

# History of Westbury House

By Michael Blakstad & Deborah Gage



*Fig 1. Westbury House in 2014, from the south*

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## Introduction

Situated at the extreme western end of East Meon parish, Westbury House is close to the border of West Meon; the parish boundary runs through the estate and the families which owned were often lords of the manor of West Meon. (The Bishops of Winchester were lords of the two manors of East Meon, which were the largest of their Hampshire estates.)

Westbury has traces of Roman occupation and it was here that the treaty between Henry I and his elder brother, Robert, was signed in 1101 to arrange the succession of the crown; in the 13<sup>th</sup> century it was owned by one of Edward I's most prominent supporters, Robert le Ewer. A fine Palladian mansion was built in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and from 1746 to 1866 it was owned by Irish nobility: first, Sir Peter Warren, and then the Gage family of Firl Place, East Sussex. The present building was erected after a devastating fire in 1904; it was a boys' school from 1924 to 1984, and then became a nursing home for brain-damaged patients. In 2016 it was shut down and is today unoccupied.

## Origins

Scattered finds of Roman pottery were discovered when a swimming pool was built at Westbury House in the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>, but we have no documentary evidence of occupation until *Wesberie*, also known as *Westburia*, and *Westbyrie* is recorded as owned by the thegn Ulnod during the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042 – 1066): in 1086 it was assessed at 3 hides in the Domesday survey, and was the property of Hugh de Port as part of the barony which he held of the king<sup>2</sup>. In the early 1100s, In the early 1100s, Robert Duke of Normandy, the elder son of William the Conqueror, was passed over for the thrown in favour of his brother William Rufus. After Rufus was killed in the New Forest, Robert was passed over in favour of an even younger brother, Henry. Robert assembled a fleet and sailed from Normandy to Porchester; he marched up the Meon Valley where negotiations led to the 'Treaty of Westbury', which conferred on him a pension and the recognition that he was Henry's rightful heir. His rebellion did not stop, however, and he was finally captured and imprisoned in Cardiff Castle<sup>3</sup>. the reign of Henry II '*the manor*' seems to have been granted to a family who took the surname of Westbury<sup>4</sup>. In the reign of Henry III *John de Westbury held in Westbury one knight's fee of the ancient enfeoffment of Robert de St. John*<sup>5</sup>. He was succeeded by William de Campania and by his son Peter and wife Margery.

After the death of Peter de Campania, Margery married one of the most colourful figures in 13<sup>th</sup> century England, Robert le Ewer, '*King's Yeoman*' to Edward I (1239 – 1307). He had escorted the money to pay the English troops fighting in Scotland and in 1322 he was given permission to fortify his what was still his wife's property: the king then granted '*to him and his heirs for ever free warren in all their demesne lands of Westbury*'<sup>6</sup>. Robert at one time held estate at Somerton, domain of the *Somersaetas* (Somerset) and was Keeper on behalf of Edward of Odiham Castle and of Devizes Castle; he was also granted the manor of Warblington near Havant, together with the right to hold a weekly market, and of Emsworth. He then fell out with the king (for the second time), attempted to leave the country via Southampton, was captured and died in prison.

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<sup>1</sup> Standfield, F.G. *A History of East Meon*, Phillimore Books, 1984 p 8.

<sup>2</sup> Victoria County History. *A History of the County of Hampshire: East Meon*. 1908 481

<sup>3</sup> Ford, John *A short history of Westbury House* Frasergate, 1984 p7

<sup>4</sup> VCH *Ibid* Pipe R. 13 Hen. II

<sup>5</sup> VCH *Ibid* Testa de Nevill, 230

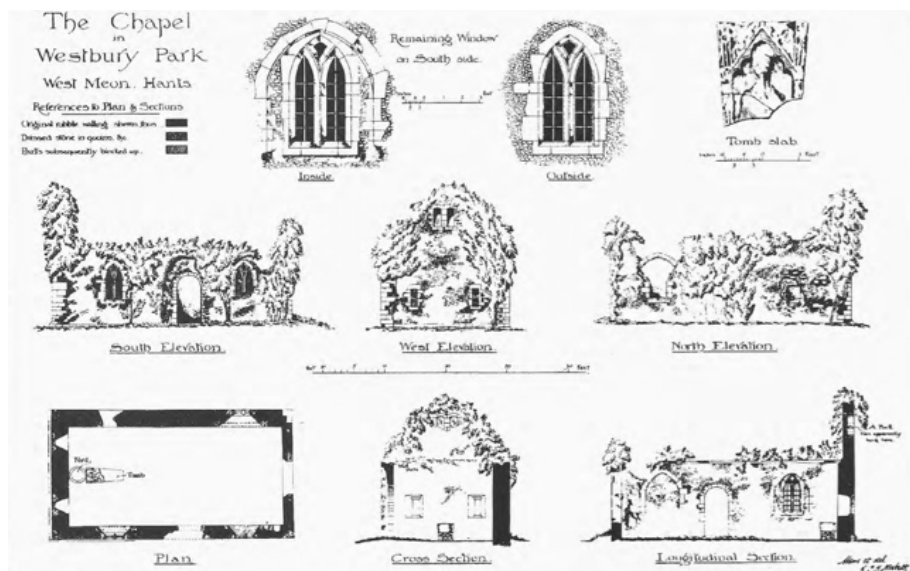
<sup>6</sup> VCH *Ibid* Vide Coram Rege R. Mich. 1 Edw. III, m. 117.

### Chapel of St Nicholas

The ruins of a chapel to the north of Westbury House are the remains of a ‘chapel of ease’ probably built in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century by Margery de Campania<sup>7</sup>. She too was imprisoned, but the property was restored to her after her husband’s death. The chapel was part of the parish of East Meon and the vicar or his curate would have visited it to hold services. In an inventory of *the chapelle of Westbury* in 1554 it had a ‘*belfry with one hanging bell*’



Fig 2. St Nicholas Chapel from Hampshire Magazine 1968 c. Paul Cave Publications



Drawn by N.C.H. Nisbett in 1891 for Hampshire Field Club

<sup>7</sup> Ford, John Ibid p3



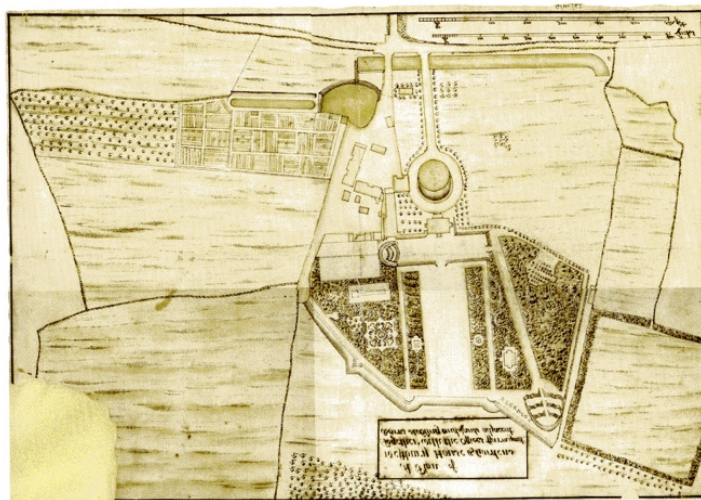
Fig 4. Fawconer crest: sable three falcons argent with bells and jesses or.

In 1428 the manor of Westbury passed to the recusant family of Fawconer, who held it for about two centuries; as Catholics, they were forced to lie low during the reign of Elizabeth I and beyond, paying their recusancy fines. In 1694 the son of Katherine Fawconer and her husband John Holt sold the manor for £4,000 to Richard Markes of Petersfield.



Fig 5. The Palladian mansion built in 1690s by Richard Markes, © Trustees of the Firle Estate

It was probably Markes who rebuilt the brick house in the Palladian style in the 1690s. He appears to have hit financial problems and in 1722 sold the estate for £7,400 (reflecting the amount of building which had taken place). The new owner was Admiral Philip Cavendish, Commander of the Navy at Portsmouth and a member of the Board of Admiralty. It may have



Map 1. Plan of the grounds by Charles Bridgeman © Trustees of the Firle Estate

been Cavendish who commissioned the celebrated early 18th century landscape gardener Charles Bridgeman to design the grounds: following the fashion of the day he opened up enclosed gardens in favour of expansive views and more formal gardens<sup>8</sup>. Standing on rising ground above the Meon, it had a superb view of the valley and the Downs.

The tree-lined avenue, which led up to the house from the East Meon-West Meon road, crossed a small bridge. Surrounding the house and gardens was a working estate with a farmyard, barns and stables, fields and timber plantations.

<sup>8</sup> John Ford Ibid, p7.

### The Navy connection

Philip Cavendish died in 1743 and three years later his widow sold Westbury for £8,500 (£2 millions at 2018 values) to a friend of her late husband, Admiral Sir Peter Warren. Another £1,000 purchased all the furniture<sup>9</sup>, the house was insured by the Sun Fire Office for £2,000<sup>10</sup>. Sir Peter, an Irishman by birth, had obtained his commission as a lieutenant in 1722; from that time his promotion was rapid. He was one of the most imaginative officers in the history of the British Navy and played a key role in the defense and expansion of British naval power in colonial America. Through the turmoil and warfare of the mid-eighteenth century, Warren cruised up and down the North American coast from one theatre of conflict to another, becoming particularly associated with colonial New York, South Carolina and the West Indies. In 1745 he captured Louisburg on behalf of the New England colonies and was promoted to rear admiral of the Blue. He captured three French ships worth £1,000,000 – over £20 million in today's money. In 1747 he won a great naval victory off Cape Finestere and was made a Knight of the Bath<sup>11</sup>, and became MP for the City of Westminster.

Warren had been introduced in Charleston, South Carolina, to a fellow commander, Admiral George Anson, a man whom in time he would call his friend and upon whose patronage much would depend. Shares in prize money from enemy ships captured in battle made naval officers like Cavendish, Anson and Warren very rich. Anson was later Admiral of the Fleet and First Lord of the Admiralty; after Anson's, Warren's prize fortune was probably the largest accumulated by a naval officer before the Seven Years War. In a letter to George Anson Warren described his purchase of Westbury as a 'very dear bargain' Warren, 'which nothing but being your neighbour' ... would have induced him to buy<sup>12</sup>.



Fig 6. Sir Peter Warren painted by Thomas Hudson © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich.

in 1735 Warren increased his considerable fortune by marrying a fabulously rich American, Susanna daughter of Stephen de Lancey, member of a well-to-do New York merchant family<sup>13</sup>. Warren bought land in America, Ireland and England. Through the de Lancey interest, Warren was given the freedom of the City of New York in February 1731. His father-in-law, a Huguenot, had married Anne, daughter of Stephanus van Courtland and Gertrude Schuyler, thus allying himself with two well-established Empire Dutch families. Warren became a prominent landowner with property in Manhattan that later became Greenwich Village.

<sup>9</sup> Julian Gwyn, *An Admiral for America: Sir Peter Warren, Vice Admiral of the Red, 1703-1752*, p. 132

<sup>10</sup> Julian Gwyn, *The Enterprising Admiral: The Personal Fortune of Admiral Sir Peter Warren*

<sup>11</sup> *The Naval Chronical*, xii, 271

<sup>12</sup> There is no evidence that Lord Anson, whose family seat was in Staffordshire and parliamentary constituency in Yorkshire, lived in Hampshire, but his sister Isabel Anson did and he must have spent time visiting her.

<sup>13</sup> Warren, Rev. Thomas. *Hist. of the Warren Family*, 18

Though he hoped his in-laws' connections and his English patrons would help his bid to become governor of New York, he forfeited a promising career in politics in 1749 by opposing his patrons on a proposed naval bill. In Ireland his first concern was the recovery of his family estate in County Meath, while in England he concentrated his land purchases in Hampshire: in June 1747 he bought Westbury House with a view to repatriating there his wife and children from America. Between 1747 and 1752, Warren's days at Westbury were mixed with the pleasure of sport and social gatherings, administering the home farm and extending his purchases in the Meon valley. He hunted, and tried his hand at shooting, which caused him to bemoan to Anson '*there are a good many Partridges, but so wild y. wee Berd Gunners Cant kill one*'. and invested in the London stock market, the government's wartime debt, the stock of great trading and insurance companies, and in private mortgages and bonds leading New York Merchant family.

In 1749 Warren loaned Thomas, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Gage, £500 at 5% interest<sup>14</sup>, or £100,000 at 2018 values: the Gages were another Anglo-Irish family of considerable wealth and he loan may have made for political reasons since the 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount was master of the household of Frederick, Prince of Wales from 1747 until the Prince's death in 1751. Warren's family was Irish Catholic and due to centuries-old restrictions relating to recusant families, Catholic families often became bankers to each other. The loan was still outstanding in 1758, despite Lady Warren's attempts to recover it. She had been anxious to see Thomas during the summer of 1754 before Parliament rose, but had missed him and never saw him again: he fell ill that autumn and died in December. His heir, William Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Gage, likewise was in no apparent hurry to pay off the debt, or even the interest.

Sir Peter Warren died suddenly of an infection in 1752 in Dublin, while he was negotiating extensive land purchases. His death at the age of 48 was a cruel blow to his young family. However, his widow enjoyed his wealth and reflected naval glory – he had achieved the rank of Vice Admiral of the Red and was a member of Parliament – and his American born children married into English aristocracy. The Warrens left three daughters and co-heirs— Anne, married Lieutenant-General Hon. Charles Fitzroy, the first Lord Southampton and younger brother of the third Duke of Grafton; Susanna, married her cousin, Lieutenant-General William Skinner in 1767; and Charlotte, married Willoughby Bertie, fourth Earl of Abingdon in 1768. Warren's Hampshire estates remained intact throughout the lifetime of Warren's widow, she and her family continued to spend much of the summer and autumn months in the country until the children had grown up and married, though later ill-health kept Lady Warren at her house in Grosvenor Square.

Following Lady Warren's death in November 1771, the Earl of Abingdon decided to dispose of his wife's one third share of her property, which in turn prompted William Skinner's decision to acquire the entire Westbury estate. When Skinner died a widower in 1780 Westbury, then amounted to 1,764 acres and was inherited by their only child, Susannah Maria<sup>15</sup>. On January 12, 1789, Susannah Maria, married her cousin Major-General Henry Gage (1761-1808): thereby, the Westbury estate passed into the Gage family. When Susannah Maria died in 1821, the estate now amounted to 1,942 acres.

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<sup>14</sup> Julian Gwyn, *The Enterprising Admiral: The Personal Fortune of Admiral Sir Peter Warren*, p. 170

<sup>15</sup> Julian Gwyn, *The Enterprising Admiral: The Personal Fortune of Sir Peter Warren*

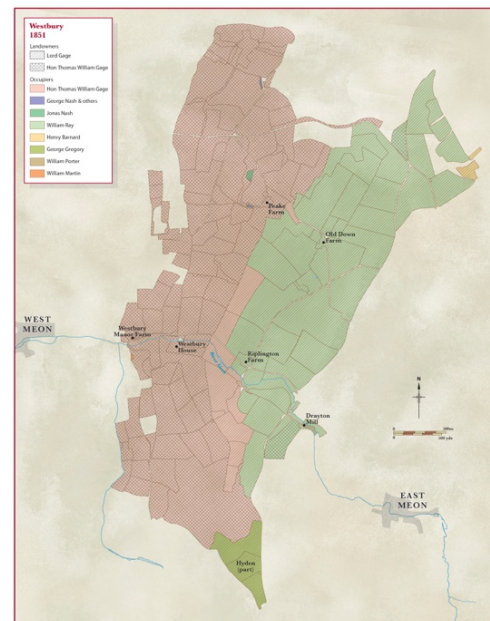
Henry Gage inherited Firle Place in Sussex to become the 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount following the death in 1791 of his uncle, William Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Viscount Gage. Henry's marriage to Susannah Maria appears to have created quite a stir as both were very rich, especially Susannah through her Warren and Skinner inheritances; they divided their time between Firle and Westbury. Henry, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Gage (1761-1808), was offered the Governorship of Jamaica in 1800, which he refused. He died at the age of 47 at his house at 17 Arlington Street, London; their eldest son Henry Hall (1791-1877) became the 4<sup>th</sup> Viscount Gage, aged 17, and he retained Firle Place as the main family seat where he enjoyed a long tenure.



Fig 7. General Skinner and his daughter, Susannah Maria, attributed to Thomas Beach. © Trustees of the Firle Estate

Suzannah and Henry's second son was Thomas William Gage, born in 1796, and he lived at Westbury until his death in 1855. He married Arabella Cecil, daughter of T. St. Quintin of Scampston Hall, Yorkshire, and their daughter Arabella Elizabeth in turn married her cousin, Edward Thomas Gage in 1856. Their son, another Thomas William, was born in 1828 but died at the age of 18, before his father, and in 1836 the Viscountcy passed to Henry Hall<sup>16</sup>.

The 1851 census lists Westbury as occupied by Thomas William Gage, with 8 house staff. From Westbury Manor farm Thomas William managed 1,161 acres, of which 452 were in the parish of East Meon. The Viscount owned a further 1,729 acres in the parish and the Tithe Apportionment of the same year shows that most of the land to the west of the main village was owned by Viscount Gage including tenanted farms at Riplington, Drayton, Peake, & Coombe, and parts of Hyden. The 1861 census shows that following the death of Thomas William, Westbury House had been let to Edward Sartoris and his wife Adelaide<sup>17</sup>. Sartoris' maternal uncle Edward Tunno lived nearby at Warnford Park and he stood to inherit the estate.



Map 2. Lands in East Meon parish owned by Viscount Gage in 1851 and farmed by Hon T.W.Gage and tenant farmers

<sup>16</sup> Source: Deborah Gage, Curator of Firle Estate.

<sup>17</sup> Appendix 1 p11 *Census returns for Westbury House 1851 - 1891*

### A cultural hub

During their stay, Westbury House was visited by the cream of London artists and poets. Adelaide was one of the illustrious theatrical family, the Kembles, and one of the greatest opera singers of her time. They rented Westbury from 1859 to 1863: Adelaide was a great hostess and friend of many of the great artistic, literary and musical figures of their age - including Robert Browning and Frederick Leighton.



*Fig 8. Portrait of May Sartoris by Sir Frederick Leighton, at the Kimbell Museum, Austin, Texas*

While he was staying at Westbury House, Frederick Leighton painted a portrait of May, the daughter of Adelaide and Edward, which is now in the Kimbell Museum in Fort Worth, Texas whose curator, Malcolm Warner, asked for our help in identifying the two buildings featured - the mill at the top right of the painting and the church at May's right shoulder. He wanted to establish where May would have stood for the painting to be made. There are two buildings in the painting. The windmill on the hill above May's hat was almost certainly Marland's Mill which sits on a hill a mile north of the village and couldn't be seen from Westbury House. The second building, by her left shoulder, is the tower of a church. St Nicholas, the chapel in the grounds of Westbury House, had been restored by Viscount Gage in the 1790s but it was small and did not have a tower. The church in the painting is more likely to have been West Meon's previous church, burned down and replaced in the 1900s.

There is no viewpoint from which Marland Mill and West Meon Church could have been seen together (nor St Nicholas Chapel) so it is most likely that Leighton painted May separately, indoors, then walked around the neighbourhood with his easel, filling in the background from items of local interest. (May's brother Algernon later married the daughter of Ulysses Grant, the President of the United States<sup>18</sup>.) In 1863 Edward Sartoris inherited Warnford Park and the family moved there. In 1866, Viscount Gage put Westbury (and the manor of West Meon) up for sale, comprising over 2,000 acres, which were bought by John Delaware Le Roy.

<sup>18</sup> Mocatta, Robert: *Appendix 1*, p 11



Fig 9. The staff of Westbury House in 1897



Fig 11. Westbury cricket team in 1901, Col LeRoy Lewis with son and wife in centre

### The great fire

When John Delaware Lewis died in 1884 his cousin Herman LeRoy-Lewis inherited Westbury, then aged just 24. He was educated at Eton and Cambridge and qualified as a barrister at the Temple; he was a JP and Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire and subsequently High Sherriff. As can be seen from these photographs, he maintained the substantial mansion of Westbury House with a sizeable staff: butler, two footmen cook and three maids. He did not describe himself as a farmer, but as ‘*living on his own means*’.



Fig 9a Westbury House before the fire.

Westbury hit the national headlines in 1904 when the Palladian house was gutted by fire: the Times of London reported the heroism of Herman LeRoy-Lewis (the Lewis came from his mother’s name) ...

*‘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.’*

*‘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 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.'*



Fig 10. The ruins of Westbury Houses after the fire of 1904



FIG 10a. Entrance to Westbury House after the fire

This wasn't the first act of bravery by Colonel Le Roy Lewis: in the Boer War he had been awarded the Distinguished Service Order; during World War I he was to be Military Attache in Paris and was awarded the Legion of Honour and Croix de Guerre. He was Commander of the Bath, High Sherriff and Deputy Lieutenant of Hampshire. The gallant Colonel lost no time in rebuilding the mansion, regardless of cost. Ground-floor rooms included a 'saloon or lounge' (45ft by 27ft), with oak-panelled walls and housing a 'three-manual organ, electrically blown', an elegant drawing room (72ft by 21ft), fitted with mahogany glazed bookcases of Chippendale design, a dining room (32ft by 21ft), with painted panel walls; plus a study, boudoir and billiards room.... and so it went on, three floors of Edwardian comfort, including a passenger lift and central heating<sup>19</sup>.

### Break-up of the estate



Fig 12. Westbury House from the south west



Fig 13. Dining Hall at Westbury House School

<sup>19</sup> Standfield F.G. *Ibid* p105

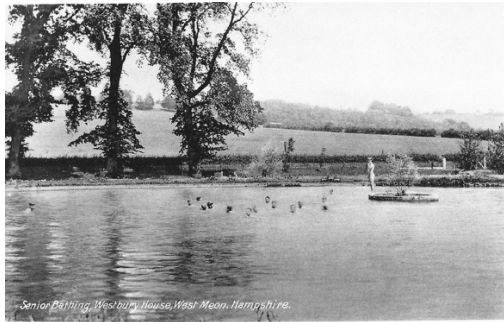


Fig 14. Bathing in the lake



Fig 15. A classroom at Westbury House School

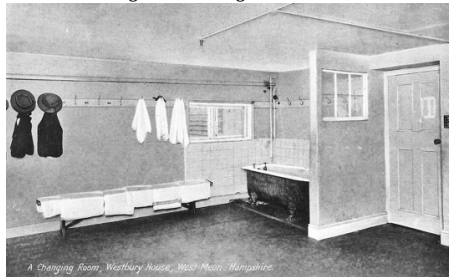


Fig 15. Changing room



Fig 16. Prayers in organ room.



Fig 17. Organ Room with school cups on mantelshelf



Fig 18. The school in the early 1960s. Headmaster Sherard Manning in centre of front row, wife Jane and son Nick on his left.

In 1918, Le Roy Lewis put up for sale the estate of nearly 5,000 acres: only a few of the farms were sold. At another auction in 1924, Manor, Riplington, Peak and Old Down farms were sold along with Westbury House which became a successful preparatory school. An account by a former pupil, Denys Ryder, of his time at Westbury House School is attached as Appendix 2. He describes how, during World War II, its cellars were requisitioned for storage of the records of the Corporation of the City of London. The school was founded by Thomas Christopher Whitehead who was headmaster for the first 38 years, then Sherard Manning was headmaster until the late 1970s. It was then closed and lay empty for some time before re-opening briefly as an International Boys' School, mainly for middle eastern pupils. Fighting between Iran and Iraq put paid to that initiative, and it was then bought by Frasersgate. In January 1982 it re-opened as a Nursing Home specialising in the treatment of brain-damaged patients, A Residential Home for the Elderly opened alongside in 1984. The nursing home continued to specialise in the treatment of brain disorders as it passed through a succession of owners until, in 2016, it was inspected by the Care Quality Commission and found inadequate on almost all counts and closed down<sup>20</sup>. It has now stood empty and derelict for three years, and a sad footnote was written by BBC South which reported in April 2019 that patient records had not been destroyed and were lying around the desolate building for any marauder to read<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> CQC report on Westbury House Nursing Home <https://www.cqc.org.uk/location/1-122264497/inspection-summary#overall>

<sup>21</sup> BBC South report 10/4/2019 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-hampshire-47860424/thousands-of-patient-files-left-in-westbury-house-nursing-home>

Appendix 1 Census returns for Westbury House 1851 – 1911

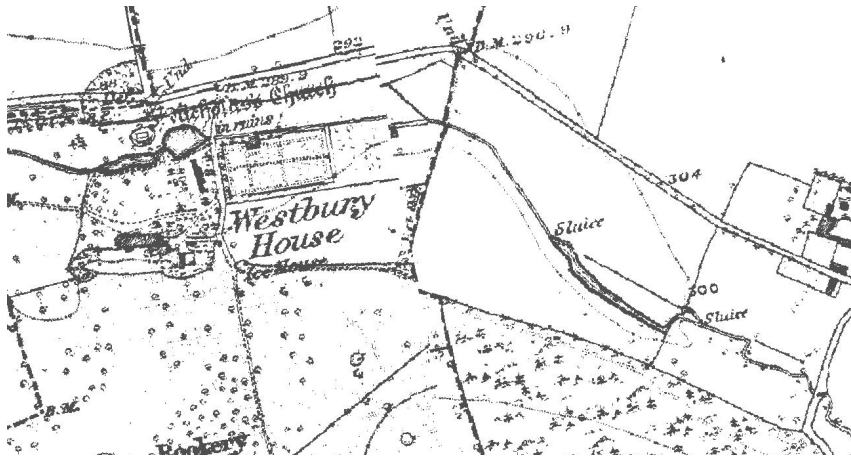
Analysis by Robert Mocatta

No. of Schedule	Name of Street, Place, or Road, and Name or No. of House	Name and Surname of each Person who abode in the house, on the Night of the 30th March, 1851	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of		Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	Whether Blind, or Deaf, or Dumb
					Male	Female			
1	Westbury House	Thomas William Gage	Head	Married	53		Landed Proprietor & Magistrate	Surrey, Guildford	
		Arabella Elizabeth Gage	Daughter	Single	23		Magistrate's daughter	Wants, Westmore	
		Mary Gray	Servant	Married	39		Housekeeper	Hills, Cumberland	
		Caroline Archin	Servant	Single	30		Lady's Maid	Wants, Westmore	
		Jane Tebble	Servant	Single	19		Kitchen Maid	Wants, Westmore	
		Ann Philips	Servant	Single	29		Housemaid	Wants, Westmore	
		Elizabeth Page	Servant	Single	29		Kitchen Maid	Wants, Westmore	
		Thomas Simms	Servant	Single	36		Butler	Surrey, Guildford	
		Charles Harris	Servant	Single	50		Footman	Berks, Maidenhead	
		Henry Welch	Servant	Single	16		Footman	Wants, Westmore	

1851 Hon Thomas William Gage, 53, was a landed Magistrate and farmer of 1500 acres employing 25 labourers and 10 boys outside. His 23-year-old daughter Arabella lived in the house along with 8 servants, none of who were from East Meon. These were: 39 Caroline Archin, lady's maid, 30 year old Jane Tebble, kitchen maid, 19 year old Ann Philips House servant, 29 year old Elizabeth Page, Kitchen maid, 36 year old Thomas Simms, Butler, 50 year old Charles Harris, groom and 16 year old Henry Welch, footman. There were 10 in the household.

Parish (or Township) of	City or Municipal Borough of	Municipal Ward of	Parliamentary Borough of	Town of	Hamlet or Tything, &c., of	Ecclesiastical District of			
East Meon					Westbury	Westbury			
No. of Schedule	Road, Street, &c., and No. or Name of House	HOUSES In Label	Name and Surname of each Person	Relation to Head of Family	Condition	Age of	Rank, Profession, or Occupation	Where Born	Whether Blind, or Deaf, or Dumb
22	1		Adelaide Sartoris	Wife	Married	46	Landed Proprietor's Wife	Widdow, Berkshire	
			May	Daughter	Single	16		London	
			Algernon	Son	Single	9		London	
			Henry Kemble	Nephew	Single	12		Dublin	
			May Hames	Servant	Married	60		London	
			Mary Hogge	Servant	Married	37	Clergyman's Wife	Devon, North Devon	
			Harriet Dennis	Servant	Single	22		Wants	
			Edward Sartoris	Head	Married	46		Wants	
			Elizabeth Page	Servant	Single	36		Wants, Scotland	
			Caroline Archin	Servant	Single	39		Wants, Devon	
			Ann Philips	Servant	Single	29		Wants, Devon	
			Thomas Simms	Servant	Single	36		Wants, Devon	
			Charles Harris	Servant	Single	50		Wants, Devon	
			Henry Welch	Servant	Single	16		Wants, Devon	
			George Harris	Servant	Single	50		Wants, Devon	
			John Welch	Servant	Single	16		Wants, Devon	

1861 Westbury was rented to Edward Sartoris (46) who was not there on the night of the census. His wife Adelaide, nee Kemble, was described as “landed proprietor’s wife”. Her two children May, 16, and Algernon, 9, lived there. Algernon later married Nellie Grant, the daughter of US President Ulysses Grant. The household included Adelaide’s 12 year old nephew Henry Kemble and her sister May Hames (60). They had another visitor on the night of the census, 37 year old Mary Hogge, a clergyman’s wife. There were nine servants, including 22 year old Harriet Dennis, an under housemaid, from East Meon. None of the other servants were local, and their coachman and two grooms lived in a different part of the house. 10 years later the Sartoris family were living at Warsash, Titchfield, and Edward Sartoris was by that stage MP, having been elected in 1867. Their daughter May lived with them along with a household of 11 servants. None of these had been their servants 10 years before



**1871** John Delaware Lewis had purchased Westbury in 1866. He was MP for Devonport and on the night of the census was in a house Eaton Square' along with his wife and a household of 9 servants. The house appears to have been unoccupied that night.

17	Westbury House	1	John Delaware Lewis	Head	Married	45	Member of the Bar at the Temple	British Subject
			Teresa Lewis	Wife	"	45	Magistrate for Exeter	Wants Education
			Henry Haylett	Servant	Single	22	Footman	Wants Education
			Jane Henley	"	"	22	Servant	Wants Education
			Erab Henley	"	"	24	"	"
			Jane White	Servant	"	22	Cook	Wants Education
			Henry Littlejohn	"	"	22	Housemaid	Wants Education
			Ellen Kimbott	"	"	22	"	Wants Education
			Miss Palmer	"	"	22	Kitchenmaid	Wants Education
			Charles Bouch	"	"	22	Page	Wants Education
			Arthur Street	"	"	22	"	Wants Education

**1881** John Delaware Lewis (52) a barrister not in practice and his wife Teresa (45) lived at Westbury. They had a staff of 9 servants, one of whom was from West Meon, none from East Meon: footman, 2 pages, cook, 2 housemaids, kitchen maid and ladies maid. The 9<sup>th</sup> was the sister of one of the maids and was listed as a visitor.

9	Westbury House	1	John Delaware Lewis	Head	Married	52	Living on his own means	British Subject
			Teresa Lewis	Wife	"	45	"	"
			Henry Haylett	Servant	Single	22	Footman	Wants Education
			Jane Henley	"	"	22	"	"
			Erab Henley	"	"	24	"	"
			Jane White	Servant	"	22	Cook	Wants Education
			Henry Littlejohn	"	"	22	Housemaid	Wants Education
			Ellen Kimbott	"	"	22	"	Wants Education
			Miss Palmer	"	"	22	Kitchenmaid	Wants Education
			Charles Bouch	"	"	22	Page	Wants Education
			Arthur Street	"	"	22	"	Wants Education

**1891** John Delaware Lewis died in 1884. The house was owned by his cousin Herman le Roy-Lewis who had taken on the name Lewis after his cousin's death. He was "living on his own means" and did not describe himself as a farmer. He lived with his wife and two young daughters. They had a staff of 9 servants, none of whom were from East Meon: butler, 2 footmen, cook, 2 housemaids, kitchen maid and two nursemaids.

**1901** The LeRoy Lewis family did not spend the night at Westbury, which was only occupied by two female servants. Herman Leroy-lewis was at his London House, 31 Hanover Square in 1901 with his wife, son, three daughters and 14 servants! He was promoted to Colonel in September and served in the Second Boer War.

**1911.** The family was back in residence in. Colonel Le Roy Lewis lived with his wife Kathleen and four daughters, aged 9 to 22, all of whom were born in London. His house staff was 16 people, none of whom was local. This staff included a butler, chauffeur, two footmen, a hall boy, 2 lady's maids, 4 housemaids, a cook, kitchen maid, scullery maid, 'between' maid and a children's maid. There were two grooms in the groom's cottage and a coachman in the coachman's cottage. The total staff on site was 19 people. By contrast the Talbot Ponsonby family at Langrish House only had 9 domestic servants, and there were only 7 domestic servants and two gardeners at Bereleigh at the time of the census – although as the Gallup family were not in residence at the time of the census. In Edwardian times, Westbury had by some way the largest staff in the parish

Appendix 2. Interview with Denys Ryder

Frogmore Mill, April 12<sup>th</sup> 2013

*Transcribed by Michael Blakstad*



*Westbury House – outbreak of war.*

I was a Londoner – my parents lived in London, in Chelsea – and we were on holiday down at Thurlston, in South Devon, on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1939. It was on that day that Dad invited us into one of the rooms there, and he got out the wireless, it was called a wireless in those days, and we were asked to sit down and listen to an announcement. The announcement was from a man called Neville Chamberlain, and he got up and he said that he had been to see the Chancellor of Germany, and that if Germany had not withdrawn their forces from the Polish territory by 11 o'clock on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, then Germany must consider itself at war with Great Britain. We declared war on Germany, not Germany on us, a point which a lot of people don't remember. That was a great moment for me because at that very time, German forces were in Poland and I can visualise my father turning to my mother and saying "It is about time that Denys went to school with his brothers." School of course was Westbury House, which is at the western end of East Meon parish where we now live, and that is the story of how we came here. I was seven and a half at the time. Now, Westbury, before the First World War was in the hands of the Leroy Lewis family – I don't know how they acquired it – but in 1925, Thomas Whitehead and his sister acquired the house as a private preparatory school for boys. They stayed there until the mid---60s, when they handed the school over to a former pupil of theirs, Sherrard Manners, who I think a lot of us in the village may remember, Sherrard and Jane Manners took on and ran the school until 1977, when it closed, either due to lack of pupils or financial reasons. A school with 70 pupils was probably unprofitable, but that is what happened, and that is where I came, ten days later than the third of September 1939.

*Meon Valley Railway*

At that time the school and all its activities centred towards West Meon, because the church was there, the railway was there – a very important railway because it was the Fareham to Alton line, known as the Meon Valley flyer line, and I have been on it many a time, going forward and backwards to school.



Denys with two brothers

*Life at Westbury House School*

Westbury had a real influence on my life, and my memories of the war years at Westbury between 1939 and August 1945 were of years in which I had a real freedom. We were allowed the ability to roam there, because outside the house was 125 acres in which boys could go on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons,

which were the half days of the week, boys could go and play and bully each other and climb trees and build tree houses and did everything out there until we were called back into the school.

#### *Discipline*

Oh well, discipline. You're talking about when I became a naughty boy and Tom Whitehead, the headmaster, decided to beat me. Tom had two places where he beat boys, one was in his study, and he had the cane on the top of a tall cupboard, a drinks cupboard, he had there, and the other was in the squash court – at the top of the house we had a squash court, right next door to his bedroom, and inside there he had a very whippy cane, and he had occasion to beat me once on two occasions within 24 hours – I can't remember why I had been naughty the first time, but obviously the second time I had annoyed him tremendously doing something so he beat me – I got three strokes first time, which didn't really hurt me so much, but then I got three strokes the second time when he beat me, and that really hurt because it hit the same place

#### *Sister Edith*

Now Edith was a very interesting character. She was a spinster, very much so. She was in charge of all feeding arrangements, as well as teaching us how to play the piano. She was what one might call a bit of a battle axe, she had a well---puckered upper lip – it made her look like a concentration frau, if one can put it that way. But having said that, when I left school, I became very good friends with Tom Whitehead and his sister Edith and we remained so until his death in the early 1960s and hers in the late 1980s, so I had a long association with Tom and Edith Whitehead.

#### *The War in Evidence*

I think there must be four occasions on which war affected us. One very much affected me, because I can remember a day on which a German fighter plane was being chased, I think by a Hurricane, and they came across the roof at tree-top level. And as it passed over the school, the Hurricane took a shot at the German fighter which was chasing, and the canon shells, they all fell out of the sky and fell right down in between us – I was on the lawn there with some friends, and these shells fell between us, and they were quite large shells, 100 millimetres or four inches long, the casings, and if they had fallen on our heads, you wouldn't be interviewing me now.

The second incident was when friendly fighters, from Goodwood and Tangmere, caught a whole group of enemy bombers somewhere over the East Meon/West Meon area, we believe it was over Seven Copse, Seven Copse is where the sewage works is now – it was in the form of a 7, a very clear 7 of woodland --- they were probably doing a loop, bypassing Goodwood and Tangmere air fields on the Sussex coast, and decided to come down on the rear of Portsmouth, and drop their bombs and away they went. And of course the fighters caught them, and you get one of them caught by fighters with a lot of bombs on board, and the fighters caught them, and the next thing we knew was that Hen Wood was alight. Hen Wood is now Westbury Forest. Westbury Forest at the moment has big trees, 50 feet high, but at that time it was a series of small little hummocks,

anthills, it was downland, ungrazed downland, there were a few little bushes and trees in there, and they dropped these incendiary bombs, and the whole area went alight that night and it burned for two or three days after that. Then we were allowed out of the school, on one of our afternoons, and the Headmaster said 'No, not to go into Hen Wood'. Of course, boys are boys and you know what exactly happened, we all went in there. There was one lad, I can't remember what his name was now, what we were doing was to find these fin shells, of the incendiaries, they were small things, about six inches, and we were trying to pick these up as souvenirs, and one of these boys picked up a complete bomb, unexploded, and started throwing it around.

The third time was when we believe the German bombers were trying to cut the Fareham to Alton line. There were lots of bridges along that line, and lots of tunnels as well, and the most important part of that line was the viaduct – it has now been taken down, but you can see the remnants of it there, just before you get to Doctor's Lane, going into West Meon from East Meon. They came one night and they used land mines, the only thing they could use. The nearest they came to it was on John and Henry Marks' farm, about two miles away, they weren't very good with their navigation, and they dropped their land mine, and when these land mines went off, it was really a tremendous noise – we heard it in Westbury – and the whole hillside was very visible to everybody, from the East Meon/West Meon road, right up till the 1960s, when I think the Marks decided to fill it in.

I suppose the last of the interesting events which happened, near the end of the War – I think it was a week or ten days before D-Day, when we heard the noise of vehicles entering Westbury Drive, and entering the gates to the park, close to the house. This was the Canadians. At that time there were armed forces of all nations, situated right along the roads, right from London, along all the roads until the coast, where they were going to embark. The Canadians came and parked in Westbury Park. They stayed there a few days, we were told not to go near them, I don't quite know why, of course I do know now why, and those people moved off. What is interesting to note is that a year or so ago from today, we took down the old cricket pavilion on the Recreation Ground in East Meon, we were taking down part of the old packing cases of the Canadian Army, and I have souvenirs of it here, and they were old packing cases that were used to make the old cricket pavilion in East Meon.

#### *Storage of records.*

Westbury is a very extraordinary house, it is only two rooms wide although it is a large, long and high building, three storeys high – four if you include the basement, and it was in the basement, where we had our changing rooms and the larder and all the other things down there, there was a great big dark, empty room with no windows in it at all, and inside there was stored a whole lot of records. Now we boys, when we heard they were records, thought they were 78 playing records, and of course they weren't, they were worthwhile records come down from London – they went all over the country of course, the records, in case of bombing – and we sat down there whenever there was an air raid, and we sat down there until the air raid finished.