



CAMBRIDGESHIRE GARDENS TRUST

NEWSLETTER No. 20 MAY 2006

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CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

I am pleased to announce that the Ramsey Abbey Walled Kitchen Garden Trust has now been awarded a Local Heritage Initiative grant of £25,000 towards the access and opening up the gateway along the East wall of the garden. This was the result of a meeting on site with the officers from the Countryside Agency when they gave valuable advice to some improvements to our submission which allowed more ticks to be awarded. It is always a difficulty when filling in pages and pages of questionnaires. The advice we gained at that meeting was that you need to explain in detail the aims of your project and what you will achieve. Having been involved for several years on this project one often assumes that every one you talk to knows everything about your scheme. This is not always the case.

The Local Heritage Initiative is a national grant scheme that helps local groups to investigate, explain and care for their local landscape, landmarks, traditions and culture. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) provides the grant but the scheme is a partnership, administered by the Countryside Agency, with additional funding from the Nationwide Building Society.

At the same time when waiting for this grant to be processed, two meetings were held at the Cambridge University Botanic Garden, and I thank Professor John Parker for making the Cory Library available for our meetings. All the patrons of the Trust involved with the Walled Garden at Ramsey and members of the RAWKG Trust attended and as a result we have moved forward with our solicitors and the County Council on the draft lease for the garden. The RAWKG Trust very much appreciates the injection of interest by the patrons and their suggestions on ways forward to overcome what appeared to be major problems. As a result two areas have been re-assessed: that the 10 year old Brochure should be reprinted including all the progress that had been achieved to date, and that

instead of trying to restore the garden as a Victorian Garden it was agreed that the garden should grow plants to illustrate the horticultural achievements in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire. The new brochure is soon to be published and will be available to members for a small charge, and the list of plants will be available when I am sure that we have noted every plant. I thank Sylvia Norton whose knowledge of Sweet Peas is unlimited and Dr Tim Upson of the Botanic Garden for providing a list of plants which were established in the Garden, and for sending me a copy of Curtis's Botanic Magazine which is completely given over to the Botanic Garden.

All this could not have been achieved without the help of many people and I thank them for all their support and energy in the project.

In this newsletter is an account of our AGM at Holmewood Hall last year. We had hoped that this would have been better attended. Christopher Taylor and Charles Malyon, members of the Trust, gave very interesting lectures and during the lunch interval we looked at the garden around the house. Two other members have now volunteered to research the garden history of this site. Luckily they met with Christopher Taylor and discussed the approach they should take, finding out the owners of the property and how they could afford to layout the grounds and why the Georgian property is now encased in a Victorian outer shell. The same week BBC Radio broadcast a talk on the history of Whittlesey Fen which was drained by the first owner. Also during the same week BBC 1 showed a programme on tracing your ancestors mentioning the second owner whose family owned a cotton mill in Lancashire. How fortunate that the initial meeting had been held prior to these two broadcasts.

John Drake

A.G.M. HOLMEWOOD HALL

29th October 2005

The annual General Meeting of the Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust was incorporated into a full day event at Holmewood Hall, Holme, Peterborough. The detailed arrangements were undertaken by Alan Brown, in conjunction with Karen Wragg the Conference Manager at Holmewood Hall, which is now owned by British Sugar and operates as a Conference Centre.

Holmewood Hall

The venue was chosen because of the excellent conference facilities offered by Holmewood hall and the interesting history of the house and grounds.

The distinguished Wells family had accumulated a fortune from ship building dating from the 16th century, and purchased the manor of Holme in 1752. William Wells (1818-1889) inherited the Holme 6000 acre estate in 1826 from his great uncle, and commissioned the Scottish architect William Young to design the present building to be built on the site of the previous 18th century building that had been destroyed by fire. It is believed that there had been two or three earlier house on the site, but there is little information regarding this period.

The drawings of the present Hall which is in the Victorian Gothic revival style, were featured in "The Architect" magazine in 1874, and the building is believed to date from around this time. During recent renovation work it was found that some walls of the 18th century building had been incorporated within the Hall, and the stable block.

William Wells was Liberal MP for Peterborough, High Sheriff of Huntingdonshire and President of the Royal Agricultural Society, and responsible for draining much of the fen land around Holme. Married to Lady Louise, daughter of the 8th Earl of Wemyss in 1854, he died childless in 1889. The estate was bought for £72,000 by Lord De Ramsey, and re-sold to John Ashton Fielden in 1901.

Fielden never married, and when he died in 1942 he left much of the estate to various hospital funds. Following the nationalisation of the health service the property became part of the Crown estates.

During World War 2, the Hall and grounds were the secret headquarters for a branch of American Intelligence engaged in

the training of spies to be parachuted behind enemy lines. The foundations for the various buildings associated with this period are visible in the field beyond the ha-ha.

The Hall was bought by British Sugar in 1951, initially to serve as a document warehouse and later as an agricultural research and development centre. Recently the Hall has been restored to its former glory and is now a prestigious conference centre.

All those attending the A.G.M and lecture programme had the opportunity during the lunch break to see the various ground floor rooms of the Hall, the extensive outbuildings, and the two garden terraces. On one of the terraces is along the rear of the Hall and is bordered on one side by the wall that encloses the stable yard. And the other is to the right of the hall and is bordered by a ha-ha leading to open ground. It is hoped that it will be possible to have more information on both the Hall and the grounds at some future date.

Lecture Programme.

Following the A.G.M. the day was organised to enable members to have a morning and afternoon lecture.

The morning lecture was given by Christopher Taylor and was entitled "Why people layout a Garden". The talk was a fascinating study of a wide variety of garden types designed by people through the ages, which Christopher Taylor was able to illustrate using his extensive collection of slides. The lively discussion that followed showed that Christopher Taylor's unique presentation on garden layout had stimulated much thought. The afternoon lecture was given by Charles Malyon on "Research into the gardens of Leckhampton". The Leckhampton house and garden had been researched in detail by John Drake and Charles Malyon and the results published in the Cambridgeshire Gardens Trust newsletter No19 dated September 2005. Charles Malyon was able to add some interesting information on how the research had been undertaken, and to provide more information on the background of the family members responsible for the design of the house and garden.

Bill Emmerson

NEWS FROM THE OUSE

A report from the Huntingdon DFAS Garden History Group

Quietly beaver away over the last three years, volunteers from Huntingdon NADFAS (The National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts), have been researching and recording gardens of the Great Ouse valley in collaboration with the CGT. The area between Huntingdon and St Ives claims, in the Manor of Hemingford Grey, one of the oldest continuously-occupied secular buildings in the country and its associated moats and garden remain a feature today (Gardens created by author Lucy Boston include over 200 old roses. Open daily). Over the centuries, wealthy families have settled in this area attracted, perhaps, by the richness of the agricultural land, the wealth of the fishing, fowling and hare coursing and the beauty and peace of its river setting.

The seventy-four years between 1840 and the Great War saw a particular flourishing of the south-facing, sheltered hillside between Houghton and St Ives, with prosperous merchants such as corn factor George William brown, partner of the firm Brown and Goodman (millers) and the coal merchant Charles Coote building Florentine and neo-Elizabethan style mansions in 1868 and 1897 respectively. Their ensuing gardens and pleasure grounds have, with those of their neighbours, bequeathed a Victorian garden landscape perhaps unparalleled in Huntingdonshire. The Elms (originally 8 acres) alone boast over 22 mature Wellingtonias, while Houghton Grange (stretching over 48 acres in 1920) with its long avenue of limes and vista extending beyond the Alconburys has Dawn Redwood, Catalpa and London Plane.

Research has been well rewarded here where the discovery of a diary by the builder of The Elms. Kept for a year from Christmas 1899, George Brown enthusiastically documents the weather and temperature: the snows, the skating and the floods that affect the water meadows and his garden; the viewing of the first aconites and yellow snowdrops, the ordering of plants from Mr J G Clarke of 57 Pershore Street, Birmingham and the manuring and improving of his garden with his gardener, Sadington. Visitors came to enjoy his renowned collection of spring bulbs and the march of the year is punctuated not only with enthusiasm for seasonal tasks and flowers but with newspaper cuttings of local events set against the world stage of the tribulations of the Boer War.

And industry in the neighbouring gardens is equally to be witnessed in purchases by the owners of the near-by Houghton Hill House, Houghton Rectory, Houghton Bury and many others recorded in the ledgers of our very own Wood & Ingram Nursery! Sadly, this splendid heritage is now



straining under the pressure of development. A guided busway and road improvements affect the northern fringes while Houghton Grange is currently the subject of a planning application for over 90 houses; The Elms, for more than thirty flats.

It has been a particularly busy start to the year for our group researching and recording The Old Rectory at Wyton and River House at Hemingford Grey. The northern grounds of the former rectory have succumbed progressively, since the mid fifties, to housing infill. Seen from the river, however, the doubled-gabled, predominantly Georgian edifice presents a fairy-tale aspect floating above the reed beds as it looks out over the water meadows and the bifurcating River Ouse to the slopes of the Hemingfords beyond. The canal, which traverses the garden, may have been the main route for commerce for Wyton in days long before the railways. The remains of a canal crossing before the house now forms an extensive landscaped pond but was thought to have been excavated to carry stone for the building of Wyton Church. Other features of the 8.7 acre grounds include a tennis court, flagged and walled terraces, island beds and a kitchen garden. Beyond them to the river

stretch reed beds concealing pathways and, in summer, a reed maze created by the current owner.

This reach of the Great Ouse has always attracted artist. Possibly in existence in some form on the site since the twelfth century, River House, now a mellow, predominantly 3-storey, regular Georgian building, was for a time the home of the painter Walter Dendy-Sadler. This artist, whose best well known work, *Friday* is currently on view at the Tate Liverpool (the Walker Art Gallery), achieved enormous popularity at the turn of the 19th Century with whimsical and gently-satirising pictures of monks and genre depictions of 'Olde England'. His other passion was in the creation of his ideal 'Victorian Garden', already somewhat anachronistic. The

river and his garden in Hemingford Grey were the background to many of his paintings. Equally it was photographed by his sister, who also lived at River House. It is fascinating today to map these images to the present gardens which retain many of the original features including the studio, summer houses and boat house. The romantic lily pond, sadly has now been drained.

Like our parent group, the CGT, our Huntingdon garden history group enjoys visiting garden sites and monuments. Often, as with our trip in March to Leighton Bromswold and Northborough Manor, these trips have been brought to life by John Drake, Chairman of the CGT, to whom we are greatly indebted for his supervision and enthusiasm. As the aconites, crocuses and snowdrops struggled into bloom, we also braved the gardens of Trinity College in the company of chief gardener George Thorpe. We shared with him the latest developments in Duff's garden as well as The Roundabout, the President's garden and the bowling green before gaining



the relative warmth of the Wren Library to see the original Loggan plan of the college and its grounds, and the Herbal of Apuleius Platonius. The earliest known illustrated description of plants to be published was that of the Greek physician Discorides in the first century AD.

Subsequent lists of plants and their medicinal properties relied heavily upon it. That of Apuleius Platonius written in the 9th century AD was no exception and the first illustrated herbal to be printed in Mainz in about 1483. The manuscript version in Trinity College (one of about sixty known survivors) contains 8 different texts and over 500 images. Most of the images are reproductions of those from earlier, even classical manuscripts. As well as the medicinal use of

herbs, they deal with minerals and animals connected with folklore and magic, and hence pagan traditions in addition to the prayers to be said during the harvesting and preparation of remedies and their administration. Though delightful and amusing, (the drawings of plants are often interspersed with pets and their harmful stings) we could see that some of the illustrations were quite crude and certainly would not have been adequate for identification purposes.

Further outings are planned for the warmer weather including a visit to the Chelsea Physic garden and the Museum of Garden History and, of course, work will continue in researching and recording gardens in Huntingdonshire. We would warmly welcome pictures, articles and any other information relating to our area from fellow members of CGT which may be useful in augmenting our archive.

Judith Christie

ALDHAM HOUSE IN THE PARISH OF ST ANDREW'S CHESTERTON

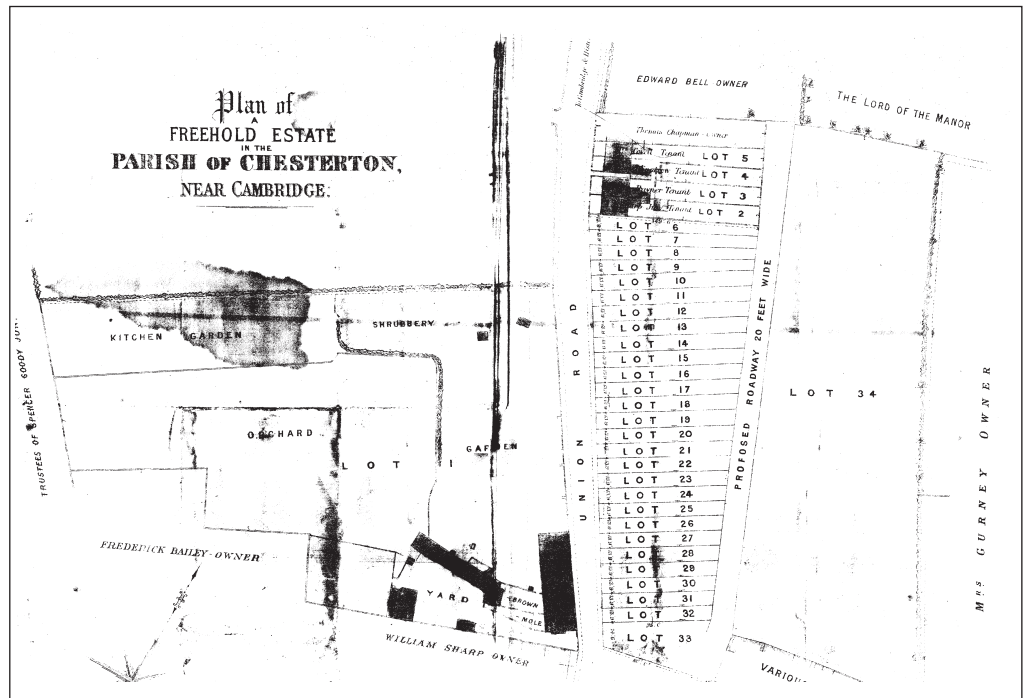
Part 1

The site

Aldham House is the only surviving historic building and garden in Union Lane in the parish of St Andrew's, Chesterton. Cestreton, 'farm by a fortified place', was an early settlement adjacent to the Roman town in the area of Castle Hill, Cambridge and on the north bank of the River Cam. Separate from Cambridge, it was a Royal Manor of 2,795 acres. The mediaeval village with the name of Chesterton developed towards the southern boundary of the River Cam adjacent to the east field of the Manor.

Until the late 1920's the quickest communications between village and the town of Cambridge were by ferries. There were field paths from the village through to Magdalene Street (Victoria Bridge and Victoria Avenue date from 1890) and the main route for carts into the village was not Chesterton Road, but Mill Lane, renamed Union Lane in 1840. This lane, with a confirmed dating of 1325, was the route to the village's mill sited to the north between Highworth and Hurst Park Avenues. The lane linked to the mediaeval Milton Way, 1280 later renamed the Ely turnpike, 1763 and currently Milton Road. Crossing Milton Way it lead on to Arbury Camp in the north, while to the south it linked via the High Street to the main ferry adjacent to the Green Dragon public house on Water Lane. In May 1668 Pepys recorded "walked into Chesterton to see our old walk; and there into the Church, the bells ringing and saw the place I used to sit in; and so to the ferry, and ferried over to the other side and walked with great pleasure, the river being mighty high by Barnwell Abbey; and so by Jesus College to the town".

The frontage of the buildings of Aldham House adjoins the footpath of Union lane and is approximately 50m from the High Street and the southern end of the lane. On Baker's map of the University and Town of Cambridge, 1830 the frontage of Aldham House and gardens was approximately 100m in length and 150m in depth. The Chesterton Enclosure map, 1840 shows a plot of 1.14 acreage together with 0.2.7. freehold in the ownership of Rev F H Maberly and a smaller plot presumably held by copyhold from the Lord and Lady of the manor of Chesterton. Both 1830 and 1840 maps show a clear boundary for the site, which today is identifiable by the present boundaries of Aldham House and the garden together with those of the electro-plating works to the East, Leys Lodge to the West and Cambanks flats to the West and South. St Andrew's spire, about 250m away, can be seen from Aldham House garden.



1885 plan from bill of sale

The House and garden in later Victorian times

A house with outbuildings is clearly marked on the 1830 map and the position of the house with direct frontage on Mill Lane and almost opposite Back Lane, presently Scotland Road, is identical to that of Aldham House today. The house on the 1840 map had the new building and grounds of the Guardians of the Poor Law Union immediately to the West. This Chesterton Workhouse for a union of Cambridgeshire parishes was built in 1839 and explains the renaming of the Lane.

Unfortunately the title deeds of Aldham House do not indicate the date of the building. Mary Wragg is the first named owner and she is listed in both the 1841 and 1851 censuses as a resident of Mill lane. By the 1861 census there is a house named Grove Cottage in the renamed Union Lane with Mary Wragg resident. The earliest abstract of the title to the premises commences with an indenture of conveyance to Mrs Mary Wragg dated 4th August 1843, and 'no purchaser shall require the production of, or investigate or make any objection or requisition in respect of the prior title . . . (which) do not appear at all'. I cannot find evidence of a date or name of a builder. When the house was sold in August 1891, there is a reference to Grove Cottage, (then called Aldham House) and the two adjacent cottages are 'Aldham Cottages'.

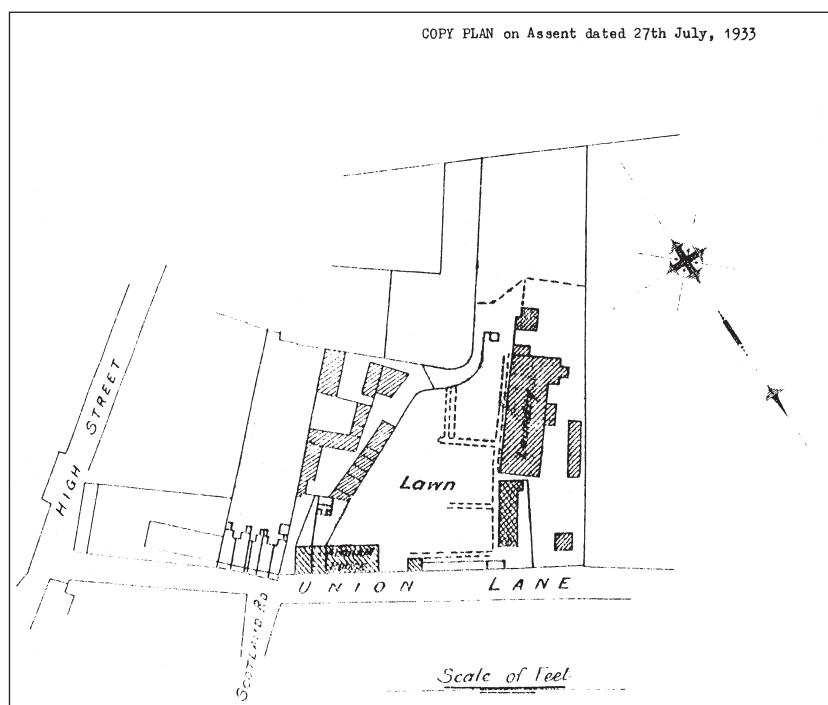
The clearest description of the house and garden is provided in a bill of sale, 30th September 1885. The whole site, together with the other land on the opposite side of Union Lane, was to be auctioned by Mr A M Robinson of Bene't Street, Cambridge at the Lion Hotel. The bill offers a description of the house and other buildings together with a detailed plan of the gardens and the site. There is also a

catalogue of the household and garden furniture, which was to be auctioned on 28th October 1885. The auctioneer was instructed by the owner, Mr John Aldham Sharpe, who was the great-grandfather of Geoffrey Aldham Sharp. Geoffrey visited Aldham House from British Columbia, Canada in 1980 and subsequently sent me these documents, some photographs and a rudimentary family tree of the Wragg family. He also drew my attention to the Wragg memorials

on the wall of the North aisle of St Andrew's Church, Chesterton.

The bill of sale refers to a 'very attractive Freehold Property occupying a good position on the Union Road, about a mile from the centre of the Town of Cambridge, comprising a capital family residence known as Aldham House with pleasure grounds, orchard gardens, stabling and outbuildings'. It also refers to two cottages adjoining and the plan shows that these are part of the same building as Aldham House. The house was 'substantially built of brick with slated roof. The house stands in its own walled-in grounds and contains entrance hall, dining room, sitting room, 5 bedrooms, bathroom, kitchens and offices, together with coach house, stables, gardens, green-house and orchard in full bearing'. Gas and Water were laid on, but an Ordnance Survey map, 1886 shows a well and a pump outside the two cottage (Recent archaeological digs on the site opposite Aldham House and that of Haig Court at the end of Union Lane revealed several 14th century wells).

The plan of the estate in 18585 shows a long frontage wall as far as the site of the workhouse (until recently Chesterton Hospital). Parts of this wall fronting Aldham House and the present Leys Lodge survive. On the SW side of the site was a large kitchen garden and on the NW as far as the Lane there was a shrubbery. Both are now covered by Cambanks flats. Immediately to the south of the house were the pleasure grounds with a large lawn and mature oak tree, which still survive. Beyond these grounds was a substantial orchard again covered by Cambanks flats to the south and by their garden, now turned top lawn. An aged walnut tree survives from this time. The garden also extended westwards towards the shrubbery but during the 1930's this was partly covered by Aldbrook Lodge, now named Leys Lodge. The plan also shows a wall separating the small gardens of the two adjoining cottages, which were entered by a gate. The tow tenants were servants to the owner. On this eastern side, with entry to the Lane, was a yard with a large stable, a carriage house, a workshop and adjoining greenhouse. The lower part of this stable and part of the carriage house survive amongst



buildings belonging to the electro-plating works. Aldham House is plain and unadorned but some ornate brickwork and curved slates of the stable survive.

The catalogue of the household furniture for auction in 1885 offers a few clues concerning the garden. Under the heading 'out-doors' are listed a garden roll and garden seat, a lawn mower, sundry garden tools together with a scythe and reaping hook. As one might expect there was a saddle stand and a stool; a cushion and

gig umbrella; two headstalls, a halter and twitch; a corn bin and chaff cutter and a set of stable brushes and curry comb. A photograph from the 1860's shows Aldham Sharp with his horse on the gravel at the rear of the house. It also includes Anne Sharp in smart Victorian dress at the main entrance, which is to the side of the house and Jane, the maid near to the two cottages. Perhaps a young wisteria is among the creepers which clad the walls. The son of the last matron of the workhouse remembers the wisteria as a substantial creeper before 1914. More surprisingly the catalogue refers to a pheasantry. There are also listed pigeon houses and hen boxes, wire pens with wooden coops and a dog kennel. Gardening activities are indicated by reference to two water tubs, two frames, five sieves, tree matting, a quantity of flowerpots and eight flower vases. Clearly repairs were carried out by servants and there are references to scaffold poles, sundry planks, three ladders, a quantity of coping bricks and two navy barrows.

There are tantalizing references to sundry plants, perhaps purchased at Murrell's nursery along Back Lane opposite. More specifically there are plants in tubs, two aloes in pots, six asparagus pots and a Marchiel Neil rose tree. More ominously there are two rat traps. I like to think that the 'deal table in the summer house' refers to the surviving thatched summer house below the oak tree, where wrens nest each year in the Norfolk reed thatch of the interior.

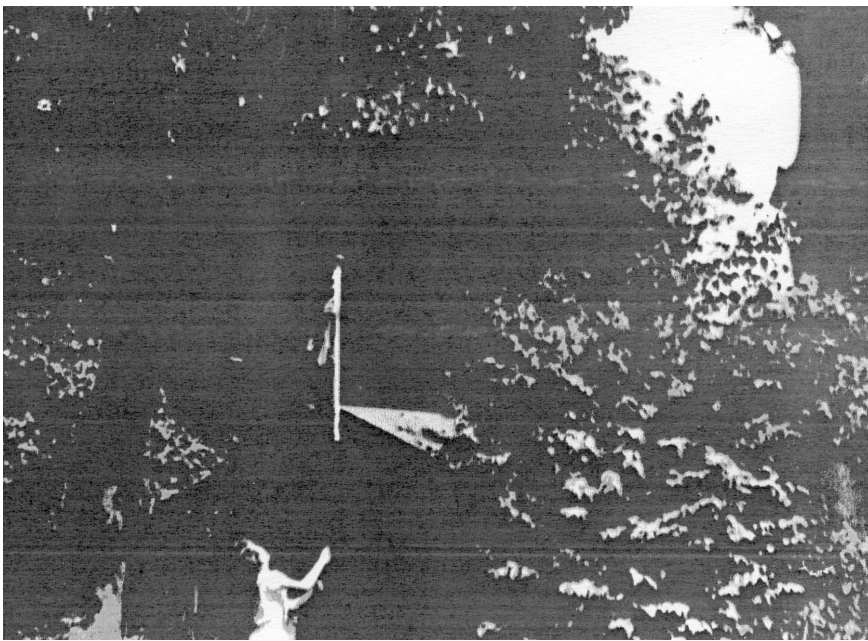
The owners and residents of Aldham House in the 19th century

The earliest recorded owner whom I have found was Mrs Mary Wragg in the 1840's and the following information has been researched from probate records, The Manor of Chesterton Minute Book, censuses title deeds, street directories and, especially, from the written and spoken memories of relatives and of former residents; from the memorials in St Andrew's Church and from past copies of the Cambridge Chronicle.

On 22nd April 1803 William Wragg, substantial farmer of



The 'dukkestuen (Norwegian doll's house) and (below) raising the Norwegian flag



Chesterton and "being at this time thanks be to God of sound and disposing mind, memory and understanding", made his last Will and Testament. A man of considerable estate, he would not have foreseen that by 11876 the name of Wragg in the male line had died out and that by 1922 all of his properties had passed from his descendants. The male line of the Wraggs in the 19th century was not one of great longevity. William senior died within a year of making his Will, aged 48 years; his sons William and John died in 1829 and 1833, aged 47 years and 37 years respectively. William II died without surviving issue and of John's sons, William III, the eldest, died in 1849 aged 45 years, while John Daniel survived for 52 years but never married. Their only sister, Hester Sophia Wragg, did not marry until over the age of 50 years. She was the second resident of Aldham House whom I have recorded, but she married in 1876 without issue and the house passed to cousins on the maternal side named Aldham Sharp. The only son and surviving child of William III, Francis William, had died in 1876, aged 31 years, a month before his aunt Hester. He was the last in the male line of this branch of the Wragg family.

The story of the Wraggs and of a small part of their estate, Aldham House formerly Grove Cottage, in Mill/Union Lane is

provided with the barest of bones by the memorials on the floor and on the walls of the north aisle of St Andrew's Church. Censuses and street directories give some idea of their worth and substance but it is the written and spoken memories and photographs provided by their descendants, now living in Canada, which offer fresh and occasional flashes of light on their bones.

William Wragg, at the time of writing his will in 1803, owned Grundells farm or Denny, pastures in green End and Ferry House land together with the recently acquired large estate associated with Chesterton Hall. (The early 17th century Hall survives adjacent to Queen Elizabeth Way roundabout and its stable block is visible on the western side of the roundabout.) He had recently purchased the latter estate with its substantial land in West Chesterton towards Cambridge Castle from Sir Thomas Turton. In his Will, Chesterton hall and its estate was left to his eldest son William II on reaching the age of 24 years while "all that my messuage or tenement situate....in the Parish of Chesterton called Grundells or Denny, all ways, passages, easements, profits and appurtenances thereto belonging and all lands whatever as mentioned in the conveyance therefrom to have and to hold unto my said wife" and then to his second son John. William I's wife Hester died in 1808, so by the year William II was living at Chesterton Hall and John at Grundells. St Andrew's Parish Register records John's marriage to Sophia Aldham in 1813. William II had married Mary a little earlier (a daughter Anna Maria was born in 1812) and I believe that Mary was also an Aldham, sister of Sophia. This Mary Wragg (nee

Aldham?) is the first recorded resident of Grove Cottage, later Aldham House. Men of property often sought wives who could bring them further property and the Aldhams from West Walton suited the purpose.

In 1829 William Wragg II died having been predeceased by brother John in 1823. William's sole heir, Anna Maria, died aged 20 years in 1832. John and Sophia Wragg, however, had three surviving children: William III, Hester Sophia and John Daniel. William III married Elizabeth Finkell of Steeple Morden; the Finkells were described in the Cambridge Chronicle as "the last of a very ancient family who settled in Haslingfield and other parts of the county before the Norman Conquest". William and Elizabeth settled in his uncle's property at Chesterton Hall while his aunt Mary, widow of William II, moved to Grove Cottage in Union Lane, a sort of dower house. She is the 'Aunt Wragg' of Geoffrey Aldham Sharp's memory. So William III of Chesterton Hall was a farmer of considerable substance and to him had devolved all the lands of his grandfather William I, although clearly substantial provision was made both for his aunt Mary and for his sister Hester Sophia and brother John Daniel. William III died in 1859 when his estate passed to his sole surviving heir, Francis William. The latter became a

Captain in the Cambridgeshire Militia but sadly died childless after a short illness in 1876. His widow Joanna remarried Theodore Gurney, former Professor of Mathematics at the University of Sidney, Australia and currently Fellow of St John's College. She survived her second husband but died without issue in 1922, leaving a proportion of the Wragg estate and Chesterton hall to her husband's college. (St John's College in turn sold much Wragg land to Cambs County Council and in the grounds near the Hall was built Cambridge's second major council house estate – Hawthorn Way, Oak Tree Avenue, through to Union Lane beyond the site of the Workhouse. Its range of stable and coach house to the west of the new roundabout was used for an Infant Welfare Clinic in the 1920's and for the St Raphael Club for disabled people from 1962 in association with Lady Adrian).



To resume the Wragg connection with Aldham House: Mary Wragg, widow of William II and resident in Mill/Union lane in the 1841, 1851 and 1861 censuses, was described variously as Independent, Annuitant and Independent Landed Proprietor. She is listed in Kelly's Directory, 1839, together with William Wragg junior (III), her nephew, as a principal landowner and again in 1847. In 1864 William was a principal landowner, together with his aunt and the Bensons, Lords of Chesterton Manor. Mary, living at Grove Cottage for over 25 years, always had a resident young woman as a servant. During this period the censuses list her niece Hester Sophia Wragg, as Independent, Annuitant and Fundholder. Initially living with young brother John Daniel, she moved to Chesterton Hall with her elder brother William but in 1861 aged 49 she is living as a lodger. In her fifties Hester married Thomas Gifford, a cattle salesman from Pidley, Hunts, and in the 1871 census she lived with him at Grove Cottage together with two young domestic servants and an Irish lady of independent means. No doubt Mary, who had died in 1866, decided that Hester, her niece and closest relative, needed a house of her own. Hester became the second resident of Grove Cottage, probably before her marriage.



Five years later in 1871 Hester inherited further property from her younger and unmarried brother John Daniel Wragg, who had died in 1869 aged 52 years. In the censuses he was described as an Independent and a Landed Proprietor; amongst other property he had built John's Villas, five cottages adjacent to Grove Cottage and numbered 13-21 Union Lane. So Hester acquired an extra plot of land with a frontage of 65 feet in union lane and a depth of 250 feet. Grove Cottage, now Aldham House, was freehold, as was most of the Wragg lands, but somewhere held copyhold. For their copyhold lands the Wraggs were customary tenants of the Manor of Chesterton. The Manor of Chesterton Manor

minute Book, housed in the Cambs Record Office records that on 27 June 1871 Hester Sophia Gifford appeared before the General Court Baron and "prayed admission under the Will of John Daniel Wragg to two pieces of land with six messuages or tenements erected thereon". For these she owed fealty to the Lord of The Manor and paid a quit rent of three pence. In 1876 her nephew, Francis William of Chesterton Hall, appeared before this court for other Wragg land held by copyhold. The Court records note the death of two copyhold tenants, Francis William Wragg and Hester Sophia Gifford at their findings on 23rd May 1877.

Hester enjoyed residence at Aldham House for ten years 1866-1876, during which time she benefited from the services of the Mansfield and Brown families who lived in her two cottages known as Aldham Cottages attached to Aldham House, but approached through a gate in the wall separating that House from its outbuildings. With Hester's death there were no surviving Wragg relatives, and in her Will she left her property to the heirs of her aunt and

mother both of the Aldham family. A third Aldham sister had married into the Sharp family, farmers of Walsoken, Norfolk. Hester left to "my said cousin John Robert Sharp the freehold messuage formerly called Grove Cottage, but then known as Aldham house – together with the orchard and garden land, outbuildings and premises thereto belonging". John Robert, described as a yeoman of Emneth, Norfolk died in 1884 when Aldham House passed to his oldest son, Joseph Aldham Sharp felicitously named (it seemed to be common practice for these families to incorporate their wives or relatives maiden names. John Robert also had a daughter named Mary Wragg Sharp.)

So Joseph Robert Sharp became the fourth resident of the house, but Hester's Will of 1875 had divided her property. "I direct and appoint, give and devise unto William Sharpe a son of my said cousin John Robert, and now residing in Chesterton, the row of cottages built by my late brother John Daniel Wragg, known as John's Villas. Together with the freehold and copyhold land next to and adjoining the said cottages and so much of the land or ground adjoining them to the back wall but not the land at the back of the barn belonging to and adjoining the premises now in my occupation."

For John's Villas, William Sharp, younger brother of Joseph Aldham Sharp, become the new copyhold tenant in November 1879 "according to form and effect of the sod Will...at the will of the Lord and Lady of the Manor according to the custom of the said Manor by annual rent of three pence fealty suit of Court". Other property of John Daniel on the east side of Union Lane remained with brother Joseph.

At this point in the story I benefited from the chance visit by Geoffrey Aldham Sharp, grandson of Joseph Aldham Sharp, who travelled to his birthplace, Cambridge from British Columbia in 1980. He looked round the house and garden where his father, John Aldham Sharp was born in 1883. Later he sent me the plan, inventory and bill of sale of Aldham House 1885, photographs of the house and garden and anecdotal family memory. The 1881 census for Chesterton recorded John Aldham Sharp, aged 17, living with his father Joseph, a builder and mother Anne and his younger brother, Robert Williamson Sharp (Williamson was the mother's family name). The 1885 inventory and bill of sale, referred to in previous sections, convey a good impression of their lifestyle. The two photographs of Aldham House, one of the rear and the other facing Union lane, were especially commissioned from Simpson Bros Cambridge. They suggest a family, upwardly mobile, proud of their new home and seeking to establish themselves as persons of substance. Ann in full Victorian dress stands grandly at the front side entrance. In the background towards the kitchen is the maid and holding centre stage on the gravelled path at the rear are Joseph Aldham Sharp holding his saddled mare Kitty together with his elder son, John Aldham and the more diffident Robert. John, shortly to be married aged 21 years, sports a walking stick. The St Andrew's Register records his marriage to Kate Morrell in 1883 and the birth of a son, John Aldham II in the same year. (Five years later in 1888 a daughter Irene Morrell Sharp was born). The second photograph shows Joseph Aldham Sharp in billycock hat standing proprietorially below the sign J A Sharp, Builder

and Contractor, fixed to the end wall of Aldham Cottages above the gate to the stables and outbuildings. Presumably this yard (now electro-plating works) had become a builder's yard. At this time Union Lane was an unmade road.

Geoffrey Aldham Sharp told me that both his grandfather, 1863 and father 1884 were born in Aldham House. The latter is probable, the former possible – perhaps on a temporary visit to 'Aunt Wragg' (Mary Wragg, the first owner 1790 – 1866), who was spoken of in the family with awe and reverence. Her nephew, John Robert, the Norfolk yeoman, never lived at Aldham House and his death in 1884 was presumably the reason for the 1885 Bill of Sale. By 1891 both of the title deeds of the House and the Chesterton census show that Aldham House was no longer owned by the Wragg/Sharps, but the latter continued to live in Chesterton.

The owners and residents of Aldham House in the 20th century

The 1891 census reveals John Aldham Sharp and his wife still in residence and I have found no evidence of a sale in 1885. However the title deeds show that on 22nd August 1891 the freehold of "Grove Cottage, then called Aldham House, together with the orchard and garden land, outbuildings and premises thereto belonging, formerly occupied by John Aldham Sharp, but lately in the occupation of Miss Thurston" and the two adjoining Aldham Cottages occupied by Mansfield and Brown was sold to Ralph Herbert Lord, photographer of market Street, Cambridge and Charles Henry Wilkin, chemist's assistant of Huntingdon Road, Chesterton. The copyhold property, John's Villas remained in the customary tenure of William Sharp. Later Wilkin was bought out.

This conveyance to Ralph H Lord was also confirmed by one of his descendants, Mrs Hazel Sandiford, who visited the house in the 1980's providing photographs and further information. Ralph Lord married a local Cambridge girl, Anne, and in 1901 they and five children lived on Aldham House together with two domestic servants. Ralph was born in Whitley, Yorks and in 1901, aged 46 years, was a photographer. During the next two decades he became a dairyman and an Urban District Councillor. Mrs Sandiford provided a photograph of a horse and milk float and churn. The float is labelled "Aldham House Dairy, Chesterton" and "Pure Milk – Jersey cows only". The dairy operated from the stable yard and outbuildings and his cows probably grazed in the fields of Scotland Farm opposite on the east side of Union Lane (Back Lane, Chesterton, later Scotland Road) Another of her photographs show two young girls playing with hoops on the grass to the rear of Aldham House. There is a rose arch in the centre front flowerbed, but it is in wintertime and no plants are identifiable. The two girls are Grace and Mabel Lord, aged 13 and 11 years respectively, listed in the 1901 census. Also recorded as residents were three sons: Ernest, Herbert and Sidney aged 21, 20 and 19 years. Ernest is a butcher and is married, while Herbert is entitled "photographer". Ralph Lord's father and mother-in-law and one of his children are buried in St Andrew's churchyard.

Clearly Ralph Lord had entrepreneurial ambitions. On 30th October 1911 he made a part mortgage to Beatrice Emma Jones of Trumpington House, Hills Road, Cambridge,



Aldham House c.1880 – Aldham Sharp family

a widow who had remarried in 1914. At this time Ralph Lord was a Concrete Contractor living in Mount Vernon Weaste, near Manchester. Aldham House was occupied by Charles Richard Alder, who presumably was maintaining Lord's dairying interests for on 22nd April 1918 there is a conveyance of Aldham House and all its properties to Charles Alder, who also on 12th September 1918 acquired the adjoining John's Villas from William Sharp. William Sharp, in the presence of the Deputy Steward of the Manor of Chesterton, surrounded his copyhold tenancy to Charles Alder, who was admitted as the new tenant "by the annual rent of 3d fealty suit of Court". He was the last copyhold tenant as these tenures ceased in 1922. However in the person of Charles Alder all the former Wragg properties on the west side of Union lane were again linked in the ownership of one person. His tenants at John's Villas were Messrs Dodd, Odell, Murrell and Newman and Mrs Hart.

During the 1920's Charles Alder, a farmer and dairyman, ran the dairy, renamed Stetchworth Dairies. During this decade he was both a Councillor of the Borough of Cambridge and of the County Council for the East Chesterton Ward. One of his tenants in Aldham Cottages worked for the dairy and Charles Alder owned other dairy shops in Cambridge. He arranged the construction of the Premier Hall, which was opened on 22nd April 1926 by the

wife of the Cambridge MP, Lady Newton. The Cambridge Chronicle recorded that she "most warmly congratulated Councillor Alder and the committee for the wonderful work they had done in erecting that lovely hall". It contained a polished dance floor of 70' in length and 30' width, and it was popular with undergraduates. The hall was also used on two evenings a week by the local Conservative Association. (Sadly the hall had a short life; in 1935 Hallens purchased it for a car showroom but the building with its distinctive cupola and



polished floor only survived until demolition in 1998. McCarthy and Stone's 'Haig Court' now occupies the site.) However the decade of the 1920's and early 1930's were very depressing for farmers and in Charles Alder's Will he recorded "It was my intention to have made some provision for my daughter, my sister and the manageress of my business but on account of the very large losses I have made on farming I find that it is impossible to do so." Sometime in the 1920's Charles Alder had erected Leys Laundry on that part of his garden to the north of Aldham House, towards the workhouse wall. Co-owner of the Premier Hall, Charles Alder had employed Ronald Kay as manager both of his dairy and laundry. Presumably the idea of a laundry related to the regular need for clean linen by Chesterton Workhouse and perhaps some of the workhouse residents found employment there.

Charles Alder died on 5th November 1932 leaving "all my real and personal estate whatsoever situate unto my wife for her own use absolutely and I appoint her sole executrix". The conveyance to his wife, Lucy Aveline Alder stated "All that piece or parcel of land at Old Chesterton in the County of Cambridge and fronting upon Union Lane. Together with the

Chesterton Road for "all that parcel of land... and also these buildings and messuages erected thereon known as Leys Laundry and Aldbrook Lodge" effectively separated Aldham House from its orchard and shrubbery, leaving only the "pleasure grounds". At this time Lucy moved from Aldbrook Lodge, known as Leys Lodge from the 1940's, to live at 226



Norway's National Day party, May 17th 1953

messuage, dwelling house, outbuildings and premises erected on part thereof known as 'Aldham House'. And together also with the Laundry buildings and premises known as 'The Leys Laundry' erected upon or part thereof and which said land and laundry premises are more particularly delineated in the plan annexed to this assent and are therein coloured pink." Sadly Lucy had inherited real problems. She continued as joint proprietress of the Laundry with Mrs Kay, but had to sell the Premier Hall and to raise money she had heavily mortgaged the property with the Midland Bank in 1934 and 1935. She moved from Aldham House to Aldbrook Lodge, an architect-designed house between Leys Laundry and Aldham House. Ronald Kay and his wife Mary Dorothy continued to live at Aldham House until June 1942 operating both the laundry and Stetchworth Dairy. Lucy Alder was the final owner of the Wragg properties in Union Lane. The 1926 Ordinance Survey Map shows an extension of the orchard into the kitchen garden of the 1885 map, but the the shrubbery remained next to the workhouse wall. The new Laundry had diminished the garden of Aldham House, which was further reduced by the building of Aldbrook Lodge in the 1930's. The 1886 OS map shows paths from the house running through the shrubbery and it may indicate the thatched summer-house which still exists beneath the oak tree. This summerhouse is either late Victorian or Edwardian, situated towards the end of the lawn entitled "pleasure grounds" in the 1885 bill of sale.

A conveyance of October 1942 between Lucy Alder of Aldbrook Lodge and Frank Papworth, launderer of

Milton Road, where she died on 30 December 1944. Harold Hinchcliffe, new manager of the Laundry moved into Leys Lodge in 1942, to be followed by Frank Laughton in 1951. Another conveyance on 3rd July 1946 shows that Frank Papworth moved to a new laundry in Eastbourne selling Leys Laundry and Leys Lodge to Percy Wheatley, a wholesale skin merchant of 290 Milton Road. On 1st February 1961 Wheatley sold all this land, except for Leys Lodge and its garden, to Kester Developments who had constructed Cambanks Flats on the former shrubbery, orchard and kitchen garden of Aldham House. On 5th September 1962 Arthur Pullen and his wife Amy purchased Leys Lodge, living there until his death in May 2003. During the past three years new developers have applied for permission to demolish Leys Lodge and to replace it with a block of six flats; so far their applications have been rejected.

I have been unable to trace the sale details concerning Stetchworth Dairy occupying the stable yard and outbuildings of Aldham House, or Johns Villas, 13-21 Union Lane. However Kelly's Directory in the later 1940's records the Cambridge Electro Components Ltd (the current electroplating works) occupying the dairy site, while Cordon Farington, racquet maker and Stanley Rowlinson, factory hand, lived in Aldham Cottages attached to Aldham House.

Nearly a year after Lucy Alder sold Leys Laundry to Frank Papworth, she sold Aldham House and cottages to Percy Wheatley on 4th August 1943. By 22nd October 1943 Wheatley had sold the house, but not the cottages, to Max Booth Tetlow, an architect and planning officer. After two

years Tetlow moved to Durham selling on 18 June 1945 to Charles James Runham, grocer's assistant and to John Derek Clarence Howes, laboratory assistant and later proprietor of Howes Cycles in Hills Road, Cambridge. The house became a family home again with settled residents when Dr Derek Russell Davis, a psychiatrist at Addenbrooke's Hospital and a Fellow of Clare College, where he had been an undergraduate, purchased from Runham and Howes on 21st September 1950. For the next 11 years Derek and his Norwegian wife,



Thatched garden house and, on the right, Mr Charles Malyon

Marit, together with two children, Jan and Vivien, lived happily in the house. Vivien and her mother visited the house in 2003 for the first time since leaving in 1962; they provided photographs and shared happy memories of their lives before moving to Bristol where Derek took office as Professor of Mental Health. They had not wished to leave the house and were pleased to find few changes at Aldham House. Vivien, who attended the Shirley School and then the Perse Girls, recalled a tree platform on the oak, a swing attached to the Robinia, turning the pond into a sand pit and playing hopscotch on the tarmac paths. They kept bicycles in the coal shed, her brother remembers an outside lavatory and there were still cows in the fields opposite the house. Her father was helped in the garden by some of his patients and she remembers gooseberries, currants and a pear tree together with the wistaria, oak and walnut. The area beyond the apple trees was used for bonfires and the family introduced the farm gate.

Vivian sent a photograph of the former gate. Their links with Norway were very close; each year there were holidays sailing from Newcastle and also for some Christmases. Vivien writes "My parents had a party for the local Norwegian families for a few years until there were too many Norwegian language students, so they then celebrated at the Barn in Fen Ditton". She sent a photo of the party, 17th May 1952 or 1953. The next year Vivien phoned her grandfather asking for a 'dukkestuen' (doll's house). "It was painted in 'bonde rød' (farm red) with green trim. It was shipped, ready to assemble from Oslo by Bestepapa (grandfather). The colours were the same as my grandparents summer house on the Oslo fjord at Nesodden." She sent a photograph of herself raising the Norwegian flag "flown for all occasions". Vivien's photographs also show the house with a street door entrance, another with "an old farm building in the corner of the garden" (fronting Union Lane and behind the 'dukkestuen') - we didn't have access to it but Leys Lodge did."

The photographs also show the mature ailanthus, a philadelphus near the front wall and the pear tree in front of the 'dukkestuen' at the end of the western flower border. Another shows the mature yew adjacent to the kitchen door and the ash behind the summerhouse. One in 1962 shows the new Langdon House in the fields on the opposite side of Union Lane. Inside the house was an Aga for the heating, a trapeze fixed in the inner hall and Norwegian wallpaper. "You must have wondered how the Norwegian wallpaper came to be in your house." Vivien Codfree now lives in Nova Scotia, her brother Jan in Norway and sadly their mother Marit has recently died.

(By strange coincidence we have connections with Norway and friends there. I attended a Nansen Camp in 1950 and visited a friend in Bergen the next year. Then in the 1980's we found a replica of our wallpaper in Bergen's Folk museum. Very familiar with 'bonde rød' and green, we had introduced some of these colours in the kitchen. Unfortunately after 50 years the 'dukkestuen' is struggling to survive with some roof and side boards rotting. It has lost its verandah and is now painted a lighter green. The ailanthus became unsafe and was felled; the pear tree died and was taken down; the front entrance to the house was bricked in before I arrived; some of the wistaria has decayed; the oak platform and swing have been dismantled. But the philadelphus, other mature trees and the shape of the garden remain; the front rosebed and the box tree shown in the photographs survive; the 'pleasure grounds' are still recognizable. The tarmac has been removed and the original gravel restored but the only survivals of the old farm building near the front wall have been stone footings and bricks frequently discovered while digging.)

Derek Russell Davis and family moved to Bristol and on 26th September 1962 sold the house to another academic family, Dr John Cair Robson of St John's College and Dr Jane Mary Robson, a medical practitioner in Chesterton. Together

with their family they lived at Aldham House for the next fourteen years. During their tenure an improved brick wall, removing the outside lavatory but defining the eastern boundary more clearly, was negotiated and the rear boundaries were effectively fenced. On a recent visit Dr Jane Robson helped to identify the names of some of the surviving bourbon roses and other plants which she had introduced. On 15th April 1976 the Robson family moved to Fulbourn and I purchased the property where I have lived for 30 years; now the longest tenure of any resident. In 1976 the property was land registered for the first time. Academic links with the house continued, this time with a schoolmaster. My children, Harold, Catherine and Charles have happy memories of the house.

I wish to include reference to one other resident: Harold Fordham, itinerant wanderer of the streets of Old Chesterton and Cambridge, walking in homemade clothing with his possessions in a bundle on his back. As a child, he lived in Fen Road, Chesterton and attended St Andrews and Brunswick Schools. He had worked on a farm, as a bricklayer and then as a gunner in the Middle Eastern and European theatres of World War II. He moved into the 'dukkestuen' at Aldham House after leaving the garage at the Vicarage, when the Reverend Carre retired. Harold stayed for nearly three years, was part of the local community but few knew of his talent as a naive artist. He was a man seeking peace and discovering beauty. He said "I like to think of the world as the beautiful colours of paint" and he was often found in the shed using any rough paper and acquired paints to portray his own world and landscape. Flowers predominated and he painted our garden from his home in the shed. He grew his own plants among the fronting paving stones, borrowing whichever plants took his fancy. Sponsors helped him to exhibit at the Gallery on the Cam in 1988 and 1989 and his painting of Aldham garden from the shed hangs in the house, together with related paintings by Andrea Alexander and by John Malyon.

Charles H Malyon

Sources for Aldham House and garden, Old Chesterton

The site

- a) *maps: Baker's Map of the University and Town of Cambridge, 1830 – Cambridge RO; University Library Chesterton Enclosure Map, 1840 – Cambridge Record Office Ordnance Survey Map, 1886 and 1927, preferably 25" scale – University Library*
- b) *Bill of Sale and plan of site, 1885 provided by descendants of Mary Wragg*
- c) *Victorian County History – Manor of Chesterton*
- d) *Photographs of Old Chesterton – The Cambridgeshire Collection, City Library*
- e) *The Manor of Chesterton Minute Book - Cambridge RO*
- f) *Information from archaeological digs in the vicinity.*

2 The House and Garden

- a) *Title Deeds of Aldham House*
- b) *Bill of Sale, plan of site, inventory of house and out-buildings, 1885*
- c) *letters, anecdotes and photographs provided by former residents*

3 The people – former owners and residents

- a) *Probate Records - Cambridge Record Office; after 1858 from 42-49 High Holborn, London.*
- b) *Parish Registers of St Andrew's, Chesterton and of Walsoken, Norfolk – Cambridge Record Office*
- c) *Censuses, 1841-1901 of Chesterton; 1841 and 1851 of Walsoken, Norfolk – Cambridge Record Office*
- d) *Wragg Memorials in St Andrew's Church, Chesterton*
- e) *Kelly's Directories in Cambridgeshire 19th and 20th centuries (1847-1937), Cambridge RO; Kelly's and Spalding's for Cambridge 1874-1975, Cambridge RO*
- f) *The Cambridge Chronicle, C19 – Cambridgeshire Collection and Cambridge RO*
- g) *Letters and anecdotes of former residents and their descendants*
- h) *Title Deeds of Aldham House*
- i) *The Manor of Chesterton Minute Book – Cambridge RO*

To be concluded in the next newsletter.

THE UNIVERSITY BOTANIC GARDEN GLASSHOUSES AND THEIR RESTORATION

The land for a 'new' Botanic Garden for the University of Cambridge was acquired from Trinity Hall in 1831. A plan for the development of its entire 40 acres had already been drawn up by Edward Lappidge, working with the Professor of Botany, John Henslow. Lappidge was well known locally and had been employed on the construction of an arboretum for Hildersham Hall. In his design the Botanic Garden was to have a large and rather exotic Conservatory situated centrally on the site and towards the northern boundary of the Garden.

This attempt to create a new Botanic Garden was caught up in a legal wrangle and was delayed for 13 years. A new design incorporating Henslow's requirements was put together by the first Curator, Andrew Murray in 1845. This Garden was to occupy only half the site due to financial restrictions imposed by the University. The western portion of the present Botanic Garden is Murray's design, with only one major difference – the location of the glasshouse range. Murray proposed to erect the range at the eastern end of the Main Walk in a north-south orientation, but this was never put into effect. The glasshouses were finally erected on their current site near the northern boundary and orientated east-west facing the main lawn of the Garden.

The initial development of the Garden was rapid under the dynamic young Curator Andrew Murray. Sadly, Murray died in 1850 from pneumonia which he contracted after falling into Hobson's Conduit on the western boundary of the Botanic Garden. It was his successor James Stratton who saw the erection of the first glasshouses in 1855. This enabled the transfer of the tender and stove plants from the old Botanic Garden in the centre of the City which completed the clearing of that site for building.

Stratton's glasshouses were replaced by much grander structures between 1888 and 1891. The new structures were built with white-painted pine by James Boyd and Sons of Paisley near Glasgow for a sum of 'not more than £3000'. The 1888 design was novel. A corridor over 90 yards long was constructed from which a succession of houses branched off along its southern side. The remarkable vista created by this corridor proved ideal for displaying climbing plants. By 1931 this pine range was suffering badly from fungal rot and a restoration appeal was launched for funds to supplement the University's contribution. The monies raised was sufficient

to employ the firm of Mackenzie and Moncur Ltd to replace the Temperate House and the Palm House in Burmese teak. These houses were ready by 1932. Mackenzie and Moncur were 'Hothouse Builders, Heating Ventilating and Electric Engineers, and Ironfounders' of Edinburgh, London and Glasgow. Their builder's mark can be found on the inside of the Temperate House door. They were well known for their glasshouse work in particular the Palm House in Sefton Park, Liverpool.

In 1933, a generous donation of £6000 from W.J. Courtauld enabled the rebuilding of the rest of the houses in the range to take place. This time W. Richardson and Co. of Darlington were appointed to carry out the work. Teak was used again. The range was thus completely renewed in

hardwood by the end of summer 1934. The two firms were paid £7249 for their work, which would represent about £1.98 million today.

This remarkable teak glasshouse range has been a landmark feature of the Botanic Garden even since its construction. Sadly, by the 1980s the central towering Palm House had become unsafe and between 1984 and 1988 was dismantled and then replaced by the

white-painted steel structure of similar design we see today. The rest of the range comprising the wooden houses and the corridor, however, were retained.

By 2005, these wooden constructions were 70 years old and had received no major attention throughout their lifetimes. The condition of the Temperate House at the western end of the range, however, gave particular cause for concern: many of the glazing bars were no longer effective, some signs of rot were visible, and the ironwork needed attention. Where the decision had been taken to demolish and rebuild the Palm House in steel in the 1980s, a bold decision was now reached by the University Estate Management team to renovate the Temperate House using as much of the original wood and iron as possible. This change of emphasis towards renovation and preservation reflects the uniqueness of the Temperate House: it is the last of its kind. The University appointed EURA to carry out this specialist commission.

The Temperate House was carefully taken apart in autumn 2005. The glass, the rafters and parts of the ironwork were removed and the brick and stonework surround of the house was re-pointed. All the wood left *in situ* was power-washed and sanded, and three coats of teak oil



were applied. A small proportion of the wood was in poor condition particularly that in the rafters. This was cut out and replaced by more teak, although not this time from Burmese forests. The 'new' wood was itself recycled from a demolished hospital, and is in excellent condition despite being over a century old. We believe that the 'new' Temperate House will have a life expectancy more or less the same as it had in 1933. This is a testimony to the endurance of wood as a construction material. We can be certain, however, that the late 20th Century steel Palm House will need replacement in far less than the 70 years the teak house has existed so far.

At the same time as the Temperate House was being renovated the small north-facing Fern House was also restored. This house was in a somewhat poorer condition than the south west-facing Temperate House due to the constant dampness and lack of sun it has experienced. However, even here much of the woodwork was recovered, cleaned and replaced. The rafters had suffered most decay and now have been made good using the 'hospital' teak.

The Temperate House is now resplendent. It has the appearance, if not the design, of a modern structure. The

wood glows like rich amber, and the iron-work is fresh and clean from sandblasting and re-painting. It is magnificent both outside and inside and can be properly appreciated while it is still unoccupied.

This restoration programme funded by the University goes on. Later this year the extreme eastern house of the range which currently houses both Belizean forest plants and the cactus collection, will be subject to the same treatment.

The Temperate House is about to be re-landscaped and replanted to exhibit some of the world's most precious and unique floras. It will feature the remarkable plants of the world's smallest floral kingdom, the Cape region of South Africa and the very distinctive flora of Australia. These floras will focus attention on the pressing need for conservation of plants throughout the world. At the same time, the Temperate House will itself be a testimony to the commitment of the University and the Botanic Garden for conservation through restoration and renewal, wherever that proves possible.

Robert Brett, Glasshouse Supervisor

John Parker, Director

Could you all please note that we have our Summer Social at Chippenham Park this year on Saturday June 10th at 6.00pm. Tickets are £10.00 each. Members may be interested to know that Chippenham Park is likely to be a summer venue for a future RHS Flower Show. Please can you send your application for tickets to Mrs Jean Chittim, 13 Wood Lane, Ramsey, Huntingdon.

Please if you have not already done so apply for tickets for the visit to Rennishaw Hall, on Thursday 13th July 06 as the organisation needs to know in advance how many are coming. We plan to meet at Rennishaw Hall at 11.00am. Members may have already had glances of this spectacular garden when The Antiques Road Show filmed in the garden recently. If there is a shortfall of our members we will contact Northamptonshire Gardens Trust to make up the required 25 visitors. Please contact Daphne Pearce immediately if you have not already done so.

Please note that there is an error regarding the date of the garden opening at Abbots Ripton which should read Sunday 6th August 2006. The proceeds from this event will go towards the cost for the survey of the RAWKG which has resulted in knowledge that the trust will have to take out a long term insurance policy to cover repairs to the chancel of the church in Ramsey. Please could you encourage all your friends to support this event.

This year's AGM will take place on Saturday 4th November at 2.00pm at the Gilmour Building at the University of Cambridge Botanic Garden. The AGM will be followed by a talk on 'The Garden at Great Dixter' by Fergus Garrett who is the head gardener and currently setting up a trust to ensure the future of the late Christopher Lloyd's lifetime achievement. There will be a small charge for non-members who wish to hear the talk.

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