

GARFIELD HOUSE

41/43 PARK ROAD, SITTINGBOURNE

Notes on the ownership extracted from the deeds

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The following notes, extracted from the deeds of the property, provide an outline history of the site & the building which stands upon it. Daniel Wills, who built the house, was a brick maker & barge builder who, in partnership with Henry Packham, (great-grandfather to Robert Dixon & me) founded the business of Wills & Packham which they brought from Rainham to Sittingbourne around 1870

The building was named after James Abram Garfield, President of the United States of America who was shot by an assassin in 1881 – the year when the house was built. Daniel Wills & Henry Packham were admirers of Garfield & of William McKinley, another assassinated President, after whom they named one of their barges.

I have extracted the following from the deeds:

28th April 1806

THOMAS TONGE

by his will (after making pecuniary legacies & bequeathing a freehold estate in Shottenden Green in the parish of Chilham) bequeathed the rest of his estate to his nephew

WILLIAM VALLANCE

16th January 1807

probate in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury by

WILLIAM VALLANCE

13th 14th August 1818

WILLIAM VALLANCE

& his eldest son THOMAS TONGE VALLANCE

lease & release (the customary means of conveying freeholds in those days) of “Sittingbourne Fields”

30 acres in Sittingbourne & Milton abutting towards the **north** on the great road leading from Sittingbourne to Rochester & on lands then late of John Brenchley Esqre & then of Mr John Smith & on lands then late of Thomas Tonge gentleman & then of the said William Vallance & on lands then late of James Tonge gentleman & then of Mr Thomas Walker towards the **east** on lands of the said John Brenchley & the said John Smith & on lands sometime then since of Mary Trott widow then of William Twopenny Esqre towards the **south** on a piece of land of the said William Vallance & on lands then late of Gabriel Harpur Esqre & then of Andrew Hawes Bradley towards the **west** on the King's Highway leading from Milton to Tunstall & on the lands then late of the said James Tonge & then of the said Thomas Walker & on the said land then late of the said Thomas Tonge & then of the said William Vallance

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& also 7 acres abutting towards the **north** "Sittingbourne Fields" above mentioned
towards the **east** on lands then late of the said Mary Trott & of the said William Twopenny & on the said piece of land sometime then since of the said Gabriel Harpur & then of the said Andrew Hawes Bradley
towards the **west** on the King's Highway from Milton to Tunstall
towards the **south** on the piece of land last mentioned then late of the said Mary Trott & then of the said William Twopenny.

Most of the adjoining land was held by substantial land owners; Harpur & Bradley were successive owners of Gore Court; William Twopenny lived at Woodstock

30 th December 1831	Will of THOMAS TONGE VALLANCE to SARAH VALLANCE (his wife) for life & WILLIAM VALLANCE (his father) & JAMES VALLANCE (his brother) as trustees to sell & then to his children equally
29 th May 1839	SARAH VALLANCE died
27 th October 1843	THOMAS TONGE VALLANCE died

The following entries in Italic have been struck through on the abstract of title as being irrelevant to Garfield House, but are included as being of interest to local historians.

<i>20th November 1843</i>	<i>will of WILLIAM VALLANCE (see above) bequeathing his estate in Stamford Middlesex, Westbrook, Lydd & Old Romney to his son, JAMES VALLANCE Executors: were his wife MARY ANN & his surviving sons JAMES & WILLIAM</i>
<i>21st February 1844</i>	<i>probate of will of THOMAS TONGE VALLANCE obtained by JAMES VALLANCE (his brother)</i>
<i>23rd February 1849</i>	<i>WILLIAM VALLANCE died</i>
<i>16th March 1849</i>	<i>probate of his will obtained by his surviving sons</i>
<i>5th August 1857</i>	<i>by his will JAMES VALLANCE bequeathed all his freehold & copyhold hereditaments in Kent to his nephew THOMAS WILLIAM VALLANCE (son of THOMAS TONGE VALLANCE) subject to a life tenancy of his dwellinghouse at Sittingbourne for his wife (CATHERINE MARGARET) Named as Executors: his wife, his said nephew, brother WILLIAM VALLANCE & GEORGE GROSVENOR</i>
<i>18th November 1858</i>	<i>Probate obtained</i>

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28th May 1860

CATHERINE MARGARET VALLANCE, of Cavendish Square, Middlesex & Sittingbourne, widow of JAMES VALLANCE & Rev WILLIAM VALLANCE of Southchurch, Essex, (his brother) *presumably as Executrix & Executor of the late JAMES VALLANCE & the children of THOMAS TONGE VALLANCE (including THOMAS WILLIAM VALLANCE acting as administrator for his late brother JAMES ATTWOOD VALLANCE) conveyed to the said THOMAS WILLIAM VALLANCE (in return for certain specified payments made to his sisters £983 to MARGARET ISABELLA, £925 to SARAH ANN MARIA, £985 to HARRIET & £728 - 13s - 6d divided between the three of them for their shares in the estate of their late brother JAMES ATTWOOD VALLANCE, the shares held by his sisters in the land, hereditaments & premises conveyed to THOMAS TONGE VALLANCE by his father WILLIAM VALLANCE in August 1818 as above.*

NB the abstract makes the point that Margaret & Harriet were married & hence their respective husbands Cuthbert Edward Ellison & William Augustus Chaplin were parties thereto, as was Watson Coare, gentleman of King's Bench Walk in the Inner Temple, acting perhaps, on behalf of the unmarried Sarah Ann Maria or as joint administrator of the estate of James Attwood Vallance or in some other capacity which is not made clear.

27th July 1864

THOMAS WILLIAM VALLANCE sold to WILLIAM MAILE, auctioneer of Faversham who bought with WILLIAM JAMES HARRIS accountant for the sum of £8,000 some land extending to 39 acres, 3 roods & 20 perches with 13 cottages abutting on the **north** the Chatham & Canterbury turnpike road on the **east** lands belonging to the representatives of John Smith, Edward Twopenny & George Smeed on the **west** to the Queen's highway from Milton to Tunstall on the **south** to land belonging to the said George Smeed, the said Edward Twopenny & the said highway leading to Tunstall

Smeed & Twopenny occupied Gore Court & Woodstock respectively

except the premises then used a "lock up"
The land was then occupied by John Jarrett & the cottages by William Smith & others

15th August 1864

Statutory declaration by GEORGE PAYNE gentleman (aged 52) that he was employed by THOMAS TONGE VALLANCE from before Vallance's marriage until his death & confirming that the above-mentioned 5 children were issue of the marriage & no more & that all of the children survived him.

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28th June 1866

FRANCIS RUSSELL & LEWIS DAVIS WIGAN sold to WILLIAM MAILE & WILLIAM JAMES HARRIS a piece of land on the south side of the road leading from Sittingbourne to Rochester 36 feet wide, 56 feet deep, abutting on the **south** the land described above on the **east** part of the said land “since sold off to Messrs Shepherd & Neame” & on the **west** to part of the said “since sold to Samuel Nuggleton together with the messuage or tenement ... formerly used as a lock up”

30th July 1872

WILLIAM JAMES HARRIS bought for £4,154 8s 0d WILLIAM MAILE's half share in the remaining land (34 acres 0 roods 20 perches of the original 39 acres, 3 roods 20 perches with 2 narrow strips of land, of which they had reserved some 3 feet of width or thereabouts on the east & north sides) through & over which they had “*made & completed certain roads or streets then called Park Road & William Street & other roads not named according to the plan*”

Park Road led to Gore Court Park. Perhaps William Street was named after the developers

30th September 1880

WILLIAM JAMES HARRIS, gentleman sold to DANIEL WILLS, Brickmaker a parcel of land on the east side of Park Road, Sittingbourne for the sum of £150 Plan shows frontage of 60 feet & that Harris retained the land to the **west**, H Iron (or, as he is described in the narrative wording, Henry Irons) held land to the **south** flank (131 feet) & W Cremer to the **north** flank (129 feet) Mr Wills covenants that “*no house or other building to beerected on the said piece .or parcel of land..... shall be of less value than two hundred pounds or less than three storeys high.....no such house.....shall project beyond the building line.....no such houseshall....be used as....a house for the sale of Ale Beer Porter Stout or other Malt Liquors or as a Beer House, Public House, or Inn Refreshment House or Victualling House*”

No fear of any such capers - Wills & Packham were strictly teetotal – unlike other barge builders, their launch parties were very restrained occasions.

Wills also undertook to maintain fences 6 foot high on the **south** flank & **rear** boundaries.

Signatures witnessed by Allan Tassell solicitor of Faversham

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- 18th October 1881 WILLIAM JAMES HARRIS, gentleman sold to DANIEL WILLS, brickmaker, a parcel of land “*on the Vallenciennes estate*” (abutting on the **east** side a road, recently laid out by the said W J Harris) for the sum of £126
One might suppose that the name of the estate (with its particular spelling) derives from the family name of Vallance & gave rise to the name of Valenciennes Road
Plan shows frontage of 60 feet to what became Albany Street (& later Albany Road) & a similar width to the **rear** abutting the parcel bought in 1881. Harris retained the land on either side, with a depth of 125 feet 6 inches to the **north** & 128 feet 6 inches to the **south**.
Mr Wills undertook covenants similar to those above
The witness, as before, was Allan Tassell, solicitor of Faversham
- 19th September 1912 Will of DANIEL WILLS named as Executors his sons GEORGE HENRY WILLS, JABEZ WILLS & his friend CHARLES CREMER & gave a life interest to his wife ELIZA WILLS in certain parts of his estate
- 7th July 1920 codicil revoked appointment of CHARLES CREMER & the bequest made to him
- 1st November 1920 DANIEL WILLS died
- 12th April 1922 said GEORGE HENRY WILLS of 52 Park Road, Sittingbourne, Company Director & said JABEZ WILLS of 8 Royal Esplanade, Westbrook, Margate, Brick Manufacturer conveyed to ERNEST ALBERT CROWHURST Retired Superintendent of Police in consideration of £1,130 a “parcel of landbounded on the **west** by Park Road....having a frontageof sixty feet ..bounded on the **east** by ...Albany Street...having a frontage of sixty feet
bounded on the **north** in part by land owned by William Cremer & in part by Edward Bishop containing 254 feet 6 inches on the **south** in part land owned by Miriam Taylor & in part by Executors of John Stonehouse Budds containing 259 feet 6 ins together with the messuage known as “Garfield House, Park Road, Sittingbourne erected thereon – *where the buyer was living at the time.*
The land remained subject to the same covenants as before.
Witnessed by F V Budden Solicitor of Sittingbourne – partner in the firm of Harris, Budden & Harris

In due course Mr Budden left the firm under a cloud, because of excessive consumption of alcohol. The problem had grown unbeknown to Budden's partners, one of whom, Cecil Harris, described the problem afterwards to a client of the firm as “the worm in the wood”.

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George Webb married Miss Murton of Tunstall House, in which building he was practising as a Land Agent & Land Surveyor in the mid 19th century, continuing, I have been told, the practice begun by his father-in-law.

In 1878 the business moved to 51 High Street Sittingbourne – perhaps George had died or retired. In the mid 20th century, 51 High Street became the office of solicitors Harris & Harris. Before that, they occupied 37/39 Park Road, (which was perhaps built by William James Harris) adjoining Garfield House.

In 1895 Geo Webb & Co moved to 81 High Street (where they were first connected to the telephone - Sittingbourne 57- in 1905) They were succeeded there by Barclays Bank, who perhaps made the partners a tempting offer.

In 1922 they came to to Garfield House – more space at a lower rate per square foot than the High Street. Not every partner of the firm has held an interest in the building

31st August 1922 ERNEST ALBERT CROWHURST sold Garfield House for £1,500 to RICHARD WILLIAM COWPER
WALTER ROBINSON ELGAR
ARTHUR SAPTE WEBB – the last partner of the founding family
WILLIAM SHAPLAND COWPER
BRIDGES ROPER DIXON carrying on business in co-partnership as Land Agents & Valuers all of 81 High Street Sittingbourne
Witnessed by Cecil Harris, solicitor of Sittingbourne

In a bare 4 months Crowhurst made 33% profit

– Daniel Wills, a canny business man, would not have been impressed.

11th August 1924 the above purchasers, having carried on in a partnership the business of Land Agents & Valuers under the name of G Webb & Co, &
RICHARD WILLIAM COWPER having retired from the partnership, on payment of £303 of which £227 is attributable to his interest in the hereditament
NIGEL EDWARD BERESFORD ELGAR was taken into partnership
witnessed by P J Scoones & George B Stickens, clerks to Geo Webb & Co

1st January 1926 by virtue of Section 36 of law of Property Act 1925
Freehold became vested in
WALTER ROBINSON ELGAR
ARTHUR SAPTE WEBB
WILLIAM SHAPLAND MANDEVILLE COWPER
BRIDGES ROPER DIXON &
NIGEL EDWARD BERESFORD ELGAR
upon statutory trusts for sale

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15th April 1926

WALTER ROBINSON ELGAR
ARTHUR SAPTE WEBB
WILLIAM SHAPLAND MANDEVILLE COWPER
BRIDGES ROPER DIXON
NIGEL EDWARD BERESFORD ELGAR
conveyed to GEORGE FREDERICK JAQUES
& ETHEL MARY JACQUES
a portion of the land with a frontage to Albany Street of 45 feet
at the **rear** 44 feet 6 inches
a depth on the **north** of 126 feet
& on the **south** 128 feet
No price is mentioned

The house built on the site is known as St Stephens. Some time later, part of this site at the north corner measuring 10 feet 6 inches by 14 feet 3 inches reverted to Garfield House. Among the deeds there is no documentation recording this transaction – nor the slicing away of a small triangle at the north corner, which appears in later plans.

25th August 1930

ARTHUR SAPTE WEBB at his own request was discharged from the trusteeship, *bringing to an end the original family connexion*

18th August 1932

WALTER ROBINSON ELGAR formerly of “The Limes” but now of Bobbing Place, Sittingbourne
WILLIAM SHAPLAND COWPER of “Gortanore”, Tunstall
BRIDGES ROPER DIXON of Lynsted
appointed GODFREY WYATT ELGAR of Bobbing Place in place of
NIGEL EDWARD BERESFORD ELGAR formerly of “Stallance” Sutton Valence, near Maidstone, but now of 49 King Street, Manchester
Land bounded on the **east** by Albany Street
on the **north** in part by land of William Cremer & in part by Edward Bishop
on the **south** by land of Miriam Taylor & by land of Exors John Stonehouse Budds
Signatures witnessed by P J Scoones & G Coombes, clerks to Geo Webb & Co & by a book keeper from Manchester

4th October 1935

GODFREY WYATT ELGAR died

18th November 1937

BRIDGES ROPER DIXON died

18th November 1939

WALTER ROBINSON ELGAR died

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- 9th September 1940
WILLIAM SHAPLAND COWPER of “Gortanore”,
Sittingbourne confirming Trustee
appoints as Trustees
RONALD ROPER DIXON of Cambridge House, Lynsted
CHARLES ROBINSON ELGAR of Bearsted Lodge, Bearsted,
Maidstone &
CHRISTOPHER MAYLAM ELGAR of Bobbing Place,
Sittingbourne
Land bounded on the **east** by Albany Road
on the **north** in part by land of Messrs Harris & Harris & in part
by Edward Bishop Limited
on the **south** by land of Miriam Taylor & by land of George
Frederick Jacques
Witnessed by E A Heap, spinster of Golden Wood Highsted &
B J Lawrence, spinster of Fair View, Claygate, Marden
- 15th August 1941
CHRISTOPHER MAYLAM ELGAR died
- 22nd May 1943
CHARLES ROBINSON ELGAR died
- 31st July 1947
WILLIAM SHAPLAND COWPER of “Gortanore”,
Sittingbourne &
RONALD ROPER DIXON of Teynham Court, near
Sittingbourne appointed
PERCY JOHN SCOONES of “Leyfield” 116, College Road,
Sittingbourne &
STEWART ROPER DIXON of Cambridge, Lynsted
as new trustees.
- 14th August 1962
WILLIAM SHAPLAND MANDEVILLE COWPER died
- 24th April 1965
PERCY JOHN SCOONES died
- 12th January 1986
STEWART ROPER DIXON died
His will made his wife PHYLLIS BERYL DIXON his residuary
legatee.
It was witnessed by Dorothy Margaret Herton Accounts Clerk of
15 Berkeley Court, Sittingbourne &
Angela Jeffrey, Secretary of 41 Roseleigh Road, Sittingbourne

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- 16th April 1987 the 2/5th share of STEWART ROPER DIXON was vested in PHYLLIS BERYL DIXON by deed of assent executed by the Executors MICHAEL DAVID CHAUNDY, son-in-law & NICHOLAS KYNASTON FERGUS GRAHAM Solicitor of 39 St Margaret's Street, Canterbury
(a partner in Furley Page Fielding & Pembroke)
- 26th May 1987 PHYLLIS BERYL DIXON of Cambridge, Lynsted assigned her share to ROBERT PACKHAM ROPER DIXON
- 27th May 1987 RONALD ROPER DIXON of Teynham Court, Sittingbourne appointed ROBERT PACKHAM ROPER DIXON to be a trustee
- 28th March 1988 RONALD ROPER DIXON of Teynham Court, Sittingbourne & ROBERT PACKHAM ROPER DIXON granted a lease of an outbuilding to MELVIN SILLCOCK for 12 years from 30th July 1987
- 27th August 1992 RONALD ROPER DIXON of Teynham Court, Sittingbourne assigned his share by deed of gift to ROBERT PACKHAM ROPER DIXON
- 26th March 1998 ROBERT PACKHAM ROPER DIXON of South Deep, Teynham Street conveyed to SARAH ELIZABETH DIXON by deed of gift his freehold estate in the outbuilding at the rear subject to the lease to MELVIN SILLCOCK which granted the tenant the right to park three cars on the parking area & a fourth for visitors.

Michael H Peters
March 2007