

## HEATHFIELD HOUSE

*Beryl Varilone*

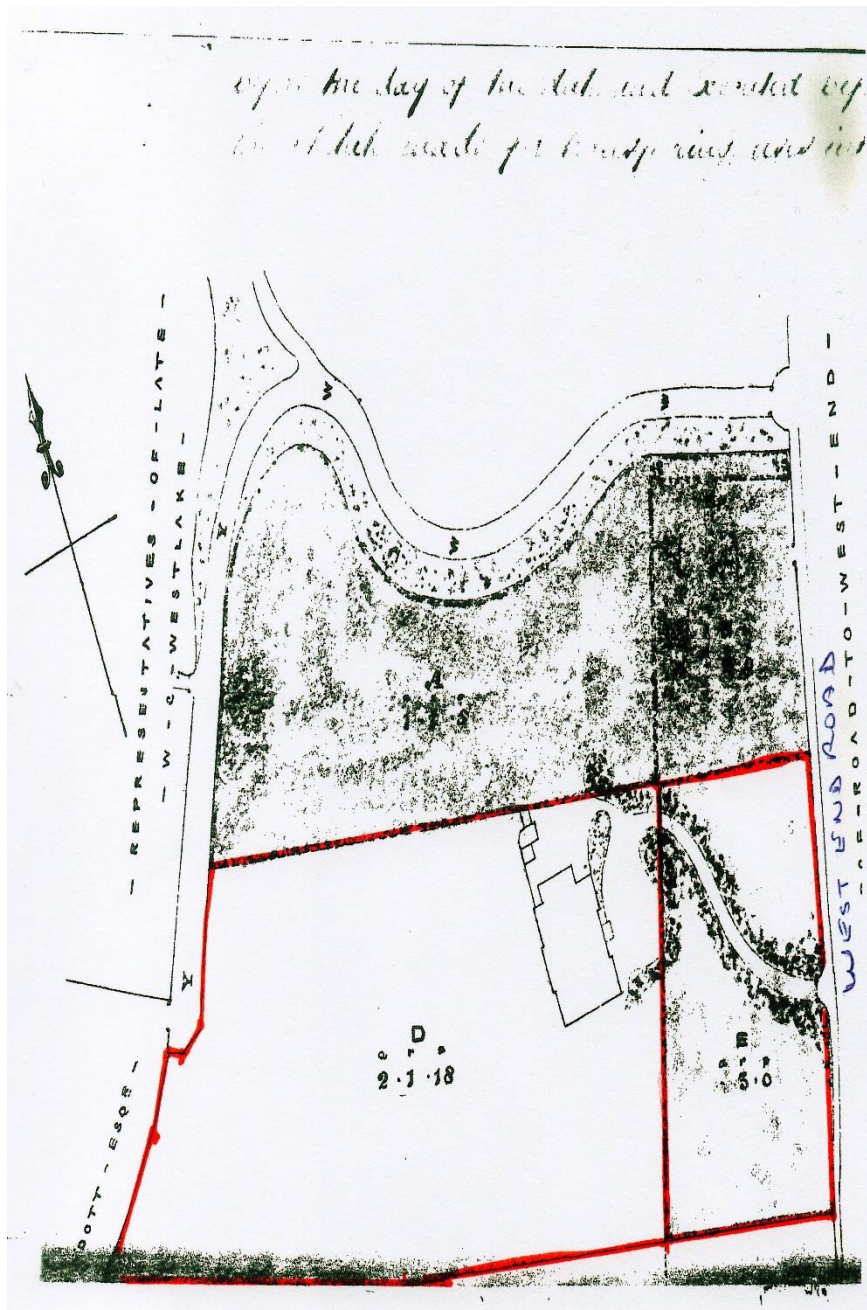


Travelling east from Southampton, across the River Itchen, go on along Northam Road and up the steep Lance's Hill. At the summit, West End Road leads off the left.

In the angle between the roads, high on the hill, is the area of scrubland known as Hum Hole. In the early 1800s it was owned by Henry Buchan, who worked part of it as a gravel pit. I think it was pretty well worked out by the time that the brothers Jonathon and George Garrett managed to raise a loan of £405 with which to buy a piece of the land, together with permission to erect one house. As they were both described as stone masons or builders, they probably built the house themselves. When it was finished, they sold it to widow Ann Michell of Market Lavington for £1,500. this was most likely Mersham House.



In December the following year they paid Henry Buchan £230 for two other pieces of land plus the gravel pit. They marked off a plot measuring 4 acres, 3 rods and 18 poles. On which they built Heathfield House and in October 1837 they sold it to the reverend Charles William Davy from Dorset for £1,800. The documentation for these two transactions is in the Southampton City Archives. The Rev. Davy's includes a crudely drawn map on the deeds. What a pity there wasn't one with Ann Michell's, then we could have pinpointed her house.



ORIGINAL DEEDS OF HEATHFIELD HOUSE

So, the Rev. Charles Davy came from Poole and moved into his new home together with his wife Sarah Maria (nee Stephens), there were two daughters, Harriett Ann and Maria Stephens. The 1841 census listed also one young man and three young women, presumably living-in staff. They were John Ridgate 35, Harriett Copeland 25, Sarah Gear 20, Jane Green 25 and Elizabeth Steel, aged 25.



Ten years later, in 1851, the census held a little more information, and Charles' age was given as 69. He was described as "Clerk in Orders with out cure of souls", so presumably he had retired by then. Although he officiated at the wedding of Charles John Dickinson and Agnes Augusta Dumbleton on the 20th of February 1854 in St James Church at West End.

Back to the census - His wife's age was given as 49. the girls, Harriett Ann 16 and Maria Stephens 14, were scholars at home and had a living-in German teacher - 14-year-old Johanna flies. Was she the fore runner of the modern-day au pair? There was also a footman, a groom, a cook, a housemaid and a 17-year-old nursery maid.

As the youngest daughter was by then 13 years old, a nursery maid seems superfluous. Perhaps she acted as their companion; she was certainly too young to be a chaperone.

In her book "The Country Houses of Southampton", Jessica Vale wrote "Heathfield House .... The columns of the porch were repeated by another pair in the entrance hall. At some time an ironwork veranda was added to the west side of the house".

In 1855 the Rev. Charles Davy died and his widow moved to Penzance, where she lived in Mansion House Gardens, Trengwainton, Madron, together with her daughters and seven members of staff. On the census record she was described as "Landed proprietor and fund holder".

On the 23rd June, an advisement was put in the 'Hampshire Advertiser', announcing that Messrs. H.R. Perkins were commissioned to auction Heathfield House on the 19th July. Quite a full description was given "...comprises about 5 acres of ornamental grounds, in pasture, orchard, garden, pleasure ground, and plantation; stands on an eminence at a pleasant distance from the road leading from Pear Tree Green to West End, with a modern and substantially built Gentleman's Residence, with good cellars in the basement; the ground floor is 12 feet high; and contains spacious entrance hall. Good proportioned dining-room, morning-room, drawing-room, library, kitchen, scullery, pantry, china closet and minor offices; easy staircase for first floor, 9 feet 9 inches high, and containing 6 commodious bed chambers, large landing, and conveniently-placed water closet. A second staircase to two good bed-rooms and four servants' sleeping rooms. An enclosed stable yard, plentiful supply of water, two carriage-houses, three-stall stable, harness-room, groom's room, loft, cart shed, tool-house, piggeries, et.....

The house is of modern elevation, stands on high, gravelly ground, commands uninterrupted views in one of the most healthy localities, about 2 miles from Southampton, within ten minutes walk of the church, twenty minutes drive of the railway station, and would be found, on inspection, to be one of the most compact and comfortable residences in the county of Hants,....."

Presumably the house was not sold, because for the next few years Mrs Davy leased it out.

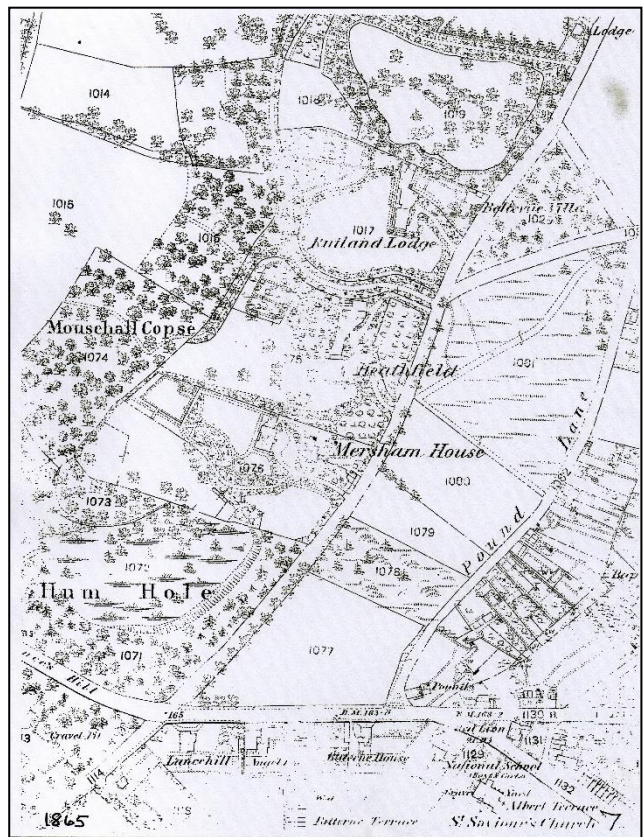
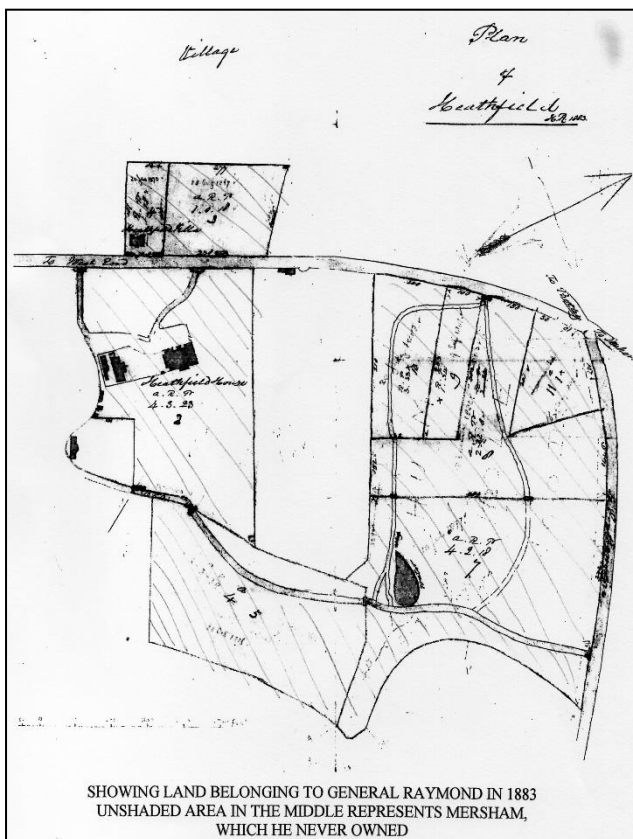
On 25th November 1857 an agreement was signed on a lease of the house and grounds for seven years to Robert Richardson of Oriental Place, Southampton. The rent for the first year to be £20. (This was taking into account the maintenance work he had already done on the property) and then £120 per year, to be paid in 4 instalments.

I think he was a barrister. He was 33 when he moved in with his 30 year old, London born wife Maria and their two servants.

I do not know if the two Richardson families were related. Could Henry and Robert have been brothers?

Just to "round off" the Davy family, Sarah and her daughter seem to have moved to Rugby where Maria died in 1871, and aged only 34, to be followed seven years later by her 78-year-old mother.

On the 11th November 1863 the house was again up for sale. One of its advertised attractions being a Turkish Bath in the cellar. The tenant at that time was a widow, Mrs Dingwell, who I think was followed by a banker called George Atherley.



In May 1865 it was bought for £3,000 by 56-year-old Devonshire-born General Henry Phipps Raymond. His 37-year-old wife, Julia (née Ximenes) had been born in Nova Scotia. I could not find mention of any children.

The general had been educated at a military academy and entered the army when he was 16. He rose to be a Colonel-in-Chief in the Royal Scots Lothian Regiment. In later years he was also a magistrate for Hampshire.

As it became available, he bought up large areas of surrounding land including many building plots on the other side of Westend Road. Mersham excepted, he owned land right down through Hum Hole to Lances Hill and Portsmouth Road. In all, he had increased his holding to over 20 acres. By doing this he hoped to stem the tide of new houses in the area.

He was a methodical man and wrote what he called "Memoranda made by Gen. Raymond". This was a list of these acquisitions and all the boundary positions.

Also included were the improvements and changes he had made to what he referred to as "the estate". There were also copies of clauses from his will. One declared that no timber must be cut down. Another mentioned the deed attached to his will stating that the estate must never be sold, nor pass out of the family.

Purchase from the Representatives of the late Alexander Hoyer Esq. of this wood called Mousehole Coppice of about 4 acres - and this purchase of course annuls all necessity of the Remarks in the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph of the foregoing Deed as regards the 30 or 40 yards of Hedge this bit of Hedge being part of the boundary of the said same wood.

Extracts from General Raymond's memoranda

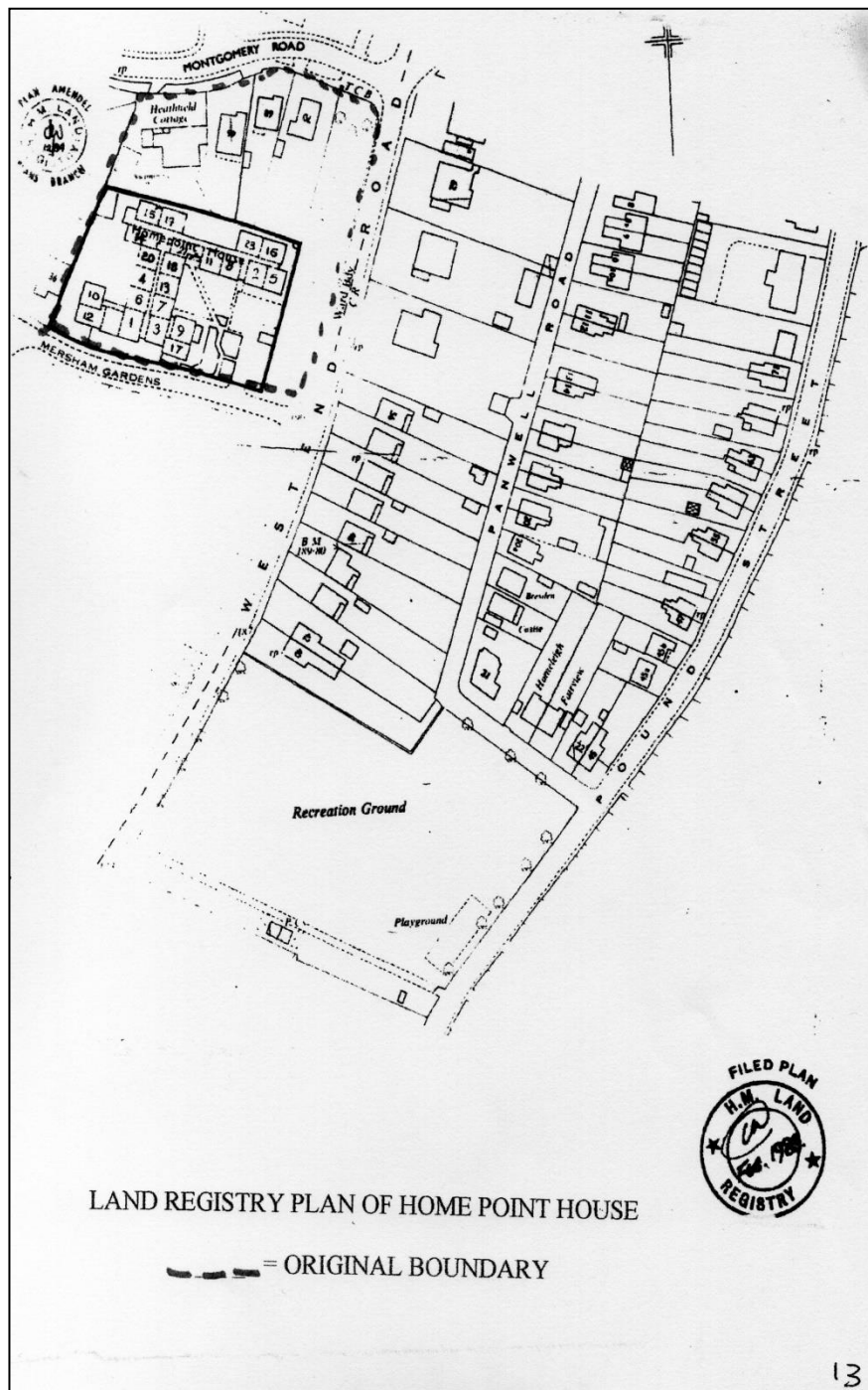
4. "This property I direct is to be retained in the Family and"  
"never be sold and I desire my Execution will cause a"  
"properly certified extract from this part of my will to"  
"be attached to the Title Deeds of the Estate in her possession"  
"which will effectually invalidate disposal of it by Sale"

7. It is further my particular desire that NONE of the Timber be cut down on the Property.

He must have been a good employer because in 1871 he had a young man, 27-year-old John Hale from Sussex working as a servant. Ten years later he was still there and had risen to the position of Butler. He seems to have saved enough to eventually leave Southampton and become a tobacconist and newsagent on the Isle of Wight.

On the 9th December 1897, the 89-year-old general died. Up until 1901 Mrs Raymond was still living in the family house. I wonder if it was then that the land was sold off. I know that it reverted back to the original acreage.

I think that the next occupant might have been Mrs. Wells who stayed until 1911, to be followed by 46-year-old Wilfred Rivers-Carnac. He had two young sons, John 11, born in Horsham and Peter 10, born in Southsea. I wonder what had happened to his wife. He had been born in India and I think he had served in the Indian Police but I know nothing of his married life.



In 1920 it was owned by Mr Henry and Mrs Mary Beazley. In her book "*Memories of Bitterne*", Irene Pilson wrote of the wonderful house warming party they gave. Although she was only ten at the time, she was fascinated by Mrs Beazley's hair, which she described as "...long, long hair which actually flowed down in a luxuriant, shining, blue-black cascade right to her ankles..."

In March 1931 there was quite a serious fire in the stable block. Apart from the stables and garage this included a gardener's cottage which housed Mr and Mrs F Mansbridge, who were fast asleep and had to be roused from bed.

The fire was noticed by a maid about 10 pm. She informed Mr Beazley who was playing billiards with a guest and the alarm was raised. The fire engine arrived promptly and by 11 pm the fire had been extinguished, so Mr and Mrs Beazley and their guest returned indoors.

Mr Beazley's car and most of the furniture from the cottage was rescued, but a 2-week-old Wolsley Saloon car belonging to the guest was destroyed. Station Officer Westbrook and Auxiliary Firemen Paton and Davis went up into the room above the garage to check it out and suddenly there was a great big crash as the bell tower collapsed on top of them, burying them under about two tons of debris. They were all seriously injured.

I think it was round about this time that Mr Beazley died and the house was turned into a private hotel and remained so until it was next sold.

Mr John Shepherd wrote a letter to the "*Southern Evening Echo*" telling of Mrs Allington who lived in the hotel. She was a pilot and apparently a bit of a stuntwoman, flying very low and doing parachute jumps from her blue bi-plane.

In 1936 the proprietor's name was given as Captain Geo. Joseph Quinn, but it was still a hotel, and Mrs Beazley was still there.

In 1939 it was taken over by Miss Elizabeth Gwendoline Beale, SRN, SCM, who ran it as a Maternity Home and also a Nursing Home. She changed the name to St. Judas Nursing Home.

At some time the stable block, garage and gardener's cottage were combined into one house, but were still retained as part of the Heathfield property.

Miss Beale left in May 1958, to be followed by Mr Geoffrey Jackson an ex-Ghurkha Officer and later, London newspaper reporter and his wife, Mary, SRN, MRCN, RFN, an ex-QA nursing sister. They had a son and a daughter, Jeremy and Dagmar, followed later by another daughter, Katherine. They changed the name back to Heathfield House and ran it as a Nursing Home. I think they took about twenty-four patients. One of them at that time was a tiny little lady who had been a nurse alongside Florence Nightingale.

Even at that date there was no toilet or water on the second floor. This was tucked under the eaves and consisted of just two tiny bedrooms on one side of the little staircase and a slightly larger room on the other side of the little staircase. Had there been a fire, there would have been no hope of escape because the windows were too small to squeeze through.

I remember there being only one bathroom in the building, but there might have been another one which I cannot place. I think there was one toilet on the first floor and four on the ground floor - two for the patients and one for the staff. The other was just inside the back door and previously for outdoor staff use.

When I think of the kitchen, I recall its grouchy great Aga, with three or four ovens at different temperatures. Wonderful if you could master it, but quite liable to go out if it felt like doing so. Most of the cooking was done on the old grey and black gas cooker.

There was a big wooden table running the length of the room. Even now I can see Mrs May Sherman, the cook, scrubbing away at it every day until it was absolutely spotless. Even so, on every one of his regular visits, the Medical Officer of Health insisted that it was not hygienic and HAD TO GO!!! It was still there in 1975.

In July 1980, round about the time it closed down, it was registered as a Grade 2 listed building. On the 27th October 1981, Mr Jackson sold out to the Messrs McCarthy & Stone. Probably it was then that the property was split up and the cottage and main house were sold separately. I think that the following January the house was sold to Proxima GR Properties Ltd.

In spite of being a listed property permission was given to destroy it and in 1982 the bulldozers moved in and Heathfield House was razed to the ground. By the end of that year, Homepoint House - consisting of 51 flats for the elderly - was built and occupied.

As the house was often leased, rather than sold I am sure that I have missed out tenants. Even so, I was amazed at the number of people who have lived there during its relatively short life.

There were several similarly named houses in the area; "Heathfield House", opposite which was "Heathfield Villa". There were "Heathfield Lodge" and "Heathfield Cottage". While at the top of Peartree Avenue was "Heathfield".

Kelly's earlier street directories, before the houses were numbered often referred just to "Heathfield", as they did with the following; 1909 Mr Bruno Digby-Beste; Heathfield. 1913 and 1914 Mrs Wells; Heathfield

So it was not always easy to make the correct choice.