

A History of Milton Court and the Manor of Milton Version 2.0

Prior to 1600

The area around Dorking and Westcott has been occupied from ancient times. There is a prehistoric barrow on Milton Heath, about 100 yards east of the entrance to Milton Court, just above the A25. The barrow is possibly Bronze Age but we have not traced any records of it being excavated. Aerial views indicate that there may also be a similar barrow, now ploughed out, in the field bordered by the mile walk on the current Milton Court estate.

There is evidence of Roman occupation in one or more of the fields between Milton Court and Westcott.

The Manor of Milton is mentioned in the Domesday Book – as the Manor of Mildeton, in the Wotton Hundred (an area which could provide 100 men and arms in time of war) lying south of the crest of the North Downs. Dorking is its' principal town, located centrally on its north border. The Manor of Milton comprised around 1,300 acres to the west of Dorking. Milton Court is at the eastern edge of the Manor, part of the boundary of which can still be seen as a small bank running up from beyond the end of the putting green to Sandy Lane and then along beside Sandy Lane.

Some things have changed since the Domesday Book was written – pigs no longer forage in the woods, there are far fewer people working on the land and there is now a railway running through the valley. However, there are many similarities too – relative to many other parts of the country, there have been comparatively few changes in land use in 900 years.

The oldest known record of a building on the current Milton Court site is the mill that is mentioned in the Domesday Book. We don't know when the first mill was built or what it looked like.

See Appendix A for a commentary on the Domesday Book entry and subsequent history to the time of Elizabeth I, which is paraphrased below.

The Domesday Book states that in the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042 to 1066), Uluric the Saxon held the Manor of Milton of Edward (the Confessor). This form of words is not clear – perhaps he leased it from Edward?

The Manor of Milton included some land in Copthorne Hundred, but writer of the Domesday Book entry for the Manor of Milton was unable to locate this land.

In 1086, the date of the commencement of the Domesday Book, the estate appears to have been owned by the Fitz-Anculf family.

Most of the Fitz-Anculf estates descended to Fulc Paganel, who married a daughter or other female heir. Note that this family owned the Lordship of Newport-Paganel, perhaps now best known as a service station on the M1! Fulc Paganel became owner of the estates at some time before 1141.

Ralph, who was the son and heir of Fulc, had six sons, the eldest of whom was Gervase. Gervase assisted as one of the Barons at the coronation of Richard I in 1189. He and his wife Isabel, who was a daughter of the Earl of Leicester and widow of the Earl of Northampton, had one son, called Robert.

Robert predeceased his father and the estates passed to Hawise the daughter, who married John de Somerie. On his death, the Manor of Milton descended to Ralph his son, who died in 1210 or 1211. He and Margaret his wife had two sons called William and Roger. William, the elder brother, inherited the Manor and on his death in 1222 it passed to Nicholas his son. He died in 1229 without issue, so the Manor then passed to Roger, his uncle (Williams' brother).

Roger died in 1273 and the Manor passed to his son, also called Roger, whose mother was the first Rogers second wife Amahil. This second Roger had two sons, Roger, who was the elder, and John. The son Roger died in his minority and the father Roger died in 1291, when John inherited the Manor.

It is believed that John gave the Manor to the prioress and nuns of Kilburn (then a village, now a suburb of London). They are recorded as owning it in 1315 or 1316. John died on 21st December 1321 and in the subsequent inquest it was found that Prioress Margery was its' official occupier.

We know nothing of the history of the Manor for the next 200 years.

Henry VIII dissolved the priory of Kilburn in 1535 or 1536 and annexed the manor to the Honour of Hampton Court.

Henry created the Hampton Court honour and chase through a commission that studied and surveyed lands in Surrey and Middlesex and made recommendations for purchase¹. It is believed that Thomas Cromwell was the mastermind behind the creation of the honour.

Cromwell was the Kings chief minister; he rose to be lord privy seal and was made Earl of Essex in 1540. However, following his arrangement of the Kings marriage to Anne of Cleves, he rapidly fell out of favour and was beheaded without trial later in 1540. It was not unusual for people to fall out of favour with the King to such a dramatic extent at this time. (Thomas Cromwell was not related to Oliver Cromwell.)

In 1552, in the reign of Edward VI, the Feet of Fines entry records a transfer of rights over part of the Manor from Thomas Freman to Richard and Katherine Thomas and Richards heirs. Richard is recorded as farming the land "of the Crown" until 1553 or 1554.

The Feet of Fines entry in Appendix A mentions the water mill, 4 messuages and 30 cottages. It appears that messuages were larger buildings, most likely farms or large houses.

Following the accession of Mary in 1553, the Manor was given to the re-formed monastery of Sheen (now a suburb of London).

Sheen monastery was suppressed by Elizabeth I in the first year of her reign (so either in 1558 or 1559) and the estate was transferred to (first name not known) Wright. His widow Catherine was in possession of the manor in 1573 or 1574. It was farmed from 1564/5 to 1589/90 by Walter Brown, Esq., then in 1592 to 1594 by William Ratcliff Esq., and finally in 1598 or 1599 by Ralph Latham, gentleman.

The Evelyns and the building of Milton Court

On 14th March 1600, the Queen gave the manor to George Evelyn of Long Ditton. Appendix A below explains why the year was 1600 and not 1599. He died on 30th May 1603 and then the estate passed to Richard, his fourth but eldest surviving son. Around the same time, George Evelyn had acquired the manor of Wotton. His annual rental to the Crown for Milton was 40 shillings, which represented one fortieth of a knights fee – a cash substitute for providing men and arms whenever the monarch went to war.

In 1609, George and Robert Evelyn, with others, received a grant from James I to make gunpowder for 10 years and had the sole right to do this.

There was possibly an original dower house built in 1575, which was rebuilt. A sales prospectus produced in the 1930s (original in Dorking Museum) states that the original building was destroyed by fire towards the end of Queen Elizabeths' reign. She died on 24th March 1603.

However we have found no primary sources that describe a house on the site of Milton Court until the building of the Jacobean mansion.

There is a reference above to the widow of Wright, who held the Manor in 1573 or 1574. This may be the source for the suggestion that a dower house was built at about this time.

A dower house is a house set aside for a widow. It was the custom in wealthy families that when the father died and the son inherited the house, the widow had to leave and take up residence in a dower house. Presumably this custom had died out by the eighteenth century.

The exact date of the building of the Jacobean Milton Court is unclear – some sources say 1608, others 1611 and others “about 1610”.

Milton Court – Heritage Regained² quotes the Victoria County History³ as saying ‘The house was rebuilt by Richard Evelyn and completed in 1611 (accounts in the possession of Mr Rate)’. One can envisage that the scale of the building project meant that it was started in 1608. We do not know anything about the whereabouts of these accounts, which is a great pity.

Presumably, when George Evelyn was given the estate, the first priority would have been to make whatever alterations and renovations that were needed to Wotton House. Then on his death, a need for a dower house arose and building duly commenced some five years later.

All the material for the building was available locally. Both bricks and tiles are still manufactured from Wealden clay within a few miles of Milton Court. Oak for supporting beams and the staircase occurs in abundance locally. Similarly, hazel poles for the wattle and daub walls on the top floor (covered with plaster) would have come from local coppicing. Lime for the mortar probably came from Milton Court chalk pit and the house is built on sand.

The road or lane that passes the site of the mill and the farm now crosses the railway and then bears right up the hill as a path. Milton Court chalk pit and lime kiln can be found by continuing straight on through the undergrowth where the path bears right.

The chalk pit is extremely large and we can surmise that it would have been in use for a great many years, though it had fallen out of use by the 1830s (see below).

Thus it could well be that lime from this pit was used in the building of other brick or stone built buildings in the Manor of Milton and the surrounding area.

When Milton Court was built, it may have had rounded gables at both the front and the back. If this was the case, the ones at the front were replaced with pointed gables some time before 1850, as drawings of that era show pointed gables at the front, one pointed and two rounded gables at the back. Milton Court – Heritage Regained says that there is a tradition that they were changed (from rounded to pointed) in 1620. Subsequent restorations and additions later in the nineteenth century added new larger rounded gables at both the front and back. The only surviving original rounded gable is the small one in the middle of the rear elevation, which is best seen from the rooms on the top floor at the back of the mansion.

One unanswered question is why the field immediately to the west of the current drive and Milton Brook, bordering the A25 and Lince Lane, is called the War Field. It has had this name since the nineteenth century at least. One possibility is that the War was the Civil War (1642 to 1647). Dorking and the surrounding area was predominately Roundhead. Local tradition has it that the name came from a much earlier war or battle.

In 1664, the Manor of Milton was assessed for hearth tax. This was a property tax on buildings worth more than 20 shillings (£1) a year in rent. The tax was assessed based on the number of hearths in a building. People who received poor relief were exempted from paying the tax.

The assessor for the Manor of Milton was John Wood, Tythingman. The Hearth Tax record reads Chargeable Entries 16: Hearths: 59; Not Chargeable; 17⁴.

From this we can infer that there were a number of properties, probably small cottages, occupied by farm labourers and suchlike, who received poor relief and thus were exempt from the tax (the not chargeable category). The larger properties in the manor, such as the farmhouses and Milton Court itself, would have had several hearths.

The tax was collected twice a year – on Lady Day and on Michaelmas Day – and was 2 shillings per hearth. It was a very unpopular tax because the commissioners had the right to come into the home to count the hearths. It was the first time that tax inspectors could visit a property. The tax was abolished in 1689.

Then in 1696 a new property tax, the window tax, was introduced. The tax was at first a flat rate of 2 shillings, or 8 shillings on houses with more than ten windows. In 1747, the Government introduced bands of payments according to how many

windows the house had. In 1784 the tax rates were doubled and the tax was finally abolished in 1851. We can see from the photographs taken in 1857 (see below) that some of the windows of Milton Court were still bricked-up. This would have been done years earlier to reduce the tax that was levied.

From 1752, Jeremiah Markland rented part of Milton Court from Martha Rose, who was a widow. 'He continued in much seclusion, being depressed by the gout and other infirmities, until his decease in July 1776, in the eighty-fourth year of his age.'⁵ He was born on 18th, 22nd or 29th October 1693 and died on 7th July 1776.

In the Diary of William Bray, Esq.⁶, the entry for September 22nd 1757 notes 'With Sir John Evelyn to Milton Court: held court there. Mr. Evelyn with us. To Wotton at 6; danced till past 10. Colonel Evelyn, Mr. Harcourt, the butler, Miss Mary Evelyn, Miss Clark, Miss Duncumb, and three maids. I danced with Miss C. and Miss D.'

The next entry reads '28th. Paid for a thing to hang my wig on, 1s. 2d.; a hutch for the child, 8s. '!

There was a legal dispute between Martha Rose and her son which was brought in 1765 and which she lost. Markland also lost money as he supported Martha.⁷

The Dorking Poor Rate Books⁸ allow us to trace the leaseholder of Milton Court. On 7th October 1759, Martha Rose, Widow, was paying the Poor Rate but on 15th February 1765, this changed to Richard Rose, presumably Martha's son. On 12th February 1768, Richard was still living at Milton Court but by 16th September 1768, he was living at Milton Court farm and the lease on the Manor had presumably reverted to the Evelyns. Richard was still living in the farm on 16th October 1769 but on 9th March 1770, the occupant of the farm was Michael Marsh. He was still there a year later, but when the Poor Rate record resumes, in 1804, the farm was occupied by William Wells, who was also paying rates on Milton Mill and land.

Thus we can assume it was from 1768 that Milton Court was let to tenants as described below.

The following passage, written in about 1820, looks back to the period when Markland lived at Milton Court.⁹

'The spacious rooms of Milton Court, with their long-polished tables and benches, served strongly to remind me of the hospitality of former times. We certainly have now but few of these venerable mansions, whose blazing hearths shed hospitable glare along the carved walls and shining through the windows, invited all those who passed to partake of the good cheer which reigned within.

In this respect, we have left only the shadow for the substance; or, as aptly observed by a periodical writer, "what the present race have gained in head, they have lost in heart'.

A visit to Milton Court cannot fail to resuscitate emotions of regret, and, doubtless several of my contemporaries will recognise in its lofty hall the scene of many a jocund hour, unmixed with the forms and ceremonies of more recent introduction.

Frequently I have heard them recur to these hours; and I can well depict to myself the harmless “gambols on the green”; the overflowing mirth of the harvest-home; the cheerfulness and vivacity of the dance; and the moonlight walk across the fields; - alas, how changed the scene! Aggravated distresses have partially set aside the celebration of the harvest home, and the dances to commemorate the festive season of the year.

Where now is the smiling host, welcoming to his board whole groups of healthful youth and beauty?

Where now the annual boon to those swarms of industrious peasants with their hearts brim-full of gladness? Surely they all appear but to have been delusions of some idle hour: be this as it may, their absence has left a chasm in the unsophisticated enjoyments of country life, which after-times have as yet been unable to supply.”

Milton Court descended, with other estates, to Sir Frederick Evelyn, who died in possession of this manor in 1803. The estate then passed to William John Evelyn of Wotton.

As described below, the estate appears to have been owned by the Evelyn family continuously from 1600 to 1865, when it was sold to Lachlan Rate.

We need to research the Evelyn family since our view of their ownership of Milton Court (then forming part of the Wotton estates) is fairly sketchy.

We know that George Evelyn died on 30th May 1603 when Richard, his fourth but eldest surviving son, inherited the estate. Presumably George’s widow (name unknown) lived in Milton Court from 1611 until her death. There is however mention of a third son called Robert (born about 1570, died 1639) which is confusing!

Richard had a son called Richard. This Richard had at least two sons, the eldest surviving son (name unknown) who inherited the estate on Richard’s death.

Another son was the famous diarist John Evelyn, born 31st October 1620, died 27th February 1706. He moved to Wotton House in 1694 to live with his brother and inherited the estate on the death of his brother.

John had two sons; John born in 1655, died in 1699 and Richard who died aged 6. He also had two daughters; Mary, who died aged 20 and Susannah.

The next owner we know of is Sir John Evelyn, who was alive in 1757.

Next we know of Sir Frederick Evelyn, who died in 1803, at which point William John Evelyn inherited the estate. He must have died before 1814 as that is when Dame Mary Evelyn appears to have been the owner.

George Evelyn is recorded as owning the estate in 1838 and on his death it passed to his eldest son, William John Evelyn, who is discussed below.

The Nineteenth Century – financiers and the coming of the railway

Sir Charles Morgan, Baronet, was involved in some kind of transaction in respect of Milton Court with Dame Mary Evelyn (widow of Sir Frederick?) on 6th July 1814. This is one of the documents that we have not seen which is referred to in the 1939 Abstract of Title.

His father, Sir Charles Morgan (formerly Gould), 1726 to 1806, is recorded as being Judge Advocate General in connection with a General Court Martial held in Norwich on 9th December 1799.¹⁰

Sir Charles (the son) was clearly very well connected. For example, when he married his third wife, Sydney Owenson, on 20th January 1812, the Marquis and Marchioness of Abercorn arranged for a knighthood for him.¹¹

Sydney Owenson came from an Irish family and was born on 25th December 1775-6 on a mail boat crossing from England to Ireland.

She was something of a novelist and socialite and became renowned for *The Wild Irish Girl*, which was published in 1806. In 1862 there was a posthumous two-volume edition of her memoirs – she died on 16th April 1859.

It is not clear why Sir Charles entered into a contract in respect of Milton Court. Given the then dilapidated state of the building, it seems unlikely that he ever lived in it. And why should someone based in Tredegar in Wales want a house in Dorking?

In those days the Milton Court estate was much larger than it is now, extending almost into Westcott.

Various wealthy Victorians, including the Reverend William Warrington ‘a gentleman of large property’¹², William Mainwaring and his son George Boulton Mainwaring (the latter an MP and both sat for portraits that are now in the National Portrait Gallery¹³) and Richard Twining were also involved in a transaction in respect of Milton Court. The last may be the same person as the Richard Twining of the Twinings tea family, who at that time had ventured into banking.¹⁴

It thus seems likely, given the status of these people, that the Evelyns were using Milton Court as security for loans.

In 1831, Sir Charles Morgan Robinson Morgan (the son) appears on one of the documents for the first time and he presumably inherited the loan on his fathers’ death in 1843. However other sources give his year of death as 1846.

It may not be a coincidence that a half-sovereign dated 1843 was found during the refurbishment of the mansion in the 1990s.

Charles Morgan Robinson Morgan was born in 1792 and inherited the Tredegar estate on the death of his father. Sir Charles carried on the familys’ interest in industry, commerce and agriculture. He was the Chairman of the Monmouthshire Railway and Canal Company, and Chairman of the Alexandra Dock Company, for which he

donated land. Continuing the love of agriculture that had so absorbed his father, Charles was an avid breeder of short horn cattle, and served as President of the Royal Agricultural society.

After serving as MP for Brecon (also called Brecknock) from 1835 to 1847¹⁵, he finally made the step that had just eluded his father and grandfather, when in 1859, Lord Derbys' government raised Sir Charles to the peerage as Baron Tredegar. Described as 'kind, sympathetic and large hearted', and 'a genuine specimen of the old English gentleman', Charles was often surrounded at Tredegar House by his large family. Married to Rosamund, an extremely popular Lady Tredegar, they had eleven children, including Godfrey Charles, born in 1830, and Frederick. Both sons were instilled with their fathers' love of hunting and skill at horsemanship.

Charles bought Godfrey the horse 'Sir Briggs'; the charger that performed so well at the Battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War. Godfrey is mentioned, together with his four sisters, in *Wild Wales; Its People, Language and Scenery*.¹⁶

For all his success, as the power and influence of the Tredegar Estate grew, some detected a 'pervading sense of sorrow' in Charles. This might be linked to the fate of his eldest son, Charles Rodney Morgan, who died in Marseilles in 1854, aged 25.¹⁷

Charles died either in 1875 or in 1883, depending which source is used!

The Baronetcy finally became extinct on the death of the 6th and last Baron Tredegar in 1962.

In the Dorking Poor Rate books for 1836, 1837 and 1838, the first entry for the Manor of Milton is for a house owned by Charles Barclay and occupied by William Hammond. This has been interpreted as referring to Milton Court but this interpretation appears to be incorrect, since in earlier Poor Rate books, when there were rates levied on Milton Court as a separate entity, then it was specifically named. Another factor supporting this view is that the house owned by Barclay is shown as having a rateable value of £100, whereas Milton Court farm had a value of £250.

The Rate books for the same years show Milton Court Farm, Milton Mill House and Lands being occupied by John Wells and owned by 'Representatives of Geo Evelyn Esq.'.

To summarise our view of ownership at this point. George Evelyn owned the freehold of the whole estate. He had mortgaged Milton Court mansion (and the farmhouse and mill?) to a number of third parties and was receiving a modest income from the relatively poor tenants. He had leased the farmland to one or more third parties who paid rent to him.

We can speculate as to why Evelyn wanted to raise money. It may well have been to invest in his gunpowder manufacturing business – either in more buildings or in plant or machinery. Alternatively it could have been used to develop Wotton House.

In her journal¹⁸ entry for 24th May 1890, Lady Layard (see below) reports meeting an old man called Joyce, the son of a former vicar, at Milton Court. He recalled that

when he was a boy, Milton Court was occupied by cottagers, for which the dictionary definition is ‘people who lived in cottages, especially labourers’. If he was 70 (for example) in 1890, then he could have been talking about what he saw in perhaps 1830, which seems to fit.

The Country Life article¹⁹ says that the long gallery or drawing room was formerly panelled with oak, which the occupants of around this time ruthlessly destroyed for firewood.

The article goes on ‘During this period of gradual destruction, Milton Court was tenanted by poor families. They lived in detachments scattered about the house receiving their provision by means of a pony, which daily made an excursion up the staircase distributing his wares to the occupants. Besides the pony a ghost was said to haunt the stairs up and down and through the rooms looking out across the garden. Furthermore, the ghost held a bag of jingling coins according to the evidence of the caretaker who nervously related the incident when the present owner came to see the place. Noticing an incredulous smile pass over the face of her listener she hastily clinched the matter by what to her seemed a positive piece of evidence: “It is all very well to laugh, sir, but I was three nights off my beer when I saw the miser”. Others say the ghost was no miser but only Jeremiah Markland, the scholar, whose spirit still haunts the house, where a century ago he had spent quiet hours with his books.’ We do not know the source of this information – possibly the Rates?

At some time between 1838 and 1845, ownership of the estate passed from George Evelyn to his son William John Evelyn. Perhaps it was in 1843, which is another possible explanation for the date of the half-sovereign.

William John Evelyn was born in 1827. He was the eldest son of George Evelyn of Wotton, educated at Rugby and Balliol, where he achieved his BA in 1848. In 1873, he married Frances Harriet, eldest daughter of the Reverend G V Chichester, the rector of Wotton. He was a Justice of the Peace, High Sheriff of Surrey in 1860, FRGS, and Conservative MP for West Surrey from 1849 to 1857 and for Deptford in London from 1885 to 1888. He died on 26th July 1908.

By the 1850s, the estate was somewhat smaller because the Reading, Guildford and Reigate Railway (RG&RR) had acquired the land needed for the railway line that still runs along what then became the northern boundary of the estate.

The RG&RR was formed in 1845 and was taken over by the South-Eastern Railway in 1852. The railway was authorised in 1846 and 1847 by Acts of Parliament and the first train on the section of line closest to Milton Court ran on 15th October 1849. The RG&RR was owned by a syndicate of London and Surrey businessmen and bankers with the objective of securing traffic from the North and Midlands going to the Channel ports with the ability to bypass London. This organisation paid £160 per acre for the land that they bought from William John Evelyn.²⁰

The total paid for the purchase of Mr Evelyn’s land was £6,254, so the purchase involved some 39 acres in total.

Given that this line is now very much a backwater of the national rail network, it seems odd to our eyes that such an ambitious plan could ever have been considered for the line. However, this line was one of the earliest in the area – it predated the current north/south line through Dorking and the line from Redhill to London. At that time there were a number of such speculative schemes.

Even Brunel's railway masterpiece, the broad gauge Great Western line from London Paddington to Bristol, was not completed until 1841, only four years before the RG&RR was formed.

Brunel was one of three engineers considered for the post of engineer in chief. The other two were Mr Locke and Robert Stephenson. The latter was appointed but soon after was replaced by P W Barlow of the South Eastern Railway following their takeover of the RG&GR.²¹

There was a railway crossing, called Milton crossing, north west of Milton Court. This crossing is still there but the crossing keepers' cottage, immediately to the north east of the crossing and the well opposite the cottage on the south side of the line has long gone. Beyond the crossing is the overgrown Milton Court chalk pit and limekiln.

The 1836 to 1838 Dorking Poor Rate books record John Wells as occupier of Milton Court Farm, Milton Mill House and Lands and a Lime works (disused). The lime works had no rateable value. We can suppose that it may still have been used until very early in the nineteenth century – perhaps the coming of the industrial revolution had made small lime works like this an uneconomic proposition?

The map that accompanies the plans for the railway clearly shows the chalk pit. It is interesting to note from this plan that little has changed in the valley since then: some of the field boundaries have disappeared, to accommodate modern farming practices, but otherwise much is still the same, as is the use of land described in the document accompanying the 1845 Act.

There are a couple more documents dated 1847 that could again be loan agreements, and among the other names mentioned are Arthur Morgan and R Morgan (relatives of Sir Charles?). It is possible that these had something to do with the sale of land to the RG&RR.

There was a Captain Henry Morgan of Bristol who applied to join the original committee of the RG&RR but we don't know whether he was related to the other Morgans or whether this was just a coincidence.

Then in 1850, there are two documents whose parties are Sir C M R Morgan (and others) and William John Evelyn. Was it at this point that the Evelyns repaid the loans?

The 1851 census records one of the residents of Milton Court as being Edward Charman, aged 64, who was a farmer of 350 acres employing 7 men. We know from the RG&RR minutes that in about 1846, Charman leased and occupied land belonging to William John Evelyn, so this fits nicely.

The four other heads of household resident then were agricultural labourers and in total there were 32 inhabitants.

The 1857 photographs show a fence running at right angles from the front of the mansion immediately to the left of the front door. It seems likely that Charman, his family and servants occupied the more luxurious right hand part of the mansion whereas the labourers and their families lived in the left hand portion and probably the top floor. As was common in those days, the families each had several young children, so it must have been quite lively living at Milton Court then!

The Rate family and the renovation of Milton Court

In the second edition of 1858 of A Hand Book of Dorking, it is stated that Douglas Biggar, the architect and proprietor was carrying out a most thorough and substantial repair to Milton Court and that it will be converted into a modern gentleman's mansion. At that stage he could only have just started work, since the two photographs taken in July 1857 show no sign of any refurbishment. They show quite clearly how some of the windows had been bricked-up to reduce the amount of window tax that was levied.

It may be that those photographs were taken in order to give potential developers an idea of how much restoration work needed to be done.

This would have been a good time to redevelop the mansion, since window tax was abolished in 1851.

It appears that Biggar spent the next few years developing the estate – laying out gardens, replacing the pointed gables with rounded ones and adding a loggia at the back. The word proprietor suggests that Biggar owned the property then (if so, just the leasehold) but there are no references to him in any of the documents associated with the deeds.

The only Douglas Biggar we can trace was born on 6th August 1800, the son of Robert and Charlotte Biggar. He was baptised on 13th October 1800 at Saint Botolph Without Aldersgate in London. At the time of the 1851 census he was described as a manufacturer of chemicals employing 34 men and was living at 66 Aldersgate in the City (just North of St. Paul's Cathedral). Douglas married Emily Mary Eastwood at Saint Botolphs on 31st May 1845. He died in 1869 and Emily died in 1891. From this information, it does seem feasible that he was the man who took on the refurbishment.

The 1861 census records only a cook, coachman and visitor living at Milton Court, so by now, all the tenants had gone. The coachman was John Robinson. He and his wife and eight children, as well as a nurse, were living at the lodge to Milton Court. The lodge must have been a larger building in those days. The only picture we have of it is in the 1874 painting (see below), but it is hard to judge its' size from the painting.

The Milton Court deeds refer to a lease dated 31st December 1862 but we have no details. Possibly it was a renewal of a lease between Evelyn and Biggar – was the refurbishment more extensive and taking more time than was originally planned?

The refurbishment would have been a huge task, as the 1857 photographs illustrate. The inside of the house would have had to be totally refurbished, with bricked-up windows reopened and the outside of the building partially rebuilt. The extensive grounds would have required much landscaping work, the creation of the drive to the entrance, extensive new gardens, walling, stables and so on.

The Dorking museum has a copy of some sale particulars of 1865. In this it states that the lease dated 31st December 1862 from (William) John Evelyn is for sale. It states that 'Milton Court has recently been restored at great cost by the vendor and that there

are beautiful pleasure grounds, terrace walks, conservatory, graperies, orchard house, walled kitchen garden, stabling and farm buildings.

The terrace gardens are laid out in the Italian style of gardening, with flowerbeds in the necklace pattern, good walls, well-stocked with Fruit Trees in full bearing.'

There are a couple of small photographs forming part of the sale particulars. Both show rounded gables on both the front and back, hence we believe that Douglas Biggar was responsible for this change.

The view of the rear of the house is particularly interesting as it still retains the old shape, with a conservatory, or loggia, running between the two outer bays.

The date of the sale was 17th May 1865.

There was a further sale of a lease on 27th May 1867, as well as the lease on the mill. We know from articles in the Surrey Advertiser (in the Dorking museum) that the Rates were living at Milton Court in 1866. We also note that the 1865 sale particulars do not mention the mill or the surrounding farmland. Thus perhaps the 1865 transaction was only in respect of the lease on the house, gardens and the farm buildings, while the 1867 transactions were in respect of the leases on the rest of the estate.

In an abstract of William Burges (see below) diary in the Victoria and Albert museum, there is an enigmatic note for 1869 that reads 'Joldwyns for Rate'. Joldwyns was a country seat six or seven miles south east of Milton Court, so it may be that Rate was living there while some work was being done on Milton Court.

It is interesting to note that in the 1871 census²², there is an entry for Milton Court stables, which must also have provided accommodation, since the under-coachman, his wife and two children were living there.

There is no reference to these stables in any of the following censuses.

Lachlan Rate bought the freehold to the estate from William John Evelyn on 26th June 1871. Lady Layard, in her journal entry for 16th July 1872, recorded 'They (the Rates) have just bought the house & surrounding land from Mr. Evelyn of Wotton.'

As part of his work on Milton Court in 1872, Burges had had parts of the Jacobean section of the house underpinned.

The Lordship or Manor of Milton was also subject to a change of ownership between Evelyn and Rate on 20th January 1873. The Lordship appears to carry no particular rights or responsibilities and has subsequently transferred ownership in conjunction with the estate, until NEL sold it to the local council in 1967 for a nominal £1.

Lachlan MacIntosh Rate was born in Alnwick, Northumberland, on 7th February 1819. He was educated at Jesus College Cambridge, BA 1854, MA 1857. He was a banker, Anglican philanthropist and in 1869 he became a barrister-at-law of the Inner Temple.

His parents were Joseph Rate and Mary Mackintosh. They were married in 1802 in Inverness. He had two brothers; Oneas, born 21st February 1805, baptized May 1805 in Alnwick and John, born about 1810 and baptized on 15th April 1811 in Alnwick. The Right Reverend Oneas (or Eneas) Rate of Bleachfield House Falkirk died on 16th September 1893 and John died on 14th October 1906 in Twickenham.

In May 1842, when Rate was working for Rickards Little & Co of 15 Bishopsgate Street, Within, he was given the role of Consul General for Texas in Great Britain. Texas was then an independent republic with its' own government. Rates' role ceased in 1845. In that year, the government of Texas decided to join the rest of the Union and did so on 19th February 1846.²³

The years 1842 to 1845 were turbulent ones for the Republic of Texas, with intermittent war with Mexico and opposition from France and England to Texas being annexed to the Union. England and France were opposed to slavery and believed that the annexation of Texas, which was then a slave state, to the rest of the Union, would result in an increase in slavery in the rest of America.

There is no record of Lachlan Rate having played any active part in discussions between the various governments during his time as Consul General. However, this could explain why the Baylor University of Waco in Texas has an interest in Lady Layards' journal.

Rate married firstly Elizabeth Spottiswoode, on 19th June 1845 at St. Martin in the Fields and then secondly, in 1860, Alice Gertrude Candy, born about 1836 in Streatham, Surrey, daughter of Charles Candy. There is a record of the death of an Elizabeth Rate in the third quarter of 1858 in the Guildford district, so this may well have been his wife.

They had five children, Alice Margaret Gordon Rate, born about 1861, Frances Mary Rate born about 1862, died 24th October 1882 (buried at Ranmore church), Lachlan Richard Mackintosh Rate (who had four daughters), born 15th August 1865, Mary Ida Lillian Rate, born 13th October 1869 in London and Enid Rate, born either in July or August 1873.

In the census for 1881, Lachlan junior is recorded as being a boarder in Lordships House, Eton College. His place of birth is given as St Georges Square, London. It seems likely that his father also attended Eton College and thus met Henry Layard there.

Lady Layard was Enids' godmother, the child being given the same Christian name as her godmother. In her journal for 8th August 1891, when Enid was about 18, Lady Layard writes 'Enid was ridiculously affected & had done her hair in a tremendous mass at the back of her head – threw her eyes about & shook her shoulders – lisped & altogether was very second rate in her manners - & made eyes at the men – but she seems to attract them wonderfully & have them at her feet – It provokes me - & I am sorry to see my godchild turn out to be like that.' This perhaps gives a clue to the character of both ladies!

Alice married William Pelham Burn (born in 1859 in London) in Kensington in 1891. The Dorking Advertiser²⁴ noted that Miss Rate's marriage will take place at St. Mary Abbot's, London, on 29th January.

They had four children; Hubert, born 1892, Maurice born in 1893, Arthur born in 1895 and Marjorie, born in 1897. All of them were born in Norwich. However, by 1907, when her father died, Alice was a widow. She later married into the Dunlop (tyre) family. She may have been a co-founder of the Leith Hill music festival (see below).

The Dorking Advertiser²⁵ recorded 'The wedding of Miss Ida Mary Lillian Rate, daughter of Mr L M Rate, J.P., of Milton Court, Dorking, with Mr William Douro Hoare, eldest son of Mr Richard Hoare, of Marden Hill, Hertford, took place at St Mark's Church, North Audley-street on Thursday. The Duke and Duchess of Newcastle were among the wedding guests.

The reception at 9, South Audley-street, was largely attended. The bride and bridegroom left during the day, en route for the Italian Lakes, for their honeymoon. The presents numbered over 300.'

Enid married Alan David Erskine in St. George's, Hanover Square on 1st June 1897 and their son Ian David was born on 17th March 1898, followed by Patience Lina on 18th March 1901.

There are references in Lady Layards' journal to one Emily Kemble, who joined the Guest household as governess in 1843 and remained with the family until her marriage in 1868. Kemble is an unusual surname, yet in the indentures dated 15th September 1847, 16th January 1850 and 28th August 1850 that are referred to in the Milton Court deeds, we find that one of the parties was Henry Kemble. All we know about this man was that he was the son of Henry Stephen Kemble (1789 – 1836). These dates suggest that Henry (the son) could have been Emily's brother. Thus it is possible that Lachlan Rate knew of Milton Court via this connection before he bought the house and estate.

The 1861 census records an Emily Kemble as working as a nurse (maid?) for a William Cleveland, who was a surgeon/doctor living in Marylebone. She was aged 29, so this would not fit with 1843 – unless this should be 1863?

Lachlan Rate was one of a group of British financiers who founded the Ottoman Bank in 1856. In 1863, this merged with the interests of French financiers to form the Imperial Ottoman Bank. The bank subsequently dropped the "Imperial" on the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey.

He was also a director of the Anglo-Austrian Bank, the Bank of Roumania and various other companies.

So it seems clear that he was a very wealthy man. In the 1871 census, he is described as a retired barrister and in the 1891 census as 'living on own means'.

The 1881 and 1901 censuses show only a skeleton domestic staff in residence.

Among the other Ottoman Bank co-founders were Sir William Clay, Baronet and politician, George Carr Glynn, son of a Baronet, who drafted an agreement for the amalgamation of the London and Birmingham and Grand Junction Railways and George Thomas Clark, who was an engineer and antiquarian, and worked for Isambard Kingdom Brunel on the Great Western Railway. (Information for these two paragraphs from searches on the Ottoman Bank and the names of the directors on the web.)

Here we find a link with Lady Layard (see below). Her father owned the Dowlais Ironworks in Wales until his death in 1852 and in the same year, George Clark became a trustee of the Dowlais Ironworks, effectively controlling the ironworks until his death in 1898. Lady Layard's mother Charlotte was also involved in the management of the ironworks from 1852.

It was the Rate family that refurbished the interior of the house, added the extensions at the rear and either side and created the famous gardens from the start made by Douglas Biggar.

Between October and May each year, the Rates lived in style at 9 South Audley Street, in Mayfair.

The painting by P Daws(on?) of 1874, in the possession of Martyn Field, former chief executive of UnumProvident, shows that the extension to the North West of the original mansion was complete but the one to the South East had yet to be started.

The 1871 census return (2nd April) shows that in addition to the Rates and their four children, there were nine domestic servants living at Milton Court. It seems unlikely that the top floor of the Jacobean mansion could have accommodated all these people, so we can assume that the North West extension, which was the servants' quarters, had been built by then.

It is understandable that a wealthy Victorian family would view it as a priority to have accommodation for the servants that were required in order to ensure that they, the Rates, could live in the comfort to which they were accustomed.

Lady Layard spent her honeymoon at Milton Court in March 1869, so it is likely that the extension was complete by then. Henry Layard, then aged 51, had proposed to her earlier in the same year. She was his cousin and was aged only 25.

In her journal entry for 9th March 1869, she notes that Lachlan Rate was an old school-friend of Henry (probably at Eton College – see comments above on Lachlan junior). We also know that they both supported the mosaic and glass industries of Venice and Murano.

Rate was an early active member of the Burlington Fine Art Club.

Lady Layard, christened Mary Enid Evelyn Guest, was born on 1st July 1843 at Dowlais House, Merthyr Tydfil, in South Wales. She was the third daughter and eighth child, of ten, born to the industrialist Sir Josiah John Guest (1785-1852), owner

of the Dowlais Ironworks, and his wife Lady Charlotte Elizabeth Bertie (1814-95), only daughter of Albermarle, 9th Earl of Lindsey.

It is her journal, which she kept for 51 years and contains over 15,000 entries, that gives us such a wonderful picture of the family life of the Rates and life at Milton Court in those days. It also gives us a number of important clues to the chronology of the changes to Milton Court during the second half of the nineteenth Century.

Lachlan Rate employed the famous Victorian architect William Burges to refurbish both the interior and the exterior of the house. Burges is recorded as visiting Milton Court in September 1871, 1872 (in which year rate and Burgess went to the Derby races at Epsom together), November 1875 (in respect of the Hall ceiling and the billiard room) and in 1880, which was the year before his death.

Billy Burgess, as he was affectionately known, was a member of that raffish circle of Pre-Raphaelite painters and their architect and writer friends: Swinburne, Rossetti, William Morris, Philip Webb, Burne-Jones and Millais. He kept dogs in the office, went to low dives, drank opulently, rowed with his friends, was impatient with bureaucracy, took opium, attempted fashionable diets, belonged to a number of art, architecture and antiquarian clubs as well as the Architectural Association, the Institute of British Architects and the Architectural Institute. He served tea in his dowdy Thames-side office to his friends on dishes of beaten gold encrusted with gems all to his own extravagant devices.

‘A crank, but a genius and a really good fellow’ was one contemporary assessment²⁶.

He was small, plump, extremely shortsighted, and a wonderfully amusing companion among the clubs and artists’ societies and nightspots of mid Victorian London.

There were also trappings of establishment responsibility: memberships of the Athenaeum and of a fashionable Masonic lodge and, long overdue in the year of his early death, he achieved Associateship of the Royal Academy.

He was one of the leading figures of the mediaeval revival in High Victorian architecture. His greatest works, for the richest man in the world, Lord Bute, were Cardiff Castle and Castell Coch. They rival the scale and fantastic splendour of the castles of King Ludwig of Bavaria. In more sober mood, Burges designed and built Cork cathedral and worked on designing or extensively remodelling a number of country houses.

He was born on 2nd December 1827 and died on 20th April 1881, in Kensington, London. Two of his visitors in the last days of his life were Oscar Wilde and J.A.M. Whistler. The Cecil Higgins Art Gallery²⁷, whose website has an excellent outline of some of Burges’ work, has a posthumous caricature of him in bed, by Burne-Jones. On the website, we can see that the motif on the cabinet doors is very similar to that used for the ceiling of the main room on the first floor at Milton Court.

Judging by some of his other commissions, which include the most extraordinary use of decoration, the work he did at Milton Court was pretty conservative.

The first we know of a connection between Burges and Lachlan Rate is in 1864, when Burges designed a model lodging house for the philanthropist in St Anne's Court, Soho. Its 30 rooms on three storeys plus a ground floor school room, kitchen and shop cost £2,900. The rooms were intended to be let to people working in the area. In the second half of the nineteenth century philanthropy was fashionable and building decent accommodation for workers a particular vogue – especially when the theory ran that, in order to distinguish it from charity, it should have a business-like appearance. Rate made only 4% on his investment²⁸.

Milton Court – Heritage Regained records Burges visiting Milton Court in 1880 in connection with further alterations. We know that the design on the ceiling of the rear ground floor room has been attributed to Burges and that this room is on the site of the former loggia. Lady Layard records sitting in the loggia in her journal entry for 5th August 1881, which was after Burges died. Thus it appears that although Burges produced the designs, they were executed after his death (as were some of his other commissions).

There are also the two bay window extensions to the ground and first floor at the front of the building. They were absent in the 1874 painting but we don't know when they were added.

Finally there is the small extension to the south east, which includes the oriel window. This extension added three small rooms on the ground and first floors, one of which is accessed only from another room and a second either from another room or down a short narrow flight of stairs. In addition, access to one of the bedrooms on the first floor was changed from what is now the flower room to a more awkward access from the Jacobean staircase.

We don't know when this extension was constructed, but it seems to have been of lower quality to what Burges would have produced, for example the dead space behind the brick pillars supporting the first floor at the rear and the lack of windows in the room immediately above. So maybe it was a later addition with its' main purpose being to improve the symmetry of the front elevation? If so, it is strange that the first floor window on the south eastern extension has three divisions compared to the four in its' opposite number.

We can hazard a date of later in the 1880s and certainly before 1890, because in her journal entry for 24th May 1890, Lady Layard wrote 'It was the Evelyn Dower house & a lovely old Elizabethan red brick building originally of the form of an E until Mr Rate added wings – it is covered with ivy & has a lovely old fashioned garden.'

What we do know is that because of the change in access to the first floor bedroom, the panelling and painting of the flower room must have been done after this extension was added.

The identity of the artist who painted the flowers, insects, birds' eggs, sky and clouds in the flower room is unknown. Florence Ede (see below) thought that Angela Rate was responsible, which would have meant that the painting was done around 1920, which is far too late. However, she says that Angela died in her early twenties, which means that she must have been referring to Frances. It seems unlikely that Frances

was the artist as she died in 1882, though it is just possible. We know that Lady Layard was something of an amateur artist, so she may have been involved. The work on some of the panels is more accomplished than on others, so it is possible that more than one artist was responsible.

The paintings of some of the insects are quite naturalistic as if they had been copied from life rather than from the pages of a book. It appears that each panel was slotted into its' surround, which would have enabled the artist to paint each one in comfort, perhaps using flower stems plucked from around the estate and placed in vases.

We know that the flower room was decorated before 1903 (see *Gardeners Chronicle*²⁹ reference below).

At some time the millpond was extended with the addition of a shallow lake to the west and the lower lake was created, with a water garden on the far side. There is in existence a photograph of the construction of the lower lake but we have not yet been able to locate a copy. The two avenues of lime trees leading towards the railway would also have been planted at around this time, as well as the limes bordering the drive.

The entrance arch, with its' crest and motto *Spero Meliora* (I hope for better things) was also added and presumably the two lodges at either end of the drive were also built around this time. In the painting of 1874, the entrance lodge appears to have been a larger building than its' replacement. The style of the old lodge was very much in keeping with the mill house. Both these buildings (and the old mill – see below) appear to have been demolished and rebuilt rather than being refurbished.

In a letter dated 26th July 1993 from Keith Priest of Fletcher Priest to Diane Cantello at Unum, he writes, 'It is apparent that William Burges not only designed the additions to the Mansion but also designed the gate and gatehouse.' We can add that it also appears that he was responsible for the design of both the mill and the mill house. The attribution to Burges followed a visit to Milton Court firstly by Victorian scholars and then by members of the Victorian Society. To start with, there was hard evidence that Burges had carried out work in the hall, boudoir and former billiard room. The boudoir panelling is very like some of the panelling at Knightshayes in Devon, a mansion that Burges was working on in the 1870s and the simple repeating patterns straight on to boarded ceilings were also used by Burges at Knightshayes. There are too the decorated and beamed ceilings, which Burges regularly employed, and the pugnaciousness of some of the exterior detailing.

The crest on the archway is the coat of arms of the Rate family, *Spero Meliora* being a motto that they shared with a number of other Scottish families. The arms were a gold shield with an engrailed black cross and an anchor as the crest.

During this period, tragedy struck the Rate family with the death of their daughter on 24th October 1882. The *Surrey Advertiser and County Times*³⁰ describes the events as follows.

‘DEATH OF MISS FRANCES RATE - We much regret to have to announce the death of Miss Frances Mary Rate, the second daughter of Mr & Mrs L M Rate of Milton Court, which took place early on Tuesday morning.

The sad event was painfully sudden, the deceased having only recently returned home from Scotland the previous afternoon, and although far from well, no serious danger was apprehended. Late on Monday evening, however, it was found necessary to call in the aid of Dr. Clark, but despite the skill and attention bestowed, death occurred a few hours later from congestion of the lungs.

The mournful tidings created a deep feeling of grief in the town, the deceased lady, who was 20 years of age being well-known and highly esteemed. The utmost sympathy is expressed and felt by all classes for the bereaved family.

The funeral service will take place at noon this day (Saturday) at Ranmore Church.’

The Reverend Stiff, writing in 1912, remembered, among others, ‘Miss Frances Mary Rate of Milton Court, each of whom, in their respective ways, had always done everything they could to advance the cause of God and the Church in Dorking. It is not too much to say that these and all other departed friends of our church still have some share in our work, if we attach any meaning to the doctrine of the Communion of Saints.’³¹⁴

In her journal entries of 10th and 11th February 1883, Lady Layard records how overcome with grief over the death of Francie (Frances) Alice Rate was and remarks that she trembled for her (Alices’) health and reason. A marble bust was made of Frances that stood in the drawing room.

Lachlan Rate was a J P and sat as a magistrate in Dorking. He is recorded in 1890 as making a claim against a Mr Amies in Kent for the value of 40 tons of Mangel Worzel supplied to Mr Amies. The outcome is not known.

By contrast, in 1889 there was an action against him to enforce two calls alleged to be due on 50 £1 shares. The judge found for Lachlan.

On 22nd April 1896, Lachlan Richard Mackintosh Rate married Ada Catherine Bennett in Suffolk.

He had turned up at one of his mothers garden parties in the uniform of a Private in the Irish Militia, which he had joined, and caused much embarrassment, following which incident, his mother made him live at Springfield Farm, which the Rates also owned (reminiscences of Florence Ede).

At some time after that, perhaps on their marriage, Lachlan and Ada moved to Stonewick, Warninglid.

Under the ownership of Lachlan Rate, the gardens of Milton Court became famous. They were featured on local postcards and Country Life carried a long article, with photographs. The following extract gives a flavour.

‘It is difficult in a few words to give any idea of the charm of Milton gardens. Larger and more pretentious ones are to be found in many counties, but few can claim the harmony of this garden, the perpetual growth and increase of its storehouse of colour and the sense that here the flowers grow because they love the sunlight and not for pride of the rare Latin names they bear on their labels.

On leaving the house by the garden door, we cross a sunk garden, filled with clustering blooms of rare tea roses and enclosed by an old greystone balustrade, covered with climbing roses and other flowering creepers. We then pass under arches of Felicite Perpetue rose, white as the driven snow. Leaving an apple orchard on one side and an old bowling green on the other, we continue our way between a double hedge of yew, which forms a rich background to borders containing every sort of herbaceous joy. Thence we may wander on to lawns and wild garden, overlooked by “immemorial elms” with glimpses of white foxgloves and blue delphiniums, copper and other briars and old Provence and moss roses, to where overshadowed by grey willows, the stream wends its way through banks of water – loving plants. On reaching the bog garden, we must pause and note with a gardener’s appreciation the Iris Kaempferi, pink flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*) sweet-scented rush, Japanese primula, yellow mimulus, blue forget-me-not, lobelia cardinalis, our own wild purple loosestrife and many other aquatic plants will all greet the eye in turn as the summer advances. On a sheltered pond groups of *Nymphaea marliacea*, *albida*, *carnea*, *chromatella* and the rare *rosea* open their golden centres to the sky. Here too, kingfishers are often to be seen especially towards evening when a quiet observer may catch them at their work, killing their fish supper by dashing it again the old moss-grown plank over the stream. This stream and its adjacent ponds are also the haunts of wild duck and heron.’

The bog garden was on the far side of the lower lake.

In 1905, four watercolours of the gardens, together with other well-known gardens in southern England, painted by Margaret Waterfield, appeared in ‘Garden Colour’³².

There was also an illustrated article in the *Gardeners Chronicle* in 1903, which talks about the flower room and says that the artist drew his materials from the garden outside.

Postcard photographs were also taken of Milton Court in 1906. These are still available in the Francis Frith collection of historic photographs.

In 1907, *The Times* said ‘the garden became one of the best known and most beautiful in the South of England.’³³

To give one impression of life at Milton Court in the time of the Rates, in her journal entry for 11th August 1891, Lady Layard recorded Mrs Rate having 53 people down for the day from a district they (the Rates) visited in Lambeth. The visitors arrived at 12, the Rates dined at 1 and then went down to the barn where the people were fed sumptuously on beef, pie and tarts – which Mrs Rate and Lady Layard helped to serve. The men then played cricket and the women went for a walk. Then at 4.30, they met in the barn again, with Mrs Rate and Enid taking turns to play the piano while everyone danced. Later, a guitar was brought, and Ida Rate sang, with everybody

joining in the chorus. Finally, Mrs Rate gave them each a bouquet of flowers, said a kind word to them and packed them up in 2 farm wagons and sent them off to the station. One old man of 72 had never seen the country before and said it was more beautiful than he could have imagined!

There seems to be some continuity here as the Country Life article below concerning the mill talks about regular groups of visitors from the poor of London.

The link to Lambeth is interesting, since that was where Lachlan Rates' funeral service was held. This was probably a reflection of his philanthropic involvement with the poor of that area and his involvement in the restoration of Lambeth Palace.

The Rates clearly entertained regularly, having a wide circle of similarly wealthy Victorians. Among the various titled and other people that Lady Layard met at Milton Court, we note the names of Mathew Arnold and George Meredith.

By contrast with the happy events described above, the Dorking Advertiser³⁴ carried the following report.

‘A LITTLE BOY DROWNED – A little fellow named George Frederick Clark was drowned on Tuesday in the Milton Mill Pond. By the kindness of Mrs Rate, wife of Mr Rate, J.P., Milton Court, the little fellow, who was only four years old, was brought by his mother, from Lambeth for a fortnight in the country, stopping at the Mill House.

While playing near the Mill Pond, the boy fell in and was drowned. An inquest was held on Thursday afternoon before Mr Mortimer Bayliss, Deputy Coroner, Mr Dyball being chosen foreman.

Florence Clark, the mother, wife of Charles Joseph Clark, described as a potter's labourer, of Lambeth, stated that she last saw the child alive about 10 o'clock on Tuesday morning. Though he had got about as he pleased round the house, she had never found him near the water, nor had she missed him until the policeman brought the hat in, about twenty minutes afterwards.

Frederick Richardson, a lad living at Greathurst Lane, Westcott, stated that whilst fishing on Tuesday near the flood-gates the deceased child came and sat on the bank. He sent him away, because he was afraid he would fall in. Witness went round the other side of the pond, and did not see Clark again. Later on he saw P.C. Steadman with a hat, but had heard neither scream nor splash.

P .C. Steadman deposed to finding hat and body of the child. John Aldridge, cowman, also gave evidence. Dr Horace Chaldecott said that death resulted from suffocation by drowning. The jury returned a verdict of death from accidental drowning.’

The date of death was 6th August 1889.

Twentieth Century

One further small alteration to the house was made between 1901 and about 1905. This was at the back of the house, where a set of windows were added to the left part of the extension, immediately above the sloping roof that had been added at the back. This can be seen by comparing the photograph in the Country Life article with later photographs of the rear.

The Dorking Advertiser of 1905 records the two following snippets.

‘Several new prizes were offered for the Horticultural Society’s Annual Show at Milton Court. These included the best dinner for a labourer in the field costing less than 6d, six cooked potatoes (peeled) and the best cake (ingredients less than 6d) by a Westcott girl under 14.’

‘PC Steele arrested Annie Ansell, Esther Ansell and Rose Sturt, three respectable young girls, for stealing cabbages with a value of one shilling from Milton Court Farm. In his evidence he told how, after being alerted by Mr. Wood the farm bailiff, he saw the three girls gather up seven cabbages into their aprons after they had been thrown into a field as fodder for Mr. Rate’s cows. They were let off with a caution.’

There are in the Dorking Museum orders dated 1902 to 1904 from J & W Attlee on account of Lachlan Rate made by W H Stuart and W G Woods (presumably the farm managers) in respect of goods for Milton Court farm. These goods included dog biscuits, oats, maize, straw, and wheat, sacks of corn for pheasants, poke bran, pollard, linseed cake, corn cake and barley meal.

This suggests a mixture of arable farming, rearing cattle and pheasant shooting on the estate at that time.

Lachlan Rate died on 28th February 1907 and so predeceased Alice Rate, who died on 26th September 1927. They were both buried in Ranmore churchyard.

In 1909, the entrance to St Martins church in Dorking was widened and improved by Alice Rate and in October a lamp was erected in memory of her late husband. The lamp, painted blue, still stands at the entrance to the churchyard, though it is rather dilapidated.

Before Mrs Rate died she left instructions that her grave was to be lined with branches of the tree of heaven and it was the job of James Ede, uncle of Richard and husband of Florence, to dig the grave at Ranmore Church and line it. She also left ‘mourning’ instructions for the servants.

Archbishop Tate, the Archbishop of Canterbury, conducted Lachlan Rates’ funeral at Lambeth parish church before the burial at Ranmore. Rate was a friend of Archbishop Tait and was the treasurer for raising funds for the restoration of the Lambeth Palace chapel. In 1876 he had brought Burges in to carry out the work. Burges restored the exterior and produced a lavish, multi-coloured design based on his mediaeval researches. Despite the fact that the final cost was considerably over the estimate, Rate continued to use him at Milton Court.

In his obituary in Times²⁹ in 1907, we read ‘The restoration of the old and neglected manor-house of Milton Court Dorking, entrusted by him to the late W Burgess (sic) is one of the most successful examples of its kind. Here with his family he made his home for some 40 years and under the fostering care of Mrs Rate....the garden became one of the best known and most beautiful in the South of England.....Besides his widow, he leaves a son and three daughters.’

He left an estate of £324,099.0s.6d, an enormous sum in those days. His executors were the Right Honourable Edward Ponsonby, Earl of Bessborough CVO and the Honourable William Napier Bruce CB.

His will read ‘I devise my mansion house and estate known as my Milton Court Estate...[in the several parishes of Dorking and Westcott Surrey]....and also my Nutfield estate to the trustees herinbefore named to the use of my said wife during her life without impeachment of waste and after her death to the use of my son Lachlan Richard Mackintosh Rate during his life with the remainder to the wife of L R M Rate.’

Bizarrely, a codicil to his will gave security of tenure to those of his Milton Court tenants who adopted the surname Rate!

In 1912, the Reverend Neville G. J. Stiff³¹ wrote: -

‘The house is now the handsome residence of Mrs. Rate, widow of Mr. L. M. Rate, who was one of the most earnest and liberal of churchmen, and a constant benefactor to the Parish Church, and all Church work, not only at Dorking, but in London and elsewhere.

The family is well known in Dorking and has long been associated with Church life and work of the parish.

Incidentally it may be mentioned that the grounds of Milton Court are very fine, and more than one article in the illustrated papers have spoken of the beauties of both house and garden.’

There is a rather charming painting of the rear of Milton Court, executed by the author, in A Pilgrimage of Surrey³⁵, published in 1914, just before the First World War.

In 1918, The Dorking Advertiser³⁶ carried a story that Mrs Ada Catherine Rate drowned in Freechase Lake at Warninglid, Sussex. She had disappeared from the Grosvenor Hotel, Buckingham Palace Road on 14 Feb 1918 and her fully clothed body was found several weeks later. Ada was the wife of Lachlan R M Rate and the mother of his four daughters (see below).

The West Sussex County Times³⁷ reported the inquest as follows.

‘Dr. Dow, Deputy Coroner, held an inquest at Warninglid on Maundy Thursday on the body of Mrs. Ada Caroline Rate, who disappeared from the Grosvenor Hotel on

February 14th and whose body was found at Freechase Lake on Wednesday. Alfred Saunders, employed at Freechase, said he saw what he thought to be a hat about 20 feet from the bank and, getting a boat, found the body floating face downwards. The water was 6 ft. 9 in. deep. Supt. Anscombe, who helped to get the body out, said it was fully dressed, with the left shoe missing. A sash line was fastened loosely round the waist and the hands were tucked in the cord. There were no signs of violence. There was 6s. 9d. in the coat pocket, but no letters. Mr. Lachlan R. M. Rate, of Stonewick, Warninglid, an underwriter at Lloyd's, said his wife had been under treatment for a nervous breakdown, but lately appeared to have got well again. She was looking forward to a visit to Devonshire. The jury, of which the Rev. W. A. Dengate was foreman, returned a verdict that Mrs. Rate had drowned herself while insane, and expressed their sympathy with the husband.

The funeral took place at St. Mary's, Slaugham, on Saturday afternoon.'

Lachlan and Ada had four daughters; Muriel Frances, born 7th February 1897, Alice Margaret, born 13th April 1899, Lettie Mackintosh, born 14th December 1903 and Elizabeth Angela, born 18th November 1904.

At around this time, the staff at Milton Court consisted of one cook, one housekeeper, one butler, three maids as well as grooms, a driver and gardeners. Back in 1871, a domestic staff of nine supported what was a rather larger household, when the whole Rate family was there and entertaining their guests.

The Maids wore mauve uniform in the morning and changed to a brown and cream uniform in the afternoons. At Milton Court, the kitchen quarters and servants' hall were in the basement which was so damp that frogs were frequently seen hopping around the kitchen. The library and morning room were on the ground floor and the bedrooms were on the first floor and the servants' quarters were on the top floor. The main staircase had a red carpet with very long brass rods that had to be cleaned weekly.

Florence Ede recalls that Muriel co-founded the Leith Hill Music festival with Ralph Vaughan Williams. However the festival started in 1904, so it seems more likely that this was one of Lachlan juniors' sisters, possibly Alice. We have yet to find any documentary evidence of a link between the festival and any of the Rate family.

Lachlan Richard Mackintosh Rate (Lackie) inherited the Milton Court estate on 20th May 1932 but he then died on 13th July 1936. It is not clear why there is a gap of over four years between his mothers' death and his inheriting the estate. Willam Hoare and Alan Erskine, but not Lachlan, were executors of their mother-in-laws' will, so there may have been a deliberate intention to prevent Lachlan having the freedom to do what he liked with the estate, possibly on account of his eccentricity.

As she was the eldest daughter, the Rate family papers may now be with Muriel's family (if she had one), or failing that with the family of one of the other daughters. We believe that Letties' married name was Sandford.

The estate then passed to Muriel Frances Rate, who sold it to Sir Harry Mallaby Mallaby-Deeley, Foundling Estates Ltd and St. Aubyn Estates Ltd on 23rd December 1936.

In 1936 a sale notice appeared in the *Morning Post*³⁸ and no doubt in other publications. There were no photographs and the agents were Knight, Frank and Rutley.

It appears that at this date, the old estate was split into two, with the farms subsequently being sold to the Broom family. It was subdivided again, so that there were three parts (see below), though the date of the second subdivision is not clear.

Sir Harry then died intestate on 4th February 1937 whilst in the South of France, probably at the Chateau des Fayeres in Cannes. On 26th March 1938, the Principal Probate Registry granted Letters of Administration to Dame Edith Maude Mallaby-Deeley (Widow) and Sir Guy Meyrick Mallaby Mallaby-Deeley Bart. (Son?) of Slaters Oak, Effingham.

Sir Harry was born on 27th October 1863 and was the MP for Harrow from 1910 to 1918 and for Willesden East from 1918 to 1922.

He was a fanatical golfer and became the President of several clubs, including the famous Sandwich Club. In 1906, he founded the Princes course in Kent, which hosted the Open Championship in 1932. In 1909, his caricature appeared in *Vanity Fair*, entitled *The Prince of Princes*³⁹.

He was something of a financier and owned other properties; for example, he bought a life interest in the Leinster estate from the 7th Duke of Leinster for £67,000 plus £1,000 a year (obituary of the 8th Duke of Leinster, the *Daily Telegraph*⁴⁰).

On his death, the Baronetcy passed to his son, Guy Meyrick Mallaby-Deeley (born 23rd May 1897, died 21st January 1946) and to his son Anthony Meyrick Mallaby-Deeley (born 30th May 1923, died 1st December 1962, at which date the Baronetcy became extinct).

It is a remarkable coincidence that the Baronetcy of one of the other people connected with Milton Court, Sir Charles Morgan, also became extinct in 1962.

In 1937, *Country Life*⁴¹ carried a full page advertisement for the sale of Milton Court ‘by direction of the administrators of the late Sir H. M. Mallaby-Deeley, *Bart.*’, illustrated by two photographs of the grounds, one of the front elevation and one of the staircase. We also have several other views of the interior, which are likely to have been taken at the same time or possibly for the 1936 sale.

The article goes on to describe ‘This exceptionally beautiful Elizabethan residence is delightfully situated in wooded seclusion, with old-world gardens, park land and lake, the whole extending to about 83 acres. Ten principal and seven staff bedrooms, four bathrooms, five reception rooms, gun room. Excellent domestic offices. Two entrance lodges, four cottages, garages, stabling. Main electric light, gas and water. Central heating throughout. Soil chiefly sandy. Stations: Dorking and Dorking North, 1.5

miles, with express service to London. 24 miles to London by road. For sale – freehold – at a reasonable price.’ It is odd that there was no mention of the mill – perhaps because it was too dilapidated to be worth mentioning?

In 1938, the Dorking and Leith Hill District Preservation Society were looking for a site to hold a great pageant. Although the ‘For Sale’ signs had recently appeared, Dame Edith agreed to make Milton Court available and the ambitious project went ahead under the title ‘England’s Pleasant Land’. E M Forster of Abinger Hammer wrote the script, Ralph Vaughan-Williams was the musical director and Tom Harrison from Holmbury St. Mary was the producer. The cast comprised local people playing the principal characters as well as providing the crowd scenes of Saxons, Normans etc. that featured in a storyline recalling the history of rural England over a period of nearly a thousand years.

There were three performances, on 9th, 14th and 16th July.

The play is set in the countryside ‘close to a village and to a manor house’. The action opens in Norman times showing the settling of the land at Domesday, but the main activity takes place much later when the estate land is enclosed and the peasants revolt. Eventually the Squire gets his comeuppance when the 20th century death duties eventually overturn the old order and the play concludes as the scene becomes filled with hoardings, bungalows, charabancs, petrol pumps and litter. In this way the pageant sought to rally public support to help ‘preserve and enhance the charm and rural character of the Dorking district for the public benefit, and to prevent development which would injure its amenities’.

If this message was not made sufficiently clear during the various scenes of the pageant, the narrator, or Recorder as he was called, emphasised the point at the conclusion when he declared that “The spirit of a country is in its hills and fields. If they die, that spirit dies with them. Its life is in your hands. Shall it die or shall it live?”

The preservation of the countryside was of particular concern to E M Forster and to Ralph Vaughan Williams, both of whom had been associated with the Abinger Pageant in 1934 with a similar theme. In that instance the Woodman, as narrator, urged his audience to consider their responsibilities “Houses, houses, houses. Are these man’s final triumph? Or is there another England, green and eternal which will outlast them? This land is yours and you can make it what you will.”

A photograph of the event in the papers of E M Forster in the archives of Kings College Cambridge shows Forster, Vaughan Williams, Lady Allen and the bandmaster chatting. This was Lady Allen of Hurtwood, who was born in 1897 and died in 1976. She was a landscape architect and a campaigner for pre-school education, so it is possible that the former pursuit was the connection with Forster.

The photograph appears to have been taken in the field bordered by the mile walk, with the pageant-play having been performed in the lower part of the field.

There is also a photograph of Ralph Vaughan Williams conducting the band of the 2nd Battalion of the Duke of Cornwall’s Light Infantry in the same field.

The pageant-play was finally published in 1940, by Leonard and Virginia Woolf, at the Hogarth Press.

On 9th August 1939, Foundling Estates and members of the Mallaby-Deeley family sold the remaining estate to W.T Henleys Telegraph Works Company Ltd.

Dame Edith was living at Milton Court at the time of the sale to Henleys.

The chairman of Henleys at this time was Sir Montague Hughman (pronounced as in human) and his name was on the sale documents on behalf of Henleys.

Henleys were founded in 1837 by W T Henley, initially as a manufacturer of electrical apparatus and electrical conductors. The firm expanded quickly during the Victorian age and during the 1860s Henleys were responsible for the Persian Gulf Cable and for the shore ends of two Atlantic cables⁴². By 1937, the main factories were in Woolwich and Gravesend and there was also a subsidiary company that manufactured tyres and other rubber goods, including golf balls.

Henleys published a regular staff magazine called the Henley Telegraph⁴³, which has provided a source for some of the material in this note.

The order for Henleys head office staff to move out of London was given on 1st September 1939, two days before war was declared. The Henley Telegraph published a special emergency edition with a lead article entitled ‘So this is Milton Court’, which painted an idyllic picture of the house and grounds. ‘Milton Court still has its bowling green and a double hedge of yew against which the multi-coloured blooms of Michaelmas daisies have shown to their best; an apple orchard; roses, roses all the way; grey willows overshadowing its mill stream; lawns which are velvet carpets; and a half-timbered mill house.’⁴⁴

Milton Court had to be altered to provide working accommodation for about 275 people. An office wing, with kitchen and dining room had to be built. This was subsequently referred to as the 1939 block! The main house was to become sleeping accommodation with cubicles for 190 people, with others sleeping in the lodges and a large army hut put up in the grounds.

The chauffeurs’ house became a six-bed sick bay. An ARP system was set up and air-raid shelters were to be built. Milton Court was also to have its own fire brigade.

Milton Court also had a Home Guard unit, which was photographed in front of the mansion. Any resemblance to characters from Dads Army is for the viewer to judge!

The move itself was not without problems. Company records and equipment were sent in six 20-ton lorries. One got lost on the way – it was the first night of the blackout. The others reached Milton Court but couldn’t get through the entrance arch! Everything had to be off-loaded and manhandled the rest of the way. To cap it all, the caterers who had been booked wanted to turn the job down as they felt that it was beyond them. After much gentle persuasion, they agreed to take it on.

During the war that followed, air raid shelters were built on what is now the croquet lawn. Thanks to the efforts of Richard Ede and to members of the Davis family, who were living at Milton Court in the war years and have visited Milton Court again in recent years, we now have a number of photographs of Milton Court in wartime.

In terms of enemy action, there were two occasions when the war came to Milton Court. On August 30th 1940, while a Henleys board meeting was in progress, two bombs fell close to Milton Court. Some cars were damaged, two of their drivers were injured, the roof was blown off one of the houses and windows were broken. The RAF chased off the German bombers.

Ralph Vaughan Williams came to Milton Court on Tuesday evenings to rehearse Henleys choir and they took part in the Dorking Music Festival in April of either 1940 or 1941.

In May 1941 the Company presented Dr. Vaughan Williams with an inscribed gold fountain pen in appreciation of his help. In his speech of thanks, Vaughan Williams said that “We musicians generally are unoccupied in wartime.....but when the suggestion was made that I might help with your singing, here was an obvious piece of war work and I am delighted to have been of assistance.”

In early 1943 the Henley Telegraph reported that the company had taken a lease on offices at 51-53 Hatton Garden. The company's head office in Holborn had been destroyed in the 1940 blitz and the new lease enabled some staff to move back from Milton Court to London.

Local Home Guard units took part in exercises with regular troops, including the Canadian Black Watch; they held summer camps near Milton Court and the evidence of this can still be seen on Milton Heath today.

Social activities continued apace, not always for the purpose of light entertainment. In January 1943, the Milton Court Social Club held a meeting to discuss the Beveridge Report. This was to lead to the setting up of the welfare state and the meeting is an interesting example of how the Government consulted the public and gained their reactions. Mrs Dunsheath, the wife of Doctor Dunsheath, Director of Henleys Telegraph Works, led the discussion. She was a remarkable lady who later led one of the first womens' climbing expeditions to the Himalayas.

A notable event for the Henley choir came in April 1944 when at Dorking County School they gave the first public performance of Vaughan-Williams' choral setting of 'Greensleeves'. To mark the occasion the composer dedicated the work to the choir and presented them with 50 copies of the score, although the Oxford University Press had to state that 'through difficulties of paper supply some time would elapse before the printed copies would be available'.

The Henley Dramatic Society was also very active in the district, and profits went to charity. Notable productions were J B Priestley's 'Laburnum Grove' and 'The Housemaster' by Ian Hay.

During 1944, Henleys Gravesend works were responsible for the manufacture of PLUTO, or Pipe Line Under The Ocean, which was used to supply petrol to the Normandy beachhead following the D Day landings on June 6th. Only one man was allowed to make the joints between sections of the pipeline, so he was called out at any time of the day or night to do this important work. The pipeline was extremely massive – at one time a small section of it was displayed at Milton Court.

Henleys were also involved in secret work in relation to the control of power supplies to parts of London during the War.

Then on 30th June 1944, a V1 flying bomb, or doodlebug, landed next to Elm cottage, killing the three occupants, two women and a boy – Lilian Rose Lawrence, Royston Arthur Lawrence and Irene Kathleen Risley.

At the time, it was not known whether the doodlebugs had some form of guidance system (they didn't) so local press reports stated that the cottage was in an isolated position – presumably to mislead in case the real target had been Henleys offices at Milton Court.

The footings of the cottage and the collapsed privy can still be found above the bomb crater at the extreme end of the car park by the horse chestnut trees. More recently, two small wells were discovered just to the north of the remains of the cottage.

After the War, Henleys were responsible for many other large projects, including the electrification of the Manchester to Sheffield railway line and the power supplies to the Royal Festival Hall for the Festival of Britain in 1951.

On 31st March 1953, Sir John Dalton took over as chairman of Henleys from Sir Montague Hughman.

The Henley Telegraph also mentions a biannual fete. The third of these was held on 23rd June 1951 and the fourth one was held on 18th July 1953, when it was a special Coronation garden fete opened by Sir John and Lady Dalton. The final fete was held on 11th June 1955 and was also opened by Sir John. It will be interesting to see earlier copies of the Henley Telegraph and their descriptions of the first and second fetes.

In 1955, Henleys was merged with several other electrical engineering companies, to form Associated Electrical Industries Limited (AEI). AEI in turn was taken over and so now the name of Henleys has disappeared.

After the war, the various Town and Country Planning Acts came into force and so we find far more documents from then on.

The next major change was on 28th September 1961, when ownership passed to Associated Electrical Industries Ltd, who had presumably bought Henleys.

Then on 17th August 1965, National Employers' Life Assurance Company Ltd. (NEL) agreed to purchase the estate and started to move staff in. The conveyance was dated 31st March 1966.

NEL started life on 11th March 1935 as National & Colonial Insurance Corporation Ltd and was taken over by National Employers Mutual in early 1960 and renamed NEL.

On 22nd May 1967, NEL sold the Lordship or Manor of Milton to the Urban District Council of Dorking. This was done because the exact boundaries of the Manor were unknown, a problem which also affected the author of the Domesday Book entry! Thus the Land Registry could not register a transfer to NEL and so the Manor ended up with the council by default.

In 1973 a new office building was constructed and was subsequently extended. This building was called the 1973 block and is now called the Westcott Wing.

Also during 1973 it appears that Milton Court was listed (grade II) by the Secretary of State as being of special architectural or historic interest.

Britannia Arrow Holdings took over the NEL group of companies in 1983.

In 1984 and 1985, NEL bought additional land, which had formed part of the pre 1939 estate, from T.H. Broom & Son.

In 1989, the 1939 block was demolished and a new three-storey building was completed by the summer of 1990. During construction, staff were housed in temporary offices (portacabins) below the putting green and beyond the end of the car park.

In 1990, NEL was again taken over, this time by Unum, a US disability insurer. Unum was interested in the company called NELPHI, a subsidiary of NEL, which transacted similar business to Unum, and so the remaining NEL companies were sold to Century Life, who moved their staff to offices in London, leaving NELPHI as owners of Milton Court.

On July 4th, the grounds were used for a large celebration to mark the takeover.

In November 1991, NELPHI changed its' name to Unum Limited and rebranded as UnumProvident in 2001.

A major refurbishment of the mansion began in 1993, under the auspices of architects Fletcher Priest. Once work started on removing the more modern additions to the fabric of the building, the removal of false ceilings led to the discovery of the Victorian painted ceilings on the two ground and first floor main rooms. This caused some excitement when it was realised that they were the work of William Burges and what started as a straightforward refurbishment project became a restoration project as well. See above for the eventual attribution of the work to Burges.

In the nineteenth century, installing the new ceiling of the drawing room, which is also the floor of the attic above, had involved removing the timber Jacobean beams. What the Victorian builders did not realise was that the old beams, together with the partitions sitting on top of them in the attic, formed an essential part of the structural

system of the roof. The engineers discovered that instead of bearing on the drawing room ceiling, the partitions were hanging from the roof beams.

Over the previous century, the walls had moved, and on the exposed south front the ends of the timber beams buried in the wet wall had rotted away. When the engineer made his first inspection of the attic floor, then used to store old metal safes, he suddenly realised that parts of the floor had no visible means of support. He quietly suggested to the people with him that it might be sensible if they cautiously walked around the edge of the room and went downstairs. Then he called in emergency propping gear!

The restoration and refurbishment was completed and there was a grand reopening of the mansion in 1994. The opportunity was taken to publish *Milton Court – Heritage Regained*, which has proved to be a valuable source of information for this history.

It was during this renovation that the 1843 half-sovereign was found. Other discoveries included the Victorian pump above the well in the basement and the fireplace on the top floor that had been covered over for some years and contained a Victorian poker.

NEL/UNUM had for many years held staff Christmas parties at venues including the Tithe Barn at the Burford Bridge Hotel, the Surrey Hills Hotel and even the grandstand at Epsom Racecourse, but following the growth of the company in the 1990s, no local venues were large enough to accommodate these events.

Instead the opportunity was taken to hold summer parties in the grounds of Milton Court, which were extremely popular, usually with a fancy dress theme.

On 8th May 2002, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport sent a letter which stated that Milton Court had recently been upgraded from grade II to grade II* to reflect its special importance. At that time, 6,000 buildings were listed as grade I, 18,000 as grade II* and 418,000 as grade II. Thus this change considerably enhanced the architectural significance of Milton Court. We understand that the upgrading was part of a general review of listed buildings rather than as a result of any prompting from UnumProvident.

In the autumn of 2004, the dam at the end of the lower lake gave way and had to be rebuilt. The opportunity was taken to dredge the lake, probably for the first time since its' original excavation.

Milton Court Mill

As discussed above, the mill is the building with the longest recorded history in the Manor of Milton.

It is first mentioned in the Domesday Book and again in the Feet of Fines. See Appendix A.

The Dorking Poor Rate books record Edward Pryor paying Poor Rate for 'his House and Mill' continuously from 7th October 1759 to 15th March 1771, after which there are no records until Lady Day in 1804. By then, William Wells was paying Poor Rate on Milton Court Farm, Milton Mill and Land, which he continued to do until 18th March 1814. Then on 14th September 1814, John Wells took over payment for Milton Court Mill and Land, while Edward continued to pay for Milton Court Farm.

This situation continued until 20th May 1818, when there is another gap in the records. When they resume on 18th October 1836, John Wells was paying rates for Milton Court Farm, Milton Mill House and Lands. There is no mention of the mill itself, so it had probably fallen into disuse – like the lime works, another victim of the industrial revolution? The position was the same in 1837 and 1838.

There are a few drawings and a painting of the mill and mill house ranging in date from 1850 to 1874, which show a rather utilitarian group of brick built buildings.

Both the 1850 sketches and the steel engraving in *A Hand Book of Dorking* show a continuous wall fronting onto the lane for the whole of the three-gabled mill house. However the 1874 painting shows the middle part of the house set back and even today we can see evidence of this in the brickwork of the wall bordering the lane.

We can assume that Biggar was responsible for these alterations, perhaps made so that carts that were delivering grain or collecting flour did not obstruct access for farm traffic. Otherwise he appears to have made only small changes to the mill house.

The *Watermills of Surrey*⁴⁵ states that the new mill dated from about 1860 but includes a photograph showing the mill in a state of dereliction 'in the 1860s'.

The only other photographs we have of anywhere near that date for Milton Court are the ones taken in 1857, possibly to give potential renovators an idea of the work required. So we suggest that the photograph of the derelict mill was also taken in July 1857.

The 1861 census records the residents of Milton Mill as being Reuben Farrell aged 27, a journeyman miller, born at Findon in Sussex, his wife Elizabeth aged 24, born in Dorking, their son William, 7 months and John Killick aged 21, also a journeyman miller born in Findon. So it seems as though the new mill was then in operation and only recently reopened.

The census records of 1881, 1891 and 1901 make no mention of the mill. The mill house is shown as unoccupied in 1881 and 1901 but is not mentioned in 1891.

The refurbishment instigated by the Rates included the Mill, which by 1881 had been rebuilt as a timber framed, tile hung building with high gables. In 1886 it was producing a range of products from Best Flour to Bran.

The mill and mill house that were refurbished by Biggar must have been completely demolished, with the mill house being rebuilt further back from the lane.

The etching of the mill dated 1885 in the Watermills of Surrey shows grass encroaching on the steps up to the lane, the small fence in front of the wheel in a dilapidated state and the path by the wheel much overgrown. However, the photograph in the Dorking museum appears to show the mill shortly after it had been rebuilt. Thus the photograph must predate the etching by perhaps 10 years or more and hence a rebuilding date of the early 1870s would fit.

It could therefore be that it was the design and rebuilding of the mill (and the mill house) that occasioned the visits of Burges to Milton Court in 1871 and 1872, assuming that such a commission was not beneath him. We can also speculate that Burges may have also been responsible for the design of the arch and the cottage by the arch. The style of the arch is in keeping with the style of the mill house.

An article written in 1886 gives a flavour of how the mill was then.⁴⁶

‘A lonely lane that branches off the Northward from the Guildford Road leads along the banks of Pipbrook stream, half hidden by sweet sedge and flowering bur-reed to Milton Court pond and Mill-Wheel. The stranger might easily take it for a private carriage-drive, so cunningly has the little lodge been placed with warning intent at its entrance; but it really forms a public road to the mill and the downs behind and affords as sweet and varied a country stroll as any to be found in this delightful neighbourhood. Milton Court Mill itself is my especially favourite among our Surrey mill-wheels. Its very name betrays the antiquity of the mill or its predecessor, for some such wheel must have revolved here slowly, with old fashioned leisureliness, ever since The Hamlet was first christened Milton. A flight of stone steps well worn by generations of human feet, runs down to a pretty little garden below. By its side stands a cottage thickly draped with roses, the overflow splashes over stones green and slippery with waving slime, and beyond a rustic bridge the grounds of Milton Court House complete the smiling dreamy picture. Mr Gardner’s exquisite original drawing from which the woodcut here given is engraved, hangs before me on my study wall as I write and makes me despair ever to paint in words the singular charm of that sweet spot. The pen is so poor an implement to pit against the pencil but just beyond the mill and within reach of the irrigation stream, lies another lovely bit, a natural wild garden of iris and marsh marigolds, as yet unpainted, which always seems to me as though a picture of Mr Alfred Parsons had walked out of its frame and come to life in this Surrey valley. I wish Mr Parsons was run down some day and would crystallise it for us in immortal colour.

The ivy covered archway on the right leads to the precincts of Milton Court, which once took its name from the mill and in due course returns the compliment. A fine old red-brick Jacobean mansion with quaint round gables, only to be seen by the passing pedestrians over the top of a high and forbidding wayside wall. The building was raised by the Evelyngs of Wotton-John Evelyn’s family of Syon and the Diary – in

the first part of the seventeenth century and when looked at from above on the slopes of the chalk downs the house and gardens with their lake and bridges combine with the mill and mill pond into a pretty view but the best view of all can be had from the bridge hard by the Mill House. A bridge covered with glossy green ivy where one can take in at a single glance the idle mill-wheel, the water from the open sluice rushing and roaring over the stones below, the rank vegetation of butter-bur that chokes the margin, the pond and islets where the ducks are nesting and the big trees that over hang the edge in their summer greenery.

Footpaths at intervals along the bank enable the explorer who is not afraid of a little undergrowth to follow the Pipbrook from Milton Court almost uninterruptedly till it joins the main stream of the Mole.'

Stidder states that the Wells family (Thomas, John and Alfred) occupied the mill until 1879, when Alfred was made bankrupt. The Poor Rate books mention a William and John Wells paying rates for the mill but not living there. We need to check the bibliography in Stidder to find out where he got his information. He goes on to say that milling continued until 31st March 1900, under the control of Mr. Black, the last recorded miller.

It is said that the last miller gave up the job because of a death in the millpond⁴⁷. Later (per Richard Ede, from conversations with his Aunt, Florence Ede), one Dolly Dipple drowned herself in the millpond in about 1920, when she was a young girl.

The Country Life article from 1901 says 'A little further up the stream stands the mill, on the site of which stood the mill mentioned in the Domesday Book, and close by is the half-timbered Millhouse, now converted into a Home of Rest during the summer months for weary people from the poorest parts of London, who would not otherwise obtain a holiday. They spend a fortnight in these happy surroundings free of charge and then give place to another band of tired workers. One may hope that this effort to brighten the sad monotony of their lives of so many Londoners may be emulated by others wishing to benefit in some way their fellow men and women.'

The 1901 census records the mill as being unoccupied but this was in April rather than in the summer.

In Old Surrey Water Mills, there is a fine drawing of the mill dated 1936, where it appears to be in good condition. At that time, the mill was still partly occupied but at some point between 1945 and 1951 it was demolished for its' timber.

When the water is clear, it is still possible to see a millstone lying on the flagged floor of the pool behind the site of the old mill. The wheel pit has been filled in but the remains of the leat to the overshot wheel can still be seen, as can the hole in the wall where the drive shaft from the mill wheel entered the mill.

Appendix A – Domesday Book translations, Commentary from A History of Surrey, extracts from Surrey Feet of Fines and from the Minutes of the Reading, Guildford and Reigate Railway.

1) Domesday Book translation from A History of Dorking and the Neighbouring Parishes⁴⁸

The full Domesday Book entry reads “Baldwin holds of William (Fitz-Ansculf) *Mildetone*, which Uluric held of King Edward. It was then assessed at 6 hides : now at 4.5 hides. The arable land consists of 5 carucates. There is in the demesne 1 carucate ; and there are ten villains, and nine bordars, with 4 carucates. There are four bondmen ; and one mill at 2 shillings ; and 2 acres of meadow. The wood yields 9 hogs for pannage, and 10 hogs for herbage. In the reign of King Edward, it was valued at 70 shillings ; subsequently, at 60 shillings ; and the same at present. In the hundred of Copthorne are 2 hides pertaining to this manor, valued at 20 shillings.”

2) Domesday Book translation and Commentary on history from A History of Surrey⁴⁹

MILTON BOROUGH.

This district, called in Domesday Book MILDETON, but more properly, MIDLETON, takes its name from an Hamlet so called, and probably from its situation in the *middle* way between the Maners of *Dorking* and *Westcote*. The Hamlet of *Milton Street* lyes a little to the South of the High road. This was a Maner at the time of the General Survey ; and the account given of it by the Commissioners for that purpose (although no part of the Royal Demesne) is inserted in this place, as having been always, *parochially*, a member of *Dorking*. This account is as follows:

BALDUIN holds of WILLIAM himself (*viz.* WILLIAM FITZ-ANSCULF) MILDETON. ULURIC held it of King EDWARD. It was then rated for six Hides. Now, for four Hides and an half. The Arable land is five Carrucates. In demesne is one Carrucate: and ten Villans, and nine Bordars with four Carrucates: and four Slaves; and one Mill of 2s. and two acres of Meadow. WOODLAND of nine Swine of the pannage, ten Swine of the herbage. In the time of King EDWARD, it was valued at 70s. and afterwards, and now, at 60s, In the Hundred of COPEDE-THORNE are two Hides, which belong to this Maner, and are valued at 20s.

COMMENTARY.

WILLIAM FITZ-ANSCULF, sometimes called also ANSCULF de PINCHENGI^a, was a man of great possessions in the time of the *Conqueror*^b; and probably the same who is reckoned among his followers enumerated by *Hollinshea*^c by the name of *Pinkeney*. His principal residence was at *Dudley Castle* in *Staffordshire*. which, with a great part of his lands, came afterwards to *Gervase Paganel*^d; but by what means we are not informed.

This Maner, which, while ULURIC the *Saxon* held it of the *Confessor* was rated for *six hundred* acres, was rated, at the time of the *Survey*, when holden by BALDWIN, for no more than *four hundred and fifty*. Yet the *Arable* alone is stated to have been *five hundred*; beside *two* acres of *Meadow*, and as much *Woodland* as furnished *nine* Swine to the Lord from the *mast* and *acorns*, and *ten* from the *herbage*, i. e. as much as would *fatten* ninety in *pasnage* time, and maintain an *hundred lean* upon the *pasturage* of it.

The *Demesne*, or Maner properly so called, consisted of an *hundred* acres occupied by the Lord himself, and *four hundred* more occupied by his Tenents *at will*, being ten *Villans*, and five *Bordars*. He had also four *Villans in gross*, or of his own personal property; and a *Mill* worth *6l. per annum* of our present money.

The reputed value of this Maner, in the *Confessor's* time, was *210l. per annum* of our present currency. At the accession of *William*, and at the time of his *General Survey*, *180l.* There were also *two hundred* acres in *Copthorn* Hundred, belonging to this Maner, worth *60l. per annum*; but where

to look for them, at this time, we know not.

As *Dudley*, the capital of the Barony of FITZ-ANSCULPH, with a great part of his other Estates, came afterwards to the family of *Paganel*, from whom they descended to that of *Somerie*, there can be no doubt but that this of *MILTON* was among them, since we find the latter in actual possession of it.

The first of the family of *Paganel* in whom we find the estates of *Fitz-Ansculph*, was *Fulc*, whose father *Ralph* was cotemporary with him, and probably married his daughter, or other female heir. Amongst other Lordships of his, which he inherited, was that of *Newport-Paganel* in the county of *Buckingham*, near which he founded the Monastery of *Tykeford*, as a cell to that of *Marmonstier* at *Tours*^e. *Ralph*, the son and heir of *Fulc*, taking part with *Maud* the Empress against King *Stephen*, was, in 5 *Stephen*, made Governor of *Nottingham* Castle, in the room of *William Peverel*, whom she had taken Prisoner at the battle of *Lincoln*. The eldest of six sons which he had, was *Gervase*, a partisan also of *Maud* and her family; but who, in 20 *Henry* II. unfortunately taking part with the young *Henry* in his rebellion, had his Castle of *Dudley* demolished the year following; and in 22 *Henry* II was obliged to purchase his pardon with a fine of five hundred marcs to the King^f. He was living in 1 *Richard* I. at whose first Coronation he assisted as one of the Barons^g; but how much longer he lived we know not. By *Isabel* his wife, daughter of *Robert* surnamed *Bossu*, Earl of *Leicester*, widow of *Simon St. Liz* Earl of *Northampton*^h, he had one son, *Robert*, who died before him; whereupon *Hawise* his daughterⁱ became his heir; with whom his Estates went in marriage, and this among the rest, to *John de Somerie*. From him it descended to *Ralph* his son, who died in 12 *John*; leaving, by *Margaret* his wife (who, the same year, paid 300 marcs for an assignment of her dower^j) two sons, *William* and *Roger*. *William*, the eldest, died in 6 *Hen.* III. 1222, leaving *Nicholas* his son and heir; on whose decease without issue, in 13 *Hen.* III. 1229, these Estates went to *Roger* his uncle, the younger brother of *William*^k [who did his homage to the king, and had writs to the Sheriffs of *Worcester*, *Stafford* and *Salop* to deliver him possession]. Of this *Roger* this Maner was holden, as of his Maner of *Dudley*, by *Simon de Fraunkelyn*, by the service of one Knight's fee^l and he died seised hereof in 1 *Edw.* I. 1273^m; as did *Roger* his son (by *Amahil* his second wife) in 19 *Edw.* I. 1291ⁿ. *John*, son and heir of the last mentioned *Roger*, (for *Roger* his elder brother died in his minority) seems to have given this Maner to the Priory of *Kilbourn* in *Middlesex*, which was possessed of it 9 *Edw.* II^o: and, on his decease; 21 Dec. 15 *Edw.* II. it was found by the Inquest that the Prioress of that House held of him; at that time, the Maner of *Middleton* in *Surrey*, by the service of half a Knight's fee, and suit of his Court at *Bradfield* in *Berkshire* every three weeks^p. On the dissolution of the Priory, under the Act of 27 *Hen.* VIII. this Maner, with it's appertinencies, devolved on the Crown, and was annexed to the Honor of *Hampton Court*. In the 5th, 6th, and 7th of *Edw.* VI. it was farmed of the Crown by *Richard Thomas*; but, on the replacing of the Convent of *Shene* by Queen *Mary*, was given, with other Maners in this County^q to that house^r. Devolving to the Crown again by 11 suppression of *Shene* in 1 *Elizabeth*, it was demised to *Wright*, whose widow *Catherine* held it in 16 *Elizabeth*. From the 7th to the 32d of *Elizabeth*, it was farmed by *Walter Brown* Esq.; and, in the 35th and 36th of that Queen, by *William Ratcliff* Esq. and, lastly in 41 *Elizabeth* by *Ralph Latham* Gentleman. At length, in 42 *Elizabeth* by Letters dated 14 Mar. 1599-0, the Queen granted to *George Evelyn* Esq. of *Long Ditton*, and afterwards of *Wotton* in this County, this Maner in fee, by the name of the Maner of *Milton* in the parish of *Dorking*, to be holden, as of the Honor of *Hampton Court*, by the service of the fortieth part of one Knight's fee, and an annual rent of 40s^s. The said *George* died seised hereof 30 May 1603^t: and from him it was transmitted, through *Richard* his fourth but eldest surviving son, who held his first Court here, in the same year; to Sir *Frederick Evelyn* Bart. the present proprietor. The Customs of this Maner are the same with those of *Westcote*.

The tenements constituting the Hamlet of *Milton Street*, which is on the South side of the road leading from *Dorking* to *Wotton*, are mostly the Estates of the late *Edward Walter* Esq. of *Bury Hil* [and went therewith to Lord *Grimston*.]

3) References given in the text

These are given as set out in the text: -

- a. Domesd. Tit. *Bucks*.
- b. *Dugdale*, 1. 431.
- c. Page 6.
- d. *Dugdale*, Bar. I. 431.
- e. Mon. Angl. II. 910. *Tanner's* Notit. p.24.
- f. Rot. Pip. 22 Hen. II. *Staff*.
- g. *Dugdale*, Bar. I. 432.
- h. Mon. Angl. II. 907.
- i. *Dugdale*, Baronage, I. 432.
- j. Rot. Pip. 12 John. *Berks*.
- k. Claus. 13 Hen. III. m. 7.
- l. *Testa de Nevil*.
- m. Fin. 1 Edw. I. m. 9. Esch. 1. Edw. 1. n. 15.
- n. Esch. 19 Ed. I. n. 14.
- o. *Harl.* MS. No. 6281.
- p. Esch. 16 Ed. II. n. 72.
- q. *Viz. Merton, Pirford, East Horsley, &c.*
- r. Pat. 5, 6 Philip and Mary, p. 4. m. ...
- s. Pat 42 Eliz. p. 16.
- t. Inq. Post mort. apud *Cobham*, 25 Oct. 1603.

Rot. Pip. Are likely to be pipe rolls, which were the Great Roll of the Exchequer, containing yearly accounts of sheriffs, etc. They were so called because of their shape.

We can see that the author of this article referred to primary sources for his information, which means that we can take this as a definitive view of what happened to the Manor of Milton in this period of time.

4) Dates of reigns of Monarchs that are mentioned in the text

The text quotes events in terms of the regnal year in which they occurred. So, for example, 9th of Edward II would mean either 1315 or 1316 (1307 was the first year of his reign, which year began on the day that Edward I died and ended one year later). Hence the reference further on to 14 Mar. 1599-0 can be interpreted as follows.

Elizabeth I acceded to the throne on 17th November 1558, when Mary died. Thus the first year of her reign ran from 17th November 1558 to 17th November 1559, and so the 42nd year of her reign ran from 17th November 1599 to 17th November 1600. Hence we know that the Manor of Milton was given to George Evelyn on 14th March 1600.

The dates of the reigns of the monarchs mentioned were: -

Edward the Confessor - 1042 to 1066
Stephen - 1135 to 1154
Henry II - 1154 to 1189
Richard I - 1189 to 1199
John - 1199 to 1216
Henry III - 1216 to 1272
Edward I - 1272 to 1307
Edward II - 1307 to 1327
Henry VIII - 1509 to 1547

Edward VI – 1547 to 1553
Mary – 1553 to 1558
Elizabeth I – 1558 to 1603

5) Glossary of terms used in the text

Some of these words have long fallen out of use and thus are unfamiliar to us or have changed their meaning over time. The definitions below come from Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary⁵⁰.

Appertinencies – possessions.

Bordar – a villein who held his hut at his lord's pleasure.

Bondman – man-slave.

Carucate (carrucate) – as much land as a team of oxen could plough in a season.

Demesne – a manor house with lands adjacent to it not let out to tenants: any estate in land.

Demised – transferred a crown or estate to a successor.

Hide – a variable unit of area of land, enough for a household.

Marc (mark) – 13s 4d in old money, 67p now.

Pannage (pasnage) – food picked up by swine in a wood: mast.

Seised – put in possession, attained.

Villain (villein) – a serf, free in relations to all but his lord, and not absolutely a slave.

6) Extract from Surrey Feet of Fines⁵¹

Feet of Fines started as a form of action at law developed and recorded as early as the twelfth Century.

It soon became completely fictitious as an action between genuine litigants; rather it became a means of securing a conveyance. It was abolished in 1833.

The sole extract pertaining to the manor of Milton is described below. The number given is the number of the entry in the Feet of Fines record. As above, years are quoted as regnal years, but we also know the calendar year. There are two other entries relating to the manor of Milton in the parish of Egham, which was a much bigger Manor.

6 Edward VI (1552)

696. Thomas Freman (r.) *plt* : Richard Thomas (h.) and Katherine, his wife *dfts*. The Manor of *Mylton* (4 mess., 30 cottages, a water-mill, 300 a. land, 40 a. meadow, 400 a. pasture, 300 a. wood, 300 a. heath and furze and £8 rent) in *Dorkyng*. To Richard and Katherine and Richard's heirs. Form D. Quind. of Trinity.

Glossary of terms

a – acres.

dft(s) – deforciant(s) – people who keep out of possession by force of law.

(h.) – placed after the name of a party indicating whose heirs are included in the warranty clause.

mess. – message – a dwelling and offices with the adjoining lands appropriated to the household: a mansion-house and grounds.

plts - plaintiffs

Quind. – quindene – the 15th day after a festival, counting inclusively. Thus the quindene of 1st November is 15th November.

(r.) – placed after the name of a party indicating whose right the property passed in the Fine is admitted to be; normally a plaintiff.

Form D – Fines sur graunt et render. This form grants an estate to B and renders it to him.

7) Extracts from the Minutes of the Reading, Guildford and Reigate Railway Company

These are not necessarily verbatim, but they give all the references to William Evelyn and the Manor of Milton. Extracts are given in chronological order.

15th September 1845 – a provisional committee was being set up and one of those being added was Henry Morgan Esq. of Bristol.

14th October 1845 – Captain Morgan’s request to be on the provisional committee was discussed.

3rd April 1846 – terms had been arranged with Mr. Evelyn for the purchase of his land at £160 per acre.

22nd May 1848 – the conveyances will shortly be ready for Lord Abinger’s, Mr Evelyn’s and Sir H Austin’s lands between Dorking and Artington.

13th June 1848 – We beg to request a cheque for £6,254 purchase money for Mr Evelyn’s land, to be deposited in the London and Westminster Bank pending the settling of the conveyance, the company to pay £5 per cent interest. (Letter from Hodgson, Concanen and Noyes, the companys’ solicitors.)

3rd July 1848 – We shall be obliged by a cheque for £180 compensation to be paid to Mr. John Caffin, one of Mr Evelyn’s tenants, as settled by Mr Clutton (letter from Hodgson, Concanen and Noyes).

10th July 1848 – cheque for £1,000 as deposit for Mr Evelyn.

21st October 1848 – request the seal of the company to the agreement between Mr Henfrey and the company of one part and Mr Evelyn and Mr Fraser on the other part for the use of land for temporary purposes.

7th May 1849 – sureties in connection with bonds pursuant to the Land Clauses Act, section 85, to be delivered to Messrs Evelyn and Fraser.

Then in the Book of Reference accompanying the Deposited Plans for the Reading Guildford and Reigate Railway Bill 1845, for Dorking parish, it itemises land owned by William John Evelyn Esq. The lessees were Edward Charman and John Caffin and the types of land were arable (mainly), shaw or coppice, meadow, wood, barn, yard, shed, pasture, alder bed and occupation road.

(A shaw is a small wood.)

William John Evelyn was recognised as Lord of the Manors of Milton and Westcote, in which the land was situated.

There is also a plate showing the plan of the railway as it would cross this land and an extract from the 1870 Ordnance Survey map showing the railway further east as it entered Dorking.

Appendix B - Milton Court Deeds and Related Documents

Background

Lovells sent two packages of deeds and related documents to Steve Redman, the then UnumProvident corporate lawyer, on 4th April 1997.

Accompanying the packages was a schedule of the documents, which was complete but made no attempt to put the documents into context. It is important that they are put into context, otherwise it isn't clear which still have force of law over the owners and which do not.

In order to establish the context, it is necessary to understand the history of the site, which this note also covers.

It is also clear that some documents relating to more recent developments on the site, such as the sale of Milton Court to Unum, the redevelopment of the 1939 block and the refurbishment of the Mill House, were not with the Lovells papers. These ought to be found and the important papers kept with the deeds.

Details of documents

The documents fall naturally into three groups. Firstly the period prior to 1939, i.e. before Henleys owned the site; secondly the period of their ownership until NEL bought the site in 1965 and finally from 1965 onwards.

The following sections describe the documents that are with the package of deeds and then we list those that are missing.

Prior to 1939

This is the most tantalising period, with a very incomplete record, though what we have gives us clues as to other documents that may still exist.

Conveyance of Manor or Lordship of Milton dated 20th January 1873

The oldest surviving document is the Conveyance of the Manor or Lordship of Milton in the County of Surrey from Wm. J Evelyn Esq. to L M Rate Esq. This makes reference to an Indenture dated 1st August 1843. The indenture may have also been signed by William John Evelyn and probably changed the shape of the Milton Court Estate.

Conveyances of parcels of land dated 17th October 1892 and 24th December 1906

Then we have two conveyances of land in respect of the area beyond what is now the putting green. The first conveyance is dated 17th October 1892 and is from the Right Honorable George Baron Ashcombe and the Honorable Henry Cubitt to Lachlan Mackintosh Rate.

The second conveyance is dated 24th December 1906 and is from the Honourable Henry Cubitt to Alice Rate, wife of Lachlan Mackintosh Rate. Accompanying the conveyance is a hand-written note from Alice Rate from 9, South Audley Street, saying, "the extra piece of land is for our kitchen garden".

Papers relating to sale in 1936

The next documents are part of the set that made up the sale to Sir Harry Mallaby-Deeley, Foundling Estates Ltd and St. Aubyn Estates Ltd on 23rd December 1936.

Firstly there is a vesting assent from the personal representative of Mrs Alice Gertrude Rate deceased in favour of Muriel Frances Rate. This refers to the piece of land described in the 1906 transaction and is presumably necessitated because, unlike the rest of the estate, this piece of land was solely in the name of Alice Rate

Secondly, there is a plan of the estate that was attached to the conveyance dated 23rd December 1936 (the conveyance itself is missing). This is important, because it shows the estate split into two parts. The first part, outlined in red, goes as far west as the boundary of Etherlands Cottage but excludes Elm Cottage in Lince Lane and the lane itself. It goes as far north as the railway line and as far east and south as the current boundaries.

The second part, outlined in green, goes further west and includes Etherlands Cottage and Lower Springfield Farm. This was sold to Foundling Estates (see below) and presumably the land outlined in red was sold to Sir Harry et al. We cannot tell without sight of the conveyance.

Matters become confusing here, because it is not clear when the further split of the estate occurred. It is clear that Henleys bought the part of the estate that remained unchanged in size until the 1980s. We know that the rest of the land coloured red in the 23rd December 1936 Conveyance ended up in the hands of the Broom family, but we do not know when this happened. Again, sight of the conveyance would assist.

Documents relating to purchase by Henleys in 1939

The next set of documents relates to the purchase by Henleys in 1939. Here we have an important document, which is the Abstract of the Title of Foundling Estates Limited to the freehold of the Milton Court Estate. This summarises all the previous transactions in respect of the estate.

But first, there is a 1939 copy of an abstract of lease dated 8th May 1899, giving the Dorking water Company Right of Watercourse across the estate for an annual rent of £5. Lachlan Mackintosh Rate was the lessor.

Next there are some papers relating to searches. Nothing major here, though there are some references to some town planning documents held by Dorking council. Worth noting that a certain Sir Montague Hughman (pronounced human) is named in conjunction with Foundling Estates. He was the Chairman of Henleys, which post he held until his retirement in 1955. Also we note that T.W. Broom has tenancy over some of the fields on the estate.

Next there is a deed between Foundling Estates Ltd, St. Aubyn Estates Ltd and Henry Frederick Faure, chartered accountant of 2 New Square, Lincolns Inn Fields dated 12th July 1939. Mr. Faure owned Elm Cottage in Lince Lane and the deed related to the laying of a drain across part of the estate.

We note that in the Abstract of Title (below), St. Aubyn Estates granted several mortgage loans to Foundling Estates and that the registered office of St. Aubyn Estates was also at 2 New Square, Lincolns Inn Fields.

Then there is an opinion given by Linklaters & Paines, dated 14th July 1939, that discusses matters relating to the estate in relation to the Rate family, their wills and executors.

Next we move on to the Abstract of Title. Firstly we note that St. Aubyn Estates is not a party to this document; only Foundling Estates. This is a long and complicated document that references many other legal documents and includes, among other things, a transcript of the Conveyance of the Lordship from 1873.

It names a number of individuals and gives date of death where relevant. Many of the documents are missing, and these are itemised below. There are a number of references to Wills and appointment of Trustees in respect of various members of the Rate family and to the tenancy agreement for Milton Court farm and other properties with T W Broom.

Finally, there is the Conveyance dated 9th August 1939 between Foundling Estates Limited (1), St. Aubyns Estates Ltd (2), Dame Edith Mallaby-Deeley (Widow) of Milton Court, Sir Guy Meyrick Mallaby-Mallaby-Deeley, Baronet of Slaters Oak, Effingham as administrators (3) and W. T. Henleys Telegraph Works Company Limited. This shows the smaller Estate, which remained at this size until the purchase of extra land by NEL in the 1980s.

The Conveyance also shows the directors of Foundling Estates to be M L C (? – not clear) Mallaby-Deeley and G M M Mallaby-Deeley, so this was a family company. The signature of the director of St. Aubyns Estates is almost indecipherable (S Levan??). Two witnesses are W Rousell (?) of 2 New Square, Lincolns Inn Fields and the gardener (name indecipherable) from the Chateau des Fayeres (see above).

This tells us that on 23rd December 1936, there was a Conveyance between Muriel Frances Rate and Foundling Estates in respect of the land to the north and west of the current estate. This document is not with the other papers. There were two conveyances of that date, so that was the date when the estate was split. There must have been a subsequent Conveyance between Foundling Estates and the Broom family (see above), though this does not form part of these papers.

Documents relating to the period from September 1939 to 1965

The following documents relate to Sondes Place and Milton Heath.

- a) Registration of a land charge in respect of Sondes Place dated 17th December 1947.
- b) Conveyance of Milton Heath and Sondes Place from Edmonds Frank Mactaggart to Mactaggart & Evans Ltd dated 16th November 1948.
- c) Certificate of change of name from Mactaggart & Evans Ltd to Sondes Place Research Laboratories Ltd dated 6th July 1955.

It appears that these documents were copied in 1968 but it is not clear why. Associated documents are described below

Central Land Board claim for depreciation payment dated 22nd June 1949.

Correspondence in respect of drains from Milton Heath Lodge to Milton Court sewer dated 1954.

Form of Consent – Wayleaves – between W. T. Henleys and South Eastern Electricity Board dated 18th July 1955.

Central Land Board determination of development value dated 13th September 1957.

Letter in respect of grant for improvement of Upper Lodge, Milton Court, dated 28th May 1960.

Conveyance of Milton Court from W.T. Henleys Telegraph Works Co. Ltd. To Associated Electrical Industries Ltd. This mentions an existing tenancy of Harry Broom in respect of the land mentioned in the Fifth Schedule of the 1939 Conveyance. These are the two fields between Milton Court drive and Lince Lane, though it appears that only the eastern edges of these fields are concerned.

Planning Permission to replace Milton Court Lodge with a bungalow (never went ahead), dated 22nd December 1961.

Notice of submission of public path creation order for a bridleway from Milton Bridge on the south side of the A25 dated 18th February 1965. Had no effect on the Milton Court estate.

Various searches and requisitions on title dated 1965 and 1966 in respect of the purchase by NEL

Purchase agreement between Associated Electrical Industries Ltd and National Employers' Life Assurance Company Ltd, dated 17th August 1965. In addition to some of the documents described above, the agreement mentions the following documents, which are not with the deeds. These are: -

A service tenancy agreement dated 4th January 1956 for the rent-free occupation of the Mill House by Charles Edward Albert Wyatt (caretaker/maintenance man),

A verbal agreement associated with the improvement grant dated 28th May 1960 in respect of the occupation of the Upper Lodge by George Mansey (head gardener).

An agreement for the rent-free occupation of the Lower Lodge by Dan Patrick Collins (boilerman/handyman) dated 1st February 1965.

A wayleave consent to the Post Office dated 13th November 1961.

All rights of the South Eastern Electricity Board to the sub-station and the electric cable under Milton Court Drive.

The gentlemen concerned have long since gone and the sub-station has been removed, so these documents are not needed.

Letter from the Tithe Redemption Office dated 21st February 1966. It appears that the tithes were redeemed as part of the transaction between AEI and NEL.

The Conveyance of Milton Court from Associated Electrical Industries Ltd to National Employers' Life Assurance Company Ltd. Dated 31st March 1966. Contracts were exchanged on 17th August 1965 and completion was on 31st March 1966. Amount paid on completion was £85,503.18.4d.

The conveyance notes that on 22nd May 1967, the Manor or Lordship of Milton was sold by National Employers' Life to the Urban District Council of Dorking by means of a Conveyance for a nominal consideration of £1. This document is also missing.

Correspondence on file indicates that N.E.M. attempted to register title to the Lordship but HM Land Registry advised that it was not possible to establish the extent of the Manor of Milton (i.e. its' boundaries) and so it could not be registered. There was some discussion about the council acquiring part of Milton Heath for a road widening scheme but this came to nothing and N.E.M. decided that since they could not register the Lordship, they might as well let Dorking R D C have it.

Lease of the electricity transformer substation between NEL and the South Eastern Electricity Board dated 19th May 1967.

Deed of Grant between NEL and T H Broom and Son (Farmers) Ltd in respect of a drain from the farm cottages dated 5th March 1968.

Deed of Grant between NEL and the South Eastern Electricity Board in respect of access and cables dated 8th July 1968.

Deed of Grant of Right of Way between NEL and Steel Brothers and Company Ltd. (owners of Sondes Place and Milton Heath) dated 17th July 1969. The right of way is over Milton Court Drive, all the way from the Upper Lodge to the A25, and obliges Steel Brothers (or their successors) to contribute to the upkeep of the drive.

It appears that this was done as part of an attempt by Steel Brothers to build 50 houses on land immediately to the east of Milton Court Drive. There followed an application for planning permission to which N.E.L. objected and the application was turned down at a hearing on 8th November 1970.

Searches and requisitions on Title in respect of the land to the east side of Milton Court Drive, dated July/August 1968. The documents described at the start of this section would have accompanied these papers. There is a schedule of all these documents dated 24th January 1973.

Despite having occupied Milton Court for only three years, it is likely that NEL had already recognised that they would need more office accommodation. Perhaps the Sondes Place site was for sale and NEL was interested in a possible purchase, hence the searches.

Planning permission for the construction of a single storey building with car parking beneath, dated 14th April 1971, which was conditional on the revocation of the planning permission dated 19th March 1970 (document missing) for a single storey office building.

Planning permission dated 6th July 1972 to extend the same building (now the Westcott Wing).

Agreement and Schedule of Conditions of Building Contract dated 23rd October 1972 between NEL and Messrs Triggs Construction Ltd, for what is described as the second phase of the 1973 building.

Also a Notice of Passing of Building Plan dated 16th July 1973 for the construction of a strong room in the new building.

Milton Court fire certificate 25th May 1976.

Planning Permission to replace defective wall and roof to stores and filing rooms dated 8th March 1977.

Option contract between Steel Bros. & Co. Ltd. and NEL for the purchase of land to the east of Milton Court drive, by the A25, dated 20th May 1977. This was executed in the hope that planning permission would be given to extend the existing office accommodation. The application was refused (see below) and the contract lapsed on 10th September 1978.

Planning permission to extend the car park dated 12th August 1977.

Planning permission dated 29th June 1978 and agreements between the County Council of Surrey and NEL dated 23rd June 1978 and 23rd May 1979 in respect of the demolition of Milton Court Lodge with a single storey cottage with garage or parking spaces. Never went ahead.

Dismissal of Appeal for the construction of a two storey office extension dated 30th August 1978.

Planning Permission to erect a new bungalow at Milton Court Lane dated 25th June 1979, also Agreement and Schedule of Conditions of Building Contract with Messrs J & J Carter Ltd., dated 12th November 1979.

Planning Permission for extension of car park dated 16th May 1980.

Deed of Grant between the executors of T W Broom and the East Surrey Water Co. with British Gas dated 15th December 1980 (gas pipe).

Planning Permission to improve access to Milton Court Lane to/from the A25 dated 7th April 1981. Presumably this included the demolition of the Lodge.

Planning Permission to remove a chimney stack dated 5th April 1982.

Notification of Grant of Consent of Application for Listed Building Consent dated 15th July 1982, Grant of Planning Permission dated 16th July 1982 and Approval of Plans dated 22nd November 1982. All in respect of the construction of a single storey recreational building.

Searches in respect of Milton Court in 1983, also copies of property insurance policy, rates and water rates accounts.

Notification of Grant of Consent on Application for Listed Building Consent for the demolition of the existing boiler house and shed dated 9th December 1983.

Notice of Passing of Plans for a three-storey computer block dated 24th April 1984. This was an extension to the Westcott Wing on the site of the old boiler house and shed.

Notification of Grant of Consent on Application for Listed Building Consent and Grant of Planning Permission, both dated 8th October 1984, together with Notice of Passing of Building Plans for a vegetable store.

Amalgamation of titles of land owned by NEL in November 1984.

Searches and Agreement dated 27th September 1984 between T H Broom & Son (Farmers) Ltd. in respect of the War Field.

Searches and two Agreements dated 29th March 1985 between T H Broom & Son (Farmers) Ltd. in respect of part of Long Meadow, the site of Elm Cottage and part of Hockey Field. Also Counterpart Agreement of the same date, giving T H Broom Esq. the right to graze or mow the site of Elm Cottage and part of Hockey Field until 31st December 1985.

It is interesting that the Brooms were the owners of the site of Elm Cottage and part of Hockey Field. When Alice Rate bought the adjoining pieces of land in 1892 and 1906, the Cubitt family owned this land. Did the Broom family buy land from the Cubitts in the intervening period?

The Broom family now owns Sondes Place as well, so they appear to have prospered over the years.

Deed of Grant between T H Broom & Son (Farmers) and NEL dated 11th April 1985 in respect of a gas main.

Deed of Grant of Easement dated 10th July 1987 between NEL and R H Bardsley and T H Broom & Son to lay a gas pipe.

Deed of Variation between Mole Valley District Council and NEL date 21st October 1991. This is a variation to the terms of the planning permission dated 17th May 1989 (not with these papers) in respect of the 1990 block and permits NELPHI to occupy the block as an alternative to NEL.

Court Order in respect of lease between NEL and NELPHI dated 23rd October 1991.

Lease between NEL and Unum Limited dated 30th December 1991.

Land Certificates (four) dated 31st January 1992.

Two Grants of Planning Permission dated 9th July 1992 in respect of letting of the Westcott Wing.

Documents mentioned in the 1939 Abstract of Title which we have not seen

a) Conveyance dated 27th June 1871. Deed of covenant of same date

Between William John Evelyn and Lachlan Mackintosh Rate. Appears to be the sale of the Milton Court estate for the sum of £13,733, including £405 for timber. In the Evelyn or Rate family archive?

b) Indenture dated 25th February 1828

Between George Evelyn, Mary Jane Evelyn and Charles Nicholas Pallmer and James Hewitt Massey Dawson. Appears to be an agreement for a lifetime annuity of £1,000 p.a. to Mary Jane Evelyn (aged about 70) purchased by her son William John Evelyn. In the Evelyn family archive?

(Definition of an indenture is a deed under seal, with mutual covenants, where the edge is indented for future identification.)

c) And d) Leases on Milton Court dated 31st December 1862 and on Milton Court and Mill dated 27th May 1867

Nothing known but conveyance states that they had long expired. In the Evelyn family archive?

e) Indenture dated 1st August 1843

Between William John Evelyn and Robert Whitmore – nothing known.

f) Deed Poll dated 6th July 1814

Under hands and seals of Dame Mary Evelyn, Sir Charles Morgan Bart., William Mainwaring, Richard Clark, Richard Frewin and John Silvester.

g) Indentures of lease and release dated June 5th and 6th 1827

Between George Boulton Mainwaring (1) and Sir Charles Morgan, Robert Ray, Miles Stringer and Newman Knollys (2).

h) Indenture (endorsed on release) dated June 29th 1831

The Reverend William Warrington, his wife Ann Priscilla (1) Reverend Henderson Clark and Reverend John Crosby Clark (2), Sir Charles Morgan (the son) (3), Sir Charles Morgan (the son), R Ray, M Stringer, N Knollys and Richard Twining (4) and Arthur Morgan (5).

i) Indenture (endorsed on release) dated June 30th 1831

Arthur Morgan (1), Sir Charles Morgan (the son), R Ray, M Stringer, N Knollys and R Twining (2).

j) Indenture (endorsed on release) dated September 15th 1847

R Twining (1), Sir Charles Morgan, Robinson Morgan (2), Sir Charles Morgan, R. Morgan, R Twining, Ralph Price, Henry Kemble and William Samuel Jones (3) and Arthur Morgan (4).

k) Indenture (endorsed on release) dated September 15th 1847

A Morgan (1), Sir Charles Morgan, R Morgan, R Twining, R Price, H Kemble and W S Jones (2).

l) Indenture dated January 16th 1850

Sir C M R Morgan, R Twining, R Price, H Kemble and W S Jones (1) and William John Evelyn.

m) Indenture dated August 28th 1850

Same parties as in l).

n) Several documents relating to the Denbies estate

Not relevant for the Milton Court deeds.

o) Memorandum endorsed 20th May 1932

Vesting Assent in favour of L.R.M. Rate of the Milton Court Estate

p) Tenancy Agreement dated 7th April 1924

Between Alice Rate (1) and Tom Walwin Broom (2) for yearly Michaelmas tenancy of Milton Court Farm and Lower Springfield Farm with Etherlands Cottage and Cottages in Watson Road.

If these documents still exist, some of them may be with the Evelyn family papers (see below), in the Rate family archive or in the County Records Office (?).

Other missing documents that are of importance or of interest

Anything prior to those discussed in this note

The most likely source is the Evelyn family papers, which are deposited at Harvard University.

These include the sale of land for the railway (in 1846?), the sale of the lease to Douglas Biggar, in about 1858 and then a renewal in 1862(?) and the subsequent sale of the lease to Lachlan Rate in 1865.

Similarly, there should be papers relating to any transactions between Sir Charles Barclay and William John Evelyn. Another source for these would be the Barclay family papers.

Conveyance of land from Foundling Estates to the Broom family

Date not known – most likely source is the Broom family papers.

Conveyance of the Lordship or Manor of Milton from NEL to Dorking UDC dated 22nd May 1967

The local council should have a copy of this. Given the problems mentioned above in respect of determining the boundaries of the Manor, it is unlikely that the council would be able to sell it to a third party.

More recent papers

Planning permissions in respect of conversion of Mill House for use as office accommodation (circa 1980?) and then for residential use (circa 1991).

Planning permission for replacement of car parking spaces under the Westcott Wing with office accommodation (circa 1982).

Planning permission (etc.) in respect of the construction of the 1990 block.

Conveyance of Milton Court from NEL to Unum Limited (1991).

Planning permission for further extensions to car park (1980s and 1990s).

Market rent agreement in respect of the Upper Lodge with the Waters family – confidential as current members of staff.

And probably others too! These papers must be around somewhere – with facilities files?

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Areas for further work

1) Research

Has the Bronze Age barrow on Milton Heath been excavated? If so, what was found?

What has been found in respect of recent excavations in the fields between Milton Court and Westcott? Contact Gabby Rapson who led the excavations and is based in Dorking.

Is there anything we can find out about the Manor of Milton between 1316 and 1517 – we believe that the priory of Kilburn owned it for some of this period, but were there other owners and who were the tenants? Surrey Record Centre may have this.

Family tree for the Evelyngs from 1603 to 1850, so that we can establish ownership of Milton Court for that period. Could use monuments in Wotton church, when it is open. Any other sources known?

If the accounts/papers of the Rate family still exist, can we trace them – Lackie Rate had three daughters – can we trace their families?

1851 census – family of Emily Kemble?

1871 census – anything on the occupants of the mill or the mill house? Dorking museum or the web.

2) Books and pictures

Need a couple of copies of the picture of Milton Court from the 1820s. Surrey History Centre in Woking has this.

Anything else at the Surrey History Centre – Richard planning to visit.

Other Surrey Record Society publications that might contain references to the Manor of Milton or to Milton Court.

Can we trace the photograph of the excavation of the lower lake – known to exist but we have no leads.

Does the museum have a first edition of a Hand Book of Dorking – any reference to Milton Court in that? No – any other source?

Copy of the programme for England's Green and Pleasant Land.

And The Visitation of Surrey, 1625?

Photograph of Lachlan junior at the wedding of one of his daughters at Westcott church – Dorking museum. There are four photographs in excellent condition from the Knight (?) collection – can we obtain copies from the original source?

The exact date of the 1886 English Illustrated Magazine – Brian Fairs?

Contact for access to the set of the Henley Telegraph – Westcott local history society via Richard.

Yale University archive – small drawing of Milton Court from the early 1800s and a letter from Jeremiah Markland written in about 1770 – Richard progressing.

Dorking museum press cuttings relating to Milton Court (any reference to Dolly Dipple?)

Dorking museum – any mention of lime works in poor rate books 1759 to 1818.

Selected items in the bibliography given by Stidder for references to Milton Court mill – Surrey reference library (where)?