

# THE COCKPIT



A Publication of the Chislehurst Society (founded 1934)

The Cockpit, on Chislehurst Common, has been the traditional meeting place for Chislehurst people on all great occasions, from time immemorial

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## The Mysterious Pipe on Chislehurst Common

Andrew Belsey has been working on the hydrology and geology of Chislehurst Common and sent us many notes earlier this year. Eventually he hopes to provide a detailed analysis of his findings. Meanwhile, in the Scadbury Special summer edition of *Cockpit*, we included a brief piece about the 'Mystery Pipe' (pictured here) in connection with research that he has been pursuing for some time. We also included his comment on Arthur Battle's statement in *Edwardian Chislehurst* that 'a tributary of the Ravensbourne ran alongside the Annunciation Vicarage fence'.



Andrew quite correctly pointed out the impossibility of this, as Chislehurst 'is on the Darent side of the Ravensbourne/Darent watershed'.

We can add a little to this, from studying the Editor's personal copy of the 1919 edition of the 6-inch Geological Survey of this area. It shows in incomparable detail every then-known surface stream, indicated by blue lines, and it can be clearly seen that no such stream existed. Nonetheless, it seems significant that there was a stream that started in Willow Grove, not very far away, and flowed down into the Kyd Brook and similarly, not far away, another stream is shown starting at the junction of Green Lane and Belmont Lane, which flowed north and east to join the stream that watered the grounds of Foxbury and Kemnal Manor. Until near the end of the 19th century Red Hill Farm pond once occupied much of the low ground at the foot of Red Hill, and this feature was presumably fed by springs in the Blackheath gravel beds that could perhaps be associated with the stream mentioned in Willow Grove. This pond was at its widest at the foot of the hill and tapered away down the High Street, terminating

roughly opposite the church, and this suggests a source nearer Willow Grove. Any interested reader can stand at this spot and look towards Red Hill, when it can be seen quite clearly how much of a dip still remains in the road, in spite of the fact that the pond was filled in when the top of the hill was removed in 1900, when the new White Horse Inn was built. Certainly this area can still become very wet, for the Editor recalls that when he was working at Chislehurst Library there was an automatic pump in the boiler house beneath the building that ensured the efficient disposal of any surplus water seeping in. There was also a history of flooding in the Recreation Ground in times past. So Arthur Battle may well have seen a stream in the High Street of the sort that flows irregularly, even though the pond was by then long gone, and was only wrong in his assumption of where it was heading. There is little doubt that historically the local water table was much higher in his day, and the Common was rather wetter, as is confirmed by our old map. This map, incidentally, was one of many similar treasures that came to us after the death of Dot Lawrence, sent by a kind friend.

But to return to the pipe, Andrew has come to a positive conclusion. He writes:

‘I was never in any real doubt that the mysterious pipe on Chislehurst Common was a sewer ventilation pipe, but only now I have discovered that the name for such things is “stink pipe”. Writing about the River Effra, one of London’s rivers now lost by being culverted, Paul Talling says:

‘The course of the river is relatively easy to follow from Brixton to the Thames at Vauxhall. A number of Victorian “stink pipes”, lamppost-like tubes that lifted the overwhelmingly awful sewer stench away from street level, line the route, including ones along the Dulwich Road at the junction with Chaucer Road and Brixton Water Lane.’ (*RH Books, 2011, p.56*).

‘They are not that rare: plenty of information and photographs can be found on the Internet. Some pipes in London and Wolverhampton are even Grade II listed, and let us not forget that pretty well every house has something similar, usually as a continuation to roof level of the WC outlet, hence the name ‘soil and vent pipe.’ The additional function of these is to prevent water in the U-bend being siphoned out.

‘Still, this does not explain why there is a lone pipe on the Common, nor whether it is still effective. Given its position, it would need to be cleared regularly, otherwise it could become blocked by twigs, leaves, birds’ nests, etc. – assuming the birds could stand the stink. As the pipe is part of the sewage system, it is the responsibility of the water company, locally Thames Water. Perhaps someone ought to consider applying for listed status, especially as it is on the Common.’

## Woodlands, Ashfield Lane, and the Webster family who lived there

As Webster's Pond has been mentioned as one, although erroneous, solution to the Mystery Pipe Problem, it seems appropriate to say something about the Webster family, their house in Ashfield Lane, the pond bearing their name that stood opposite on the corner of Ashfield Lane and Kemnal Road, and the cottages nearby that for so long bore the family's name. Thanks to Andrew Thomas, (who was co-author with Tony Allen of the early drafts of their *History of Kemnal Road*), we now know a great deal more about that area, the houses and their occupants. Also, and of considerable importance, we now have a much better understanding of Kemnal Manor itself, which has been rightly recognised as having had a major influence upon the development of the most important of Chislehurst's three manorial estates, Scadbury itself. This will be covered in a separate article at a future date. So thank you Andrew Thomas, for the following account of Woodlands and the Webster family. Two of the photographs reproduced for this article were taken between 1915 and 1919, and are from a collection held by Mr Thomas.

John and Eliza Webster moved into their new house, 'Woodlands, on the Ashfield Lane', as soon as it was completed in 1871. They had been living in Highgate, but with three children, all under 10 years of age, they wanted the space and quiet of country life. The railway had recently been extended to Chislehurst, so that John would find it easy to get into London, where his hosiery business was booming.

### The house

Woodlands (pictured here) was a striking house. It looked southward over a pond on the corner of Ashfield Lane and Kemnal Road, and beyond to the Commons, while behind it, to the north, lay Wood Heath, an area of wood and scrubland owned by Earl Sydney, though not forming part of the Commons. When Woodlands was sold in 1923, the sales particulars described it as '*a spacious house, with Stabling, Outbuildings, Garage accommodation, ... beautifully Timbered Gardens, and Grounds, Woodland and Rich Park-like Pasture*', and as being in a '*Picked Position, on high ground and gravel soil directly overlooking the Beautiful Common.*' In all there were over five acres of grounds.

The house was built of brick, with a slate roof. It had three floors and a



cellar. The front entrance hall was long, 27ft 11ins, with a side hall to the garden entrance, a lavatory and W.C. It led directly to the large drawing room, which overlooked the grounds behind the house. The dining room at the front, 25ft 7ins by 17ft 9ins, had a *'handsome Italian marble mantelpiece'*. The remainder of the ground floor was given over to *'fully adequate'* Domestic offices, with a kitchen, fitted with *'double oven Range and Dresser'*, scullery with sink and a rain water pump, larder, pantry, tradesmen's entrance and servants' W.C.

There were five bedrooms on the first floor, with a bathroom (with fireplace), W.C., and a housemaid's pantry, while on the upper floor there were several rooms for linen, lumber, and servants' bedrooms.

By 1923, the house was somewhat behind the times. While there was mains gas and water, there was no electricity. The sanitary arrangements were on the cesspool system, *'and are believed to be in good order'*. Somewhat apologetically, the particulars point out that *'it would be easy to install main drainage'*.

The house was surrounded by well-maintained gardens and grounds. The formal garden area around the house had pretty flowerbeds and borders, while beyond was a full-sized tennis court, and beyond that a large, well stocked kitchen garden, orchard and *'Park-like Grass Land'*. The remainder of the grounds was given over to woodland with *'innumerable fine Trees and Shrubs'*, with *'much of the Timber of mature growth and excellent proportions'*.

Finally there were outbuildings around a paved stable yard, a double garage, stabling for two horses, harness rooms, fruit room, workshop, brick potato store, and a coal cellar. There were two living rooms and a W.C. for outdoor staff.

### **The Residents**

John and Eliza (she, pictured later in life, right) were married in 1859 in Staffordshire. John was 39 and Eliza was 26. John was born in Wainfleet, Lincolnshire, and he had set up an outfitters business with his elder brother, William, in London, which suggests that the family had a background in cloth. He married into business, since his wife was a daughter of William Machin, who ran the Waterloo Potteries at Burslem in Stoke on Trent, and they lived there for a while after marrying.



In 1861 John decided to set up a hosiery business in London. The family moved to Highgate, where they had three children, and then a further two after moving to Woodlands. The children were: Eliza, born in 1861, who married Harry Richardson, in 1901, Maud, a boarder at a ladies' school in Brighton, and still at home, single, in 1911, John William, the eldest son, born in 1865, joined his father in the hosiery business, but moved to live in Croydon in 1890, Harry, born in Chislehurst in 1873, an art photographer, who moved to Plaistow Road in Bromley, and Fred, born in 1876, who was still living at home in 1911.

John Webster died in 1896, and left a life interest in the house to his wife, who continued to live there until her death in the autumn of 1922, after which Woodlands was sold by the trustees of John's will.

The house was occupied after 1923 by Cyrus and Dora Adam, lately of Calcutta, and later by Thomas Smith (who in 1933 had an altercation with the trustees of a piece of land on Kemnal Road, and lost). For a while the house appears to have been converted into flats, as so many large houses were at this time, but by the time of the Second World War the house was occupied by the Christian Missionary Society (CMS) and renamed Liskeard Lodge. This was linked to Foxbury, which the CMS had acquired at about the same time. Foxbury was a training centre for female missionaries, while Liskeard Lodge was for men. In 1968 the CMS moved its training functions to Birmingham, and Liskeard Lodge was sold for development. Shortly afterwards Woodlands was demolished, and the houses of Roehampton Drive and Liskeard Close were built in its place.

The Webster family name lingered here for a while. The three cottages to the east of Oak Cottage were known as Webster's Cottages, and the pond on the corner of Ashfield Lane and Kemnal Road was called Webster's Pond, but this pond (shown in a postcard below) has now gone, and the cottages have been renovated and renamed.



## **Chislehurst Society Publications for sale by post.**

*Prices include postage and packing You can order by phone, post or email. Some items are now available for purchase online via our website: [www.chislehurst-society.org.uk](http://www.chislehurst-society.org.uk)  
A free bookmark (worth £1.50) will be given to any orders received before 24 December 2011.*

Chislehurst – a Guide to some Heritage Buildings, by Roy Hopper. 1996 £2.50  
*Twelve buildings relating to Open House days in 1996. Only a few copies remaining!*

Chislehurst – no Ordinary Suburb (DVD). 2007 £12.00  
*Modern Chislehurst and some of its historical background. Runs for 23 minutes.*

Discover Chislehurst and its Environs, by Darrell Spurgeon with Roy Hopper. 2007  
£12.00

*Detailed architectural walks including neighbouring areas.*

Francis Murray of Chislehurst, by Jean Pailing. 2002 £10.00  
*As Rector from 1846 to 1902, his life illuminates Victorian Chislehurst. A valuable supplement to Webb's History of Chislehurst.*

The French Imperial Family in Chislehurst, by John Mercer. 2002 £3.50  
*Napoleon III, Eugénie and Prince Imperial at Camden Place, 1870 - 1880.*

Heritage Map of Chislehurst. (Rolled, in tube) 2000 £4.00  
*Will look at its best framed and hung on your wall. 30 x 42 cm*

Historical Walks Around Chislehurst, by Alice Sennett. 1995 £3.50  
*Our best-selling tour of Chislehurst, featuring two walks.*

In Trust for Chislehurst, by Clifford Platt. (Commons and National Trust lands).  
1995 £3.00  
*Enhances the understanding of Chislehurst's hard-won open spaces.*

Kemnal Road – a History, by Tony Allen and Andrew Thomas. 3rd edition 2011  
£7.50  
*Highly detailed account of its growth and development. (Includes Kemnal Manor)*

A Walk From Sidcup to Chislehurst Along the Old Road, by Roy Hopper. 2003  
£4.00  
*From the Black Horse, Sidcup, via the line of old Perry Street, to the Bull's Head*

***Two Orpington & District Archaeological Society publications of interest, also available via the ODAS website: [www.odas.org.uk](http://www.odas.org.uk)***

Scadbury Manor and its History and Archaeology 2009 edition £1.50  
*ODAS' account of the home of the Lord of the Manor of Scadbury and Chislehurst.*

Pure Aerated Waters: Chislehurst Mineral Waters Company, by Janet Clayton. 2006. £3.00

*ODAS' account of a local factory that was widely advertised from late Victorian times to the mid-20th century.*

***New this year: two items by local author Yvonne Auld, obtainable from Paper Lane in the High Street. We regret that at present we are not able to maintain our own stock of these items.***

For King and Country: The Men of Chislehurst Who Fell in The Great War, 1914–1919, by Yvonne Auld Complete one volume edition. 2010. £7.00

*This is an excellent contribution to Chislehurst history, with brief biographical details of almost every man named on the Great War part of the War Memorial. In addition there are introductory sections about choosing, constructing and unveiling the Memorial. There is also a brief account of the Memorials displayed in the Annunciation, Methodist and St Nicholas Churches.*

The History of Chislehurst, by E A Webb, G W Miller and J Beckwith (CD format). 1899 first edition, complete on CD with all illustrations, tables and maps. 2011. £6.99.

*Now available for the first time on a searchable CD created by Yvonne Auld.*



### ***A note on Webb's History of Chislehurst.***

*The History of Chislehurst* was published in 1899 in a print run of 500 copies. Copies very occasionally come up for sale through local bookshops, and copies can also be found on websites such as [www.abebooks.co.uk](http://www.abebooks.co.uk).

Prices vary according to the condition of the book and its bindings, but it is rare to be able to find a first edition for less than £200, and copies signed by one of the authors may fetch above £300.

***We have been contacted by a private individual in Beckenham who has a copy of the first edition which he would like to sell. We are advised that it is in good condition, and the seller will be pleased to show it to anyone interested in buying it. Please contact us if you are interested.***

A reproduction of the book was published in 1999, and this can also be found for sale from time to time, often attracting prices above £100.

It is now also possible to buy reprints of the 1899 edition, which are newly printed facsimiles of the original book. These sell for as little as £22, and can be found on [www.abebooks.co.uk](http://www.abebooks.co.uk) and other second-hand book websites.



## A one-pipe problem: Sherlock Holmes visits Chislehurst

We, as responsible and conscientious Editors, are acutely aware that the case of the Mysterious Pipe on Chislehurst Common is beginning to assume Holmesian proportions. It therefore seems not inappropriate at this festive time of the year that the Public should be reminded of the never to be forgotten day when the Great Consulting Detective actually visited Chislehurst with his faithful companion, Doctor John Watson, as recounted by the latter in his story *The Adventure of*



*the Abbey Grange*. That these accounts by Watson have been published under the pseudonym of ‘Arthur Conan Doyle’ should not blind us to the fact that had it not been for Watson’s untiring devotion to, and admiration of Holmes and his methods of detection, the stories would never have seen the light of day. It was in order to preserve a degree of respect for the bereaved wife of the victim, that neither the precise location of the house nor its real name were revealed, and this has thus given rise to a great deal of argument that has raged ever since among Holmes’ and Watson’s many admirers and critics, as to exactly where the Abbey Grange was located.

It seems to us that one has simply to read carefully the details of the journey made by the Illustrious Pair from Chislehurst Station to Marsham in Kent, where the Abbey Grange was situated, then absorb the description of the house, then inspect maps of the locality and deduce from them its most likely location. Nothing, one might suppose, could be more simple, or more in keeping with the Methods of the Great Detective himself.

Let us therefore first recount that journey to remind our readers of the vital details, as told by Dr Watson, a truly iconic and thrilling moment from the large body of work that he produced. It was, he tells us, ‘on a bitterly cold and frosty morning during the winter of ’97 that I was







awakened by a tugging at my shoulder. It was Holmes. The candle in his hand shone upon his eager, stooping face and told me at a glance that something was amiss.' 'Come, Watson, come!' he cried. 'The game is afoot. Not a word! Into your clothes and come!'

Ten minutes later they were in a cab on their way to Charing Cross Station. There they consumed some hot tea, and took their places on the Kentish train. Holmes produced a note from his pocket that was tellingly addressed from 'Abbey Grange, Marsham, Kent.' He then explained as much as he was able to Watson, which apparently so absorbed them both that in no time at all they had arrived at Chislehurst Station (an early photograph of the station is shown below).

Now we have our only clues as to where in Chislehurst, or in the vicinity of its station, the Illustrious Pair are bound. Clearly Chislehurst is the nearest station to Marsham. Watson explains 'A drive of a couple of miles through narrow country lanes brought us to a park gate, which was opened for us by an old lodge keeper, whose haggard face bore the reflection of some great disaster. The avenue ran through a noble park, between lines of ancient elms, and ended in a low, widespread house, pillared in front after the fashion of Palladio. The central part was evidently of a great age and shrouded in ivy, but the large windows showed that modern changes had been carried out, and one wing of the house appeared to be entirely new.'

We must first analyse the actual cab journey, briefly as it is described. A couple of miles through narrow country lanes brings them to a park gate in Marsham. Then we should ask what houses, particularly





after the fashion of Palladio' may be found within a radius of two miles from Chislehurst Station? Inspection of a map suggests a couple of possibilities; Sundridge Park and Foots Cray Place are both described as being in 'Palladian style,' both are set in areas of parkland, and both were then accessible only by narrow country lanes. Camden Place has also been suggested, perhaps more for its 'low, widespread' appearance than its distance from the railway station. Elmstead Woods Station, which is quite near Sundridge Park, was not opened until 1904, and the idea of arriving at Chislehurst and then retracing part of the journey to get to Sundridge Park itself seems very unlikely. We cannot alter the written fact that it was to Chislehurst that Holmes chose to travel for the first part of the journey.

To the present writer, Foots Cray Place seems very much more likely what was in Watson's mind when he came to write up the Abbey Grange case-notes, because of that briefly described journey from Chislehurst to Foots Cray, which involves more than two miles of narrow country lanes. The road runs uphill from the station, then over the Common into Perry Street, and from there into Chislehurst Road and The Green, following the line of an old road into Sidcup High Street. From here we enter Rectory Lane, running down into Foots Cray Village and actually following the mutual parish boundaries of Chislehurst and Foots Cray. Near the bottom of the hill in Rectory Lane is the entrance to Foots Cray Place, with another third of a mile to go through the park, before arriving at the house. It was truly Palladian in style, very like Mereworth Castle, but not at all like Watson's description, except for the pillars. But then Watson was carefully doing his best to conceal the true identity of the house, as well as its location, as we have already determined. This particular location at Foots Cray also had a convenient pond, an important feature in the story.

Another clue to consider is the 'place-name' of Marsham. In 1897 the Lord of the Manor living at Frogna, just off the possible route taken by the Intrepid Pair, was Robert Marsham-Townshend. It is very likely that Watson was already acquainted with this widely travelled gentleman, and his original surname, Marsham, is very suggestive of a place-name. As a Kentish place name this is admittedly fictitious, though it does feature in Mr Bartholomew's excellent Gazetteer in the counties of East Sussex and Norfolk. If we then add the likelihood that Watson 'borrowed' the





*Foots Cray Place*

generally rather low, widespread appearance of the former home of the Imperial family, particularly as seen across the golf course behind it, and adding the Palladian touches from Foots Cray, he was, we feel sure, following in his mind's eye the route we have already outlined, from the station to the northernmost frontier of the parish of Chislehurst. In this way, we end up with the *Adventure of the Abbey Grange*, complete with all its intriguing and misleading 'clues'. Those readers who possess a copy of Messrs Webb, Miller and Beckwith's inspiring *History of Chislehurst*, will know that it includes a map of the parish drawn by Mr Miller, and thus can see for themselves the way in which the mind of the present writer is inclined.

In conclusion, it is also true that many authors of novels, whilst thinking of a real landscape or town as a setting, will quite often subtly alter the landscape and add a touch or two of imagination to enhance their tale. There is no harm in that, and it provides endless topics of argument, not to mention the educational value of poring over an atlas in pursuit of these places. Nonetheless, we should never forget that we are entering the world of fiction, of imagination, where authors are free to borrow whatever bits and pieces they like from anywhere else to add a touch of verisimilitude to their tales. Long may it be so!



## **David Lockton's Chislehurst Memories: comments and corrections**

The nature of the Scadbury Special edition of *Cockpit* prevented inclusion of responses to David Lockton's Chislehurst Memories, which we published in our Winter edition 2010. It is regrettable that it took so long for Mr Lockton's memories to be published that he had died by the time they appeared. However, his son responded with the comment that his father would have been proud to see his memories in print. Because that is exactly how David Lockton wrote them, from memory, it is not surprising that there were some errors.

It was mentioned that Douglas Wright, the famous Kent cricketer, married one of the Beverley Sisters (pictured right). Several people wrote to say that it was not Douglas but Billy Wright, the famous footballer. Mr N R Lobb expressed this eloquently with his comment 'Whilst it is entirely possible that Douglas Wright may have married one of the twin Beverley Sisters, I feel that the enclosed picture



of Billy Wright – for many years Captain of England and Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club – suggests that his marriage to Joy makes any other Wright/Beverley connection rather unlikely'. Nicely put, Mr Lobb.

Roger Faux comments on the café in Park Road owned by Mr Wright, but whilst he adds the same comment as Mr Lobb, he also mentions, 'We lived in Finchley and the Beverley sisters all lived in North London'. With regard to the banana importers in Old Perry Street, other readers pointed out that this was never Fyffes but Hancocks, afterwards becoming Jamaica Producers before HSW took over the premises.

Mr R J Dungate responded with an interesting clutch of further reminiscences, relating to Coldharbour Farm and the removal business of George Ward, both mentioned by David Lockton. Such reminiscences are always of value; because of space restrictions these will be held over until our next edition. They will be added to a large quantity of similar reminiscences, gathered around the time of the Millennium. Whenever your Editor lacks inspiration, he will in future draw upon this treasury, so look out for Mr Dungate's memories next time, and those of other contributors as and when there is space to publish them.

***You can contact The Chislehurst Society by email: [membership@chislehurst-society.org.uk](mailto:membership@chislehurst-society.org.uk)  
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