

# Rokefield

Reference to the 1840 Tithe Map for the Parish of Dorking, which at that time included Westcott, shows the Rokefield site being owned and occupied by Richard Fuller, as follows:

- 1034 Roke Field
- 1035 Hole Hill cottage and garden
- 1035a Orchard and barn
- 1036 Barn field

In an 1886 tithe apportionment update the properties are shown as being owned by Maria Fuller but the Orchard and Barn Field were being farmed by George Balchin (whose family is remembered by the lane that is named after them.)

Throughout the 19th century the Fuller family lived at The Rookery. When Richard Fuller died in 1852 his widow Maria inherited the estate but was obliged to vacate the family home to make way for her brother-in-law, George Arthur Fuller. She had no wish to leave Westcott and Holehill, conveniently sited at the end of Westcott Street, comprised sufficient land to allow the construction of a suitably imposing house and associated pleasure grounds. It is believed that the house name was adopted because the grounds encroached on to what had been the Roke (or Rook) Field.

The actual date of the new house is not known<sup>1</sup>. It is shown on the 1871 census with a full complement of domestic staff but Maria is not in residence, either because she was absent on the night of the census or because she had not yet moved in to her new home. The staff were as follows:

Catherine Miles	Servant	Single	??	Lady's maid	Not Known
Ann Beckwith	Servant	Single	46	Cook	Leicestershire
Martha Draper	Servant	Single	24	Housemaid	Herts
Elizabeth Rose	Servant	Single	19	Kitchen maid	Cobham
Emma Boorer	Servant	Single	19	Housemaid	Buckland
Thomas Todd	Servant	Married	41	Butler	Sunningdale, Berks
John Sproates	Servant	Single	30	Coachman	Yorkshire
George West	Servant	Single	18	Footman	Ewhurst

Maria Fuller was originally Maria Barclay. Her parents were visitors to the Rookery at the time of the 1851 census and so we know that her family included her father: G P Barclay, aged 66, merchant, born at Charter House Square, Middlesex, mother, Maria Barclay, aged 69, born at Leatherhead and a sister, Emily Barclay, aged 32, born at Chelsea, Middlesex

There was a second sister because in the 1881 and 1891 census Maria Fuller is shown living at Rokefield with Julia and Emily Barclay. All were born at Cadogan Place, Chelsea.

The 1881 census returns also show the staff living-in at Rokefield.

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<sup>1</sup> There is a reference in the Holy Trinity archives to a letter from Mrs Fuller at Rokefield dated 1866. Reference P04 to be checked.

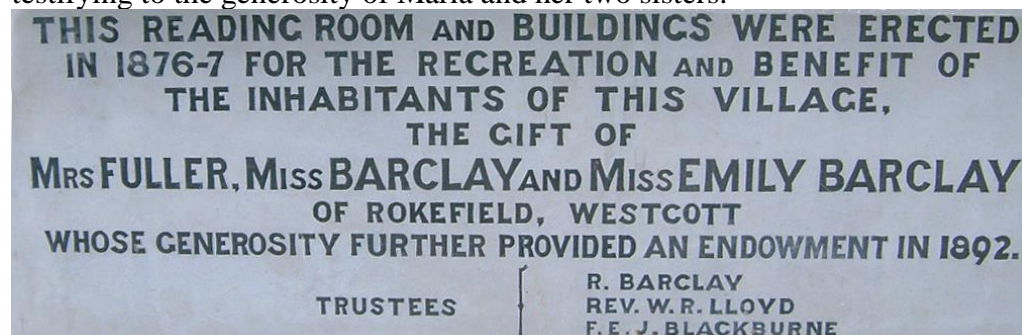
Maria Fuller	Head	Widow	67	Dividends	Chelsea, London
Julia Barclay	Sister	Single	65	Dividends	Chelsea, London
Emily Barclay	Sister	Single	62	Dividends	Chelsea, London
Elizabeth Farnsworth	Serv	Single	43	Cook	Burton On Trent, Stafford,
Catherine Miles	Serv	Single	60	Lady's Maid	Hampshire
Susan Brown	Serv	Single	60	Lady's Maid	London, Middlesex
Sarah Rose	Serv	Single	28	Housemaid	Effingham
Florence Maidwell	Serv	Single	17	Kitchen maid	Hessett, Suffolk
Isabella Peters	Serv	Single	20	Housemaid	Hinxton, Cambridge
Thomas Todd	Serv	Married	54	Butler	Sunningdale, Berkshire
Thomas Todd	Visitor	Single	24	Footman	Canterbury, Kent
Thomas Higginson	Serv	Single	24	Footman	Bridstow, Hereford
George Randall	Serv	Single	16	Groom	Bedford,

They would have been assisted by other domestics from the village. The Rokefield Laundry in Westcott Street (now known as The Old Barracks) is shown on both the 1881 and 1891 census returns and William Ruffell who lived at the Laundry was employed, probably at Rokefield, as a Coachman.

In 1881 the Gardener's Cottage was occupied and a second cottage (or an extension of the first) was being built. The gardener was Isaac Firmin and since he had a 9 month old child who had been born in Hampshire it is probable that he had only recently arrived to take up his appointment in Westcott. In 1891, the Firmin family were still in residence and the second cottage was occupied by the Elphick family. By 1901 both families had gone and the resident Gardener was Robert Hills from Puddleworth in Kent.

Maria Fuller	Widow	77	Living on own means	Cadogan Place, London
Julia Barclay	Sister	75	Living on own means	Cadogan Place, London
Emily Barclay	Sister	72	Living on own means	Cadogan Place, London
Elinor? Travers	Servant	41	Domestic Servant Housekeeper	Alnwick,
May Murray	Servant	39	Domestic Servant Lady's Maid	Scotland?
Elsie Clark	Servant	43	Domestic Servant Kitchenmaid	Brentford, London
Ann Parkhurst	Servant	33	Domestic Servant Housemaid	Thame, Oxfordshire
Mary A Martin	Servant	19	Domestic Servant ??	Bagshot
Kate Booth	Servant	23	Domestic Servant Ladymaid	Chilworth
Selina Steers?	Servant	21	Domestic Servant Housemaid	Alfold
George Plummer	Servant	22	Domestic Servant Footman	Stepney?
Frank New	Servant	16	Domestic Servant Groom	Walton on Hill
Albert Hogg	Servant	40	Domestic Servant Butler	Norwich

Maria Barclay died on 6th October 1892, shortly after her sister Emily who died on 7th July 1892 age 74. Juliana Elizabeth Barclay died on 26th February 1898 age 82. There are memorial stones to the three sisters in Holy Trinity Church, Westcott but their most lasting memorial is the Westcott Reading Room. Although most of the original building has been replaced by a relatively modern hall, the caretaker's house Draycote, which was once an integral part of the Reading Room, survives and bears an inscription testifying to the generosity of Maria and her two sisters.



Following the death of Juliana, ‘that messuage or tenement, yard, garden and outbuildings and all those pieces or parcels of land containing ten acres and two roods or thereabouts now known as Rokefield’ was inherited by 15 individuals, on whose behalf the property was auctioned in May 1898. The prospectus described the property as possessing good stabling (for six horses), coach house, garden and grounds, with 2 summer houses and orangery, store house, vinery, greenhouses and peach house, gardener’s cottage and an enclosure of grass land. Totalling 10 acres, 2 roods and 0 perches. The Dorking Advertiser reported that bidding rose to £6,000. At this price it was brought in but subsequently purchased by Colonel Davies on 22 September 1898 for about £8,000. The whole of the household furniture and other effects were disposed of on 21 and 22 June 1898 under arrangements made by Frank Davey & Co, Auctioneers.



The 1901 census shows that Rokefield was occupied at the end of March by Lt Col Jasper G S Davies, Royal Engineers (Retired) and Henrietta, his Tasmanian born wife and five staff – a butler, cook, two housemaids and a kitchen maid.

Jasper G S Davies	Head		59 Lt Col RE (Retd).	London
Henrietta Davies	Wife		62	Tasmania
Carl Hellman	Servant	Married	84 Butler	Germany
Alice Holden	Servant	Widow	49 Cook	London
Clare Ingrey	Servant	Single	27 House maid	Tadlow, Cambs.
Susan Overington	Servant	Single	18 House maid	Westcott
Anne Pope	Servant	Single	17 Kitchen maid	Tunbridge Wells

A few months later the house was sold. An indenture dated 12th July 1901 confirmed the transfer of the Rokefield estate from Lt Col Jasper Gustavus Silvester Davies of Dane Court, The Bishops Avenue, East Finchley to Charles Carey Druce of the Elms, Westcott for the sum of £8500..

Mr & Mrs Carey Druce supported village charities and especially local organisations with a musical interest such as the Westcott Choral Society. Newspaper reports survive to describe the many concerts, pageants and tea parties held in the grounds of Rokefield in the early years of the 20th century. For example,

*“On Saturday, April 13th, Mrs Carey Druce invited the members of the Guild to tea which was served in the garden. Owing to the holidays only about a dozen were able to*

*be present, but these much appreciated their hostess's kind hospitality, and played croquet afterwards with much vigour. This useful Guild was instituted to provide articles of clothing for the poor, especially for young girls going to service. The Hon. Sec., Mrs Carey Druce, will be glad to enrol new members and subscribers. Members are expected to make two or more articles annually, and subscriptions are needed to purchase materials, as the articles are sold much under cost price."*

In the parish church there is a delightful stained glass window dedicated to St Cecilia that was installed as a memorial to Mrs Carey Druce.

In 1946 Rokefield was bought by the Jewish Blind Society; formerly the Institution for the Relief of the Indigent Blind of the Jewish Persuasion, a charity founded in 1819 to grant pensions to Jewish blind persons living in London. With the coming to power of Hitler, and the resulting Nazi persecution of the Jews, the Society encouraged the immigration of Jewish blind from Germany and Austria and gave financial support to over 100 families with a blind husband or wife. With the outbreak of the Second World War more immediate support was needed and the Society established a residential home for 40 people at Bushey, Hertfordshire. This was not altogether satisfactory and with the end of the war and the need to play its part in the new Welfare State, the Society embarked on a programme of expansion. This resulted in the acquisition of Rokefield, which was adapted to provide facilities, including construction of a new hospital wing in 1950, for 64 blind residents. The Rokefield residents competed successfully in the Westcott Arts and Crafts Exhibitions and many were founder members of the Westcott Blind Club.



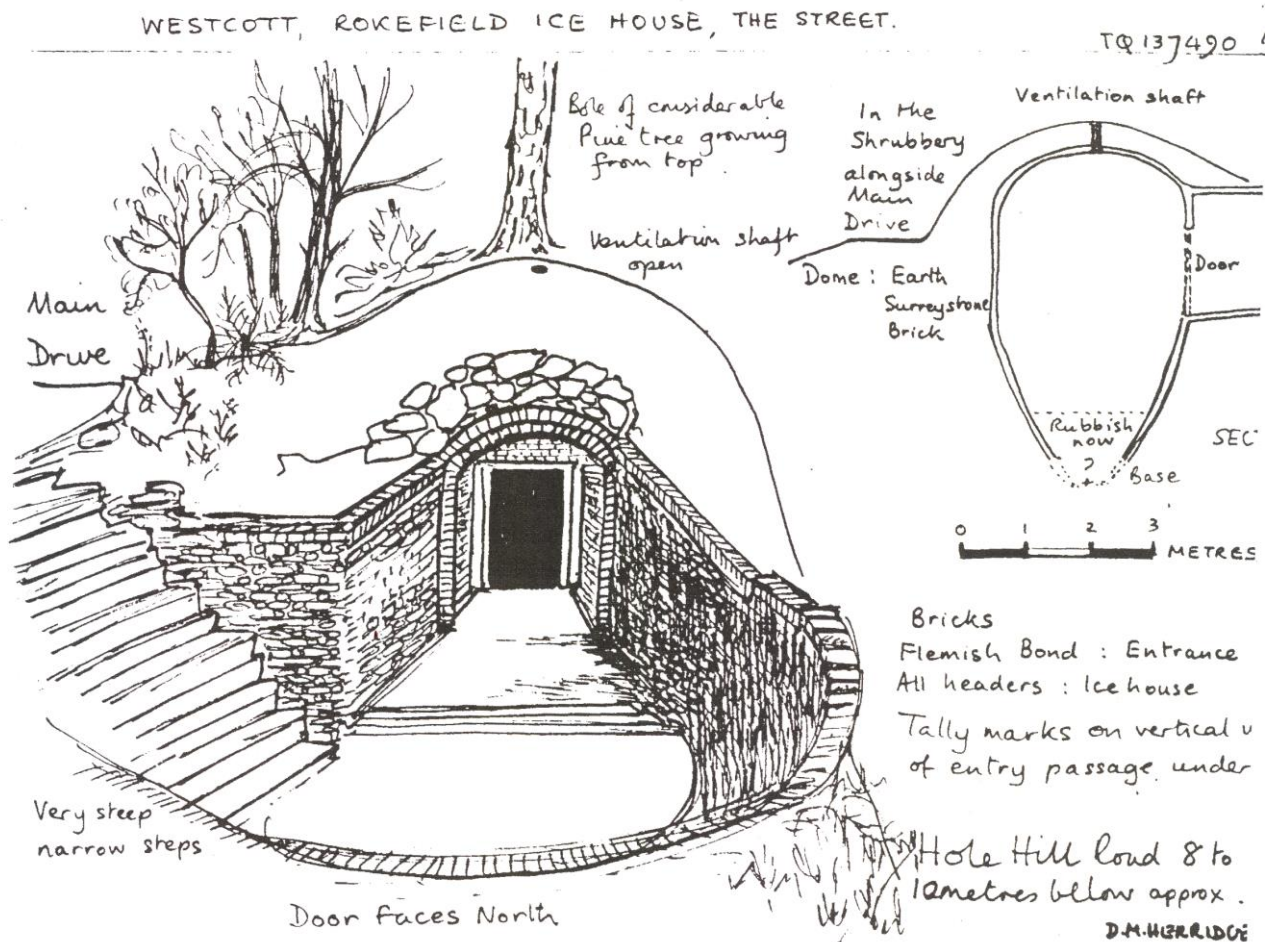
In 1990 the Jewish Blind Society amalgamated with the Jewish Welfare Board to form Jewish Care and with the rationalisation of the facilities Rokefield was no longer required. It was bought by the Gardeners Royal Benevolent Society who required a temporary residence while their existing home at Henfield in West Sussex was being rebuilt. On their departure the house and grounds were sold and the site was developed by Rushmon Homes. The original house was retained but turned into apartments and several new houses were built in the grounds.

## **Riverbank**

Part of 'the paddock', an area between the lawn to the south of the house and the Pipp Brook, which formed the estate's southern boundary, had previously been sold. A number of houses have been built on what is now called Riverbank, including the local doctor's surgery. (Further information to be obtained from MVDC at Pippbrook)

### Icehouse

The icehouse, near the top of the main drive on the left hand side as you approach the house, is typical of the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> Century insofar as it has been constructed in brick, largely below ground with an integral drain to dispose of any melted ice, in a sheltered north facing position, which avoids exposure to the sun, and with access via a passage and steps to provide further protection from the elements. The task of filling the chamber would have been the responsibility of the Gardener. Having made the chamber as dry as possible, blocks of ice were collected from Westcott millpond by horse and cart. The ice was broken into small pieces by labourers using wooden flails before being packed into the icehouse with alternate layers of ice and straw. There it would remain until the summer when a man using a ladder brought it to the surface in buckets.



**Manorial Records** (to be checked at Surrey History Centre – 192/1/10 and 6256/1 etc)

A Court Baron held on 26 November 1832 referred to ‘all that Customary Messuage, Barn, Buildings, Garden and Orchard and 28 acres of land more or less formerly called Ledgers now called Holehill lying in Westcott aforesaid within a parcel of this manor formerly the estate of (Aust Housan??) and tenements 11-14.

On 15 April 1859 Thomas Sudrick? Seager has surrendered, dated 13 March 1859, whereby William Rose received £400 and surrendered ‘by the rod’ all that piece or parcel of land 40 rods. part of a close called Rokefield, formerly Thomas Dibble on the west.... That messuage or tenement, yard, garden and outbuildings and all those pieces or parcels of land .containing ten acres and two roods or thereabouts now known as “Rokefield”

A Court Baron held on 29 December 1854 following the death of Richard Fuller, late of the Rookery, listed the Rookery estate that was left to his wife, Maria.

A Court Baron held on 13 May 1895 admitted Juliana Barclay and J B Hankey

### **Additional Census Returns**

In 1861 there is a single entry for Hold Hill Lane: William Muggeridge a 27 year old gardener, his wife and young son.

In the 1871 census two families are recorded living at Hole Hill: William Fell a 57 year old land steward, his wife and five children, and James Willett a 62 year old carpenter and his wife.



