

The Little Manor House (formerly the Red House), Westcott

The first reference to the Red House is in the Census returns for 1871 but in that year and again in 1881 the owner is not present; the house having been left in the charge of one of the domestic staff. It is not until 1891 (and again in 1901) that an owner is present – Henry Allen.; a gentleman living on his own means. The details are as follows:

1871

Susannah Jordan	60	Cook	Leigh, Sussex
Mary Briggs	38	Housemaid	Westcott

1881

Mary Uren (widow)	56	Cook	Cornwall
Susan Uren	25	Housemaid	Cornwall

The 1861 census return for Westcott includes Thomas Seager, a widower aged 65 and described as a 'landed proprietor' from Bermondsey. His household includes his unmarried daughter Emma (40) and servants Sarah Jordan (age 50, a cook born at Wotton) and Mary Briggs (31, a housemaid from Dorking). Although the census suggests that the address is Westcott Street it is probable that the entry refers to the Red House. .

T S Seager had been associated with Westcott for several years. In an 1858 Handbook of Dorking he is shown as occupying one of the two Westcott Villas (initially known as St John's Villas and now Ellerslie and Skeyne House)..He is also mentioned in correspondence dated May 1854 between Mrs Mary Rice and White's the local auctioneers. Mrs Rice had recently moved to Yardley Hastings in Northamptonshire and was anxious to dispose of furniture that she had left in the care of Mr Seager, who had succeeded them at their Westcott home. The address of the Rice home is not confirmed – Westcott Street & Brooklands are possible, or even one of the Westcott Villas – but it is highly probable that Thomas Seager occupied the Red House.

On 15 April 1859 Thomas Sudrick Seager was party to the sale of a parcel of land (40 rods) part of a close called Rokefield. He was also involved in another transaction in 1864¹

Thomas Sudwick Seager died in Dorking in December 1869, aged 75 [Will to be looked for] and manorial records show that in September 1871 Emma was admitted having been left several parcels of land from her father.

In October 1882 Emma Seager was succeeded by Caroline Emelia Stephen, about whom nothing is known.

The next transaction was in April 1886 when the Red House, and land to the rear including 5 cottages, was conveyed to Henry Allen – who features in the 1891 and 1901 census returns:

1891

Henry Allen	56	Living on own means	Mickleham
Margaret Pearce	27	Housekeeper	Ockley
William H Longhurst	27	Indoor Servant	Barming, Kent

1901

Henry Allen	66	Living on own means	Mickleham
Anne L Langford	32	Housekeeper	Worth, Sussex
Thomas W B Stone	30	Indoor Servant	Portsea, Hants

¹ <http://theweald.org/bt1.asp?bookId=DM.M33>

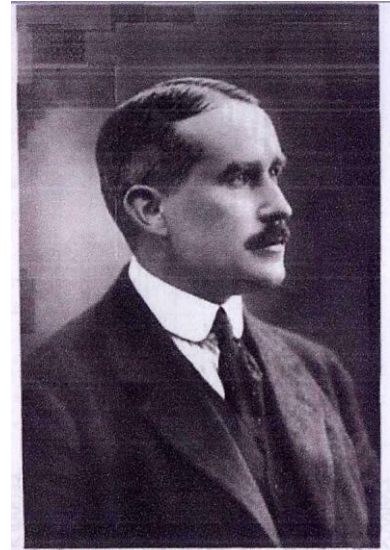
Henry Allen Henry Allen's father had been the innkeeper at the Running Horses, Mickleham but died in 1838. A year later his wife, Sarah (née Humphreys) married James Whitbread Atkinson. Henry and Sarah had two sons, Henry and Arthur. Henry was born c1834 and in 1861 he was staying with a Catholic Priest in St Pancras with no stated occupation. In 1881 he was living at Worpleston and was described as an Irish Landlord.

In 1904 the Red House and the five cottages were conveyed to William Oldershaw, who had a relatively short tenure before the property was acquired by Alice Cross – the maiden name of Mrs Dudley Cory-Wright – in February 1905.

Dudley Cory-Wright The Cory-Wrights were coal merchants and ship owners.

In the 1901 census Dudley Cory Wright was 28 year old and single, living at his father's home in Hornsey, and described as a Director of a Public Company.

In June 1906 he married Ada Alice Cross and on 6th November 1909 the family estate was extended by the purchase of the adjoining property – The White House - from Sarah Hambling Ault.



When the 1911 census was taken Mr & Mrs Cory-Wright were not in Westcott but their two children were at home, although not in the main house, as the following transcript of the census schedules shows:

The Red House

Florence Chambers 30 Parlour Maid born Peckham
Charlotte A Tucker 24 Housemaid born Burgclere, Hants

Red House Stables

Frederick George Newland 32 Coachman born Steeple Northern, Herts
Ellen Newland 32 born Edenbridge
William Frederick Newland 4 born Toddington, Beds

The Nursery, The Red House

Sarah Noy 50 Head Nurse from Quay, Yarmouth
Reginald Cory-Wright age 4
Edmond Cory-Wright age 2
Margaret Walter 20 Under Nurse from Hampstead Abbots

Rosemary Cottage, The Red House

Sarah Jane Pine 37 Cook born Ottery St Mary, Devon
Annie Boxall 23 Schoolroom Maid born Ash, Surrey

Dudley Cory-Wright died tragically in 1931, aged 58. He was crushed by a tree that had been felled and which he was sawing up. The body was discovered by his gardener, James Sawyer. In 1938 his wife directed that her husband's estate should be sold and Hampton and Sons offered The Red House, White House and 4 acres of fine building land for sale by auction. The sales prospectus included full descriptions of both houses and a detailed explanation of the interface between the two.

The map accompanying the sales prospectus also shows outbuildings – Coach house, Stables and Dairy. These have since been converted into separate dwellings - and the 4 acre area of ornamental lawns, rock garden and pools that was offered as a potential building site

In the event the Red House and the White House were not sold until 1947 when they were bought by Donovan Meredith Touche.

The White House was sold on to Millicent Lavender Francis de Stacpoole on 19 October 1949.

In 1951 The Red House was bought by Irene V Lannon.

In 1977, by which time the Red House had been renamed The Little Manor House, Mrs Lannon sold the 'garage and bothy' – now The Little Manor House Cottage- to Geoffrey Ronald Brown and Frances Eve Madeleine Brown.

David & Irene Lannon David Lannon was a wealthy London pawn broker who married his glamorous secretary Irene Violet Davidson. In her time she had been the 'hostess with the mostest' who never appeared without make up and retained her sex appeal until she died (aged 87 in March 1991; her ashes were interred in the Holy Trinity Garden of Remembrance). She / they had been members of the 'Le Touquet Set' in the 1930s and later. Anna Neagle was a friend and visitor to the house during their occupancy. It was David Lannon who bought up the adjoining 'Pointers Hill' land to extend the Red House grounds.

After David Lannon's death Irene married Captain Frank Whitworth. His Air Ministry career had included work in connection with Barnes Wallis and the planning of the Dam Busters Raid. They were married in Holy Trinity on 24th May 1980. The bride was given away by Sir Jack Wolfenden who lived next door in The White House. Irene had previously acted as Whitworth's 'hostess' since Lucy Whitworth was considerably older than her husband and invalided.. They had met when he was at Oxford and she was the proprietor of The Tea Shop.

Whitworth had previously lived at Leylands but when he married he gave his address as Anstie Grange.

The Little Manor House was offered for sale by Gascoigne-Pees in August 1986. The details state that the house 'dates back to approximately the late 1700's and has later additions. Of particular interest is its fine panelled ground floor rooms with some of the carvings dating back to 1646'.

David Knight annotated a copy of the prospectus: '*This is not an 18th Century house, it was built in the late 19th Century for Cory-Wright. The panelling is from other houses. Cory-Wright was a great one for buying remnants from other houses and fitting them into his own property.*'

Ros Kerslake, the present owner of The Little Manor House and the Little Manor House Cottage purchased the House from the Executors of Frank Whitworth (in 1996), and the Cottage from the executors of Frances Brown (in 2000)..

Little Manor House Westcott (formerly The Red House)

Dorking Advertiser extracts:

1910: In June the 'Wood Bees' Follies Fete organised by Alice Cory Wright at the Red House attracted 700 visitors and raised £80 for a new 'Charitable Fund for Westcott'

1913: A Garden Fete was held in the grounds of the Red House

1917: In June, a garden sale and fete was held in the grounds of Red House, courtesy of Mr & Mrs Cory-Wright as part of Westcott's efforts in aid of Red Cross Week

1923: In June a successful 'Fete and Fancy Fair' was held at the Red House by permission of Mr & Mrs Cory Wright. There was plenty to see and do with displays of folk dancing under the direction of Miss Rate, a Girl Guide exhibition organised by Miss Colam and the Westcott Fire Brigade being put through their paces by Chief Officer W Brooks. Mr & Mrs Carlisle and Miss Dunn entertained with songs and dramatic sketches while the Red Triangle Club supplied the music. There were numerous races for boys and girls and a comic race for the firemen, who also competed with the Red Triangle Club and the British Legion in a tug of war competition. The many stalls and side-shows included a rummage sale, ices, sweets, cakes and lemonade, fairy circle, palmist, teas, croquet, cocoanut shies, Aunt Sally, Slingshot the Booby, golf, spinning wheel, treasure hunt and a raffle, where Mr Jeater won a tea service. The event was organised by the Rev. F W Holt.

1925: The summer season included another 'Fete and Fancy Fair' at the Red House where entertainment included an 'animated kinema' by Mr P Openshaw wherein six reels of film were put on 'general release' having been passed by the censor. The first reel dealt with a cricket match in 1600 BC; the second with King Alfred and the cakes; 'costumes by the Westcott Motor Co.'. A musical interval with gramophone solo - 'needles by Woolworths' was followed by the reels depicting the Guy Fawkes' plot, the Carpentier-Wells fight, the secret history of the Belgrade Plot and, finally, a mannequin parade of famous beauties. Some of the captions were distinctly amusing. One adjured, 'Travel by Southern Railway (if you have the time)' while another was a local boost for the village, 'Come to Westcott, the health resort of S. England. Beautiful maidens, handsome men, two clubs and five pubs!' The film stars included Mrs Hughes, Miss Randolph, Messrs. P Openshaw, B.P. Bouquet, W. Martin, W.J. Jeater, E. Barrett, J Robinson, F. Tucker, G. Wootten, H. Adlard and P. Hyde jnr.

1929: Tortoise racing proved very popular when the annual Westcott Fair was held in July at The Red House, courtesy of Mr & Mrs Dudley Cory Wright. There was a certain amount of bumping and boring but the steward, J E Adlard, was very lenient. Other features at the fair, in addition to all the usual side shows, included a concert in the woods, an open tennis tournament and children's races

1931: He converted two properties, the Red House and the White House into one, The Red House. There were two old oak-beamed cottages in the grounds in which he stored antiques and curios. There had been a robbery at one of these in June 1917. In June 1914 he had bought Milton Farm, then comprising 28 acres, for £2325.



Scenes from a fete at The Red House c1922 or 1923



This photograph appears in 'Surrey at the opening of the 20th century' by W E Hitchin (Pike's New Century Series No. 18) and is annotated 'Red House, Westcott, residence of Mr. D Cross'. The book contains no other information about the house.



The Red House Garden

One of the live-in servants at the Red House in the mid-1920s was Ivy Hanks. She left school when she was 14 years old and went into 'Domestic Service'. At 16 she was a Kitchen Maid at the Red House, Westcott, working for Mr & Mrs Cory Wright. Her wages were £1 per month plus keep, but one of the conditions of service was that she had to buy her own maid's uniform.

Describing the working regime Ivy recalled that she would have just two hours off on Monday, in lieu of Sunday working - with a half-day off on Sunday once a fortnight. Otherwise, she had just one halfday off each week. Ivy would start work at about 6 a.m. and finish after washing up the dinner things in the evening. On the occasion of dinner parties she would often be working until midnight.

Leave comprised a fortnight's holiday per year. Ivy remembers that she was sometimes taken out - for example to a gathering of the Young Imperials², otherwise she was not allowed out unless on an errand, or, with occasional permission, to a function such as the Aldershot Military Tattoo. There were also visits to Boxhill and tobogganing was mentioned as an activity she participated in whilst at Westcott. Time off was of course allowed for church attendances. When leave was due, Mrs Cory Wright would pay for Ivy's fare home and provide her chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royce to take her to the railway station!

As evidenced by the accompanying annotated photograph of Ivy at the Cory Wrights in the 1925 - 27 period the household was grand enough to sustain a Butler.

Ivy's service with the Cory Wrights appears to have ended when she returned home when her mother became ill with suspected Typhoid.

That messuage or tenement, yard, garden and outbuildings and all those pieces or parcels of land containing ten acres and two roods or thereabouts now known as "Rokefield"

Correspondence dated May and June 1854 held in Dorking Museum Library (S1491) refers to the disposal of furniture etc by Mrs Mary Rice of The Parsonage, Yardley Hastings, Northampton. It would appear that Mrs Rice and her son, the Reverend Howard Rice, lived at Westcott Street / Brooklands before moving to Northampton. They left some of their furniture in the care of Mr

² A forerunner of the Young Conservatives

Seager who succeeded them at their Westcott home. The correspondence also refers to Jane Ledger, their former servant who lived in Milton Street, and Mr Cooke, the Westcott carpenter.