

House Histories

The history of the houses of Strawberry Hill

37 Popes Grove



**Written by Andrew Miller for Strawberry Hill Residents' Association
May 2019**

House histories – 37 Popes Grove

In the spring 2019 issue of the Strawberry Hill Residents' Association Bulletin an offer was made to all residents of the area. Peter Lamb of the SHRA Committee had offered a service which would involve research on the history of the houses of Strawberry Hill. This fits with another undertaking by SHRA to research and publish, via its website, a number of street histories under the name, *Streetwise*. Clearly, the two projects are linked as streets comprise collections of individual houses.

A team of SHRA local historians are working on the project and, at the time of writing, we are working on eight house histories. In return for the time of the volunteer researchers, householders in receipt of a report on their house history, are invited to make a donation to SHRA (the suggested donation is £25).

At a minimum, the work involves:

- searching through various online genealogical databases, e.g. Ancestry, find my past, for Census data and other records;
- searching the British Newspaper Archive for references to the street and house residents;
- visiting the Local Studies Centre in Richmond town centre to view records, especially Kelly's director or Electoral rolls to find out the names of householders after 1911;
- writing a report to present a coherent house history.

House history - 37 Popes Grove

The Land Registry entry for 37 Popes Grove indicates that the land on which it was subsequently built was purchased in 1900 by Dr John Rudd Leeson from Henry Ralls and Henry Wallis. Henry Ralls (1855-) owned a jeweller's shop at 17 King Street, Twickenham, and he and Wallis were probably making money buying and selling land for development in Twickenham. In 1907, Pope's Grove houses were renumbered and at that time the space for No.37 was vacant, indicating that the property had not yet been built. Leeson was developing property in the Twickenham area and this was one of his projects. No.37 was, however, occupied in 1911 by Annie Francis and, as this was before women's suffrage, she does not appear on the Electoral Roll. Leeson was probably the landlord of No.37 but we do not have records for who owned the property following his death in 1927. The house history only records who lived in the house rather than ownership.

Dr John Rudd Leeson¹

Dr John Rudd Leeson was a general medical practitioner who was born in Hanover Square London in 1854. He was educated at St Thomas's Hospital, Edinburgh University, Vienna and Berlin. While at Edinburgh he worked with Professor Joseph Lister. He was senior consultant Physician at St John's Hospital Twickenham and Consultant Physician at the

¹ Details from Ancestry.co.uk and his profile on the website of Twickenham Museum – www.twickenham-museum.org.uk

Metropolitan and Police Orphanage. In 1881, he was married to Margaret Ann (nee Lewis died 1886) and they had three children: Gertrude Kate (1881-), a nurse, and Edith Margaret (1882-), an artist, and Gladys M. (1884 daughter Gertrude Kate (1881)). In 1887, he moved into Clifden House on the corner of Clifden Road and Heath Road where he lived all his life. On 8 April 1890, he married Caroline Winifred Casmajor Thompson (born 1851-1931; nee Gwatkin - a widow since 1882) and -). Caroline had been married before and in 1891 the two step daughters, Alice Mary Thompson (1877-) and Winifred Emma Louisa Thompson (1882-1) lived with them. They had a son, Spencer Stottesbery Gwatkin Leeson (1892-1956). John also owned 5 and 6 Alexandra Villas, Queen's Road, Twickenham.

In 1891, he was granted Freedom of the City of Twickenham as a Member of the Salters Livery Company. In 1905, he donated some of the land that enabled Twickenham Library to be built. In 1908, he retired from medical practice allowing to pursue other interests. For 32 years, he was President of the Twickenham Literary and Scientific Society. In the 1911 Census, they lived at Clifden House, with a cook, a housemaid and a parlour maid where they lived until his death. During the First World War, he was an elderly captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps. He was a Middlesex County Councillor and he was largely responsible in 1926 for gaining a Charter of Incorporation for Twickenham and he became the first Charter Mayor of Twickenham. Also in 1926, he joined Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists. He died on 26 October 1927 and a huge crowd turned out for his funeral. He is buried at St Mary the Virgin Church, Twickenham.

1911-1914 – Annie Francis

In the 1911 Census the household was occupied by Annie Francis (1871-1956), a 40-year-old spinster, who is described as a 'sister' which may indicate that her brother was the head of household but he was away from property when the Census tellers visited. She was born in Helhoughton in Norfolk and living on private means. She remained a spinster all her life eventually living in *The Red House*, Walsingham, with her spinster sister, Mabel. Also in the house was, Herbert Edwin Todd (1881-), a 30-year-old farmer born in Carleton, York, who is described as the brother-in-law. There were two servants, Bessie Randall (1883-) and Nellie Horne (1888-).

The Francis and Todd families were closely linked. Henry Francis (1880-1926) was a younger brother of Annie's who married Violet Helga Todd (1876-1914), Herbert's elder sister. Henry and Violet emigrated to Canada in 1912 and both met untimely ends. Annie's younger sister, Eleanor Francis (1879-1972) also married a Todd, Dr Aldred Bertram Slingsby Todd (1877-1947). He would have known Dr John Rudd Leeson. In 1911, they were living close to Annie and Herbert at 3 Hampton Road. Dr Todd eventually died in 1947 while living at 16 Walpole Gardens, Strawberry Hill.

1914-1931 – The Dupont family

George Henry Dupont was born in Dublin on 29 September 1872. On 2 July 1901, he married Emily Mabel Purchase (1875-1967) at Oatlands, Surrey, and they had two children: Gerald Munro (1903-1982) and Helen Keynes (1908-1977). He was a doctor with the initials

MD, CM EDIN., DPH after his name. In 1939, he was living at 41 Walpole Road, Twickenham. When he died in 1941 he left £23,530 5s. in his will.

1932-1938 – The Everall family

The Everall family, mother and sister, Dorothy Mary Louise (1888-) and Dorothea Joan (1910-1955) lived at No.37 for six years. Dorothy (nee Parsons) and with her husband, John (Jack) Henry (a bank clerk), raised Dorothea at 17 Bonser Road, Strawberry Hill. In 1939, Dorothy and Dorothea, a bank clerk, were living at Orchard House, Sunbury-on-Thames. In 1941, Dorothea married Edwin J Hewitt (1878-1947) in Hendon. In the 1960s Dorothy lived at 21 Spencer Road, Strawberry Hill.

1939 – The Flood family

In the 1939 Register the Flood family occupied the house. This was Frederick Humphreys Flood (born 17 June 1898) and his wife, Violet Adeline (nee Hambly; born 11 January 1900), with four children (names redacted in the Register). Frederick was a handicraft instructor in a school and a 'trench warden' for the area. They had been married in Bodmin, Cornwall, 1920.

During the Second World War, the house may have been divided into two or more apartments, as, from 1945, there are usually more than one family living in the house. There were no Electoral Rolls for the period 1939-1945 so it is hard to say who was living in the house but the Floods may have continued in residence. In 1946, Frederick's second marriage was to Mabel Ann Flood in Willesden. Frederick died in Ealing on 17 March 1957.

1945-1956 – The Moore family and others

Albert Richard Moore (born Kentish Town on 8 May 1903- died 1982), a maintenance electrician, and his wife, Marjorie Moore (nee Percival; born 26 February 1903), moved into the house. They had been married in Cheltenham in 1929.

In 1945, No.37 was also occupied by Josephine O'Neill Bampton (1915-1955) and George and Phyllis Collins.

By 1946, the Collins's had left leaving the three people in the house until 1949, when John Alfred Vigot (born 1902 in Jersey), Hilda Margery Vigot (1900-) and a child were resident. John Vigot, a wholesale fruit and vegetable salesman, married Hilda Dowling in Eton, Buckinghamshire, in 1927.

Then in 1950 the Moores returned until 1953, when they were joined by Ernest L. Wyatt and his wife, May W. (nee Blesse) who were married in Brentford in 1930. After the Moores moved out the Wyatts were joined in 1954 by Peter E L Wyatt and Pamela J. Wyatt and Cynthia F Bee. In 1955, the four Wyatts were joined by Ralph Bedborough (born 1932 in Torryburn, Fife- died 2011 in Milton Keynes) who was the husband of Patricia S. Wyatt. They had married the year before and had a son called Jetson R. Bedborough. In 1956, the

Wyatts left and the house was empty for a while. Ernest and May went on to live at 44 Holmes Road, Strawberry Hill.

1957-1959 – The Francis and Tully families

In 1957, Eric and Barbara A. Francis lived in the house along with Colin Arthur F. (1926-1989) and Gaynor Tully (nee Williams-Glanmor). The Tullys married in Tonbridge, Kent in 1955. Eric married Eileen Gallagher in 1966.

1959-1966 - The Smith and Willis-Smith families

William J. Smith and his wife, Elizabeth A. Smith, lived in the house with Anthony Willis-Smith and Erika Willis-Smith

1967 – no names on the Electoral Roll

1968-1993 – The van Stigt family

Walter Peter van Stigt² and his wife, Judith L. A., lived in the house for 25 years. He was born as Wouter Petrus van Stigt on 1 January 1927 into a catholic Amsterdam family. He was ordained as a priest in 1953. In 1958, he left the priesthood and moved to England to teach French and English. In 1960, he married Judith Sachs and they had three children, Nicholas, Kathryn and Elisabeth. From 1963-1966 he studied mathematics at London University and he became Senior Lecturer in Mathematics and later dean at Whitelands College, the University of Roehampton. He continued his academic research interests in Holland and the United States. In 1982/1983 Kathryn A. and Nicholas D. van Stigt also lived at No.37 and the following year Elizabeth V. S. van Stigt is recorded as living there. So, at that time all their adult children lived with them at No.37. He retired from Kingston University in 1997 and died on 24 November 2015.

1993-present – The Browne family

The present owners, Adam Denniston and Elaine Ann Browne purchased the house from the van Stigts in 1993.

**Andrew Miller, SHRA
May 2019**

² Biographical details from the obituary in *The Bulletin of Symbolic Logic*, Vol.23, Number 1, March 2017