life at Rowhill Grange during the war

Here at home our lives were changing, with friends leaving the district for safer spots, or joining one of the Services. Our protected area prevented friends from

⁶⁰ Harry Gough-Cooper married Vivien Gordon, one of the girls mentioned above

⁶¹ Sometime after his death a sherry bottle was introduced into a cupboard in the Drawing Room!

visiting us; signposts were taken down, milestones obliterated, and obstructions dotted about, such as wires stretched across roads. In a letter to Barbara, Leslie says, "We are very sober and subdued but determined. For myself, I see my work clearly at J & P, and am trying to keep that organisation up to scratch and cheerful."

Problems on the sales round

Papers relating to a complaint made by the Ministry of Food in June 1942 give an insight into the farming activities and life during the war. Mr Hopper was stopped in Bexley by an Enforcement Inspector of Bexley Food Control Committee while doing his round and a summons was subsequently issued against Mr Wates for selling green onions at a price exceeding the maximum price and for selling fresh vegetables without a licence. It is interesting that Mr Hopper was described as a salesman for this purpose. He was selling lettuces, onions, rhubarb, spinach, cabbage and potatoes. A retail licence was held, issued by Dartford Rural District Council, and it had been assumed by Mr Dale that this sufficed for the surrounding district, where they had been trading for 13 years. A licence application was then made to Bexley, but whether this was granted and sales there were able to continue is not recorded.

The explanation for the first offence was that Mr Dale had informed Mr Hopper on the 30th May that the price of green onions was being reduced to 8d per lb from 1st June, but Mr Hopper forgot and charged 10d. He went back and returned the excess to all the customers as soon as he was informed of the error. There is no record of the outcome of the summons.

We lived at Rowhill, as much as possible in a normal way, as many others did, although the bombing became worse as the weeks and months of the summer of 1940 went by. "I really hope," said Leslie, "that Hitler does have a go at us because it will give him such a lesson as he has not yet had from any other Nation." Hitler certainly did do his best to break our resistance. We were bombed persistently the whole of that summer and during the year 1941.

At Rowhill we built no shelter but we reinforced the cellar, and trusted that our lives might be saved if we had this retreat during bombing attacks. There were occasions when we felt it necessary, during a spell of frequent bombing, to spend nights in the cellar below ground. Sarah, a rather simple housemaid, at the sound of the wailing siren would race down the cellar stairs with Klans, Leslie's lovely Elkhound, to the safety of this shelter. Unless danger from overhead seemed very near, the rest of the household remained on the ground floor, but there were occasions when we retreated below ground, and sometimes slept there.

Ainsworth's wife Marianne, who lived at the house during the early part of the war, wrote in September 1940, during the blitz that they were sleeping regularly in the cellar. She wrote that it was getting more liveable in and they kept food and emergency suitcases with clothes

We wrote regularly to all our children and looked for their answers as eagerly as starving folk for food. Sometimes I hesitated about describing our experiences in our letters to Jamaica, as letters were censored. Also I said, "They might make Barbara nervous about us." In some cases the effects of attack were trivial and sometimes rather comical, as described in one of Leslie's letters to Jamaica. He writes, "Mother and I, and Dale, were in the field below the Dutch Barn, gazing into the sky. There was cloud about and whilst I saw a number of Spitfires and Hurricanes, I could see no German planes, but the noise was terrific and presently big anti-aircraft guns opened fire. We got under the Dutch Barn to get some slight protection from shrapnel as there was not time to get back to the house. Clouds of earth and black smoke were thrown high over the garage. The bombs fell in the narrow strip of woodland behind the bungalows and our field, and four craters were in Thomas's bean field; seven H.E. (High Explosive) bombs in all. Casualties: one chicken killed and one apple tree uprooted!" (That night both Johnson & Phillips⁶² and Canning Town Glass works were hit, £5,000 [*£224,000*] of damage done, but no-one killed.)

On a still September morning, breakfast time at Rowhill, after the usual wail of the siren, we heard the distant hum of aeroplanes, steady and more persistent than usual. Still munching toast we went out on to the terrace. Out of the clear blue sky, a battalion of planes was advancing from the east, German bombers in perfect formation and heading straight for London. We stood spellbound, fascinated by this sinister sight. The planes seemed to be advancing slowly because they were so high. In a short time they would have been directly over us, as we were in a direct line to London.

Suddenly, as we watched, the perfect triangular formation broke. Around about the enemy planes, darting among them like gnats among dragonflies, flew our Spitfires. One large enemy bomber became separated from the formation as the Spitfires attacked it, then it fell, zig-zagging down to earth beyond our horizon. Soon the whole stable formation was in confusion and the bombers which were still undamaged turned tail, scattered and were lost to sight. Our planes flew triumphantly around in a sort of clearing-up operation and returned to their bases.

Compared with London, and some thickly populated suburbs, we had little loss of life in this district, being surrounded by many acres of open fields and nursery gardens, and only on one occasion was our own dear house damaged: We had had supper and were sitting with our friends in the drawing room,

⁶² See page 71

chatting and drinking coffee, when we heard the whizz of a falling bomb, and were immediately in darkness. Windows crashed in and the heavy curtains blew horizontally into the room where we had thrown ourselves flat on the floor. Several ceilings had come down and the old diamond-paned windows in the front of the house were out. These diamond panes were never to be renewed, to the relief of the window cleaners in later times!⁶³

Our sons in the war

Ainsworth was called up for service in the Army and became a non-commissioned officer in Heavy Anti-Aircraft with his friend Lieut. Jack Bishop. With this battery he travelled over England and Wales and, later, Scotland, for three years until the assault on Normandy in 1944. He had very little direct action with the enemy at first, but life was not lacking in interest and sometimes could be amusing, as on the occasion when he, with a battery of guns, arrived at Rowhill on his way to Canterbury, having driven through London streets with this battery "clearing the way like a fire engine". This amused him and, incidentally, us very much.



Photo 40 Ainsworth on the terrace 1940

In 1943 his battery was changed from Static to Mobile Guns and his regiment was designated for the assault on Normandy. His battery had been trained in transferring guns on to boats and, in 1944, he was appointed as Senior Officer, a Royal Artillery Captain on an American ship. He was the only man on board who knew of its intended destination. With this ship he landed on the Normandy beaches on the 5th June, the day after D Day. It was claimed they were the first Anti-Aircraft to land in Normandy!

In September 1940 Bernard, at 20 and about to take a mathematical course at Cambridge, had to turn his thoughts to the part he was destined to play in the war. In 1941, after considerable and intensive training at the Imperial College, South Kensington, (as he said, "Two years' training in eight weeks") he became a probationary, acting Sub. Lieut. in R.N.V.R. and eventually emerged from his training as a Radio Officer. He was sent to Londonderry to join H.M.S. Egret, one of a fleet of ships cruising in the Atlantic to defend the route to America.

⁶³ This was on the 29th October 1940 and the bomb fell in a turnip field on the south side of the barns.



Photo 41 Bernard on the terrace with Zeb and Klans 1940

We did not know when his ship left the port or to what port it was bound, but we knew that the vessel he was in was a sloop-of-war, a small type of ship, and we could imagine it being tossed about somewhere between Ireland, the Azores or West Africa, always in danger of torpedoes or mines. He returned to England every few weeks and with him brought oranges, bananas and, on one notable visit, a pineapple, which gave us a clue as to what ports of call the Egret had touched upon.

In April 1944 he was appointed Officer-in-Charge of Peri Island, to relieve the permanent officer who was on leave. In June 1944 he went to Ceylon, passing through Bombay on D-Day. He joined H.M.S. Ameer,(a small American built Fighter Aircraft carrier) as Radar Officer. Their last sweep was to assist the army in invading Malaya and Singapore, but this became a non-event because of the atom bomb and the war ending.



Photo 42 Commemoration bowl

After the war a number of friends who had found some peace and sanctuary at the house during the war presented Mr and Mrs Wates with a silver commemoration bowl inscribed “To applaud the escape of Rowhill from bombs, incendiaries, doodle bugs and rockets, 1940 – 1945” and with their signatures engraved.

These were the Blomfield family – Geoff, his wife Chris, brother Don and four daughters Marigold, Anne, June and Joy. (See page 76);

Walla and her husband George Munroe (see page 60);

Mr W.Bowmaker , a business acquaintance who became a close family friend;

Mary Williamson, a friend of Helen, and her husband John;

Elsbeth Lawson, a cousin, who was in the WAAF as a signals linguist stationed at West Kingsdown;

Rosemary Baker, a friend of Barbara who ran the English hospital at Cannes.

The Wates family

The extracts from the biography above give some information about the family but a little more is needed to complete the picture

G. Leslie Wates (1884-1958)

An outline of Leslie's life is given in *The Times* obituary which is included in the first appendix at the end of this booklet, and there is no need to add much to it here. He was a successful solicitor in Woolwich and the City of London and,



**Photo 43 Portrait of G. Leslie Wates by
Sir Gerald Kelly 1950**

as such, was able to buy Rowhill Grange. He had no inherited wealth.

Probably his most important client was Walter Claude Johnson who was the founder of Johnson & Phillips Ltd, a manufacturer of cable and other equipment for the electrical industry. Mr Johnson also dabbled in various other enterprises with which Leslie thus became involved. After Mr Johnson's death in 1929, as trustee of his estate he became even more closely engaged with his various business enterprises, becoming, amongst other appointments, chairman and, later, joint managing director of Johnson & Phillips Ltd.

Thus, not long after the purchase of the house his time was increasingly devoted to these activities. The main source of his income became director's fees and, although he continued practising as a solicitor and remained a partner of J. D. Langton & Passmore until 1952 and a consultant thereafter, he voluntarily declined to take any income after 1939.

He would be collected from the house in the morning by the chauffeur from Johnson & Phillips Ltd in a Rolls Royce, and taken to his solicitor's office in Woolwich, the company's works in Charlton and to his office in London. On top of this he took an active interest in managing the estate at Rowhill Grange, although the day-to-day management was in the hands of Mr Dale; he acquired

a nursery garden business – Wallace & Co – in Tunbridge Wells; and another – E.B.Champernowne – in Devon.



Photo 45 Leslie Wates on the terrace 1940

He was a family man and fond of his grandchildren. The writer's childhood memories include walking with him round the estate, he with a walking stick with which he used to make a hole in the ground to bury dropped sweet wrappers, or use it to scratch the pigs' backs; listening to the clack-clack noise of the sharpening of his razor blade if he happened to be at the house in the morning while the Rolls waited for him; carving the meat for Christmas dinners, and talking to him by his bedside during his last illness.



Photo 44 the Rolls Royce 1954

Lucy W Wates (1884-1978)

Lucy's father was William J. Ainsworth who had a variety of jobs including managing a canal. When he was living in the London area he was friendly with Leslie's father, which is how the couple knew each other. However, her childhood was spent in Swindon. Her mother's family came from Bath, to where her parents retired, so there were frequent visits to that town.



Photo 46 Lucy Wates with Dusty, Twinkle and puppies 1935

She attended art school in Bristol and taught art for a short time before marriage in 1910. Painting was her great joy. She was an accomplished water colour painter and many of her paintings now adorn the walls of houses of the family, including some of scenes in the garden of Rowhill Grange. At one time she used the upper floor of the derelict building at Woodlands (see page 45) as a studio and later one of the rooms at the top of the house. In later years her eyesight deteriorated until she was no longer able to paint. She then took up pottery using one of the outhouses near the kitchen as her studio and having a kiln in the pantry.

She came from a lively, fun-loving family, she was warm and welcoming, and the writer has pleasant memories of being with her in the drawing room by the open fire having tea and possibly making toast on the fire; sitting out on the terrace in the sun in the summer; or helping with the grading of the eggs. She liked to help with the farming activities, so as to feel that she was contributing to the finances.

Barbara (1912-2003)



Photo 47 Barbara and Guy on their wedding day

See the extract from the biography above at page 58. Barbara married Guy Argles. He had taken a position with the Colonial Office in Jamaica and their wedding took place there in 1938. They remained there during most of the war, their sons Robert and John being born there. They returned in late 1944 and lived at Rowhill Grange for a short time before moving to a farm in Devon which they acquired. After a few years they returned to Kent where Guy became director of the West Malling Research Station and they lived first at Chart Sutton and then Sutton Valence. They had three more sons – Martin, Peter and Timothy.

Ainsworth (1914-2002)

When the house was purchased Ainsworth was at Mill Hill School, north London. He had a practical engineer's mind, enjoyed constructing things from meccano, and laid a large scale model railway track with steam engines in the wood at the back of the house. Despite this he studied law at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, qualified as a solicitor and joined his father's firm, J.D.Langton & Passmore. (His wartime activities are mentioned in the biography above on page 68.) He became a partner in the firm in 1947.



Photo 48 Ainsworth and Marianne in the orchard 1938

In 1939 he had married Marianne Teleki, a Hungarian but brought up in Vienna, Austria. After he joined the army in 1940, Rowhill Grange became Marianne's home where she lived until 1944, travelling up to London during the Blitz to her office job. Being her first-born in January 1943, the house was Brian's home for his first year. The family then lived in Staffordshire, where Anita was born, for about 18 months. On returning they occupied the Old Lodge (see page 47), spent some time in Switzerland after the war end, where Ainsworth joined them when demobilized, returned to the Old Lodge briefly and then moved to Rowhill Mount, where Anthony was born in 1947, swapping with the tenant Mr Simon Thwaites who moved to the Old Lodge (See page 50).

The writer's childhood was thus spent on the estate in close proximity to the Grange. Ainsworth and Marianne lived at Rowhill Mount for the rest of their lives, although when they moved there it was intended to be only temporary. Ainsworth had the brunt of the work in managing his father's estate after the latter's death in 1958, and, in appreciation of this, the house was given to him by the family in 1962.

Helen (1916-2000)



Photo 49 Helen and Jim on their wedding day 1939

builders Larke Mitchell and R.J.Vinall were also used.

Helen remained very active in the Guide movement throughout her life. See Pax Wood – page 129

Bernard (1920-1982)

Bernard also went to Mill Hill School and then Trinity Hall, Cambridge, but his education was interrupted by the war (see page 68). After Cambridge he was a postgraduate at Oxford where he met Joanna Heron, whose brother, Patrick, became a well-known modern artist. They married in 1949. Their son, Nicholas, was born in 1951, followed by Oliver, Jeremy and Rosalind, who was the only grandchild born after Leslie's death.

See page 59 for an extract from the biography. In 1939 Helen married Jim Grant. He was a builder, down from Scotland to work on the new Sidcup bypass and lodging in Swanley. The wedding and reception took place at the Grange. Jim set up his own business in Beckenham and built a house for them there, but it was destroyed by a V1 rocket in 1944. Gavin was born in 1940 and Alec in 1942. They lived for a time in the Old Lodge. After the war they made their home in Bromley and had two daughters, Celia and Janet. Being not far away they came to Rowhill regularly for Sunday lunch. In 1961 they moved to Kensing. Jim did a fair amount of building work at the house and on the estate particularly in the 1940s and 1950s, although local



Photo 50 Bernard and Joanna on their wedding day 1949

Initially he taught mathematics but then went into educational administration, always a long way from Kent, ending up in Cumbria, where he stood unsuccessfully for parliament as a Liberal on a number of occasions. The family were not as frequent visitors to Rowhill as the other families, but see Joanna's memories in Appendix II.

The Blomfield family



Photo 51 Geoff Blomfield

This family is included under the heading 'family' because the four girls had almost become part of the family and were frequent visitors. Geoff Blomfield was a childhood friend of Leslie's. He was an architect and went to India where he worked with Sir Edwin Lutyens. There he met and married Chris Reid and they had four daughters, Marigold (born 1920/1), Anne (1922), June (1927) and Joy (1930). The girls came to boarding schools in England for their education and, although initially staying with their grandparents in Tottenham or East Anglia, during the holidays there were frequent visits to Rowhill. June had a long recuperation from scarlet fever there when very young and thus became very attached to the place

and to Leslie and Lucy, who were always Uncle Leslie and Aunt Lucy to the girls. The attachment developed more in their teens when they attended Farrington School in Chislehurst. In view of its proximity to Rowhill, the house became their base and they frequently lived there during school holidays. The visitors' book records that the whole family spent Christmas 1934 at the house. Chris was in England during the war, living partly in the house they had bought in Beccles, Suffolk, and partly elsewhere. She then returned to India so that Rowhill remained a focal point for the family, and most Christmases after the war were spent there, including 1951 after Geoff and she had returned.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Geoff was the witness to Leslie's signature on the wayleave agreements relating to the supply of electricity in Rowhill Road at this time.



Photo 52 June Blomfield (centre facing camera) and others making bonfire in the woods

Dogs

Dogs are a part of any family and the life of a house so this is a convenient point to include an account

Lucy wrote in the biography:-



**Photo 53 Dusty (right) and Twinkle near the tennis court
1930**

“Dusty was an intelligent mongrel of partly sheepdog origin, given to Barbara several years before [the move to Rowhill] by our farming friends, the Austins. Dog succeeded dog and they were all of different breeds and characters and each came to us under some odd circumstance.

“I am reminded of an incident which happened at this time. We admired a collie dog which belonged to Mrs Collins and she told us its story. It had been found by one of her gardeners amongst a litter of fox cubs born on the estate and she had kept it as a pet. Whether it was one of the cub family or whether as a pup it had strayed into the shelter of the fox’s earth and been adopted by the vixen she did not

know. I was sorry that she did not leave it with us, as it was a beautiful creature. We were consoled later by the advent of a black retriever bitch bought in Dartford Market and conveyed home under Miss Wade’s coat. Twinkle⁶⁵ was

⁶⁵ Also known as Twink

her name and, with Dusty, she became our companion and guardian until she died in the first year of the war.”

From photos it can be deduced that Dusty died in 1935 or 1936 and Ainsworth’s dog Zeb came about that time. He was a red setter with bad eyesight⁶⁶. Then there was Klans, an elk hound. He was acquired in May 1939. A letter from Leslie to his former owner states that he was already chasing rabbits in the wood and fitting in with the other dogs. Klans was very nervous with the bombs in the war. (See page 66). He must have died about 1950 as the writer remembers him vaguely. The dogs were always free to roam the estate. They were all buried in a site at the edge of the wood, near the mulberry tree in the Old Orchard beyond the rose garden.



**Photo 54 Klans
on the terrace 1940**

After Klans there was an interval with no dogs, until Leslie’s 70th birthday in 1954, when the family bought him two Dalmatian puppies, named Johnson and Phillip, after the company,⁶⁷ or John and Phil for short. However, the pair of them together were too wicked and uncontrollable, so John was rehomed. Phil was devoted to his master and used to lie in his bedroom in his last illness in 1957.



**Photo 55 The Dalmatian puppies 1954
with from left to right Leslie, Martin, Lucy, Marianne, Ainsworth**

⁶⁶ See photo on page 69

⁶⁷ See page 71

Ainsworth and Marianne's dog Peter (about 1950-1960) should perhaps also be mentioned, as he was a frequent visitor when members of the Rowhill Mount household visited, or were on holiday. He used to be pestered by Phil and would make his escape through a hole in the gate into the orchard, which was too small for Phil. In his final illness he went to Joyce at the Grange to die, and was buried with the other dogs.



Photo 56 The dog, Peter, on the terrace 1954

Finally there was Santa, acquired at Christmas – hence the name. He is in a family group photograph taken at Christmas 1966⁶⁸ so perhaps he was acquired the previous year. Phil's tail can be seen on the edge of the photo. Santa went with Lucy when she left the Grange in 1976 to live in a specially-constructed cottage adjacent to her daughter, Helen, in Kemsing. He was not happy there and one day left and tried to make his way home. He was found at Crockenhill, well on the way. Later he came back to the Grange, where the writer was living⁶⁹. His children were very fond of him. He died shortly before the sale of the house.



Photo 57 Georgie's tombstone

Not quite finally, because, after the Wates family had sold the Grange, Michael and Joy Feasey, the new owners, had two miniature longhaired dachshunds, Georgie and Sammy. They were buried beside the path beyond the tennis court, the grave being marked with a stone inscribed 'Georgie'.

Christmas

Christmas, of course, was the big occasion when the whole family got together at the house, frequently with a few other guests. The Blomfield family particularly remember the Christmases. Twenty-five or so people would sit down to dinner in the Dining Room. In later years Marianne frequently cooked

⁶⁸ See page 81

⁶⁹ See page 147

the turkey at Rowhill Mount and it was brought over in the last moment by car. Leslie would carve. After dinner the grown-ups retired to the Drawing Room to listen to the Queen's Speech while the children went off and occupied themselves.



Photo 58 Christmas dinner 1961

On one occasion there was a great expedition to explore the Great Mount, marking trees so that the way back could be found. On another, there was a football match on the croquet lawn. Martin Argles remembers a walk when he was very small, up the Little Mount. His eyesight was very bad and he became convinced that there was an elephant on the Great Mount by the wall, and was upset when no one believed him and everyone derided him.



Photo 59 Father Christmas 1961

Then we all assembled in the Common Room to await Father Christmas. There was a general lookout, with reindeers being spotted or heard outside and mounting excitement. Eventually there would be a knocking on the window or the door leading in from the terrace and Father Christmas, with a sackful of presents, would be let in to the awe and excitement of the younger children. He handed out the presents from his sack and then perhaps some from under the tree, and would then announce that he had to move on to see other children, and departed. Whichever of the company was dressed up would then re-join the party unnoticed. Sometimes it was an outsider and Mr Hopper may have played the part on a number of occasions.

After that there was tea and Christmas cake. The day was rounded off with charades in which there were some memorable performances, particularly by "Grandma."

Further memories of Christmas are given in Appendix II.

Leslie and Lucy and the house were a great unifying influence on the family which has continued to this day, although perhaps largely due to the ownership and management of the land in Devon, where the business of E B Champernowne is now carried on by Barbara's son, Peter Argles.



Photo 60 The family at Christmas 1966

Farming activities 1929-1958

The following information is extracted from a ledger relating to the division of time spent by staff on the farming activities, the garden and the cars (chauffeur and maintaining), the farm accounts and miscellaneous correspondence. The time ledger is for the period 1929 to 1940. A 48 hour week was worked, 8 ½ hrs per weekday and 5 ½ hrs on Saturdays

It seems that some farming activity was carried on by Mr Collins, the previous owner, as one letter refers to having disposed of all his pigs but not the chickens, which were therefore taken over. It is not clear which members of the staff previously employed by Mr Collins were taken over by Mr Wates. The latter referred to his gardener, Golden, who was leaving, and to Curry, who seemed to be staying on.

As is recorded in the biography, a decision was made to have pigs, but presumably there were pigsties available which made this a natural decision. The sties were located in the old stables which had been used for horses by the Alexanders. Mr Mouzer⁷⁰ was engaged to look after the pigs. He lived in the lower of the semi-detached cottages, later known as South Cottage, on the driveway to Top Dartford Road. The other was occupied by the gardener and chauffeur, Mr Baines⁷¹, later known as Rowhill Grange Lodge.

Mr Baines was assisted in the garden by a Mr Drury until September 1930, then Robert (no record of his surname) until March 1931, and then Walter Trice, although his time was split equally between the garden and the farm, the farming part presumably being fruit and vegetable for sale. There was also Mr Mitchell, whose time was split equally between garden and farm⁷².

There is a letter from Mr Wates dated 7th October 1930, that he was trying to find a position for a gardener as he was reducing the staff. He was aged late thirties and had a wife and family. He had been in charge of the greenhouse, flowers, fruit, vegetables and lawns. This may have been Mr Drury. The staff was not actually reduced in number but Robert would have been a boy and therefore less expensive.

A letter to the insurance company, in 1929, confirms that there were four men and a boy and a casual. The boy was Albert Drury⁷³, who worked on the estate for the whole of the Wates family's 50 years' ownership. He is recorded as working in the garden initially, with increasing time on farm activities, but perhaps the classification of garden included working in the house. It seems probable that there was a relationship between Albert and Mr Drury but it is not

⁷⁰ see page 36

⁷¹ see page 32

⁷² see page 35

⁷³ see page 34

known what it was. Albert's children know that their grandfather, also named Albert, worked for Ladd's nurseries in Swanley Lane and lived in Lullingstone Avenue. He had fought in and survived the Battle of the Somme in the First World War.

Mr Mouzer left at the end of 1930⁷⁴ and was replaced by Mr Parker. Mr Parker proved unsatisfactory and they parted company in March 1931 when Mr Dale was engaged⁷⁵. Mr Dale became manager, or bailiff, of the farm. It is not clear when this was but it was probably after a year or two. From the handwriting in the cash book it would seem that Mr Wates personally dealt with the accounts until March 1933, so perhaps that was when Mr Dale took over.

The farm accounts for 1931 record receipts of £233[£12,200] for sale of pigs, and £471[£24,600] for sale of eggs, fruit and vegetables. (It is interesting that this is about the same figure in money terms as the sale of fruit and vegetables, without the eggs, in 1971, when farming activities had virtually ceased). Wages were £460 including rates on the two cottages and £60 for Miss Wade, the housekeeper, who had her round selling the eggs, fruit and vegetables⁷⁶. This round, taken over by Mr Hopper later, was the largest source of income. Total sales only just about covered the costs such as purchase of pigs, food for the animals, maintenance of buildings, vehicles, fertilizer etc, so that Mr Wates in effect paid the wages out of his personal income.

The loss for 1931 was £553[£28,000]. This was the pattern until 1942. Mr Wates' income in 1929, mainly from his profession as a solicitor and from directors' fees, before tax but excluding dividend income of which there is no record, was about £6,900 [£320,000]. In 1936 it was about £8750 [£464,000].

The loss from 1942 (during and immediately after the war) was less. It is not clear from the accounts why that was. Sales kept up although expenses seem to have been reduced, perhaps because only essential expenses were incurred. There were two changes in 1934. Firstly George Baines left in that year and was replaced by Mr Hopper⁷⁷ .who was to remain as the gardener until his retirement in 1969. The other change was that 'The Little Mount' with its orchard was acquired. Mr Wates wrote to his insurance brokers in July that he was making changes and the outdoor staff would henceforth consist of five men and two boys, with the possibility of casual labourers particularly at fruit picking time.

Mr Wates made an arrangement with Mr Wilfred Shewell-Cooper to advise on and manage the orchard. Mr Shewell-Cooper received cash from sales which were paid into the farm bank account. He was paid £25 [£1900] per annum for

⁷⁴ See page 36 for further details.

⁷⁵ See page 39 for further details.

⁷⁶ see page 31

⁷⁷ See page 32 for further details

this service. He was the Horticultural Superintendent at the Swanley Horticultural College in Hextable from 1932 until 1937, so the contact was presumably made by Barbara who was studying there. He then became a freelance writer and adviser on horticultural matters and was frequently consulted by Mr Wates. He left Hextable in 1950.



Photo 61 Aerial view of the Little Mount 1939

There were two additional employees. Mr George Knapp worked during the picking season in 1934 and then on a permanent basis from June 1935, initially about a third and later a sixth of his time being spent on the garden. He stayed until February 1941⁷⁸.

A Mr Gillett worked for a couple of months in the summer of 1934, being replaced by John Cox. However, Mr Shewell-Cooper reported to Mr Wates at the end of 1936 that it had been a difficult year. John Cox fell madly in love, so the work suffered, and he then “left them in the cart” just before the picking and packing season. Allerton, who had replaced John Cox was “..a rough handler and Dale agreed that it was largely his fault that the fruit was bruised. Should see better results with Welford.” Welford replaced Allerton in December 1936 and was employed until March 1938

From the figures, 1936 does not seem to have been too bad in comparison with 1934 and 1935, in neither of which years was there an increase in takings from fruit and vegetable over the previous year, as one might have expected

⁷⁸ The writer was contacted by his nephew in 2005 and a note from his brother Sydney is included below on page 132

following the purchase of the orchard. In 1936 there was an increase of about £80[£4250] and sales to Covent Garden of £203[10,800]. After that there were substantial increases in sales of eggs, fruit and vegetables which might have been due to the fruit although the sales to Covent Garden were much less and did not exceed that figure until 1942 when it was £309[£11,200].

The fruit growing had not been a success. Mr Wates wrote to Mr Shewell-Cooper on 1st January 1937;-“The whole idea of trying to run it as a fruit farm was experimental. It is obvious that it is a complete failure, and I am not worried about this, nor do I propose to hold an inquest into the causes of the failure. My livestock are much more profitable and amusing.” He expressed sympathy with those whose livelihood depended on fruit. It was agreed that Mr Shewell-Cooper receive half his fee for consultancy only in 1937 and that the arrangement be terminated at the end of the year.

Mr Hopper’s duties originally included chauffeuring and looking after the cars but his heart was probably more in the garden than cars. In giving a reference for Walter Trice in 1935, Mr Wates commended his work as a chauffeur, so although none of his time was recorded as such, he may in practice have shared the work. After he left, in June 1935 there were a succession of chauffeurs – Mr Campbell, although his time was not recorded as such; in February 1936, Mr Glover, most of whose time was recorded as relating to the cars; and, in September 1936. Mr Crooks, about half of whose time was devoted to the cars and rest divided equally between farm and garden. He left in September 1939.



Photo 62 Mr Hopper as chauffeur 1935

From April 1938 to March 1939 casual labour equivalent to two men is recorded, making in effect a total staff of nine. One of these may have been for the pigs as, in April 1939, Mr Mouzer was reemployed. Following his death⁷⁹, he was replaced by Mr Scott in February 1940. Presumably Mr Dale had

⁷⁹ see page 36

continued to deal with the pigs personally until then. Mr Mouzer, and his successors as pig men, occupied Woodlands Lodge.⁸⁰ From the accounts it seems that Woodlands Lodge was occupied in 1937 but they do not mention the occupant's name.



Photo 63 Woodlands Lodge (1978 photo)

After Mr Crooks left in September 1939 his car duties were taken over by Albert. Until then Albert's time was recorded as about one third on the farm and two thirds on the garden. Car duties were recorded thereafter as 8 hours. Mr Weeks was engaged in July 1940 for farm work and Mr Lyons in February 1941 for gardening.

By 1941 Albert Drury (always simply known as Albert, presumably because he was first employed as a boy) was clearly very well-established as a valued member of the staff and the longest-serving member, as in that year he was given the occupation of 'Great Mount Cottage', which had just been purchased partly for this purpose.⁸¹

There is a letter from Mr Wates to the insurance brokers, in January 1941, stating that there were at present seven outside employees which might be reduced to six shortly as one of the younger men was about to be called up. He may take on a couple of land girls which would bring the figure up to eight, the present number on the policy. The indoor staff consisted of two, but casual labour was also employed indoors and outdoors.

There is a summary of the wages paid in the year ended 31st March 1941 when the full time staff comprised:-

Mr Dale £210.9.9 ½d [£8130] plus cottage (South Cottage)

Mr Hopper £157.0.8d [£6063] plus cottage (Rowhill Grange Lodge)

⁸⁰ See page 47

⁸¹ See page 18

Albert £129.15.2 ½ d[£5011] plus, in future, Great Mount Cottage
 Mr Scott £127.10.5 ½ d[£4924] plus Woodlands Cottage
 Mr Weeks £141.17.6 1/2d[£5476]
 Mr Willis £93.1.2d [£3,590]
 Mr Lyons

The total wages allocated to the farm in the farm accounts was £882.4.5d[£34,100]. This was about equivalent to the loss on the farm of £867.7.8d. Mr Wates paid £806.8.7d into the farm account in addition to paying the wages relating to the garden and car which, according to the summary, was £276.13.3d.[£10,670]

Mr Wates' total income at that time, including dividends and before tax, was about £16,000 [£618,000]. By then he was receiving only nominal income as a solicitor, his main income being as chairman and joint managing director of Johnson & Phillips Ltd. He was able to set off a loss of £888[£34,300] on the farm for surtax purposes. The tax liability would have been about 40%.

Although there are no further records of employees, the farm accounts for the period 1942 to 1946 show frequent changes of the occupants of Woodlands Lodge and therefore, presumably, of the pig men. Mr Scott was replaced by Mr Clark in 1942, Mr Clark by two men Bremer and Ridley in 1943, then Mr Grouns in 1944 and, finally, Mr Standen in 1946. A letter of August 1944 concerning fuel requirements refers to two land girls who had hot meals and baths in the house.

The writer (whose memory, being born in January 1943, probably dates back to the early 1950s) remembers Mr Dale, Mr Hopper, Albert, Mr Standen and Mr Lyons. The name Mrs Weeks was familiar to him, possibly as someone who

helped his mother with the children or in the house, when they were living in the 'Old Lodge' or 'Rowhill Mount'⁸². But this was probably Mrs Weekes, who lived in one of the bungalows and may not have been connected.



Photo 64 Albert and Mr Standen 1954

The 1953 accounts show that the Old Dairy at Woodlands was renovated and occupied by a labourer (un-named).

This photograph, taken by the writer in 1954 during apple picking, is the only known one of Albert wearing his cap, which he always did when working. Unfortunately he is cut in half, but the

⁸² See page 74

writer was only eleven when taking the photograph! A photograph was also taken of Mr Lyons cutting the lawn but it was out of focus and too distant!

As previously mentioned, the war years seem to have been more profitable. Pig sales were down but fruit sales to Covent Garden were much better (£491/[16,750] in 1944 and £595/[£20,300] in 1946) and general sales of eggs, fruit and vegetable (just under £1400/[£47,800] in both years).

Thereafter the previous pattern resumed, with wages increasing with inflation from about £1500/[£48,500] in 1946 to over £2500/[£45,000] in 1958 with similar increases in the annual loss, although in 1958 this was £3336/[£60,000].

Major expenses over those years were substantial repairs to buildings in 1951, the construction of a new additional greenhouse in 1950 and The pig parlour in 1954, the latter at a cost of £1789/[£38,500]⁸³

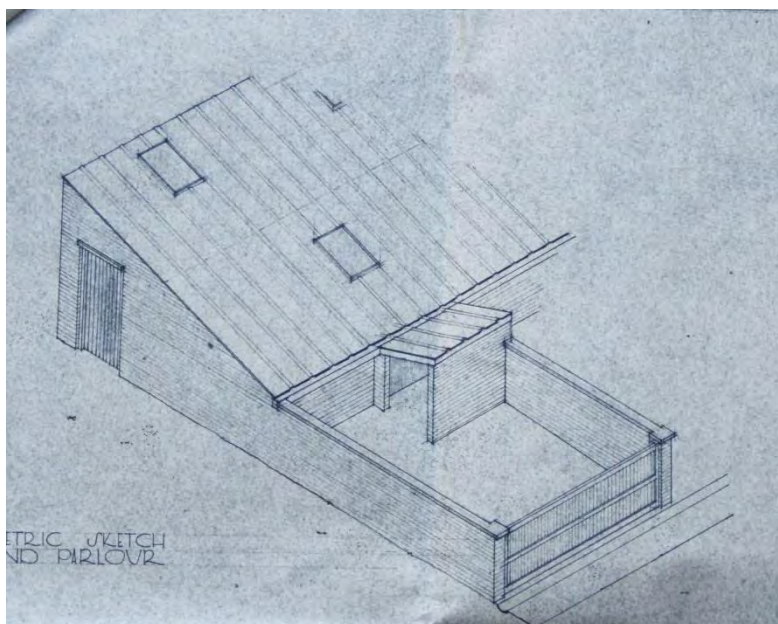


Photo 65 Architect's sketch of the Pig Parlour

The pig parlour was for housing additional pigs, which was considered necessary for increased production. The Ministry of Agriculture was consulted early in 1954, and an architect instructed. The construction took place at the end of the year, being completed in March 1955. The work was done by Mr Wates' son-in-law, Helen's husband, James Y. Grant ("Jim"). Above is the architect's sketch of the end parlour.

In these post-war years a higher proportion of income, particularly after 1954, came from the pigs. For example, in 1956 the takings were: - pigs

⁸³ See page 40

£1796[£34,800], poultry £254[£4,900], eggs £917[£17,750], Covent Garden £551[£10,700], 'shop' £379[£19,375]. The shop would have been sales to people coming up from the village, and other private sales.

The House

There is not really anything about the history of the house itself that can be added to Mrs Wates' narrative⁸⁴. The original woodman's cottage (which does not appear on any plans) must have been the east end, where the dining room with the study over it was later situated. The Alexanders presumably extended it to include the middle section, under which lies the cellar, and kitchen area. The middle and east sections were always thatched (although sadly the thatch has very recently been replaced by tiles by the hotel, probably because of fire risks etc). The western end was never thatched and would seem to be a later extension, but must have been built by the Alexanders, probably before Mr Alexander's death in 1915, as it is seen in the old photograph mentioned below, at that time with a conservatory attached.

Mr Collins did, however, state in correspondence during the negotiations that he had enlarged and rebuilt the eastern front. Changes can be seen by comparing the photograph on page 14 with later photographs. Maybe these are the changes he referred to.

The only substantial alteration carried out by Mr Wates was to the terrace. From the photographs it would seem that this was in 1937⁸⁵. After the house became a hotel, a guest produced some old photographs⁸⁶, one of which showed that there had been an earlier change. The terrace, as it is now, was reconstructed by Michael and Joy Feasey to the design of the terrace shown in that photo.

Correspondence shows that a new door was acquired in May 1929 from the company Holliday & Greenwood, Buckingham Palace Gardens. This was probably the front door, which remains to this day as the front door of the hotel.

There was no electricity supply in the area when Mr Wates bought the house in 1928. He made enquiries in 1928 and 1929 but there did not seem to be any immediate prospect. However, in 1932 he obtained estimates for wiring and finally, in 1933, the West Kent Electric Co put in a supply to Hextable. Electric wiring was installed in the house and was connected to the new supply when it went live on 27th November of that year. Electricity was not available for the Old Lodge and the bungalows in Rowhill Road until 1952.

The heating was by central heating, the boiler in the cellar (an Ideal Boiler according to the insurance details) being fuelled by coke. There were open wood or coal burning fires in the Drawing Room and Common Room, and gas fires in the Dining Room and bedrooms. There is a record that about 31 tons of coke were purchased in the year ended June 1939. Thereafter there were

⁸⁴ see page 25

⁸⁵ See Photo 20 on page 42 and Photo 102 on page 120

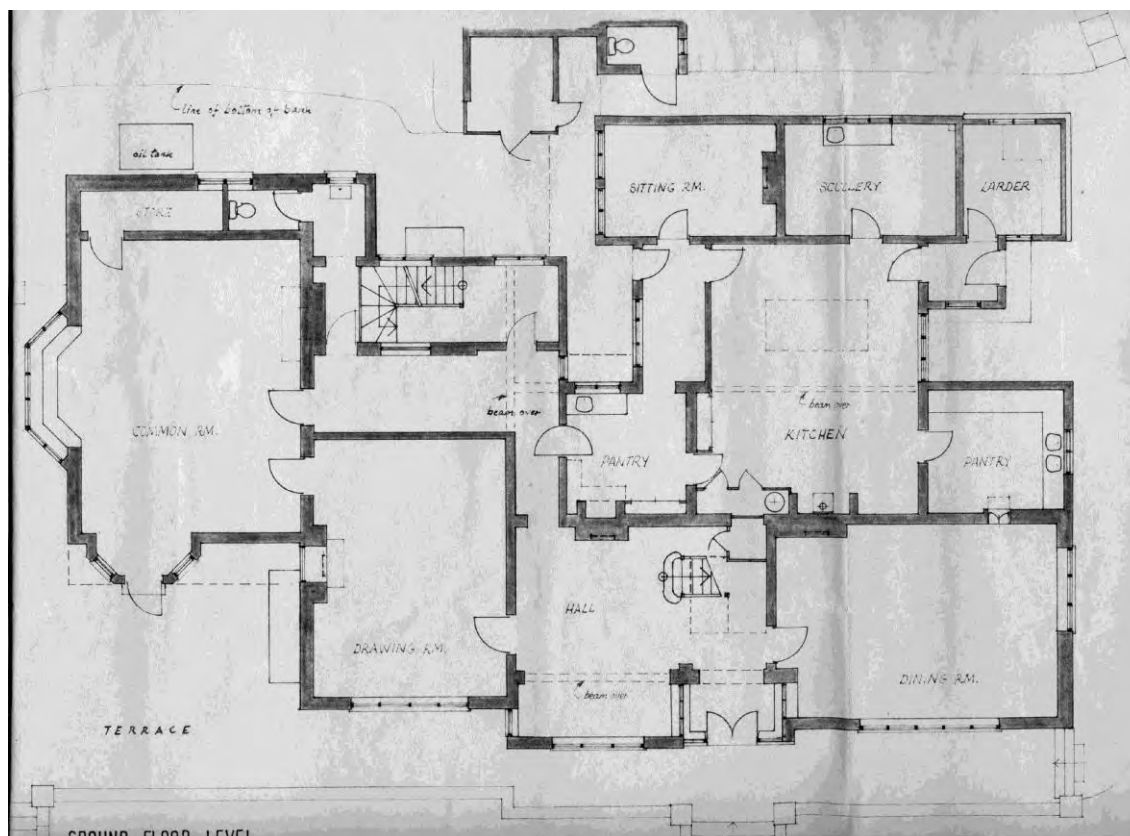
⁸⁶ Other than two photos of Mrs Alexander which now hang at the foot of the back stairs by the lift, sadly none of the photos seem to have survived and the identity of the guest is not known.

rationing restrictions in force. There seems to have been a standard amount per house. If that was insufficient it was necessary to apply for extra, which, in view of the size of the house, had to be done throughout the rationing period, which ended in about 1955. The allowance in 1945 was only 3½ tons although there was no restriction on anthracite. In 1954 they had permission for 20 tons. The boiler was replaced by a Potterton oil-fired boiler in 1969, although there was a proposal to change to oil in 1960. One of the features still retained by the hotel are some of the original radiators.

An inventory of the contents of the house, prepared in February 1929, gave the replacement value for insurance purposes as £3500 [*£165,000*].

The following is a description of the house as the writer remembers it, although his memory may be faulty and others may have different recollections. The plans shown here were prepared in 1978, before the house was sold, by his cousin Alec Grant (an architect) and an architect friend of Alec's.

Ground floor



Plan 4 Ground floor plan

The large entrance hall had a mosaic floor. The stairs were painted black (only recently changed to white by the hotel). They led to the first floor, dividing half-way up to right and left. At the foot of the stairs, opposite the window and to the right of the passage way leading to the rest of the house, was a large Chinese cabinet. (At least, we called it a Chinese cabinet, but the 1929 inventory



Photo 66 The front stairs

Swanley Junction 83 (later 2083 and finally 62083, which number was taken by the writer after the sale in 1978). Calls were frequently received for a local chimney sweep who must have had a similar number, possibly 38!

describes it as Japanese and it was at that time in the drawing room). Behind the stairs was a cupboard for coats etc, and under the stairs was a large gong which was struck to summon any occupants of the house at mealtimes. For those outside and out of earshot of the gong, a large bell hanging at the back of the house was rung. To the left of the hall, between the entrance to the drawing room and the passageway, was a hall table varnished black and upon which was usually a vase with flowers. Latterly the telephone was situated there, although earlier this may have been at the foot of the back stairs.

The telephone line was presumably one of the earliest in the neighbourhood, the number, (which was taken over from Mr Collins) being



Photo 67 Window in the hall with couch 1976

In the alcove by the window of the hall, where at the time of writing the hotel reception is situated, was a couch used by the dog, Santa, as a bed and which Lucy remembers sitting on as a small child with her grandmother, in Bath.



Photo 68 The Dining Room looking West towards the hall.

Immediately to the right of the front door was the **Dining Room**, a lovely wood-paneled room with a long window looking on to the terrace to the right, and a small tessellated window high up at the far end. In the middle was a large dining-room table; at the far end under the small window a “square” piano, and in the corner to the right another dining table but not extended, being an old family heirloom. Above this hung a portrait of James Wates, Leslie’s great-grandfather. The piano was never used as a piano but at Christmas the meat was carved on it! To the far left was a hatchway to the kitchen and, in the middle, a dresser, with a circular convex mirror on the wall above.

Immediately to the left of the door was Lucy’s desk, where she was often to be found writing. Above the desk was a portrait of Sarah Davis, her great-great-grandmother. Many of the pieces of furniture mentioned here and elsewhere are still in the possession of members of the family.



Photo 69 The Dining Room looking East

These two photos (Photo 68 and Photo 69) taken in the Dining Room were on the occasion of Anita’s 8th birthday in October 1952.



Another celebration that took place here was that of Leslie's father's 90th birthday in 1947. Leslie's niece Naomi, aged five and grandson Gavin, aged 7, remembered the event because of the drama of the cake. There were 90 candles! The flames merged into one huge flame, rising two or three feet and causing the icing to melt. Panic ensued and the cake was hastily removed from the room. The light from the candles can be seen in this photo and Gavin can be seen at the back.

Photo 70 G. F. Wates' 90th birthday

To the left of the hall was the **Drawing Room**, containing a comfortable settee facing the fireplace and armchairs on each side, that to the left being Lucy's. The fireplace was interesting as it had a glass display cabinet and window above it, the chimney presumably going to the side. There would always, at least until 1973 when it was replaced by a gas fire, be an open log fire burning in the winter months, upon which bread with dripping was sometimes toasted.



Photo 71 Bernard and Barbara in the Drawing Room 1975

On the wall opposite the fireplace was a book case over a cupboard. One of the drawers of the cupboard contained playing cards, and old cigarette cards cut up to make matching puzzles. There were also board games available – Cluedo, Monopoly, Shipping – and a Labyrinth Metal Ball Maze game. This was a present to Leslie and became a favourite game for all the family and other

visitors. The ball was guided through the maze by two handles which sloped the board in different directions. The object was to get the ball to the end without it dropping through a hole, then to get it back to the beginning, and then to see how many times one could do that.



Photo 72 Marianne and Helen in the Drawing Room 1975

On the wall opposite the window was a long display cabinet with cupboards each end and to the right of the window behind Lucy's chair, a large black cupboard. There was a table under the window.

A door led from the Drawing Room into the **Common Room**, a large room, being the whole of the western extension, with a door leading out onto a wide area on the terrace and bay windows to the west looking out on to the West Lawn. Immediately to the left as one entered from the Drawing Room was a large wireless and gramophone player. Opposite the door hung the large portrait of Leslie by Sir Gerald Kelly⁸⁷. Across the room, to the right of the bay window, was the grand piano. Behind that, in the corner of the room, was a walk-in store cupboard. Amongst other things it contained the rolls for the pianola mentioned below. The remaining corner of the room made a cosy area with an open fire surrounded by a few armchairs, but the room was generally only used when there were large gatherings such as at Christmas, when there was usually a gathering of about two dozen. This room, plus a conservatory extension built by the hotel, is now the hotel dining-room.

⁸⁷ see photo on page 71



Photo 73 The Common Room at Christmas 1975.
Anthony facing camera, Lucy in the corner and Lucy's paintings on the wall

Barbara wrote about the Common Room:- "This was the last room in the house to be redecorated (this was 1935). It had been papered with dark red paper heavily embossed with gold, had ornate gas fittings, the bay window sill was about 4 feet from the floor and the Victorian fireplace a gloomy affair. Who better to consult than Geoff Blomfield (see page 76), home on leave from India with his wife Chris and the girls? He and mother redesigned the new Common Room. The bay window was lowered and given a window seat. The paper was a sunny pinky-cream and the fireplace replaced with charming Chinese tiles and wooden candlesticks wired for electric lights, a low mantelpiece shelf, which held the little Geisha girl, now at Tumblers Plat [Helen's later home in Sutton Valence], a gift from Geoff and Chris".

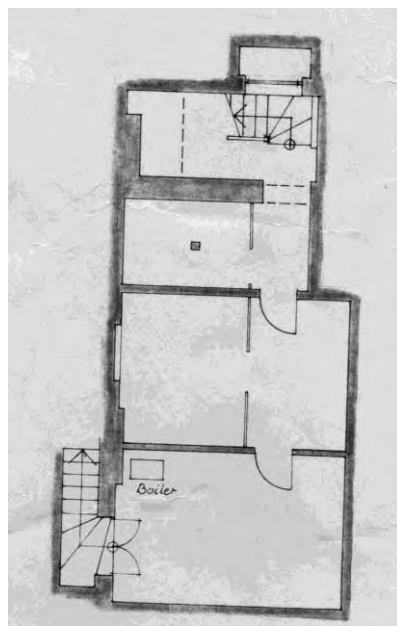
The cost of these alterations was £85 [4,800].



Photo 74 The Common Room fireplace.

A corridor led from the Common Room to the hall, back stairs and kitchen area. Immediately to the left as one left the room there was another small corridor with pegs for hanging coats, leading to a toilet at the end. This is still the gents' toilet at the hotel. In the main corridor on the left was the pianola, known as the organ, pumped by foot pedals. It could be played as an organ or rolls of music could be inserted, when it was fun to watch it playing by itself. It was an Aeolian Orchestrelle Organ.

At the end of the corridor on the left was a door to the back staircase. This descended to the cellar and ascended to the first and second floors. The hotel lift is now situated adjacent to this. The swing gate to the cellar stairs is still there. The cellar was used as a shelter in the war⁸⁸. For a small child this was exciting territory. There were a number of storage cubicles along the passage that led under the middle part of the house to the boiler room at the end. Steps descending from the patio gave access to this room from above.



Plan 5 Cellar plan

On into the kitchen area, one passed through a room shown on the plan as the 'pantry'. Crockery was stored in the cupboards on the right. On the left was a sink with a window looking out on to a back yard, beyond which were some outhouses and a steep bank up to the woods behind. The sink was used for cutting and arranging flowers, which was frequent, as there were always flowers in the house. The internal bell system was centred here, with a panel showing which room was summoning for service. Latterly it was only that for the Drawing Room that was used. This was rung at tea time, when the tea was then magically produced on a trolley by Joyce.

A little corridor ran along the side of the yard, leading to Joyce's room. This room was rather dark, there being only one window on to the yard facing west, but made very cosy by Joyce who spent her leisure time there, frequently knitting. It would also have been the home of the cat, Kitty.⁸⁹

The family photo below was taken on the occasion of Leslie's father's 90th birthday in 1947, already referred to above. It is taken in this yard presumably because it was raining and this was the only place outside under cover. The window on the back left is that of Joyce's room.

⁸⁸ see page 66

⁸⁹ For further reference to this room see Anthony's memories in Appendix II



Photo 75 Group photo on George F.Wates' 90th birthday 1947



**Photo 76 View of the back of the house
showing the roof over the small yard bottom left (photo 1976)**

The kitchen area comprised five rooms, excluding Joyce's room. The main room was a very large, airy, light area in the middle, with a sky light and window facing east, a dresser at the northern end, tables in the middle and under the window, the cooker to the right of the window, food cupboards opposite and stove to the south.

From 1939 to the early 1950s there was a parrot, called Polly, in a cage hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the room. This was originally owned by

Leslie's uncle, Joseph North Wates and his wife, Constance. There is a photograph of Constance and her daughter with the page in its cage dating from about 1884. After Constance's death in 1927 it was looked after by Mr Ayres, a friend and secretary of West Kent Dwelling Company Ltd, a property investment company, with which Joseph Wates and other members of the family were involved. He asked for it to come to Rowhill to escape the expected bombing of Woolwich. Polly used to greet newcomers with "Good morning, how are you?" in Aunt Constance's voice!

Leading off this area to the right of the stove was a room, shown as 'pantry' on the plan. This contained a dresser where the everyday crockery and cutlery was stored. The hatchway through to the dining-room was located here, and this was where the washing up was done.



Photo 77 View from back door with Dalmatian puppies 1954

dog kennel area, although whether the dogs were ever kennelled there during the Wates family ownership is not known; and Ainsworth, in a letter to Albert in 1965 concerning which field to use for certain chickens, refers to the field behind "the old kennels and potter's shed." The photograph above, however, taken in 1954, shows part of the orchard fenced off for the Dalmatian puppies⁹¹.

To the north of the main kitchen area was the scullery, where vegetables were stored and prepared, and where, presumably, clothes were washed. A short corridor led to the back door with, on the left, a large larder. In later years, after her eyesight deteriorated, Lucy took up pottery and the kiln was situated here.

Out of the back door was a concreted area; to the right, steps followed by a path leading down to the garages; to the left, steps and a path leading into the wood; straight ahead, a path with the kitchen orchard sloping down to the stables on the right and outhouses to the left⁹⁰. The washing was hung out to dry either on the concreted area or the orchard area. The outhouses included a dovecot in the centre. One of them was used by Lucy for her pottery and contained the wheel. Some people remember the iron railings of a

⁹⁰ See plan on page 107

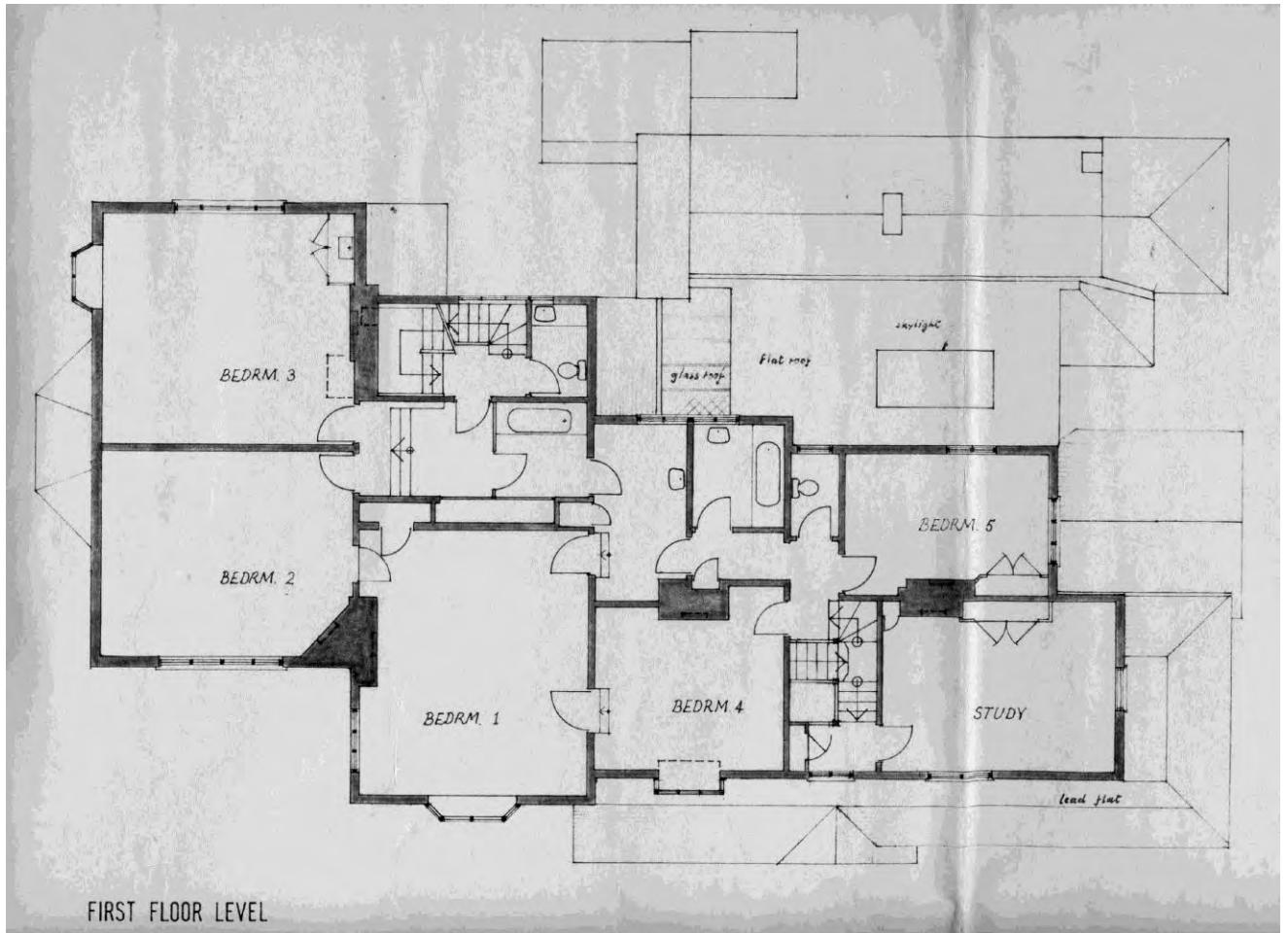
⁹¹ See page 78.

All of this area is now occupied by the Spa attached to the hotel. The sketch on the next page is taken from the path in the photograph looking back to the house.



Photo 78 Sketch of house by the back door by a friend, Betty Gray, probably 1960s.

First floor



Plan 6 First floor plan

Returning to the house, and going up the main stairs from the hall, these divided after the first flight. The right hand flight led up to Leslie's study. Even for the 20 years after his death, it was his study and was not used for any other purpose. To the left of the door was a bookcase, which, amongst other books, contained the volumes which comprised Leslie's prize for third place in the Law Society finals, when he qualified as a solicitor in 1905. To the right, a window looked over the lawns and, beyond that, was his desk, with a filing cabinet in the far corner. It was in this room that evidence of the original building was found⁹².

At the top of the left-hand flight of stairs was the Green Room on the left and the East Room on the right – bedrooms 4 and 5 on the plan. In the 1930s the Green Room was Helen's room, and the East Room was Barbara's. The latter became a spare room, although eventually it was Joyce's bedroom. It was a warm, friendly room receiving the early morning sun from the east. The Green Room (presumably because it was decorated in green) having an

⁹² see page 25

interconnecting door with the main bedroom, became Leslie's room during his final illness, and this was where he died on the 22nd January 1958.

Opposite the top of the stairs was a toilet, a rather ornate and special one. For a member of the family to open this door now is rather like stepping into Dr Who's Tardis. Instead of a toilet, a corridor stretches out into the distance with hotel bedrooms leading off it!

Next to it was the bathroom, a special place for a child staying the occasional night. Continuing along the corridor, this passed through a dressing room with sink and steps leading up to the main bedroom.

It then continued, literally, through the second bathroom, doors at either end of which could be shut when in use. This was a rather unique feature of the house. Not only was it in the middle of the corridor, but also in the middle of the house, without an outside wall (there were frosted glass panels in the surrounding walls). Cupboards lined this part of the corridor (including the bathroom) from floor to ceiling, and were where the bed linen was kept. The Blomfield girls⁹³, sleeping in the Spare Room (see below), used this bathroom, and Marigold remembers an illustrated poem on the wall:-

Please remember, don't forget
Never leave the bathroom wet
Nor leave the soap still in the water
That's a thing you never ought-er
Nor leave the towels upon the floor
Nor keep the bath an hour or more
When other folk are wanting one
Just don't forget – it isn't done
And if you'd really do the thing
There's not the slightest need to sing.

The Feaseys⁹⁴ used this bathroom and it was only removed at the time of the conversion to a hotel.

The corridor ended in a small landing, with a door to the right leading to the back stairs, and wide steps in front up to the two large rooms in the extended part of the building over the Common Room. That on the right was the "Spare Room". It was used by the Blomfield girls when staying during their school holidays; from a photo of the writer in a cot it seems to have been used by Marianne during the war. With windows to the north, looking out on to the wood, and to the west, this was a dark, unwelcoming room. After it became a hotel room this was confirmed by guests using it. It had the only ensuite wash basin in the house, located in a cupboard. A memento in the writer's

⁹³ See page 76

⁹⁴ See page 150

possession, which was on the mantelpiece in this room, is a thermometer in the form of a rock with a seagull perched on top.

The room next to this was a complete contrast. Facing south, with wide windows overlooking the lawns, it was a bright cheerful room, known as the Nursery, as this was where visiting grandchildren slept and where old toy boxes were kept. There were two or three beds here. A very special memory of sleeping there was that, when one woke in the morning, there would be a boiled sweet under the pillow, placed there by 'Grandpa'! (That was at a time when sweets were rationed).



Photo 79 The rocking horse - about 1934

However, facing you as you came through the door was the *pièce de résistance* of the room, a magnificent rocking horse, which we all rode with gusto, and must be engrained in the memories of us all. It is the one thing that anyone who knew the house as a child remembers. The house was a temporary home for the rocking horse, which belonged to Lucy's niece, Elizabeth Ainsworth, but it saw out all our childhoods. It eventually followed her to Canada, where it is now. There is no photo, that I know of, with the horse *in situ*, but this photo shows Elizabeth as a child on the horse, long before it came to Rowhill, with Barbara behind.

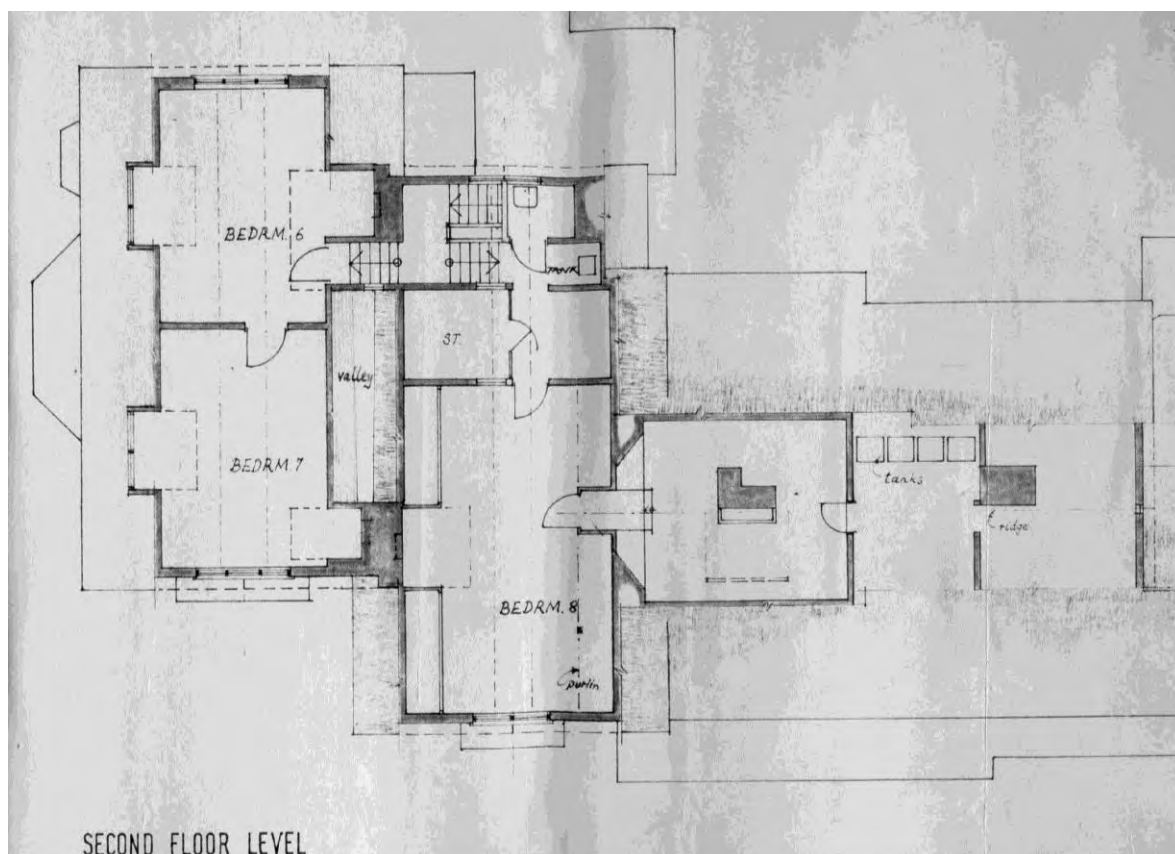
There was an interconnecting door between the Nursery and the main bedroom, shown in the next photo.



Photo 80 Brian in the Nursery 1943

The latter had a bay window, concealed by net curtains, and a window to the side, as it projected beyond the nursery, but this was obscured by the dressing table which was in that corner. Family portraits covered the walls, including a large framed photo of Lucy's grandmother, of whom she was very fond.

Second floor



Plan 7 Second floor plan

Finally, there was the second floor. The stairs divided. To the right was the second floor of the extension, shown as bedrooms 6 and 7 on the plan, it being necessary to go through 6 to get to 7. The left-hand stairs led to the attic room

of the middle section of the house. A low attic led off from this, the first part of which was boarded, where were stored the usual attic paraphernalia such as old letters and documents. In the 1930s the attic bedroom was used by Ainsworth and Bernard.

The other rooms would have been occupied by live-in maids, and Joyce certainly used one of them before moving downstairs, probably in about 1958. One of the rooms was used by Lucy as a studio for her painting for a time and, in 1959-61, a room was used by a student agricultural worker, Tim.⁹⁵ In 1963 there is a letter from Lucy suggesting the use of the rooms by another “Tim” and in 1965 she was enquiring of the Kent Education authority of the possibility of letting to teachers, but nothing came of these ideas.

However, in 1973 a kitchenette was installed so that this floor could be used as a flat, sharing the toilet at the foot of the stairs. It was occupied, for about two years, by Albert Drury’s son John, and his wife Jean, after they were married in September 1973. They then moved to a house on the Fleet Estate, Dartford, which is where they still live. It was occupied for a time by the daughter of Larke Mitchell, the Hextable builder, who did much of the repair work on the estate when an outside builder was needed.

Anita recollects, as a child, climbing through the window, where the stairs divide, into the valley between the roofs and waving to Albert on the driveway below.

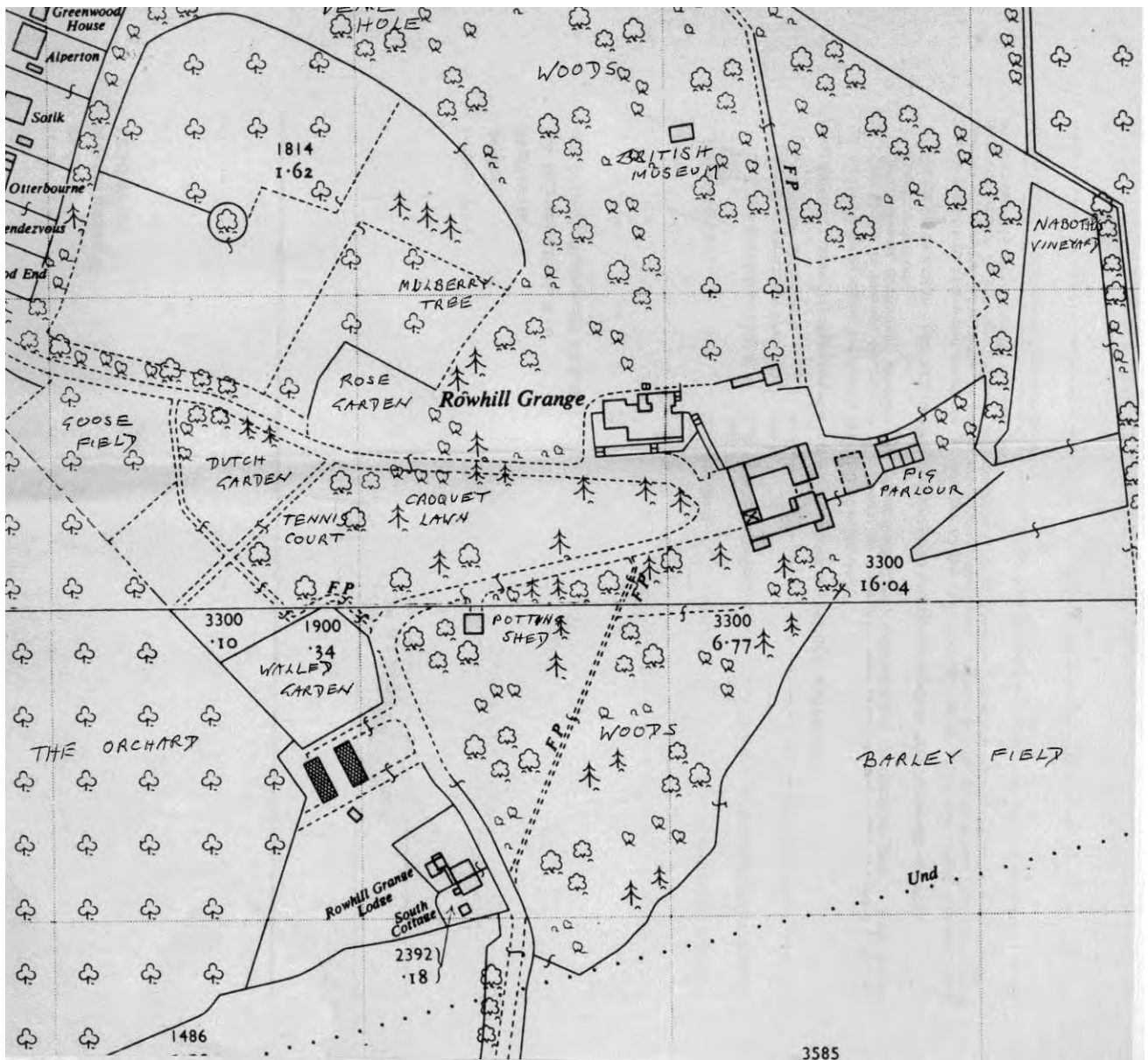
This is a suitable place to mention the thatched roof, upon which considerable expense had to be incurred periodically in carrying out repairs or renewal, for which specialist thatchers from Norfolk were normally used. Here is a photograph of thatching work in 1934. Both the house and barns were rethatched in 1951 at a cost of £1931 [*£47,000!*].



Photo 81 Thatching work on the house 1934

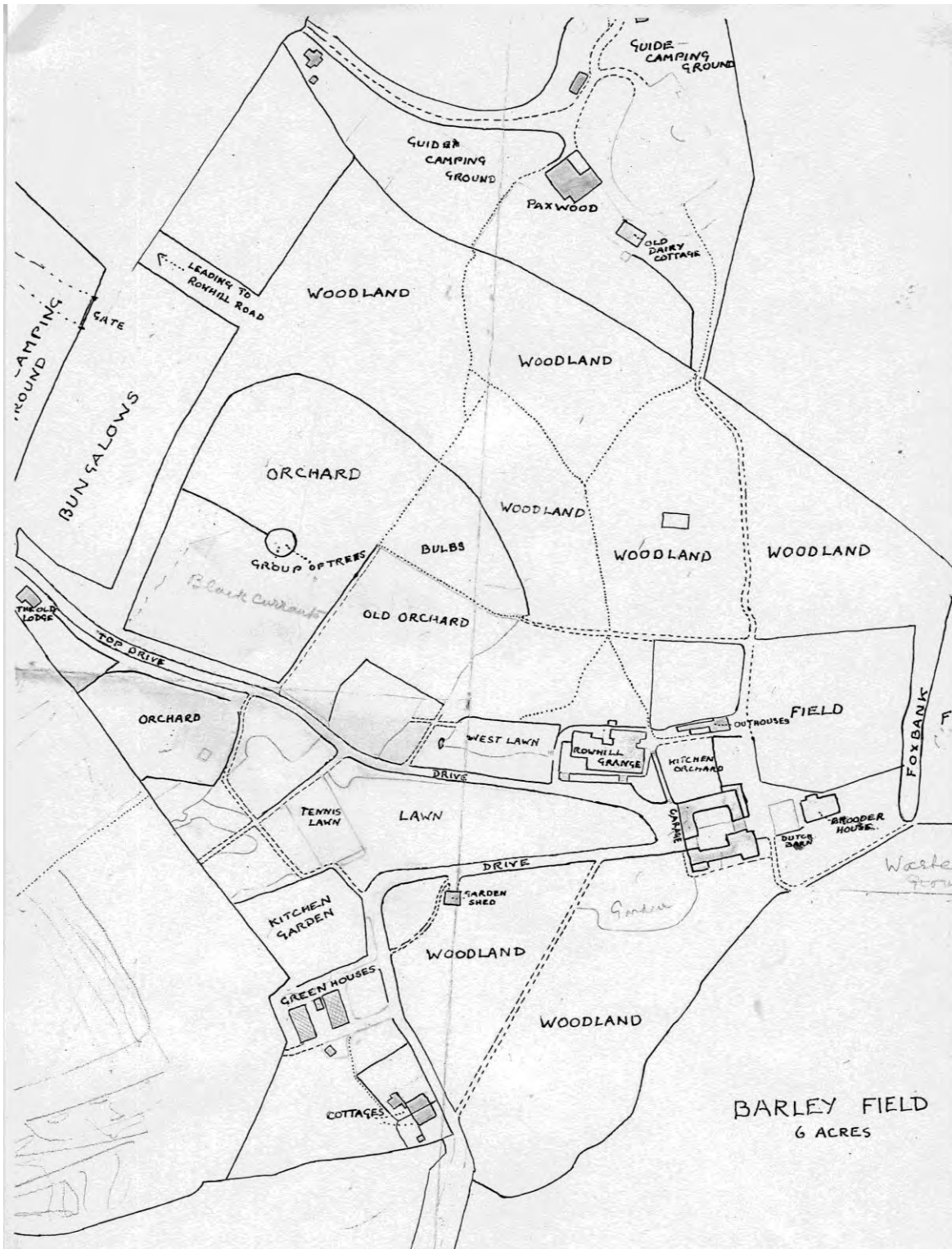
⁹⁵ Page 136

The garden and grounds



Plan 8 Plan of the grounds

This plan is taken from a plan of the estate, prepared before the sale of the property in 1978, upon which have been written the names of some parts of the grounds as used below.



Plan 9 Older plan of the grounds

This is a plan dating from about 1960 upon which Mrs Wates has pencilled in some additional descriptions and the outline of certain features. It shows all the footpaths with dotted lines.

Mrs Wates has written a description of the drive up to the house from the Top Dartford Road to the south⁹⁶. This section includes more detail and descriptions of other parts of the grounds, based largely on the writer's memories dating from the 1950s and 1960s.

The lower drive

To the right of the drive, before reaching the cottages and wood, was the Barley Field, so called for obvious reasons, although it was not always barley that was grown there. Beyond the field the boundary of the estate was marked by 'The Screen'. At some stage the public footpath, which crossed the fields beyond the boundary, was diverted, so that it followed the line of the boundary⁹⁷. Trees were then planted inside the boundary, to form a screen from the footpath. Among the trees were some planted to mark the births of grandchildren. John Drury remembers his father telling him that Mrs Wates' Austin Seven car, possibly that mentioned by her⁹⁸ was buried in the middle of the field at the end of its life!

To the left of the drive was a field, known in the family as Thomas' field, where vegetables were grown. This had belonged to Mr Roberson Thomas who bought it with other land from Mrs Collins in 1926 and who had sold the Barley Field to Mr Wates in 1933. He died in 1946 and his son, also Roberson Thomas, offered to sell it and his father's other land along Top Dartford Road and at Highfield to Mr Wates who, after a brief consideration, turned it down.



Photo 82 The Lower Drive at South Cottage with Twinkle 1930s

At the top of the driveway, as it curved slightly to the left with the wood on the right, were the two cottages. These were known under a variety of names but those that are used here are South Cottage, the first and southerly one, and Rowhill Grange Lodge. South Cottage was occupied by Mr Dale, the farm

⁹⁶ See page 28

⁹⁷ See plan 1 on page 9

⁹⁸ See page 42

manager, until his death in 1956, and Rowhill Grange Lodge was occupied by Mr Hopper, the gardener, and his family. Opposite was a footpath, which was a short cut through the wood to the lawns in front of the house, and which was the route one took when walking down to Top Dartford Road to catch a bus, or go to the grocer (The Grange used Murray's stores, known earlier as Griffins, opposite the end of Puddledock Lane, whereas Marianne, when living at Rowhill Mount, used Mr Parsons, later Mr Saddington, whose shop was next to the garage opposite the entrance to the drive).



Photo 83 Rowhill Grange Lodge from the greenhouse - about 1935

Behind the cottages was a field, which Mr Hopper's granddaughter remembers being used for the growing of runner beans, but no doubt also used for other crops.

Continuing past the cottages, on the left, was a bed of azaleas along the drive, which gave a brilliant display in spring; an area used for growing plants, including daffodils, and behind that the greenhouses. The first greenhouse was there when the house was bought. It had a heated section at the end where various more exotic plants were grown. This greenhouse gave the impression of always being very full of plants, including a well established vine from which grapes used to hang. A second greenhouse was built in 1950 at a cost of

£386[£9410], planning permission having been obtained in 1949. This was used mainly for the growing of tomatoes. Behind the second greenhouse was a shed used by Mr Hopper for the storage of his tools.

Adjacent to the greenhouses was the walled garden, entered through a gate just opposite the first greenhouse, with another gate on to the drive. All sorts of fruit and vegetables were grown here. There were fig and peach trees on the outside wall by the greenhouse and other trees trained against the walls inside. There were several rows of raspberries and loganberries, with a row reserved for the Ainsworth Wates family to pick, and one for the Grant family and, presumably, also the Argles family.



Photo 84 The walled garden from the orchard 1976

Beyond the greenhouses one entered the orchard and close by there used to be free range chickens. The walk from the Grange to the Ainsworth family house, Rowhill Mount, took one through the chickens. There were a number of chicken houses, but the chickens were not fenced in, being free to wander where they pleased in the orchard. Ainsworth's efforts to grow grapes on the hill were partly thwarted by the chickens eating the grapes! In about 1960, when there was a major policy change, pigs being given up and the decision made to concentrate on chickens, they left the orchard for the stables and other enclosed areas, and the comparative safety from foxes.



Photo 85 Chickens in the orchard - 1954

In 1963 part of the land in the orchard beyond the greenhouses and along the boundary was used for the growing of conifer trees for Wallace & Co, Mr Wates' nursery garden business in Tunbridge Wells. In the event, not many of these were sold and the remaining ones grew up into a dense coppice, known as the Black Forest, which is still there.

Tennis Court and lawns

Returning to the drive, and continuing towards the house the tennis court was immediately in front, as the drive turned to the right. This was above the level of the driveway and the bank was covered in lupins, making a magnificent display when in flower.



Photo 86 Ainsworth and Marianne on the tennis court 1940 with the drive, Rowhill Grange Lodge and the walled garden in the background

At the other end of the tennis court was another steep bank rising up to a footpath above, and the Dutch Garden beyond. Although the tennis court was the correct size the site as a whole was a little short, without much space to run behind the line. It was used intermittently, but much used in the early days of the family's ownership in the 1930s, and again by the Feaseys in the 1980s.



Photo 87 Playing tennis 1933

The Dutch Garden was hidden away, surrounded by rhododendrons, and comprised a number of parallel paths with herbaceous borders between them. At the end of the central path was a seat.

To the west of the tennis court was a footpath, shown on the map by F.P. This continued to the west of the Dutch Garden along the side of the Goose Field and emerged in the upper drive.

Although this was not a public footpath, it and the driveways were used, with the permission of the Wates family, by the occupants of the houses in Rowhill Road as a means of getting to the shops and bus stops in Top Dartford Road. To ensure that a right was not obtained, the occupants periodically signed a form acknowledging that the path was used by consent.

These forms, signed by the users of the path, provide interesting information as to the occupants of the cottages, who, at the dates shown, were as follows (house names not being given in 1969):-

Walter Cudmore	Sotik[now Clover?]	1955	1969
Henry Wilson	Rendezvous	1955	1969
Mr F.A.Williams	Alperton	1955	
John Brise	Greenwood House [now Luckystones]	1955	1962 1969
Mrs Weekes	Otterbourne	1955	
Bryan Osmond	Birdswood	1955	
Vera Gurnett	Otterbourne		1957 1969
Mr E.F.Clarke	Wood End		1957
Mr and Mrs S.Giles	Oakleigh Farm		1960
R.W.Giles			1969
C.A.Chalkley	?		1969
J.Crocker	[now The Brackens]		1969
Ian Thatcher	The Old Lodge		1969
J.Bray	?		1969
Mrs A.Clarke	Wood End		1969
D.F.Williams	Alperton ?		1969

Between the footpath and the tennis court was a horse chestnut tree. This grew from a conker planted by Bernard when he was a boy, in the early days of the Wates family ownership. Only a stump now remains, as it must have been felled by the hotel. This was the favourite tree of Mr Hopper's eldest granddaughter, Corinne, who gathered many prize-winning conkers from it.



Photo 88 Mr Hopper's grandchildren with Bernard's chestnut tree behind - 1969



Beyond that, between the footpath and the Orchard, are two magnificent copper birch trees. These and the other trees on the lawns, including the large monkey puzzle tree on the other side of the tennis court, were planted before the Wates family ownership. The monkey puzzle was quite a feature, but sadly came down in the Great Storm of 1987.

Photo 89 The monkey puzzle tree from the tennis court 1954



Photo 90 View from the drive across the croquet lawn towards the tennis court showing the monkey puzzle tree - unknown date



Photo 91 Games on the croquet lawn at a party of office staff 1935

Part of the lawn was levelled out for use as a croquet lawn. The equipment was kept in the shed across the drive, known as the Potting Shed because the potting of plants was done in the lower part. The upper part, level with the drive, was used for storing garden tools and machinery. The shed still exists. On the lawn opposite the shed was a large cherry tree. This had been struck by lightning, but survived with the trunk partially filled with concrete (or some other material).



Photo 92 The cherry tree from the tennis court - 1943

One notable tree that was planted during the Wates family's ownership is the silver spruce immediately opposite the house, which was planted in the early 1950s.



Photo 93 The silver spruce in snow 1978

The photograph on this page is the same view as on the last page but without the silver spruce. It shows a small raised pond on the lawn, close to where the tree was later planted. This pond had been there since the purchase of the property but must have been removed not long after this photograph was taken. For a similar view showing the tree in the early years of its growth see Photo 114, taken in 1957, and the frontispiece of this book taken in 1954.



Photo 94 View from the house towards the rock garden 1943

A favourite spot was the rock garden, the renovation of which is described by Mrs Wates⁹⁹. Water tumbled down from an outlet, level with the road, over rocks and through little pools, to the pond at the bottom under the shade of a weeping willow tree, and all surrounded by rhododendron bushes. This was expanded by the Feaseys¹⁰⁰, the pond being enlarged and another added. This was after the Great Storm of 1987, when many of the trees in the surrounding wood came down.



Photo 95 The pond in the rock garden 1978

This photograph does not show the willow tree, which must have been removed by then, and sadly there is no photograph of it.

⁹⁹ See page 37

¹⁰⁰ See page 150

The Barns



Photo 96 The barns, or stable block - unknown date.

The drive turned sharply up to the house in front of the thatched barns which, as can be seen from the map, were built in a square around a courtyard. The front range comprised a double garage (presumably originally for carriages, but now for two cars), workshops in the middle, and a large archway with a loft over it, leading into the courtyard. Outside the double garage, at the foot of the steps and path leading up to the back door of the house, was a petrol pump. This was rather special as the family had its own private petrol supply. The petrol was pumped up by hand from a 500 gallon tank which had been installed in 1936, and for which a licence had been granted that year.



Photo 97 The garage 1954

On each side of the courtyard were stables. These had not been used for horses for many years (although this use was to return) and the whole complex was always known as the barns. They were initially used for pigs and then, after the pigs were given up, for chickens. The first area on the right, where the stairs led up to the loft, was used for storage of potatoes. The middle area on the right was where the eggs were stored and graded. Mrs Wates could often be

found there, assisting with the grading, and other people remember helping.

RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL OF DARTFORD.

Licence to Keep Petroleum Spirit.

The RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL OF DARTFORD, in the County of KENT, being the Local Authority to grant Licences under the Petroleum Acts, 1871 to 1932, in respect of the Place and Premises hereinafter mentioned, upon application to them, duly made by G. L. Wates

of Rowhill Grange, Wilmington
(hereinafter called the "Licensee,") being the Occupier of Premises situated at

Rowhill Grange, Wilmington
which Premises are situate in the said Rural District, for a Licence to keep Petroleum Spirit, to which the said Acts apply, **do hereby License** the Licensee from the date hereof to the Thirty-first day of December next to keep Petroleum Spirit to which the said Acts apply, on the said Premises, on the Conditions endorsed on the back hereof.

Dated this 11th day of May 1936.

By Order of the Council.

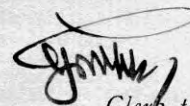

Clerk to the Council.

Photo 98 Licence to keep petrol

At the back was a large opening leading to a Dutch barn where hay was stored - a good place to play for the grandchildren and other children, (such as Mr Hopper's granddaughter, Corinne, who remembers it well). Beyond the barn was the 'Pig Parlour'¹⁰¹. After the departure of the pigs this was adapted for the raising of chicks. It comprised a corridor with covered pens to the right, and with openings to outside brick pens¹⁰².

The stables have been replaced by the Clock House and other hotel buildings - on the same site, but also partly thatched. Beyond these buildings is now a barn, possibly the original Dutch barn and, beyond that, in an inaccessible area, if one looks closely, can still be seen the brick work of the Pig Parlour, covered in ivy and brambles.



Photo 99 The barns courtyard 1934

A track led up to the left from the barn into the wood between a couple of fields, the field on the right being where the boar was kept, in the days of the pigs. Beyond this was a field marked Naboth's Vineyard¹⁰³ on the plan (page 106). It was apparently so named because it was coveted. Those who know the story behind this have passed away, but it can perhaps be deduced from the plan on page 9, where there is piece of land shown cross-hatched. It is within the boundary of the land originally sold to Mr Alexander, but was included in the sale by Mrs Collins to Mr Thomas. Perhaps it was evident on the ground that it originally belonged to the house and was therefore coveted by the Wates family. It was bought as part of the Barley Field, and perhaps it was this that gave rise to the decision to buy the whole of that field.

The fields on both sides of this path were, after the boars had gone, used for chickens. Deep in the wood was the shed known as the British Museum!¹⁰⁴ ()

¹⁰¹ See page 40

¹⁰² See sketch on page 88

¹⁰³ This is a reference to a biblical story in which a vineyard belonging to Naboth was coveted by the king

¹⁰⁴ In 1991 Ainsworth wrote to Helen that he had walked round with the then owner and that the British Museum was still there. For the origin of this see page 26 and for the reason for the name see page 42

After the relocation of the chickens it was used for them, and this may have been its original purpose.



Photo 100 The British Museum in 1978

Albert's son, John, remembers his father going round to all the chicken houses at the end of the day to ensure that the chickens were in, and to let down a door across the entrance which was operated by a lever. This was to protect against foxes. In the morning he would go round all of them to raise the door.

The upper drive

Let us return now to the driveway as it passes the house. Two flights of steps led up to the terrace. There were rocks in front of the terrace wall and aubrietia used to tumble down them. Fuchsias, in pots, were brought out by Mr Hopper for the summer months, and placed on the terrace.



Photo 101 The house 1929



Photo 102 The house 1937

These photographs show the changes in the terrace and the area below, probably made in 1937. The next photograph, taken much later, is interesting in that it shows the growth of the trees in the wood behind the house, referred to by Lucy¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰⁵ See page 42



Photo 103 The house 1978 with the writer's daughter, Melanie.

The wide area outside the Common Room on the west end was used in the summer months for sitting out to have tea, using deck chairs and a swing seat. It was wonderfully peaceful to sit there looking out over the lawns, with trees in the background and rhododendron bushes to the right, and listening to the birds singing.



Photo 104 Tea on the terrace 1940 - Helen with baby Gavin and Marianne

From the terrace, steps led up to the West Lawn, a quiet secluded area shaded by an oak tree and the rhododendrons along the drive, but with an herbaceous border in the sun along the north side, under a steep bank below the wood. At the end of the lawn was a little thatched summer house This was destroyed when a tree fell on it in the Great Storm of 1987.

A path went up into the wood from here. It was in this area of the wood that Ainsworth had built a model railway track, as a boy, in the 1930s. Many years later Lucy could be found here digging up brambles in her 80s!



Photo 105 The West Lawn 1943



Photo 107 The rose garden - early 1930s

principal feature of which was a large mulberry bush in the middle. For a time chickens roamed there until they were moved nearer the barns in 1960. The side of this orchard area adjacent to the wood was the dogs' burial ground, referred to above¹⁰⁷. The rose garden bordered on the drive and opposite was a small patch of lawn with a pampas grass bush, which is still there, and the Dutch garden beyond.

To the right of the summer house was a path which, after crossing a track, which led up from the drive into the wood and the adjacent field, entered the rose garden (now the car park of the hotel!). There used to be beds of roses separated by grassy paths, but at some time before the sale in 1978 these must have been grubbed up as, according to Joy Feasey¹⁰⁶, there were lupins there when they bought.

Behind the rose garden was a small orchard area known as the Old Orchard, the



Photo 106 Twinkle on the drive by the rose garden - early 1930s

¹⁰⁶ See page 150

¹⁰⁷ See page 77

Continuing up the drive past the rose garden, beyond what is now the hotel boundary, there was a path to the right. This passed a field to the left and then, crossing a larger field, entered the wood not far from the Dene Hole, which is described elsewhere¹⁰⁸. The Girl Guides were given permission to use this path, as well as the path round the tennis court described above¹⁰⁹, as access through the woods to Pax Wood.

The fields had various uses at different times. They, together with the Old Orchard, are now the site of Burnt Oak House. The first field, being along the driveway opposite the Goose Field, may have been used for vegetables. Irises were grown there in the late 1950s and blackcurrants in the 1960s. The irises, and also lilies, were grown for Wallace & Co, Mr Wates' nursery garden business in Tunbridge Wells already mentioned above.¹¹⁰



Photo 108 Irises 1959

In 1955, Mr Hale, the manager of Wallace & Co, after a visit to Rowhill writes that the irises and lilies at Rowhill are doing well, will be good stock in a few years' time and Hopper is keeping them well under control. He also remarks that the whole garden was looking very beautiful. There is a note from Mr Hopper to Mr Wates in June 1957, during the latter's illness, hoping that he will soon be better and out in the garden again, and informing him that 435 lilies of the necessary grades had been sent to Tunbridge Wells.

The larger field beyond, or part of it, was used as a paddock in the 1960s and 70s, and there is evidence in the form of a cine film that in the War goats were kept there. For quite a few years Mrs Wates' sister, Kathleen, and her husband,

¹⁰⁸ See page 55

¹⁰⁹ On page 111

¹¹⁰ On page 110

Bob Down, had a caravan parked on the edge of the field where it bordered on the Old Orchard (on the right of the photograph below) which they used occasionally at weekends.



Photo 109 A maze at an unidentified event 1934

This site was also used by Mr Wates' niece Naomi and her family for weekend stays, so maybe there was a stand pipe nearby.



Photo 110 Naomi and family camping with the Old Orchard behind and the writer to the left

Between the eastern edge of the field and the bungalows in Rowhill Road was a belt of trees. Mr Wates' relationship with these neighbours was generally very good as is shown by one of the two recorded incidents of problems, when a joint letter written in October 1954 brought to his notice the nuisance caused by the trees, "which for the major part of the day – due to their inordinate height and number – prevent the sun reaching our gardens. This nuisance is such that, however much we at first hesitated to broach the matter because of your tolerant and considerate attitude towards us in other affairs, we are constrained to put

our views on paper for what we feel is an unnecessary and objectionable deprivation". The letter was received on the 15th October and clearly Mr Wates took prompt action as there is a further letter written by Mr Williams as the intermediary on the 20th stating that they were all grateful for his prompt and considerate action. In view of his acknowledged generally tolerant and considerate attitude one wonders why they thought such a formal approach was necessary, although in a subsequent letter Mr Williams does attempt to explain this.

The signatures to the letter were John Brise of Greenwood House, Bryan A. Osmond of Birdswood, W.E.Cudmore of Sotik, C.B.Weekes of Otterbourne, M.A.Delo of Asoff, H.Wilson of Rendezvous and F.A.Williams of Alperton.

Mr Wates then took the opportunity of requesting Mr Williams to act as intermediary in obtaining their signatures to the letters giving consent to use the driveway as recorded above¹¹¹.

The other incident was in July 1952 when Mr and Mrs Williams, Mr and Mrs Campkin of Green House and Mr and Mr Osmond complained about noise created by the scouts on the other side of Rowhill Road late at night. This again seems to have been quickly and amicably resolved following discussions with the scout commissioner.

His "considerate attitude" to them is also evidenced by a letter from Mr Williams, dated 4th March 1952, stating that that week they were enjoying the boon of electricity for the first time, and thanking him for all he had done to make this possible. The background to this is that he had been negotiating with South Eastern Electricity Board for the supply of electricity for the Old Lodge, Great Mount Cottage and Woodlands Lodge, from which the bungalows were also going to benefit, since early in 1949. His involvement in the electrical industry stood him in good stead here, as, despite the Board's financial difficulties he was able to bring forward the date for completion of the connection by arranging for Johnson & Phillips Ltd ¹¹²to supply the copper cable, for which there was "an unusually difficult supply position" at the time.

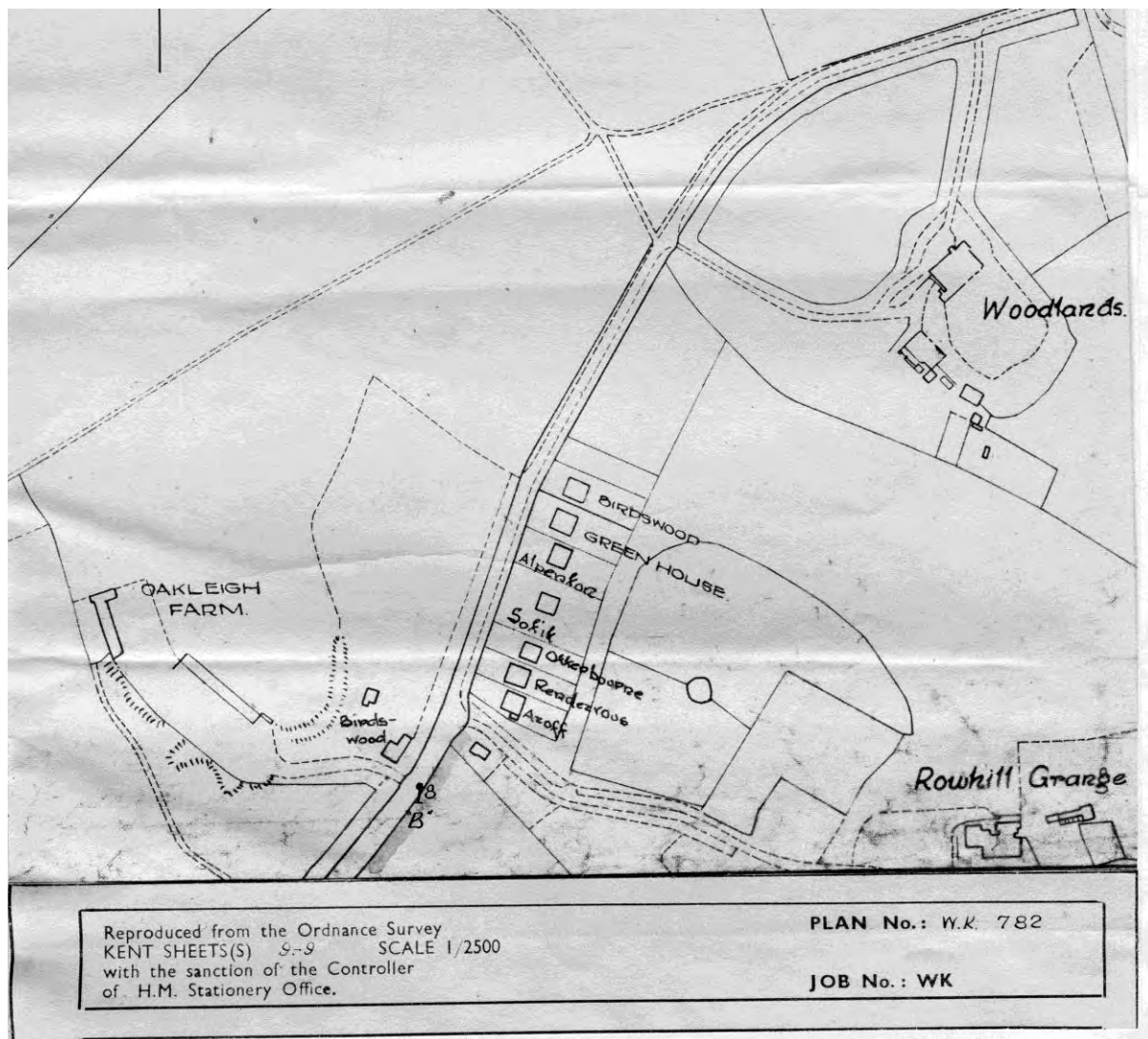
The plan on the next page, which was attached to the resulting wayleave agreement for poles for the overhead wires, shows the names of the houses in Rowhill Road. Clearly an old map has been used, as it still shows the house at Woodlands which had been pulled down twenty years before, and Great Mount Cottage named as Birdswood, so that two houses with that name are shown.

To the left of the drive was the 'Goose Field'. In addition to the original geese, there were turkeys and, later, chickens. The chicken house was an old railway

¹¹¹ On page 111

¹¹² See page 71

carriage, positioned along the fence dividing the field from the orchard. This had been at Rowhill Mount, where, in conjunction with a furnished hut, it was used as a home by the gardener, Mr Wood. His kitchen and bedroom were in the railway carriage and his living room in the hut. This is referred to above¹¹³. He was living there when Ainsworth and his family first occupied the house, in 1946. The carriage was moved to the 'Goose Field' after Mr Wood's death, the cost of conversion of £32/[£780] being paid in May 1950. There is no record of what happened to the railway carriage, after the chickens ceased to use it.



Plan 10 Plan attached to electricity wayleave agreement

¹¹³ On page 51

The driveway finished by going down, past the Old Lodge¹¹⁴, to Rowhill Road. Before it reached the house there were two trees, leaning away from each other, caused by a bomb having fallen between them in the war. There were large, imposing wrought iron gates at the entrance from Rowhill Road, although they were never closed. This was originally the main entrance to the house, but became the back entrance. Mr Wates brought these gates from the Bellegrave estate in Welling in about 1931. They were the entrance gates to the old house there, and he believed they were more than 100 years old. He and a business acquaintance had bought the estate and



Photo 111 Bellegrave estate gates



Photo 112 Part of gate - 2003

sold it off in lots for the development of that area of Welling.

In June 1943 a notice was received from the Ministry of Works requisitioning the gates for war purposes under the Defence (General) Regulations 1939. However, following an appeal, the decision was made not to remove them, as they were considered to have special artistic merit. Parts of the gate have now collapsed or been removed but some is still in place

The writer has vivid memories as a boy of returning, by bicycle, to his home at Rowhill Mount at night along the drive. The lights of the Grange were soon obscured by the rhododendrons along the north side of the drive and there were tall trees and shrubs on the other side. There was a brief respite from trees when reaching the rose garden then one plunged into trees again on both sides, and these trees creaked in the wind! One cycled as fast as possible and, finally the lights of the Old Lodge would come into view, and the gas lamp across the road. Rowhill Road was open, but there was no street lamp until reaching home, and who knew what might be lurking on the dark tree-covered hill to the left!

¹¹⁴ See page 47

But that was a boy at night. Otherwise the gardens and grounds were a delightful, quiet oasis in a busy world.

Pax Wood and scouts and guides

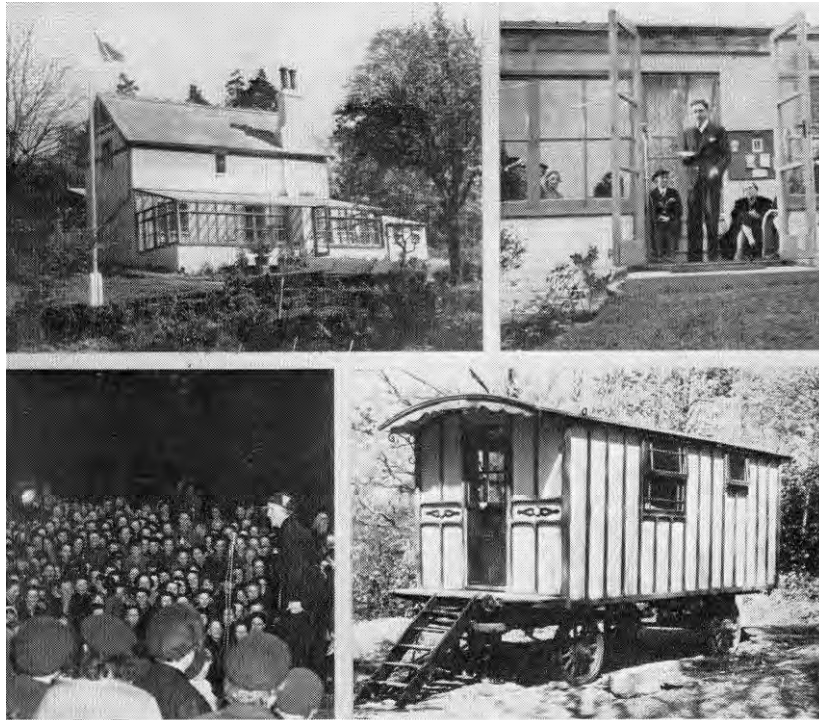


Photo 113 Pax Wood on opening day

The following is an extract from Mrs Wates' biography:-

During the war and the bombing period several bombs had been dropped in our woods. The main house of Woodlands had been pulled down but there was a kitchen garden with old stables and a coach house attached to it. I had used part of the less-damaged buildings as a studio and enjoyed many quiet hours spent there; but Hitler got it and smashed it up to such an extent that it was practically a ruin, with the walls cracked and the old conservatory attached to it, a pile of broken glass.

Helen and her father walking through this unused part of our estate, passed this ruin despondently, ruminating on this devastation. Suddenly Helen turned to her father, an inspiration coming to her. "Daddy," she said, and they both turned and looked at the ruin. "This would make a lovely Brownie House if it were done up!" And it was "done up" and is now Pax Wood and added to it later on was Pax House – Kent's No.2 Guide Centre.

In 1957, when Leslie was in Westminster Hospital during his last illness Pax Wood was 'opened' by Lady Baden Powell. He was granted the use of a television set so that he could see the opening ceremony¹¹⁵. As he lay in bed he could hear the voice of the Head Guide telling a little of the Pax

¹¹⁵ It was broadcast on children's television. This is the only occasion he watched television. There was not one in the house and the writer does not recollect there ever being one except perhaps in Joyce's room.

Wood history to the assembled guides and brownies and declaring the Brownie House, now built and ready for occupation, open.

Much of the money for the renovation of the old buildings and their transformation into an institution had come from the Mr Claude Honor Johnson Trust (see page 59).¹¹⁶

A fuller account can be found in “Pax Wood Story”, written by Helen Grant, and published in 1962. She recounts that the idea arose in 1955, when considering what to do with an outstanding war damage claim. This could have been used to pull the building down, but that seemed a waste, so the money was used towards the renovation. Her husband Jim Grant, had dealt with the renovation of the adjacent Old Dairy in 1952 and subsequently arranged the War Damage claim for the other buildings. It was he who then did the renovation work.

After the opening ceremony, at which Ainsworth stood in for his father, Lady Baden-Powell came to Rowhill Grange for tea, and this photo shows brownies and guides in their hundreds lining the driveway awaiting her arrival.



Photo 114 Awaiting the arrival of Lady Baden-Powell - 1957

The site had always been an exciting place for the grandchildren, as Helen recounts:- “The grandchildren made a wonderful playground out of the wilderness and spent many happy hours inventing exciting games round the old buildings; dens in the ivy, secret hideouts in the rhododendrons, tasting the happiness left behind by the Millwall Brownies and the ‘enchantment’ to which the Chief Guide referred”.

¹¹⁶ This does not seem to be correct. A schedule of payments made from the trust does not show any payment to the Girl Guides between 1951 and 1964. The payment in 1964 was for £2000 and may have been in connection with the construction of the adjacent building Pax Hall in that year.



Photo 115 Lady Baden-Powell arriving at the house 1957

After it had been taken over by the guides the family were permitted to continue to walk there, and a favourite walk from the house was to go through the woods at the back and on to Pax Wood.

Initially the guides and brownies were merely permitted to use the building. Mr Wates had paid for such of the cost of renovation as was not covered by the compensation and this was repaid by the guides from fees paid by groups using it. However, the family thought that the guides ought to have some security to enable them to continue with improvements so, in 1963, before the guides incurred the expense of erecting Pax Hall, they were granted a 60 year lease at a nominal rent, provided that the property was used for guiding purposes only. In 1982 the legal arrangements were taken a step further when, in effect, the guides purchased the site for £5000, although, to protect possible development potential, this was done by the grant of a long lease with the option to the guides to purchase the freehold for a nominal amount after 2022.

Mrs Wates records her husband's interest in the scouts and guides in her biography¹¹⁷, but here is some additional information from correspondence and other sources. It is clear that he encouraged them from very early on. Letters record scouts coming from Sydenham and Eltham. Initially they would have used the woods behind the house, sloping down to Rowhill Road but it seems that they accessed the camping sites from the main house. After the acquisition of Woodlands that area was used also. In the postwar period the writer does not recollect the wood behind the house being used. The girl guides used

¹¹⁷ See page 59

Woodlands (later Pax Wood) and the scouts used the Great Mount wood across the road.

Mr Sydney Knapp (born 1922) writing from Australia in 2005 recorded:- “I lived in Plantation Road, Hextable from birth to age 22 years....opposite the back entrance to Rowhill Grange property¹¹⁸. When Mr Wates and family moved into Rowhill Grange, the daughter, Barbara, joined the 1st Swanley Scout Group to help Miss De-Lipscombe who ran the 1st Swanley Cub pack as Akela. Miss Barbara was known as Bahloo, in cub circles a Brown Bear. Mr Dennis De-Lipscombe was Scout Master... The Scouts were given permission to have access to Rowhill Grange property for the weekly meetings of both cubs and scouts...weather permitting, and also camping in the grounds at weekends and holidays. As a member of the 1st Swanley Scouts the wooded areas of Rowhill Grange were very well known to me. During the season sweet chestnuts were plentiful and very tasty.”



Photo 116 Scouts thanks badge

As a token, small though it be, of great gratitude from Boy Scouts”. Whether it was thanks just for the fete or for other services also is not known.

In May 1952 Leslie was coopted to the Kent County Scout Council. This was a way of honouring those who had been of assistance to the Boy Scout Movement.

The following letters of thanks survive:-

1948 Woolwich Polytechnic Union

1951 Rangers from Southwark

1953 Guides from Belvedere, also thanking members of the staff who helped

1953 Bexleyheath and District Boy Scouts’ Association for frequent use for 18 months with hope of continuing. In 1954 Leslie was also thanked for serving as President of the Association and attending some of their meetings and was elected for the following year.

1954 Ravensbourne Amateur Radio Club

A thanks badge was given to Leslie at a Scouts and Guides fete at the house in June 1931, with a note signed personally by Lord Baden-Powell as follows:- “This little badge – of ancient and widespread origin as a sign of goodwill – is tendered to you

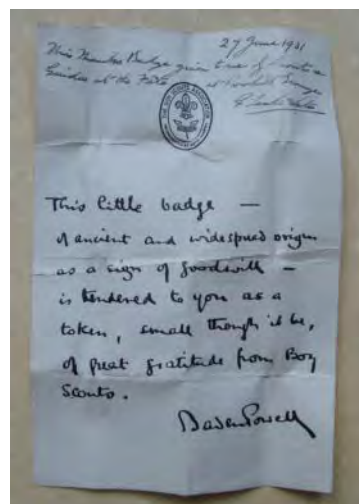


Photo 117 Baden-Powell note accompanying badge

¹¹⁸ The Top Dartford Road entrance was originally the back entrance, the front entrance being from Rowhill Road.

1956 17th Brownie pack from Bromley (from this letter it seems that the name Pax Wood was already being used prior to the opening of the house in 1957)

1956 Bexleyheath Methodist Church for their Christian Youth Rally

1956 – 1976

Leslie Wates died on the 22nd January 1958. He had had a heart attack in 1956 and, despite various hopeful signs to the contrary, he never really recovered. He was well enough to attend the annual Christmas family gathering in 1957, but shortly thereafter he deteriorated rapidly.



Photo 118 Leslie Wates with grandchildren - Christmas 1957

By his will, made some 30 years earlier, he left his estate to his widow for life, and then to his four children. Lucy Wates and his lifelong friend and former partner, Bernard Wilson, were the executors, but in practice it was his son, Ainsworth Wates, who administered the estate and the ongoing trust and who therefore took on the main responsibility for the overall management of the Rowhill Grange estate. In February 1966, shortly before his death, Bernard Wilson retired as a trustee and was replaced by Barbara and Ainsworth.



Photo 119 Bernard Wilson and Lucy Wates in the hall - Christmas 1961

Farming activities and staff

The manager, Mr Dale, had died¹¹⁹ and had been replaced by Mr Adrian Mansfield. The first signs of Mr Dale's illness appeared in October 1955 and it must have been realised early the following year that steps would have to be taken to replace him.

Through an old friend of Mrs Wates in Bath, Miss Muriel Bush, contact was made with Mr Mansfield, who at that time was working in Constantine Bay, near Padstow in Cornwall, having owned his own dairy and pig farm from 1949 to 1955. He was 28 years old, with a wife and small son. He was engaged in May to start working at the end of July 1956. From a letter written to him by Mr Wates in April, the intention was that he would look after the pigs and poultry in the first instance, then take on more general work and later, if suitable, take over Mr Dale's role. Mr Standen must have retired and he would occupy Woodlands Lodge. However, Mr Dale died in June so he was able to occupy South Cottage. Mrs Dale had left to go to a farm in Gloucestershire, where maybe she had family. There is a letter to Leslie in which she writes: "I shall always be very grateful to you and Mrs Wates for all your kindness in the past 25 years."

Mr Mansfield was a young, amiable man in great contrast to his predecessor, of whom the grandchildren were in awe and dread, but there is no record of how effective he was and how well he got on with Albert, who had to be treated carefully. In about September 1957 he was given the occupation of the Old Lodge¹²⁰, a more desirable residence than South Cottage. This is evidenced by the accounts for the year ended April 1958, in which six months' rates are treated as employees' income for South Cottage and six for the Old Lodge. Mr Kelly, the tenant, presumably left at this time which opened up this opportunity. In a letter to Mr Wates written in December 1957, thanking him for a Christmas cheque, he also expresses his gratitude for this move, and writes that he and his wife have been happier since they came to Rowhill than for several years.

¹¹⁹See page 39

¹²⁰See page 47

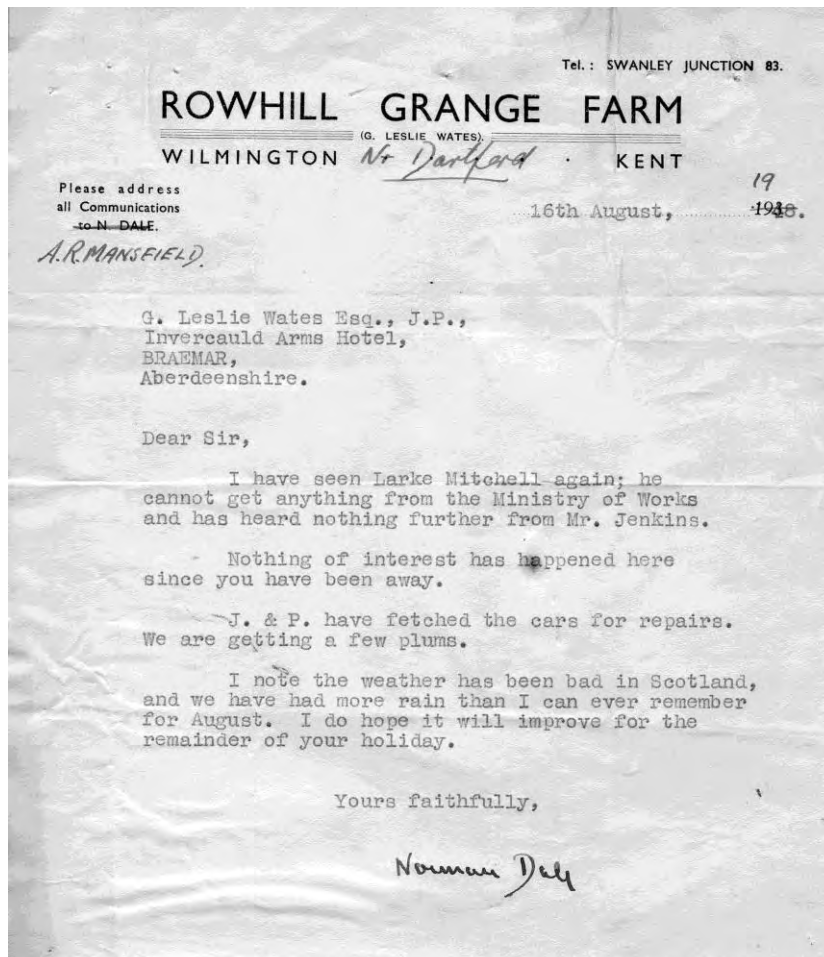


Photo 120 Old letter used as draft letterheading in 1956

During his lifetime Leslie Wates was able, with ease, to subsidise the farm from his general income. In 1956 his total gross income had been about £20,000 [*£388,000*], of which about one half was directors' fees and one half investment income. With his death the directors' fees ceased and the investment income reduced because of estate duty. The value of the investments as at April 1959, after payment of estate duty, was about £90,000 [*£1,750,000*]. The income on this was only just enough to cover his widow's living expenses and the losses on the farm and his other two horticultural business – Wallace & Co and E B Champernowne. Mrs Wates was, probably unnecessarily, conscious of the need to save costs and felt that she was contributing personally by helping with the sorting of the eggs and cutting of flowers for sale.

Efforts were made to reduce costs. The major change was a decision in May 1959 to cease keeping pigs, which took effect from 1960, and to concentrate on building up the poultry business in or near the barns in their place. The loss in the years from 1960 to 1967 was about £1300 [*£22,800*] per year which was less than the total wages bill of around £1600 [*£28,000*] per year.

Probably as part of this policy, a young agricultural student named Tim Waldron, tall and dark-haired, already mentioned above¹²¹, who lived in the

¹²¹ Page 105

main house, was engaged, mainly to look after the poultry. At a meeting in November 1959 Albert complained that he was only really interested in the poultry and would not pull his weight in other work.

In March 1961 there were ambitious plans for a new chicken house and it was anticipated that Mr Mansfield and Tim would be able to look after the poultry, with sufficient time to spare to help Albert with other work. However, it must have been decided not to proceed with this and Tim left sometime that year to set up on his own.

It seems that Mr Mansfield left in May 1962. A schedule A tax assessment states that the Old Lodge was vacant from May, and Ainsworth Wates' wife, Marianne, took over the bookkeeping, the first entries in her writing being for that month. There is no record of the reason for his leaving. Maybe it was to save costs, in that it may have been decided that Albert could handle the poultry on his own in addition to the other work on the farm, with some extra assistance. Mr Mansfield probably never actually took over the management. In a letter to Barbara in June 1961 Ainsworth writes that Albert, in effect, runs the commercial side of the farm, with the exception of the poultry, entirely unhindered.



Photo 121 Charlotte Drury in the field adjacent to the greenhouses – early 1970s

The wages books for the period 1963 to 1965 and from 1972 to 1978 survive. There is no record of when Albert's wife, Charlotte, started working for the farm but, from 1963, the staff consisted only of Mr Hopper and Albert and Charlotte and, from March 1964 to November 1967, Mr Hunter plus occasional casual labour. The latter included Albert's children on occasion and the writer's name appears in July 1964. Extra help was obtained for fruit picking and John

Drury remembers his father and Mr Giles, of Oakleigh Farm in Rowhill Road, helping each other out. Albert's weekly wage in 1963 was £10.50 [*£180 per week=£9360 per year*], in 1972 £19 [*£205 per week=£10,660 per year*] and by 1978 following a period of rapid inflation it was £46 [*£216 per week=£11232 per year*].

From 1961 to 1968 about three-quarters of the farm income of around £4000 [*£54,000*] derived from the sale of eggs.

The sale of fruit to Covent Garden was minimal, compared to the comparable sales in the 1950s, even though enhanced by the production of blackcurrants. These were grown in the part of the orchard along Rowhill Road - where they replaced apple trees - and in the field along the upper drive, opposite the 'Goose Field'. Fruit was packed in the packing shed at Rowhill Mount, from where it was taken to Harbours, at the petrol station in Top Dartford Road, who took it to Covent Garden. The writer's sister, Anita, remembers the apples being packed and Mr Dale polishing those at the top of the boxes, but this dates back to the 1950s. In the 1930s, after the purchase of the orchard, the average sales per year were £82 [*£4130*]; during the war years, and after, it was £537 [*£17,400*]; during the 1950s to 1958, £448 [*£9750*]; there were none in 1959 and 1963 and £140 [*£2830*] in the intervening years. After that the figures are included in the general sales of fruit and vegetables.

A greater share of the trade came from the sale of fruit, vegetables and flowers locally. Much of this was private, with people coming up the drive to the greenhouse area and being served by Mr Hopper. There were also sales to local shops. There is a record of the purchase of an Austin A40 Countryman in October 1962, to replace the lorry for the delivery of eggs and vegetables to shops and markets. This continued, after Mr Hopper's retirement, right up until the sale of the estate.

On 1st March 1969 Mr Hopper retired, at the age of 75, and was not replaced.

The entire burden of running the estate and looking after the garden was now on Albert's shoulders, assisted only by his wife and one other person. From May 1972 this was Mr Etteridge.

Thus, in 1969, a major decision seems to have been taken to cease the large scale production of eggs in the barns and to let these and the Barley Field out as riding stables. The tenant was Mr John Watson. This seemed to work well initially, rent from this and other properties (see below) being more profitable than egg production, thus reducing the overall loss in the years 1970 to 1972 to only a few hundred pounds. However, Mr Watson and another tenant then failed to pay rent and Mr Watson became bankrupt, which partly contributed to the much heavier losses thereafter. By 1971 the farming activities had virtually ceased, but chickens continued to be kept, until 1975 or 1976, in the fields

behind the house, between the woods and the stables. Mr Etteridge left in 1976, after which Albert and Charlotte were on their own.

Leonard Hopper



Photo 122 Leonard Hopper

Mrs Wates' tribute to Mr Hopper has been given above¹²². His daughter, Joyce, left home in 1947, when she married, and his wife, Rose, died in 1951. Their daughter-in-law, Molly, remembers her as a quiet, reserved woman. David married Molly in 1952 and they, and later their three daughters (Corinne, (born in 1958), Roxanne and Suzette) lived with him in the cottage. There is a story that Mrs Wates used to like to wheel Corinne around the estate in her pushchair as she liked her curly hair. Corinne has many happy memories of the first ten

¹²² On page 32

years of her life at Rowhill and particularly, like every other child, remembers the rocking horse¹²³.



Photo 123 Mr Hopper in the greenhouse with his granddaughter Roxanne

On his retirement Mr Hopper went to live with his daughter, Joyce, near Godalming in Surrey, and the rest of the family moved to a home in Dartford, where Molly and her three daughters still live. Mr Hopper died in 1974 and is buried with his wife at St Michael's Church, Wilmington.

¹²³ See page 103

Albert Drury



Photo 124 Albert Drury in his greenhouse at Great Mount Cottage – early 1970s

As will have been seen from this narrative, Albert was an integral part of Rowhill Grange. Having started as a boot boy after the Wates family purchased the property in 1928, he developed farming, mechanical and gardening skills and became an invaluable member of the staff, ultimately looking after the estate single-handed, with the help only of his wife, Charlotte, before it was sold in 1978. He had a gruff, but friendly, outgoing personality and a good sense of humour, although one had to tread carefully when dealing with him, as he could fly into a temper. This was in contrast to Charlotte, who was quiet and reserved but friendly once the initial barriers were broken. One of the most distinctive things about him was the cloth cap that he always wore¹²⁴, revealing a shock of

¹²⁴ See Photo 64 on page 87

black hair when lifted. He was good with children too. The writer's daughter, Melanie, aged seven, has a memory of him giving her a ride on the tractor and letting her pretend to be driving it.

On Mrs Wates' initiative, he was rewarded for his loyalty to and hard work for, her and her husband, by the gift to him by the family in 1961 of Great Mount Cottage, the house that he had occupied since it was bought in 1941, two years after his marriage to Charlotte¹²⁵. In May 1978 he was presented with a silver platter, at a ceremony in the Common Room of the house, engraved with the signatures of all the children and grandchildren of Leslie and Lucy Wates, as a thank-you for his 50 years of service. The photographs below were taken at this event.

After the sale of the estate, in 1978, he continued to work on a part time basis for the new owners, Michael and Joy Feasey, for a few years, but his and Michael Feasey's personalities clashed, so this was terminated. Charlotte also worked for them doing housekeeping work in the house, which she also did for the writer's parents and for him and his first wife.

They sold Great Mount Cottage in 1988 and bought a house in Hextable. They died within a few days of each other in 1996, Albert on 26th January and Charlotte on 9th February.



Photo 126 Albert and Ainsworth



Photo 125 Albert and Barbara

¹²⁵ See Photo 3 on page 18

Letting of cottages

The reduction in staff meant that cottages formerly occupied by staff became available for letting. In July 1956 Jim Grant estimated for some work to be done to Woodlands Lodge, which had been vacated by Mr Standen, and it may then have been let. From March 1958 to December 1962 it was let to Mr Eric Bray. It was then, in 1963, improved by the installation of a bathroom - the work being done by Jim Grant - and occupied by Mr George Fischer from December 1963. He remained there until the estate was sold in 1978. He was a Pole from Cracow. He escaped from there, during the war, to Italy and made his way to England. He had worked at Schweppes in Sidcup since 1948, as Production Manager from 1961. He was a nice man and a good tenant.

There is a letter from Mr Hopper to Mr Wates, in September 1957, in which he accepts an offer to take over South Cottage after its vacation by Mr Mansfield, the advantage of South Cottage over Rowhill Grange Lodge being that the heating system was much better. However, nothing seems to have come of this and there is no information as to its occupation until March 1959.

From that month, rent of £8.13.4 per month was received from Mr Russell, increasing to £13 in September 1962 and later to £14. It ceased in August 1967. It can be deduced from this that he occupied South Cottage until September 1962, when he moved to The Old Lodge, which had been vacated by Mr Mansfield in May of that year.

John Drury recollects a farm worker, Mr Tucker, whose children were at Hextable primary school with him, living in South Cottage. In the absence of the wages book from that time the only record of him is a Court eviction order, to be executed on the 15th January 1964.

From March 1964 South Cottage was occupied by the farm worker, Mr Hunter. His employment ceased in November 1967 but he remained in occupation. Court proceedings for eviction were taken in 1968. From July 1968 it was let to a Mr Davies, and from 1971 to 1974 it was occupied by Helen Grant's recently married daughter, Celia, and her husband, Sean Neill, with their baby, Samantha, born in November 1971, and pet boa constrictor. After they left, to buy a house on Dartford Heath, it was let to Miss Julia Easy who then married Mr Ratcliffe. They must have fallen out as she left while Mr Ratcliffe remained.

From 1967 The Old Lodge was let to Ian and Denise Thatcher. They were very good tenants and lived there until 1977. Mrs Thatcher also rented the field adjacent to the wood and the Rowhill Road bungalows, for grazing a horse.

Following Mr Hopper's retirement in 1969, his house, Rowhill Grange Lodge, being the other semi with South Cottage, became available and this was let to

Mr Watson who was using the stables, with the same ultimate problems of his not paying the rent. He ultimately vacated in April 1977.

Social activities

In comparison with the time before Leslie's death, and in particular the pre-war period, the period after his death was much quieter. The family, of course, visited and stayed frequently, and friends also came to stay. For some impression of life at the house see Appendix II. The garden was used for the occasional fund-raising event, such as for the Red Cross and the Wilmington Conservative Association. Many remember the latter's Strawberry Fayre in July 1974. There is evidence that Wilmington scouts were using part of the Great Mount for camping, at least until 1962. Detailed rules for use were agreed between the District Commissioner and Ainsworth Wates, in March 1961.

The big family event in this period was the reception for Anita Wates' wedding to Nick Laird, in 1966, and here are a couple of photographs of the guests. The first includes Mrs Reeves, Charlotte Drury, and Joyce on the right.



Photo 127 Anita's wedding 1966 - guests on the terrace



Photo 128 Anita's wedding - guests on the drive after the couple's departure

The sale in 1978

Discussions took place within the family, and advice was taken at various times after Leslie's death, in 1958, as to the future of the estate; how to prevent or minimise the losses and cost of maintenance; whether to sell all or parts; what opportunities were there for development, etc. The main factor, all along, was that Lucy loved the place and the memories of being there with Leslie, and did not want to leave. But she lived there alone, with her housekeeper, Joyce, and the time would come when she might have to move, although she was still remarkably fit. With this in mind a small house was built for her in the grounds of her daughter, Helen's, property in Kemsing, Kent.

In March 1976 she became resigned to having to move, although she hoped that the house could be kept, and possibly occupied by members of the family. Various options were considered at this time, valuations obtained and planning enquiries made. The house could possibly be split and let on long leases, arrangements could be made for the cost of maintenance of the grounds to be set against rents from the house and cottages, etc. The overriding factor was probably not to sell the house during Lucy's lifetime, or until she was reconciled to this idea, and it was also important not to sell the land, stables and cottages until after her death, for capital gains tax reasons. She was then aged 92.

On the weekend of the 10th/11th July 1976, Lucy moved to the house in Kemsing. Joyce had obtained a council flat in Swanley, but stayed until Lucy had moved, and presumably moved herself at about the same time. The house was then empty, except for the lodger, Miss Barbara Mitchell, who was asked to leave and went in November, although a Wates relative, Nancy Horlock, lived there for three weeks in September.

Joyce's flat was 8 Pear Tree Close, Swanley. She continued to help in the house until it was sold, and then did housekeeping for Marianne, at Rowhill Mount, and for the writer's family in Hextable for a few years. Unfortunately, she developed Alzheimer's disease and was no longer able to look after herself. She moved to Leyton House in Wilmington on 18th April 1993, the flat being vacated in September. Her condition continued to deteriorate and by January 1997 she had been moved to Stone Lodge Hospital, Dartford, where she died on 9th November 2001.

More details of her life, and memories of her and of life at Rowhill Grange, are in Appendix II.

Plans continued to be discussed during the next few months and the writer then stepped in and offered to live in the house as part of the arrangements, and with a view to buying an interest in the house. During the early months of 1977 Mr Watson vacated the stables and his cottage, and the Thatchers left the Old Lodge. Complicated arrangements were made, for tax reasons, involving the land and the stables being let to a family company, J & S & W Ltd.

The writer and his family moved into the house in July 1977, initially sharing with another family but, after this did not work out, letting up to six rooms to lodgers. New temporary occupiers moved into the Old Lodge and Rowhill Grange Lodge, and new arrangements were made with Mr Ratcliffe in South Cottage. The stables and Barley Field were let out as livery stables and other fields let out for grazing.

In December, Lucy wrote to Ainsworth, in what must have been one of her last letters, "I was pleased to hear that part of the family are at the Grange and have the children there – although I find it difficult to believe that your father is not there and the house interior must look very different. Will it be sold? I hope one of the family will live there. For me it has no attraction now except for its old precious connection. It is a good thing to keep the thatch in good order."

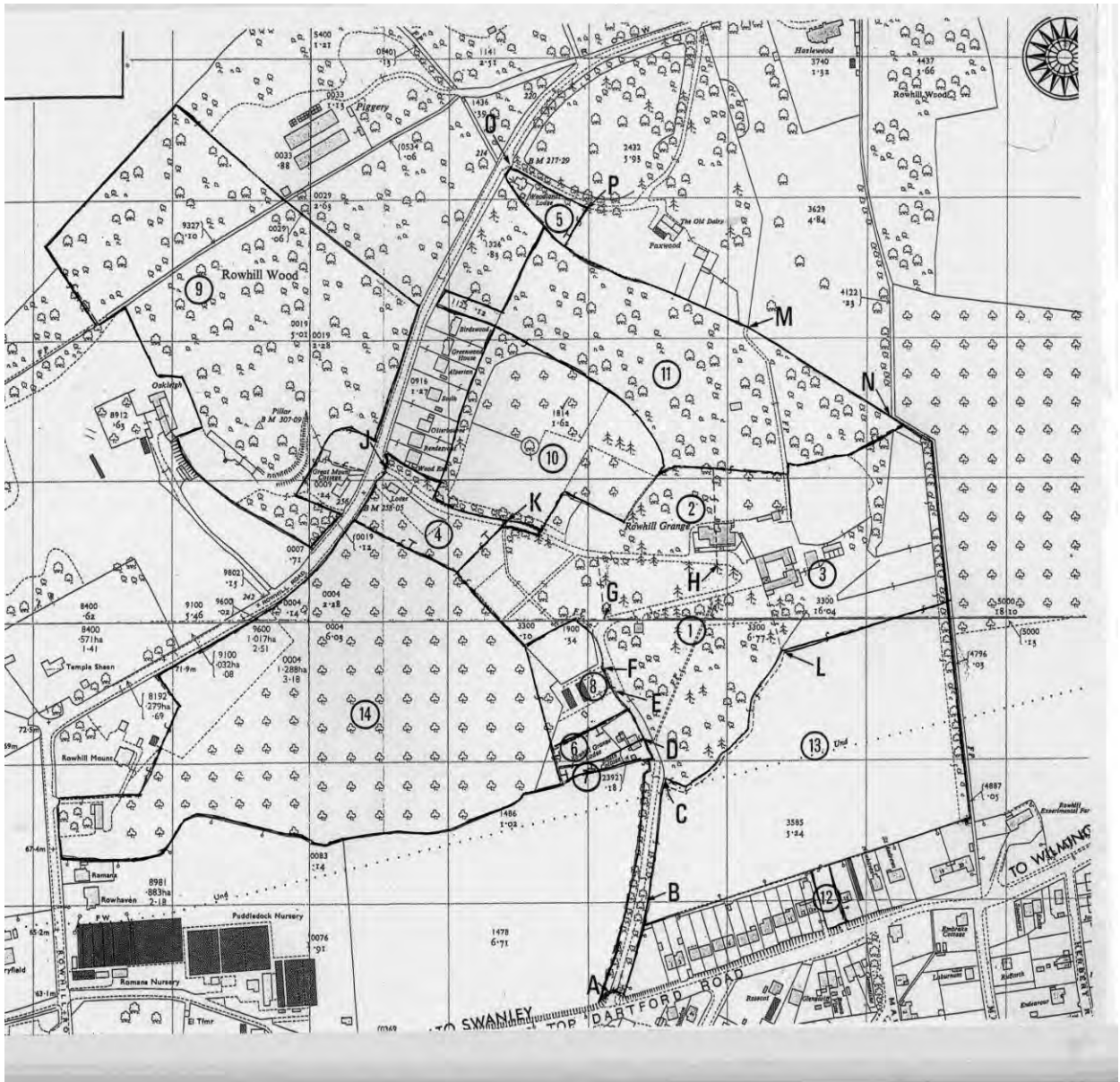
In April 1978 an up-to-date valuation of the whole estate, including the cottages, was obtained, as property prices had been rising rapidly. The total was £200,000 [*£858,000*]. Partly as a result of this, but mainly because of the life style that was going to be involved, in April it was decided not to continue with the project under which the writer would buy the house. In May, by which time it was known that Lucy was dying from pancreatic cancer, the decision was made to sell the whole estate. She died on 29th June. In the light of what was subsequently achieved on the sale it would have been impossible for the writer to have bought.

In 1975 Bernard Wates had replaced Barbara as a trustee of the estate, so the sale was effected by Ainsworth and Bernard, although in practice all four children were involved in any decisions.

By chance, Mr Fischer decided to terminate his tenancy of Woodlands Lodge at this time. He had lived there as a bachelor, but had just married and therefore wanted to move to somewhere bigger. It is worth quoting his last letter to Ainsworth:- "My memory will always stay with Mrs Wates, you and the wonderful peaceful and fulfilling time I had living at the Lodge. Thank you for everything. I hope that anyone who will stay at the Lodge will love and enjoy and be happy as I was in the surrounds and peace."

The London firm of Strutt & Parker was instructed on the sale, with Prall, Champion & Prall of Dartford, who had been advising, as the local agents. Their advice was to sell by auction with the land being divided into lots for sale in the most advantageous way. There were 14 lots, with the house itself being

divided into two, as shown on the plan below. The auction took place on 1st November 1978 at the Bull Hotel, Birchwood Road, Swanley. The writer handled the legal work through his firm, Sole Sawbridge & Co.



Plan 11 Sale plan

It was considered that the most difficult lots to sell would be the main house and that it was best to sell privately before the auction. This was achieved on the 12th October with a sale of lots 1, 2 and 3, being both parts of the house and the stable block, to Michael William Feasey (who was the brother of Geoffrey Feasey who owned Oakleigh Farm in Rowhill Road) at the price of £122,500[£525,000].

The auction room was packed and the competition fierce with the result that some very good sales were achieved. The sales were as follows:-

Lots 4 and 10, the Old Lodge and fields to the north of the top drive, to David East, who owned the agricultural supply company in College Road, Hextable, for £68,800/£295,000]. He demolished the old cottage and built the present house, Heatherbank.

Lot 13 – the 'Barley Field' to W.H.P Dick & Sons Ltd for £17,000/£73,000].

Lots 6, 7 and 8 – South Cottage, Rowhill Grange Lodge, the greenhouses and the walled garden, to Peter Allen Horton for £52,800/£226,000]. He converted the two cottages into a substantial single dwelling. In order to provide himself with greater privacy, at a later date a swap was made between him and Michael Feasey. The walled garden was exchanged for the old driveway which he incorporated into his property, with a new driveway being constructed by Mr Feasey through the wood.

Lot 12, being a building plot on Top Dartford Road, to Mr Lawson for £17,500/£74,900]. He built an ostentatious mansion on it.

Lots 5, 9 and 11 – Woodlands Lodge, the woods behind the house, and the Great Mount, were sold to Paul David Colborne for £62,550/£268,000].

The sale of lot 14 was the most dramatic. This was the Little Mount, being the land adjacent to Ainsworth's house, Rowhill Mount. He had decided with the agreement of his three siblings, all being the persons entitled to the estate after their mother's death, to take this himself as part of his share. In order to determine the market value to be taken into account for this purpose, it was agreed to let it go to auction and someone would bid on his behalf. The price would be fixed at the bid when the last but one bidder dropped out. This was £15,000/£67,100], but David East, who had bought the Old Lodge, was desperate to have it and prevent anyone else buying it. He would not have minded if he had known it was Ainsworth he was bidding against, but he took the bidding to £45,000/£201,300] before giving up!

Taking that £15,000 into account, the total sale realised £356,150 [£1,593,000], compared to the £200,000 estimate made in April. The estate agents certainly deserved their commission. This compares with approximately £127,000 originally paid by Mr Leslie Wates at 1978 values, although that figure includes Rowhill Mount and Great Mount Cottage which were not part of the sale.

Property prices have risen considerably since then. Rowhill Mount alone was sold for £1,250,000 in 2007, and that was for the site only as it was rebuilt. Mr Leslie Wates had purchased it, together with the Little Mount (which was not included in the sale and is retained by the family) for the equivalent of £92,000 in 1934, although that was subject to Mr Bellingham's occupation.

Conversion to hotel

The house was bought by Michael and Joy Feasey, in 1978, as a family home for themselves and their two children, Sam and Mia. They had lived in different places in London and had made sufficient money by improving and selling on their homes. The Feaseys were a Bexley family and Michael had taken over the family's butcher business and then expanded into dry cleaning. Joy was Australian. Michael's brother, Geoffrey, owned Oakleigh Farm in Rowhill Road and when visiting him on one occasion, they were told that Rowhill Grange was up for sale, wandered up to have a look at it and decided to negotiate to buy it in order to move nearer Michael's family and original home.

Initially they only made limited alterations to the house, The kitchen area was changed, with a door made between the dining-room and the kitchen, and the main bedroom was made en-suite by converting the Green Room (to use the Wates family name). The children used the East Room and what had been Leslie Wates' study.

They continued the recent use of the stable block for horses, running their own riding school and a livery business. The stables were re-thatched, a riding school block above the stables built, and the Barley Field rented. At one time there were forty horses.

The youngest of their children was aged 8 when they bought the house. It was a wonderful place for them to grow up, but when the time was approaching for them to leave home, and the parents were going to be alone, they made the decision to convert the house to a restaurant and hotel. An initial planning application in 1985 was refused by one vote, but permission was later obtained and the restaurant and hotel were opened in 1989.



Photo 129 The converted stable block

They converted the front range of the stable block into a house for themselves so as to vacate the main house for the hotel. The clock tower that was

incorporated came from the old Dartford Rural District Council offices at White Oak, Swanley. The offices were being dismantled at the time and they approached the council to ask whether they could have it. Joy preferred living there to the main house, which she had always found a bit spooky, particularly the back stairs.

In connection with the conversion to a restaurant a conservatory extension was added at the west end to create the dining-room. Later the terrace was changed, as already mentioned above, and the black boarding on the exterior changed to white boarding in keeping with a typical Kent style. The car park was constructed over what, in earlier years had been the rose garden. A licence to hold weddings was obtained.

In 1987 occurred the Great Storm, when the wood along the drive was devastated. The opportunity was taken to extend the rock garden by increasing the size of the pond. Joy had had in mind doing this. She loved the garden and would have liked to have done more.

On 1st September 1992 there was a devastating fire in the stable block, made all the worse by the thatch, which was attended to by 16 fire engines and 80 fire-fighters. Michael and Joy's home was destroyed. Although the stables behind were not too badly damaged, the opportunity was taken to redevelop the whole site and it ceased to be used as stables. A home was incorporated for Michael's father.



Photo 130 After the fire

They then obtained planning permission for the construction of a spa, to be erected at the end of the lawn adjacent to the walled garden, and to construct a bedroom extension. However, the stress involved in the running of the hotel became too great and they decided to sell with the benefit of these permissions.

They sold in 1994 to Peter Hinchcliffe and his friend Deborah, whom he subsequently married, and they carried out the expansion, although the spa was added to the house. They subsequently, in 2002, acquired Alexander House in Sussex, from where the name Alexander Hotels comes. It has nothing to do with the original owner of Rowhill Grange.

Michael and Joy retained the riding school and the adjacent paddocks until about 2007, when they sold them to the hotel.



Photo 131 The hotel in the snow - about 2008

Appendix I – The Times Obituary of G.L.Wates

G.L.WATES

The Times of January 24th 1958

Mr G.L.Wates, who died on Wednesday at the age of 73, was well-known in the electrical engineering and building society worlds.

George Leslie Wates was born on July 12 1884, the son of G.F.Wates, author and theologian. He spent his early life in Lewisham and was educated at Aske's Grammar School. He was admitted as a solicitor in 1905 at the early age of 21, having obtained first-class honours and been awarded the New Inn Prize. He practised as a partner in the firm of Whale and Wates of Woolwich, which in 1920 became incorporated in the firm of J.D.Langton & Passmore of London.

As a young solicitor he became the close friend and associate of the late Walter Claude Johnson, founder of Johnson & Phillips Ltd, electrical engineers. He was elected to the board of that firm in 1927 and was chairman from 1931 until 1957, when he resigned because of ill health. In 1946 and 1947 he was chairman of the Cable Makers Association and in 1950 and 1951 he was chairman of the British Electrical and Allied Manufacturers Association. During this time he was chiefly responsible for raising the capital sum to endow the Chair of Electrical Engineering at Cambridge University.

The Wates family had its roots in Woolwich, were among the founders in 1847 of the Woolwich Equitable Building Society, and have been closely associated with it ever since. He himself joined the board in 1932 and was elected chairman in 1949, resigning in 1957. Among his many other associations with Woolwich were his governorship of the Woolwich Cottage Hospital and the Woolwich War Memorial Hospital from 1908 to 1948. He was also a governor of the Woolwich Polytechnic from 1939 to 1956, during which time he was chairman from 1944 to 1947 and subsequently president of the Union of Clubs and Societies.

He was an underwriting member of Lloyd's and a director of many companies. In 1910 he married Lucy Winifred Ainsworth and had two sons and two daughters, all of whom survive him.

Throughout his life Wates was conspicuous among his colleagues and associates for his integrity, courage and clear thinking. He well earned what was once called "his gilt edged reputation" in all his dealings, both business and personal; and his pleasant natural affection for his fellow men brought him friends wherever he went.

Appendix II - Memories of Joyce and life at the house

I have included, below, the address I gave at Joyce's funeral, on 22nd November 2001, contributions from members of the family, most of which were read out at the funeral, and memories of Alexis Clarke. Not only do they paint a vivid picture of Joyce, but also of life at the house.

Funeral address

We have come here to bid our final farewell to Joyce and, before doing so, to remember and thank her for her life and the devotion and friendship she gave to us.

Nothing is known about Joyce's background. It is assumed that she was an orphan.¹²⁶ She was brought up in Darenth Hospital and from there, as a teenager, was found a position as a servant, in the days when people still had servants. Through the contacts, which Madge Waller (later Madge Munroe) had with the hospital, a number of girls found service at Rowhill Grange. Among them were Joyce and Edie. I noticed that Joyce still had Madge Munro in her address book years later. Edie moved on but remained a friend of Joyce. Gladys Fisher, who I am pleased was able to come here today with her daughter and son-in-law, found friendship with both of them. Joyce also kept in touch with Phyllis Cave, a friend from Darenth Hospital days, and was a good friend to them all until her mental condition began to deteriorate in old age. Phyllis moved to Weymouth and Joyce used to go there to stay. She died two years ago.

Otherwise Joyce's whole life was really devoted to the Wates family, and we owe her a great debt of gratitude for all she did. She lived and worked at Rowhill Grange for nearly 50 years, ultimately serving as cook and housekeeper. I will leave it to others to recall those times.

She was an invaluable help to my grandmother in her old age, enabling her to continue living at the Grange into her 90s. When she finally left to go to Downlands, Joyce moved into a council flat in Swanley and, for the first time in her life, at the age of 62, had her own home and lived an independent existence. She lived happily there for the next 16 years until the onset of dementia.

She had overcome the considerable disadvantages of her childhood and lack of education. I was always impressed by the way she coped with the complexities of modern life, such as completing tax returns, with which I helped her.

Her services to the Wates family did not cease with the departure of my grandmother. She continued working both for my mother and myself and my first wife, Laurie. Initially this was at Rowhill Grange again, and then at our house in

¹²⁶ Her date of birth was recorded as 12th November 1914

Hextable. I think I recollect correctly when saying that she would walk from Swanley, and it was only when she developed problems with her feet that she eventually stopped. She became very fond of my children and was embarrassingly generous at Christmas and birthdays.

Her last years were spent at Leyton House, Wilmington, and Stone Lodge Hospital, Dartford. Soon she no longer knew us but she was well looked after in both places.

Although she has left us now for good, she will certainly live on in the memories of the Wates family.

From Joanna Wates (wife of Bernard)

I first met Joyce in 1948, a year before I married Bernard and became one of the extensive Wates family. At that time life at Rowhill Grange was very sociable, with frequent visits from family and friends and people helping to run the house and estate. Joyce, and Sarah the housemaid, lived in (while Hopper the gardener, Albert his assistant, Dale who ran the farm, Mrs Reeves who helped with cleaning, and Edie, came and went). Joyce in her kitchen was at the centre of things, providing food and innumerable cups of tea for everyone. She never seemed flustered by any of the demands made of her, simply got on, making meals for the household and any guests. Grave and courteous, but not without humour, she brought up tea in the morning, laid breakfast, made mid-morning cups of tea for anyone who turned up in the kitchen, cooked dinner, served afternoon tea with cucumber sandwiches, scones, biscuits or sponge cake (which always rose beautifully), then supper with soup or salad, cold meats, and excellent bubble-and-squeak. Finally, before going to bed she would put her head round the door to see if anyone wanted a hot drink, and put hot water bottles in their beds before she went to her own. After washing up the dinner things she spent time in her own little sitting room off the kitchen and, once a week, she took the bus to Dartford for her afternoon off - shopping, having tea with a friend or going to the pictures.

Joyce took a great interest in everyone who came to the house; we were "her family", the only one she ever had, and every child knew instinctively that she was glad to see them and hear everything they had to say. On arrival, as soon as the children had greeted Phil, the dog, and Grandma, they made off to the kitchen. Having reassured themselves this 'pillar of the Grange' was there, they would rush outside or to the nursery. At Christmas her generosity was overwhelming; she had presents for everyone, including all 16 grandchildren, and shared in the pleasure of the Christmas tree, Santa's appearance through the French windows and the marathon present-giving.



Photo 132 Joyce receiving present at Christmas 1975

On big family occasions, like Christmas, I and others used to slip away from the formality of the dining room and help Joyce with the mountain of washing-up and enjoy a peaceful chat. To her I was 'Mrs Bernard', which I found delightfully old-fashioned, but it never seemed subservient. We would stand as equals, wiping and grading eggs in the barn, or discussing recipes. At home I tried to brew cups of tea as good as the ones I drank in Rowhill kitchen, but though I used Joyce's red-label tea they never tasted as good; it must have been the water.

As years went by, life in the kitchen became less sociable for Joyce; much of the time she and Grandma were on their own, but even when burglaries increased in the district she and Grandma locked up carefully and just went to bed. I rather think Joyce had a poker to hand, and she would certainly have used it if necessary!

Grandma encouraged Joyce to join the WI and it became an important part of her life. She enjoyed meeting people, watching demonstrations, taking part in cooking, sewing or knitting competitions, and she proudly took part in the annual garden party which was often held at Rowhill. Her horizons widened beyond the Grange. I remember her telling me with enormous pleasure the details of a trip to Paris and going up the Eiffel Tower.

When Grandma left Rowhill, Joyce went into a home of her own nearby. I never saw it but I know she would have made it bright with her handiwork. We kept in touch at Christmas for many years. For us she was an integral part of the good family life at Rowhill Grange.

From Rosalind Wates (daughter of Bernard and Joanna)

I don't have any particular 'stories' about Joyce. My memories are of a benign presence that ruled the kitchen at Rowhill. I was very fond of her, and remember arriving on one childhood visit and having to be hauled back from galloping straight through to the kitchen to see Joyce. I was firmly steered into the sitting room to greet Grandma, who was a bit scary and forbidding compared to Joyce's sunny nature.

From Anita Laird (daughter of Ainsworth and Marianne)

My memories are essentially, from childhood, of a busy, bustling, cheerful small person who was always kind and friendly, with food available (important to a growing girl!) and who allowed me to join her in the inner sanctum of her sitting room! The kitchen was not the same without her there. I loved the business of the wheeling -n of the tea trolley to the drawing room, her neat sandwiches and cakes. She was part and parcel of Rowhill and Grandma, my childhood and teenage years, always in the background. It's good to know that she was well cared for all her life.

From Anthony Wates (son of Ainsworth and Marianne)

There was hardly a day that passed by during the school summer holidays that I didn't go over the hill to visit Rowhill Grange. On most occasions Grandma was busy sitting at her desk in the dining room, writing letters. As a grandchild I was free to roam the house, so consequently I inevitably ended up in the kitchen to talk to Joyce! I must have been a thorough nuisance, as Joyce too had plenty to do and really didn't want to be bothered by a small boy. Whatever the time of day, Joyce was always welcoming and quietly listened as I prattled on about next to nothing! It wasn't long before I asked whether I could reach down the biscuit tin, the second shelf on the right in the large larder cupboard! Joyce would sit in the carver chair at the scrubbed wooden kitchen table, often with Mrs Reeves, and on occasions with Albert or Mr Hopper, to have her 11 o'clock cup of tea and one of those famous biscuits. She seemed to expect me at that time, but made quite sure that it was one biscuit and not the whole tin that I consumed!



Photo 133 Mrs Reeves and Joyce - Christmas 1961

On the subject of food, Joyce made the best bubble-and-squeak I have eaten. There were often vegetables left over from meals prepared for Grandpa and Grandma so, if I was staying the night, tea would often consist of bubble-and-squeak! It wasn't often that I would stay the night at the Grange, but on such occasions Joyce would take charge of the bedtime routines. If I was lucky I was allowed to sit in her special private room, next to the scullery. It was always warm, with a crackling fire, and the mantelpiece was covered with pictures and souvenirs from holidays taken on the south coast. Joyce used to enjoy a weekend bus tour to Clacton or Margate. Cocooned in her sitting room Joyce would tell stories she would make up while she sat and knitted. A knitted tea cosy was a favourite Christmas gift to members of the family.

Indeed, she was regarded as a member of the family. On Christmas Day, when the lunch dishes had been washed up and before the cold buffet supper was served, Joyce would join the uncles, aunts, friends, cousins and grandparents to receive gifts from under the tree. Joyce managed to find some small present to give to everyone. They were mostly made by her or purchased from the W.I. stall. She was a keen member of the Women's Institute and rarely missed their meetings.

I suppose, like many people who are always there, always part of one's daily life, I took her for granted. Joyce had adopted us as a member of her family. She was genuinely keen to hear all our news. She was loyal, generous and warm-hearted. Joyce played a valued part in my happy childhood.

From Alec Grant (son of Helen and Jim Grant)

I remember Joyce with love and affection. I remember her especially during the 'Rowhill era' but later also when she came to stay with Grandma for a short while when she moved to Downlands.

We surely all remember Joyce at the Rowhill Christmases; having achieved the impossible in the kitchen - so many brussel sprouts and such an enormous bird and such quantities of gravy! - sitting in the chair by the Common Room fire (usually the one immediately behind the door from the passage) surrounded by Christmas paper and gifts; one of the family, an essential person in the domestic fabric of our grandparents, and so of three generations; a steady, faithful soul for whose life and service we owe very special thanks. God bless her - may she rest in peace.

Dennis Moore (a lay chaplain from the hospital)

Mr Moore then spoke about her recent years in Thames Ward. Having been there about five years she was their longest patient and they had clearly become very attached to her, as witness the attendance of no less than six nurses at the funeral. He spoke about how she enjoyed music and, in the early days, had joined in the singing, particularly enjoying 'Jerusalem'.

Alexis Clarke

Alexis is the daughter of Joyce's friend, Gladys Fisher, and one of the two friends to whom Joyce left her savings by will. Gladys died in September 2002 and what follows is information given to me by Alexis by letter, following her mother's funeral and when I met her at a later date.

The family believed that Joyce was the illegitimate daughter of a titled gentleman. She was left at a hospital where the nurses gave her the name Joyce Shepherd. As a child she was sent to Darenth Hospital where she received some education. Alexis' father, Alec, was at the Darenth Little Boys Home nearby. They had parties together and Alec got to know Joyce. Joyce went to Rowhill and Alec went into the army but they kept in touch by letter. There was a circle of friends who kept in touch, including Gladys, someone called Jean, and Edie Gosold who also came from Darenth Hospital and worked at Rowhill.

During the war Gladys was in the ATS at Woolwich, so was able to come home at weekends to her parents at 7 Piedmont Road, Plumstead, and sometimes Joyce would join them. This continued after the war when Gladys and Alec married. They had a large house, where friends and relatives frequently stayed, and Joyce would visit and be treated as part of the family.

They would also visit Joyce at Rowhill, and Alexis remembers this from an early age. She remembers Mrs Wates and Phillip (the dog), Albert and Mr Hopper and sometimes Mrs Grant. Her earliest memory is from when she was five in 1957. Normally, on their visits, she was restricted to the kitchen, but if there was no one around she was permitted to go into other parts of the house and would sometimes help Joyce collect tea things. She would go with Joyce to see to the chickens and pick up eggs and grade them in the old stables, or wander round looking at the haystack and pigsties (although there would not have been pigs unless her memory goes back to her first visit). Most of the time

Mrs Wates would be found, with Phillip round and about in the garden. She remembers in particular the rock garden. Mrs Wates used to like listening to her. This was very much Mrs Wates' territory so it was special and her mother never went. The old pinafore that Mrs Wates wore struck her, as she would have expected the rich lady to wear fine clothes. When there was no family in the house, Mrs Wates would let her and her mother stay as a holiday. She thinks they would have slept up in the attic rooms. She particularly remembers the rocking horse¹²⁷, the funny old staircases, the large dining room table and how large it all was. She and her mother visited Joyce for a day or weekends for a number of years, and Mrs Wates accepted them as Joyce's friends. This was Joyce's home, where she lived with Mrs Wates, Phillip, Albert and Mr Hopper.

When Alexis was in her second year at secondary school (1964?), Mrs Grant asked her mother if she would like to live at Pax Wood and be the caretaker there. She dealt with all the bookings and Alec cut the grass, although he continued with his full-time job at STC (Standard Telephone and Cables). Alexis went to Swanley School, so she used to catch the bus from Top Dartford Road, walking through the wood and across by the tennis court. That took her near the Denehole which was a bit scary. She remembers Mr Fischer in Woodlands Lodge. They were there until Alexis finished school with 5 'O' levels at the age of 16 (1968?).

¹²⁷ See page 103

Appendix III – Family tree

George Leslie Wates (1884-1958) m. Lucy Winifred Ainsworth (1884-1978)

|

Barbara (1912-2003)	Ainsworth (1914-2002)	Helen (1916-2000)	Bernard (1920-1982)
m 1938	m 1939	m 1939	m 1949
Guy Argles (1912-1983)	Marianne Teleki (1915-2007)	Jim Grant (1903-1969)	Joanna Heron (b.1925)

children

Robert 1938-2012	Brian 1943	Gavin 1940	Nicholas 1951
John 1939	Anita 1944	Alec 1942	Oliver 1953
Martin 1949	Anthony 1947	Celia 1946	Jeremy 1956
Peter 1953		Janet 1948	Rosalind 1959
Timothy 1957			

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The photographs reproduced in this booklet come from various sources. Some were simply with the family papers, many were taken by my father and some by myself, but I am indebted to the following persons for others:- Gavin Grant, Janet Grant for access to her mother's album, John Drury and Jean Fisher, Molly and Corinne Hopper, Alec Grant and Martin Argles. Photos 1 and 4 have been provided by Dennis Molyneux. Photo 36 is from a newspaper cutting provided by Ramsay Shewell-Cooper.

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