



Wheathampstead History Society

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News and events

- Following the success of their November online lecture series, HALH will host talks in January, February and March next year. For details, go to <http://www.halh.org.uk/>

Notes and queries

GARDEN HOUSE



This is the only photograph we have of the once-grand Garden House which stood for nearly 100 years on the corner of Lamer Lane and Lower Luton Road, by the roundabout at the northern end of Station Road. Its history is closely linked to that of Wheathampstead House.

The Wheathampstead House we know today was built in 1872 by the Reverend John Olive, Rector of Ayot St Lawrence. Like many rectors of the time, he was a very wealthy man. His daughter Mary had married Viscount Kilcoursie, eldest son of the 8th Earl Cavan, in 1863.

In December 1872, John Olive bought the land on which Garden House was later built. When he died in 1874, he left his estate, including Wheathampstead House and 'land and cottages in Lamer Lane', to his widow Ellen. Garden House must have been built soon afterwards; we know that George Sheppard, widower of Emma, another of John Olive's daughters, was in residence in 1877 together with his daughter Susan. He was a wealthy businessman from Somerset and a keen gardener.

Viscount Kilcoursie inherited the title of 9th Earl Cavan in 1887 and, when his mother-in-law Ellen Olive died in 1888, he inherited both houses.

In 1891, Garden House was the home of Thomas Chittenden, a general practitioner who came from Sussex, and his family but he had left by 1895 when the house was advertised to let.

The new tenant was The Right Honourable Sir Cecil Clementi Smith GCMG, PC, a former Governor of the Straits Settlements who lived there with his wife and daughters Beatrice and Alice. Following an unhappy love affair, Beatrice married Rear-Admiral Sir Douglas Egremont Robert Brownrigg, 4th Baronet. She bore a son, Robert, at Garden House in 1903.

The house was again advertised to let in 1908. By the time of the census in 1911, the tenant was a wealthy widow, Mrs Reily, who lived there with five servants.

The 9th Earl Cavan died in 1900 so the title and the two houses passed to the 10th Earl. He built a bridge over Lamer Lane to make access to Garden House and its garden easier for his many guests and for socialising. In 1924, he sold Wheathampstead House to two local builders, who sold it on to Albert Murphy as a private house in 1928. Garden House was sold in 1930, probably again to Albert Murphy.

The great days of Garden House were now at an end. By the early 1950s, it was the registered office of the Murphy Chemical Company and in the late 1960s it was demolished to make way for the building of Garden Court.

We know very little about Garden House during and after World War II. What can you remember about it? Did you work there? Please contact us at the email address below or call 07718 068575. A fuller and detailed history of the house will be added to our website in January.