

### From The Times, November 24, 1904

"In this disastrous fire which destroyed a Hampshire Mansion, it was through the strenuous efforts of the owner, Colonel Le Roy-Lewis, that his wife, five children and some 30 servants were all saved.

A fire, which resulted in the almost total destruction of Westbury House, West Meon, near Petersfield, the residence of Colonel Le Roy-Lewis D.S.O, occurred early yesterday morning. Owing to the efforts of Colonel Le Roy-Lewis himself, no lives were lost by fire, but the housekeeper, an elderly woman named Jane Henley, who had been in the service of the family for many years, died on the roof from shock and fright before she could be rescued. The cook, whose name is Hall, jumped from the roof in her fright and broke her wrist. She was removed to Winchester Hospital.

The escape of the occupants was most exciting. The French governess, who occupied a bedroom at the rear of the main part of the house, raised the alarm at about 3am. Her cries were heard by Colonel Le Roy-Lewis, who immediately did what he could to rouse the family. Rushing out of his bedroom he found the staircase burning and the corridors filled with smoke, and all means of escape cut off. His first impulse was to save his five children, and he ran through the flames to the children's wing and found that that part of the house was safe. Getting out of a window, he scrambled along a narrow ledge to a stack pipe, down which he slid to the ground, a distance of about 40 ft. He rushed to the stables, and with some difficulty roused the stablemen, and with the aid of three of them tried to raise a heavy ladder to the French governess' window, but it fell and broke.

A messenger was despatched to Petersfield on a bicycle, some eight and a half miles distant, and the Petersfield Fire Brigade arrived about 6 o'clock, but they could do no more than play on the burning building and prevent the fire from spreading to the childrens' wing, a new part of the house which had only been built some three years.

The mansion itself is an old one, standing in a well-wooded park of 500 acres, and is in the Queen Anne style. It contained many fine pictures and some rich carving by Gibbons. Most of the rooms were wainscotted in oak, and there was a fine library. All these have been destroyed, only a few articles of furniture being saved. The family lost all their personal belongings."

*Note that The Times has got it wrong ... Westbury House is, and always has been, in the Parish of East Meon*