

# Westcott House.

The land on which Westcott House would be built was sold on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1902 and again on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1906, the year in which the construction of the house was completed for Charles Joseph Wills. His monogram and the date 1906 can be seen above the front door.

Wills was born at Radcliffe, Nottinghamshire in 1849 and married Francis Amelia Shaw at Chorlton in 1870. He was a civil engineer contracted to public works and as such he moved frequently. In 1881 he was living at West Wickham (Kent), in 1891 at Burton upon Irwell (Lancashire) and at 1901 at Chapel en le Frith (Derbyshire). By 1906 he had moved to Westcott where he remained until his death in July 1921.

His wife had died in December 1907 soon after moving into the new house. Of their seven children, it is known that James (born 1876) died in January 1930 and his youngest daughter, Dora, lived at Tunbridge Wells where she died in March 1939. Both are buried in the family grave in Holy Trinity Churchyard, where the tombstone reads:

In loving memory of **Frances Amelia**.  
The beloved wife of **Charles Joseph Wills** of Westcott House who departed this life Dec 1st 1907  
+ **Till He Come** +  
Also of **Charles Joseph Wills** who passed away July 22nd 1921 aged 73 years  
+**Requiescat in Pace** +  
In dear memory of **Dora Jane Wills** Youngest daughter of Charles Joseph and Frances Amelia Wills who passed  
away March 3rd 1939  
+ **R I P** +  
Also of their son **James Frederick** beloved husband of Irene **Wills** who died Jan 23rd 1930 aged 64 years.

## *Monumental inscription on the Wills family grave in the Holy Trinity churchyard*

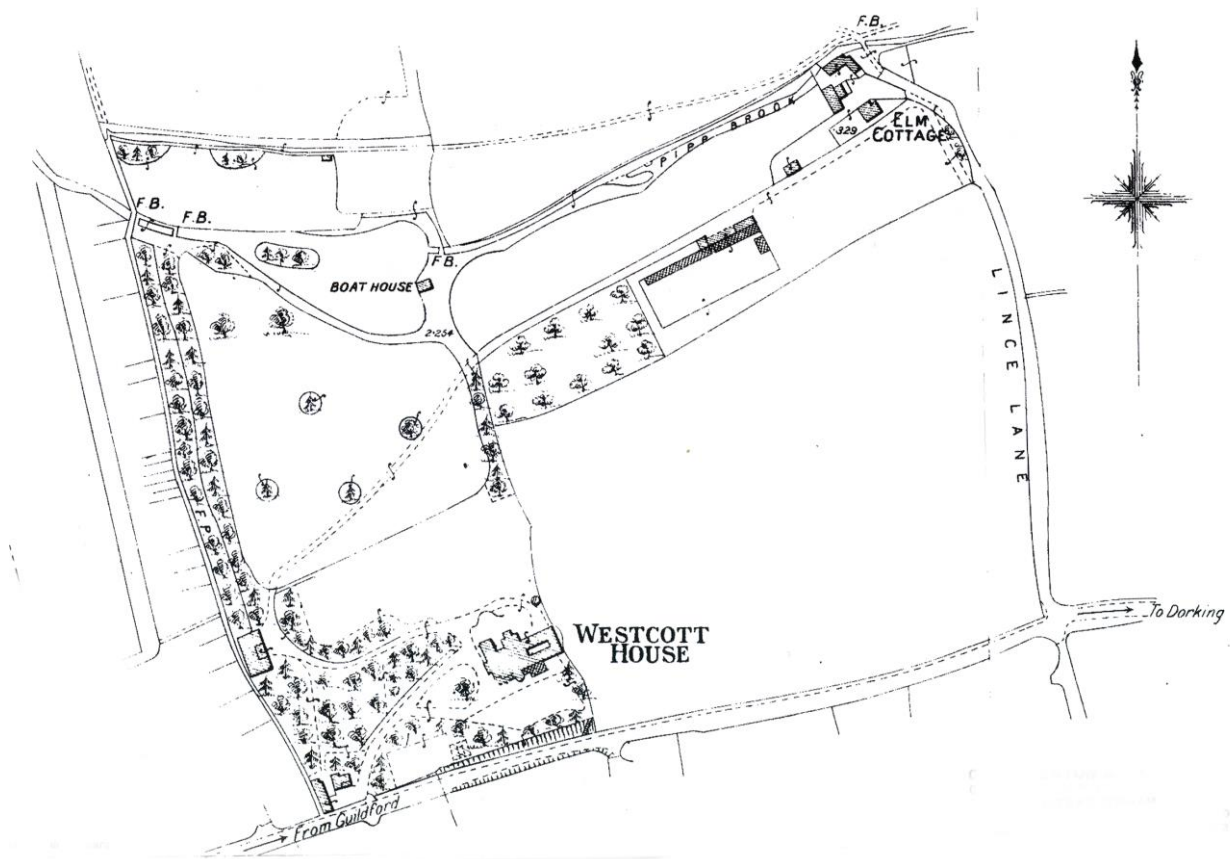
It has been suggested that Charles Wills was related to the tobacco family (WD & HO Wills of Bristol) but there is no evidence to support this. His father was Frederick Thomas Luke Wills of Lambeth and it is believed that he came to this area as consulting engineer for the Christ's Hospital, Horsham extension to the London Brighton & South Coast Railway.

Construction of the Horsham & Guildford Direct railway started early in 1862 with five stations planned at Bramley, Cranley, Little Vachery (later changed to Baynards), Rudgwick & Slinfold. The branch opened on 2nd October 1865 and was single track for its entire length with a passing loop at Baynards Station. [In 1867, Cranley's name was changed to Cranleigh at the request of the Post Office because badly written letters were sometimes mistaken for Crawley and vice versa.]

In 1902 Christ's Hospital Station was opened at Stammerham Junction at the southern end of the line, this was built to serve the new Christ's Hospital School. The station had seven platforms (three on the Guildford line and four on the main line) to cater for the expected large number of pupils expected daily. These numbers never materialised as the school was opened to borders only and it was only busy at the end of a term.

Westcott House was offered for sale with vacant possession at The London Auction Mart on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1923 under instructions from Cecil Braithwaite Esq. who had either bought or inherited the property after the death of Charles Wills. The prospectus contained a detailed descriptions of a '*Most attractive residence grandly situated on high ground commanding really fine views: in gardens and grounds of great beauty with large lake, stream and waterfalls. The House, perfectly equipped and renovated, contains 4 Reception, Billiard Room, 12 Bed and Dressing Rooms and 3 Baths: and there is a Lodge: Cottage: Stabling: Garage: walled Kitchen Gardens: Farmery and Paddocks, etc., in all about 15 acres.*'

There was also a plan of the estate.



The sale included an Entrance Lodge, Garages, Stabling, two Cottages, a Farmery and extensive grounds which the auctioneer described as follows:

*The Grounds alone would entitle this property to a high place amongst the most attractive of the lesser residential estates in the district. Every advantage has been taken of the natural features in which the situation abounds, and the resource with which some of these have been developed, and the not less skilful restraint which has left others untouched in order to create effective contrasts, afford a fine example of 'the art and craft of garden making'. Here in the various seasons of the year are spacious lawns with spreading trees and cool shade; borders of roses and herbaceous flowers; grassy slopes adorned with daffodils; bold effects of rock and wall gardening; and orchards where a wealth of blossom foretells an abundance of fruit. In a secluded corner a pretty little thatched garden house overlooks an excellent Croquet Lawn, and near by is another Lawn for Tennis. Down in the meadows the little Pipp Brook, after flowing through the lake, goes sprawling noisily over waterfalls of rocks to thread its way amongst the alders and willows that mark the boundary of the estate. The lake itself has a special charm at evening time. The very stillness of the water; the quiet reeds that fringe its borders; the silent trees reflected in its surface; the noiseless movement of the water fowl, all encourage a sense of restfulness not always to be found even amidst the beauties of a Surrey landscape*

The estate was bought by Gomer H Rees Esq who is recorded as the occupant in local directories dated from 1924 to 1931. In 1931 Mr Rees instructed Messrs Constable & Maude, auctioneers to prepare sale particulars for a prospective auction but there is no evidence that these were ever published and the House remained in the Rees family until it was offered for sale on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1935 on instructions from Mrs Rees.

The sale in 1935 described the house in similar terms to those used in 1923 and 1931 but now the estate only extended to just 10 acres. It may be that at some time in the intervening period paddocks forming part of the estate bordering the main road to the east of the house were sold.

The cottage on the eastern boundary, Elm Cottage on the 1923 plan, was much older than Westcott House as it is marked on the 1838 Dorking tithe map and on several other 19<sup>th</sup> century maps. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the cottage, with its own garden and outbuildings formed part of the Westcott House estate. In 1931 it was described as '*A most picturesque Old-Fashioned Cottage brick built and tiled with leaded light windows occupied by the Gardener. It contains Two Living Rooms, Three Bedrooms, Bath Room (Hot and cold) and nearby are some useful Farmbuildings comprising a timber built Barn and store, Cowhouse, Open Cow Byre, Cart Shed, Pigsty etc.*'

After its sale the former gardener's cottage became known as Faure's Cottage since it was occupied for many years by the Faure family, although its official name is Hacklebarney.

The house was recently (October 2005) offered for sale for £1.2million.

The land between the cottage and the main road is now a Girl Guide campsite known as Faurefold, its name also relating to the cottage owner.



[There was another Elm Cottage located on the neighbouring Milton Court Estate but this was destroyed and its occupants killed by a V1 flying bomb on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1944.]

From 1935 to 1956 Westcott House was occupied by Judge and Lady Eastham. His Honour Sir Tom Eastham was born c 1879, the 3<sup>rd</sup> son of James Cooke Eastham of Hadfield, Derbyshire. He trained as a doctor and but turned to the Law and was appointed a QC in 1922. He died on 11 April 1967 at which time his address was Viceroy Lodge, Hove. He was Chairman of Dorking Petty Sessions from 1943 to 1954. He married Margaret Ernestine Smith in 1911. An obituary appears in The Times for 12 April (and 4 May) 1967. For part of the time that Tom Eastham lives in Westcott House his father, James Cooke Eastham, lived at Stowe Maries in Balchin's Lane.

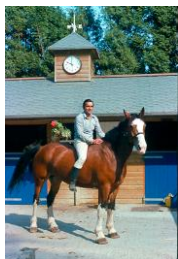
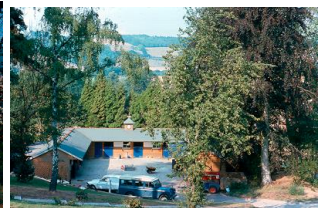
In 1956 the new owner of Westcott House was Richard Parkes. In the 1980's Victor & Gwendoline Pratt were shown on the Electoral Register as the occupants. Today the house is a Nursing and Residential Home owned by John and Julie Charalambous.

The former outbuildings at the western end of the estate have all now been converted into private dwellings, as follows:

- Beech Cottage
- Laurel Cottage
- Pine Cottage
- The Cedars
- The Cottage

[These will be the subject of a separate note.]

The following pictures of the house, stables and grounds etc are taken from the Local History Group archives – and many are also held in the Knight Collection at Dorking Museum Library:



## WESTCOTT SWIMMING POOL (as recorded in the WI's Village Survey of 1962)

In 1933 a swimming pool was built in the grounds of Westcott House and opened to the public. The 'Vitapools' consisted of two pools, one deep and one shallow, divided by a bar. It was approached from Lince Lane (opposite Milton Street). Total measurements were 100 feet by 50 feet. The deep end was 6 feet 6 inches, and the shallow end 2 feet 6 inches. There was a diving well of 8 feet 6 inches. The diving boards were 14 feet high and the springboard, it was claimed, was the best in Surrey!

The pool was built by Mr. H.C. Millington and Mr. A.E. Millington, with the aid of four local inhabitants, Mr. George Bird, Mr. Fred and Mr. George Webb and Mr. Bert Price. It was started on January 16<sup>th</sup> 1933, completed by May 18<sup>th</sup> 1933 and opened on June 1<sup>st</sup> 1933. The construction took 120 tons ballast, 15 tons of sand and 30 tons of cement. The pool held approximately 131,875 gallons of water which weighed 588.7 tons. This water was pumped from Westcott Brook and purified, and on account of its source from springs it was never really cold. Entrance was 6d on weekdays, 9d at weekends, and a season ticket was 12/6d.

Later, changing huts were added. There were refreshments available, dancing to a radiogram, midnight bathing for enthusiasts, and camping site nearby. The greenhouses were used to provide peaches, nectarines, tomatoes, grapes, flowers and other produce. Many people remember happy days spent at 'Vitapools' with understandable nostalgia. However there was trouble with publicity, large signs being forbidden by the Lord of the Manor; access was difficult from the police point of view; Mrs. Millington fell seriously ill, staffing became a problem, and a bad season decided the Millingtons to sell the pool in 1936 to the owner of Westcott House. Mr. Parkes re-opened it for private use in 1961, after it had been disused for 25 years.



## The Westcott House site in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

What was to become the Westcott House Estate comprised seven separate entries on the 1838 tithe map for the parish of Dorking, as follows

			Rod	Pole	Perch	
872	Elm Cottage and garden				35	Richard Attlee
873	Close	meadow	2	0	3	Richard Attlee
874						
875		arable	6	2	15	Charles Barclay
876		arable	3	1	15	Charles Barclay
877	Hither Diggers	arable	3	2	17	Richard Attlee
878	Further Diggers		4	1	3	Richard Attlee
879	Tumbling Diggers	meadow	2	1	15	Richard Attlee

The corresponding detail (with occupant shown in brackets where different from the owner) in a revised valuation in 1886 was:

872	Cottage and garden				37	Henry Attlee (Charles Geffrey)
873	The Close	pasture	2	0	3	Richard Attlee
874	The Close	arable	2	1	36	Henry Attlee
875	Stonepit field	arable	6	2	15	Robert Barclay (Caleb Shaw)
876	Stonepit field	arable	3	1	15	Robert Barclay (Caleb Shaw)
877	Hither Diggers	arable	3	2	17	Henry Attlee
878	Further Diggers		4	1	3	Henry Attlee
879		Tumbling Diggers				meadow 2 1
15	Richard Attlee					

On the 1859 Evelyn Estate map of Westcott the land at 872 and 873 is recorded as freehold land (serial 136) belonging to Richard Attlee.

The 1878 Ordnance Survey map of Westcott shows the 'tithe' land as follows:

Tithe	OS Map
872 & 873	343 & 344
874	342
875 & 876	339
877	338
878	316
879	315 (part)



The Wills Grave in Westcott Churchyard



This is the entrance to Westcott House showing Charles Wills' cipher and the date 1906 – taken on the Westcott Local History Group's New Year's Day Walk last year.

