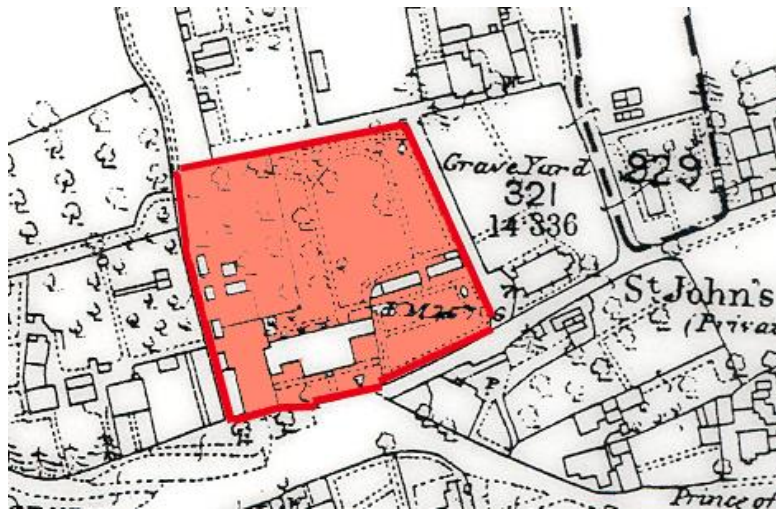


The Old House, Westcott

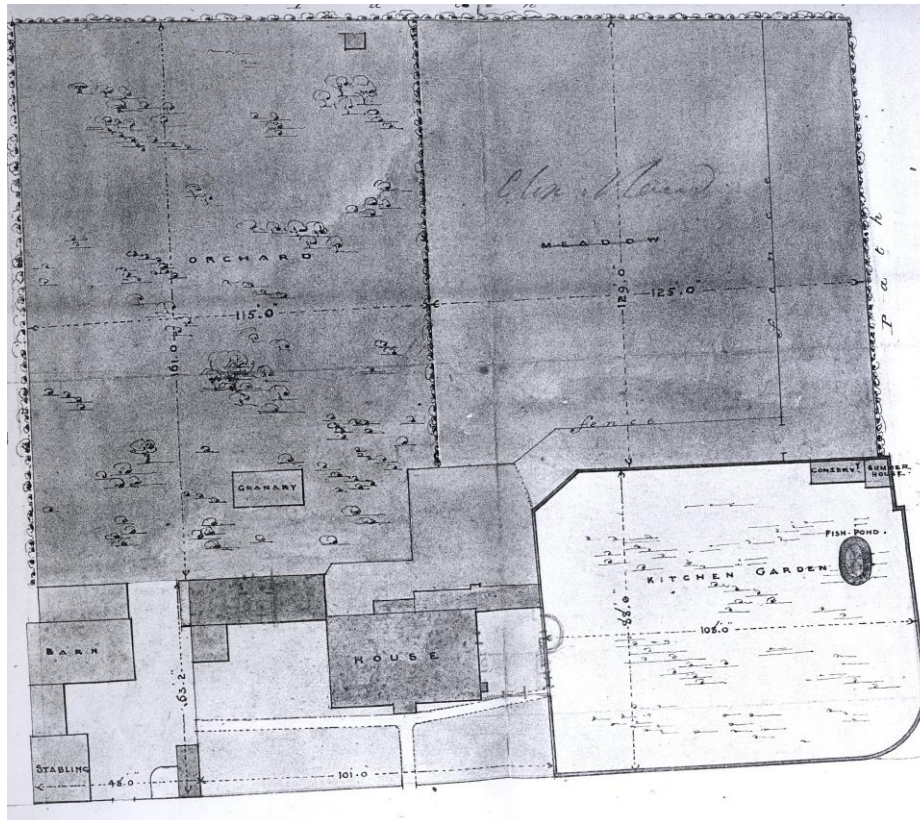
The Elms has an imposing position fronting the Guildford to Dorking road, with an extensive garden and adjacent Coachhouse (now a private residence)), stables and other outbuildings. The house and grounds can be clearly seen on this extract from the 1878 Ordnance Survey map of Westcott.



The house has been surveyed by the Domestic Buildings Research Group who have suggested that it dates from the very late 18th century or early 19th century. It is clearly shown on the 1838 Tithe Map and the accompanying apportionment notes that it was owned by John Worsfold and that the estate extended to 1 acre and 23 perches. John Worsfold was still the owner in 1859 when the Evelyn Estate Map of the village was prepared..

On the 25th August 1864, the house was auctioned at Garraway's Coffee House, Change Alley, Cornhill, London. The Sales Prospectus prepared by White & Sons of Dorking described the property as a 'Private Residence with Entrance Hall, Dining and Drawing Room, excellent Staircase, Five Chambers, a Dressing Room and Watercloset; Kitchen, Footman's Pantry, Scullery, Brewhouse with Brick Oven, Larder, Dairy and other Domestic arrangements, well supplied with fine Spring and Soft Water'. It went on to refer to an Enclosed Yard (having carriage gates to the front) containing a three-stall Stable with Loft over, double Coach House, Harness Room, Poultry House, Cow Stall, Large Barn with loose Horse Box, Cart Lodge and Piggeries, and near thereto a Granary on Iron Columns. There was also an Excellent Orchard; a Small Paddock and Fruit Plantation and a productive and well stocked Kitchen Garden, enclosed by a lofty brick wall, with a Conservatory and elevated Summer House commanding the Beautiful Scenery for which this locality is famed, the principal features being Denbies and Box Hill. There are also references to excellent under-ground cellarage, a portico entrance, plate glass windows and, in the garden, standard and trained fruit trees and vines in full bearing. The whole area extended to 1 acre, 1 rood and 36 perches or thereabouts, and the accompanying plan indicated boundaries similar to those illustrated above, although it is evident that the house and grounds underwent significant change prior to the 1878 survey.

In addition to describing the property the conditions of 1864 sale noted that documented title to the property commenced with the admission of John Worsfold on 17th June 1794, and that a formal conveyance was dated 2nd March 1832, at which time the land apparently formed part of Grinstead Farm.



Plan of The Elms from the 1864 Sale Particulars

The purchaser in 1864 was Mr Edmund Goddard who paid £1190 for the 'Compact Residence and Capital Garden'. His correspondence with Messrs White and Sons following the sale suggests that prior to the sale the house had been occupied by a Mr Roby. This accords with the 1861 census for Westcott which included Charles Joseph Roby – a 41 year old Auctioneer and Surveyor from London – together with his wife and 5 young daughters. Although his address is shown as 'Westcott Street' it appears next to R Willmott, Grocer, whose shop (now the village post office) is also given as Westcott Street, and it is reasonable to assume that Mr Roby was in fact living at The Elms in 1861.

In the 1871 census 'The Elms' was occupied by two households. Edmund & Susannah Goddard were both 62. He was from Portsea, Hants with 'income from joint investments'. His family included a son (26) who was a Colonial Broker's Clerk and two daughters, all born in London. They were supported by two servants. The other household comprised Rosalie Hounsfield, a 67 year old widow, and her daughter Georgina (35). Both were born in Paris and their occupation was shown as 'tuition', suggesting that they ran a small school. They too had two live in servants. At The Elms Stables lived coachman William Laker, Eliza his wife and William their 2 month old son.

In 1881 the occupant of 'The Elms Villa' was John Pescod Whitmore, 55, from Lynn, Norfolk with income from 'land, houses and funds'. He was accompanied by his 35 year old wife, Florence, and 4 year old daughter Nellie Taylor Whitmore. The Coachman in The Elms Villa Stables was now John Parsons from Wiltshire with his wife and two young children.

Mr Whitmore's presence was confirmed by the Surrey Gazette dated 28 April 1881 which reported that Mr Wakeford, groom to Mr Whitmore of the Elms, was slightly injured when he was thrown by his horse. A new title apportionment in 1886 also recorded Jno. P Whitmore as Mr Goddard's tenant.

The entries before 1861 and the occupant at the time of the 1891 census have still to be identified. It may be that at the time of these censuses the house was unoccupied, as would be the case if the owner also had a London residence.

Towards the end of the 19th century Charles Carey Druce became the owner. A report in the Dorking Advertiser of 10 April 1897 referred to a Sacred Concert in the Reading Room organised by Mrs Druce of the Elms, in aid of the Albany Home, and the 1901 census showed Charles C Druce, a 40-year-old white lead manufacturer from Dover.

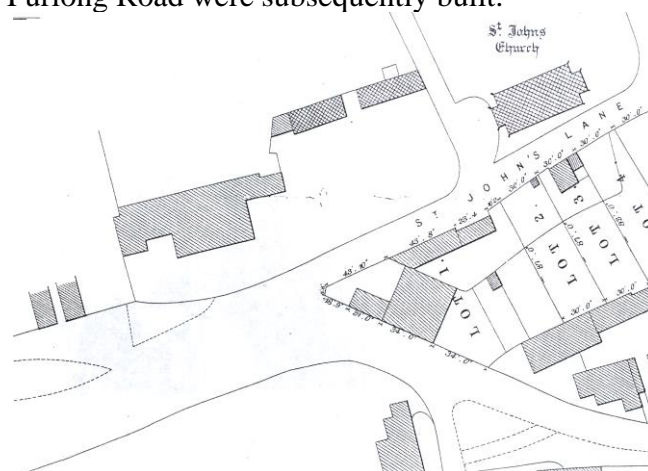
The Carey Druces, and especially Mrs Carey-Druce, did a great deal to foster music in Westcott and there is a fine memorial window in Holy Trinity Church in recognition of this but for most of her time in Westcott she lived at Rokefield. An indenture dated 12th July 1901 confirmed the transfer of the Rokefield estate from Lt Col Jasper Gustavus Silvester Davies of Dane Court, The Bishops Avenue, East Finchley to Charles Carey Druce of The Elms, Westcott for the sum of £8500.

The Elms was bought by Henry Trentham Maw, a surgeon who was living at The Ferns, Coulsdon in 1901 and the DBRG report states that the house was extended and modernised by Dr Maw in 1905.

It is presumed that Dr Maw purchased the whole of the Wilmott land, and when several new houses were constructed in 'The Furlongs' the little used lane to St John's Chapel immediately in front of The Elms became a relatively busy and noisy road. His solution was to close it off and build the a new road, the present access to Furlong Road from the Main Road, through Wilmott's former garden.

In 1906, according to a report in the Dorking Advertiser, Dorking Rural Council noted that 'the original proposal of Dr Maw for diverting the road at Wilmott's Corner was not altogether acceptable and a compromise had been come to. It was resolved unanimously to agree to Mr Maw's revised proposition that the new road to be made through Wilmott's Garden by Mr Maw shall be of the width of 13ft 9ins provided that Mr Maw consents to the widening of the remainder of Chapel Lane from the Chapel eastwards as far as his property extends on the East side of the said lane, by throwing out a slip of his land there so that the said lane shall be of the same width as it is at the present time at the starting point in a line with the end of the new fence erected in the rear of the Prince of Wales Inn and then working upwards to the width of 13' 9" to intersect with the said new road through Wilmott's garden.'

[Robert Wilmott was the owner of what is now Balchin's Stores and at the turn of the century the garden of his property extended eastward from the shop to include the land on which Highwall and 1 and 2 Furlong Road were subsequently built.



The approach to the Furlongs in front of The Elms in 1905

Dr Maw was a churchwarden at Holy Trinity and when he died, aged 58, in April 1925 he was buried in the churchyard. His will included a bequest in aid of the church choir. This became known as the Maw Charity.

It is not known exactly when the name changed from The Elms to the Old House but it was several years before the felling in December 1925 of the ancient elm trees that stood in front of the house and Balchin's Stores.

In June 1916 land and property in Chapel Lane were auctioned by the executors of William Mansell. The three pairs of semi-detached cottages were sold for £300 each, a small building plot went for £45 and an enclosure of Grassland realised £240 plus £15 for the hay crop. The purchaser of all five lots was Dr Henry Trentham Maw.

Four years later the 3 pairs of cottages and the enclosure of grass land were again offered for sale but it would appear that the sale failed to attract a buyer since in August 1935 all the properties were again put up for sale, this time on the instructions of Mrs Maw. The sales particulars note that the title to the property commenced with a conveyance dated 26th July 1916 (which was when it was purchased by Dr Maw) and that it was leased to Professor L F Rushbrook Williams from 25th March 1926. The particulars also state that 'there is a right of way over the strip of land on the south side where it adjoins the garden wall of The Old House, but the soil is included in the sale.'

Laurence Frederic Rushbrook Williams (1890-1978) was an historian and civil servant. He taught history at the University of Dacca, wrote several influential books about India and Pakistan and at one time was the Foreign Minister for the State of Patiala. During the Second World War he was Adviser on Middle Eastern Affairs at the Ministry of Information and later Director of the Eastern Service at the BBC. When Reg Ward left Westcott School in the summer of 1930 he was employed as a gardener by Professor Williams, and recalls that in addition to looking after the Old House gardens he was responsible for exercising the owners' lion cub until it was decided that discretion was the better part of valour and it was shipped off to the zoo.



There is a reference in the Dorking Advertiser to the sale of The Old House on 8 May 1926 and on 4 June 1927 there was a report in The Times of the wedding of Miss Mildred Sawyer of The Old House¹ to Mr Hepburn at St James' Piccadilly. On 29th January 1932 the Times reported that 'Mr & Mrs Rushbrook Williams have left 'The Old House' Westcott for India, where they expect to remain until the end of April. Letters addressed to 265 St James'[s Court will be attended to.'

Reference to local directories and electoral registers reveals entries as follows:

The Elms

1882

John Pescott Whitmore

¹ The deeds of Dalesford House in Coast Hill Lane (formerly Overdale) refer to the sale of the property in December 1927 to Emily Doris Sawyer the wife of George Alexander Sawyer C.B.E. of The Old House, Westcott.

1895, 1899, 1903,

Chas Carey Druce

The Old House

1907 et seq, 1924

Henry T Maw

1926

Mrs Elizabeth G Maw

1930

Sidney Wilfred Francis

1932, 1936

Prof. L F Rushbrook-Williams

1938, 1951

Joseph E Bembaron

1964, 1972

Edward P M Brown and the Hon Mrs Jennifer M Brown

1999

Nicholas P Ridout

Nicholas, the son of Douglas & Christine Barton of the Old House was admitted to Westcott School in 1973.

The telephone number of the Old House in 1939 was Westcott 81 with Joseph E Bembaron as the subscriber, later replaced by Gordon.

Additional background:

The DBRG also reports that in 1870 the garden included two large greenhouses and that nearly 100 different fruit trees grew in the walled garden, including an 'old iron pear'. The brick wall that provides the boundary to Chapel Lane is of 'poor man's bond' though that near the house is of Flemish bond.

In 1921 the Westcott Fire Brigade attended a big blaze at A J Canter's builder's yard². This could have had fatal results as the fire quickly spread to the rooms above Dr Maw's garage, which was separated from the yard by a narrow passage only 2 or 3 feet wide, where Mr Canter and Mr Reynolds were sleeping. The fire was eventually brought under control with assistance from the Dorking Brigade. Afterwards there was much concern about the inadequate water pressure from the Westcott hydrant and the Dorking Brigade's equipment was also criticised; "There were eleven leaks, large and small, in the 200 yard hose and at least 20% of the water pumped never reached the nozzle."

Spoke Valerie Ridout on 17th October 2005.

The stable block incorporates a brick inscribed 'John Worsfold 1790'.

Dr Maw was a surgeon although he made his money from propriety medicines – eg ????

tablets.

Bill Dixon was adamant that it was Mahatma Gandhi whom he saw at the Old House in 1931.

Nicholas is a city solicitor; Valerie has rooms in Harley Street and also teaches. She is particularly knowledgeable on India and Pakistan.

In the 1901 census Henry Trentham Maw was described as a Doctor of Medicine and Manufacturer of Medical Instruments. His wife Elizabeth, whom he married in Kensington in September 1897, was formerly Elizabeth NcNamee and was born in Madras c 1872.

² Subsequently developed for W Songhurst and now the HQ of the RSG Group.

The Times on 1 October 1975 reported the death of Evelyn Mary Harvey, age 85, wife of the late Edgar C Harvey of The Old House, Westcott.



Elm Trees in Guildford Road Westcott



The Old House - May 2003