

STREETWISE

The history of the streets of Strawberry Hill

1. UPPER GROTTO ROAD



The street in spring 2019 looking east to Radnor Road

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

© SHRA 2019

Streetwise – Upper Grotto Road

Streetwise is a history of the streets of Strawberry Hill. Strawberry Hill Residents' Association will be publishing, via its website, a series of street histories (www.shra.org.uk). They are based on research undertaken by members of SHRA, using commercially available genealogical websites, and the Local Studies branch of Richmond-upon-Thames Museum. We begin with Upper Grotto Road simply because it is the street in which I live and it has a history that touches on the life and property of Alexander Pope, probably the most celebrated resident of the area.

Origins

Upper Grotto Road dates from around 1898-1899 but the land upon which it was built has a long history which is bound up with the story of Radnor Lodge (which is 29 Radnor Road). Since the early 17th Century there was a house with land on this spot. It is probable that Radnor Lodge and its land were added to Alexander Pope's estate by Sir William Stanhope¹. In 1761, he built an underground passage connecting what had been Pope's garden to Radnor Lodge. This tunnel or grotto became known as 'Stanhope's Cave'.



The corner of Upper Grotto Road and Radnor Road showing the walls of Radnor Lodge

The Department of the Environment Lists of buildings of special architectural or historical interest describes the grotto as follows:

'Arched passage with niches at either side decorated with various minerals and slag-glass, partly in tightly designed patterns. Rustic arched entrance, the Radnor Lodge one partly altered and the other blocked. The passage is bricked up half-way along its length.'

¹ *A History of Radnor Road* by Mike Cherry of Twickenham Museum (copy in the Richmond Local Studies Centre)

The land, which was later built on, became a market garden from the mid 19th century. The box below provides a timeline of the fascinating history of the house and land. In 1819, the land was owned by Viscount Clifden, an Anglo-Irish aristocrat, based in Kilkenny².



1819 Auction Catalogue showing the house (later Radnor Lodge) in the corner of garden ground



1894 OS Map showing nursery and Radnor Lodge

The 1894 OS map shows the future northern boundary wall of the gardens in Upper Grotto Road and the large number of greenhouses in the nursery.

1700-1898 Radnor Lodge and market garden

The history of Radnor Lodge is presented in the table below.

² 'The Twickenham Award' (1819) – Local Studies Centre

Year	Evidence
Pre-1727	The land was owned by Robert Moor Quintus Senior who died in 1727.
1727	George and Ann Moore inherited the land and a house/cottage was built.
1747	Mrs Ann Adams (nee Moore who was the sister of Robert Moor) was the owner of part of Pope's Garden and 'five half acres of customary land'. There was a cottage on the land, where in the winter of 1747/48, Henry Fielding (1707-1754), the author and magistrate, lived. He came to Twickenham to marry his second wife who was already six months pregnant when they were wed on 27 November 1847.
1750	John Winde (1692-1759) of Wigmore, Hertfordshire, was the owner but he committed suicide in this year and the property went to his sons, Ambrose and Robert.
1754	The building is shown on Rocque's Map but its shape is unclear.
1759	Robert Winde, the younger son, of John Winde was the occupier.
1760	Ambrose Scudamore Winde (1732-1775), the eldest son of John Winde, sold the property and emigrated to Jamaica with his younger brother, Robert, becoming a successful merchant and a Judge of the Supreme Court. He is noteworthy for having successful, mixed-race children.
1761	Sir William Stanhope (1702-1772) was an English politician who was MP for Buckinghamshire from 1727 to 1741 and from 1747 to 1768. He bought the property and connected it to his garden with a tunnel running diagonally under the lane (then known as 'Worple Way') with a grotto at each end. The end leading from Pope's Garden was known as 'Stanhope's Cave'. He had one daughter, Elizabeth, who married Welbore Ellis (1713-1802).
1772	The property was inherited by Welbore Ellis MP, later Baron Mendip, who succeeded his father-in-law, Sir William Stanhope, as owner of Alexander Pope's estate. He was an English politician serving in the House of Commons in six constituencies between 1741 and 1794 before joining the Lords. In 1782, he was Secretary of the Colonies during the American War of Independence.
1784	'Mr Ellis Stab' ('stables') is marked on Samuel Ellis's Map.
1802	Welbore Ellis had died childless and his estate was inherited by his nephew, Henry Welbore Agar-Ellis (1761-1836), 2 nd Viscount Clifden, an Anglo-Irish aristocrat and politician, based in Kilkenny. He was an MP in the Irish Parliament from 1783-1789, then in the Irish House of Lords. In 1793, he was an MP for Heytesbury in the British House of Commons. In 1802, on becoming a Baron, he went to the House of Lords.
1819	The land was owned by Viscount Clifden (see map above).
1839	An unattributed pencil map in the Twickenham Local History Collection describes Radnor Lodge and its grounds as part of the 'garden to Pope's Villa'.
1845	The Poor Rate Book states that the occupier is Stephen Wurr, while the owner was a Mr Travers.
1851	The Census describes the house as being in Back Lane, Cross Deep, and the occupants are Stephen Wurr aged 70 and market gardener employing one man, his wife, Elizabeth (aged 70) and daughter, Lydia (aged 17).
1855	The Poor Rate Book describes the property as comprising house, premises,

	market garden, orchard and paddock. The owner at this time was Mr J Clark's executors.
1856	The Poor Rate Book shows that the occupier of the house, premises and market garden was Richard Clarke (1822-1898) who was born in Aldford, Cheshire.
1857	The land comprised three acres, two cottages, the vineries (greenhouse for vines), two forcing-houses (greenhouse for vegetables), and a 'range of pits with forty lights'. It was leased to Richard Clarke on a 21-year lease at £100 per annum.
1861	Richard (aged 39) was living in the house which is described as being on Chestnut Lane (Green Lane has been crossed out on the Census form). He was living with his wife, Isabella, nephew – Robert Baillie, niece – Sarah Baillie, and gardener, William Elkins.
1863	The OS Map shows three distinct buildings on the site of Radnor Lodge with trees indicating an orchard and a large number of garden buildings, probably greenhouses.
1871	Richard Clarke (aged 49) was the market gardener living in the house with his wife, Isabella (aged 55 – born in Ramsgate), and three nieces, Sarah and Jane Baillie and Louisa Clarke. The house was described as being in Narrow Lane, Pope's Grove.
1881	The house is described in the Census as being part of 'Pope's Villa gardens'. Richard's two nieces, Sarah and Jane Baillie, were still living with Richard and his wife.
1891	The house was now on Radnor Road.
1894	The OS Map shows the distinctive, three-sided main cottage, plus two further buildings, on the site within the 'nursery'.
1898	Richard Clarke was still living in the house until this date when the Lodge was converted from the 18 th century stables. It seems that on his death the owners decided to sell off the market garden for building.

1898-1916 - housing development

In 1898, building plots in what was called Upper Grotto Road were auctioned for between £45 and £61 each³. The name given to the road was probably because it is a continuation of Grotto Road (formerly Fox Lane) which runs along the north side of Pope's garden⁴. Different builders took on the jobs of constructing 68 houses according to varying plans. However, most are semi-detached, London stock brick, sash windows, box bays or semi-hexagonal box bay windows. They have hipped roofs interspersed with three-storey houses with gabled roofing.

By 1901, building was only partially complete – the following houses were either not yet built or occupied – (current numbers) 10-14, 32, 44-50, 5-9, 15-39, 53-69. There were 25 houses on the North side of the road and 10 on the South side. Shortly afterwards the

³ 'Twickenham in 1898' based on a short talk by Tony Bryer to the Twickenham Local History Society, 7 December 1998 – www.twickenhamurc.org.uk

⁴

houses were completed. On the 5 July 1905, all the house names were changed and the present arrangement of odd (South side) and even (North side) numbers was introduced. Prior to the renumbering the North side was numbered consecutively 1-30, plus numbers 12 was called Eden Villa, 14 Ivy Villa, 16 May Villa and 18 was Fern Lea. Numbers 56 and 58 were 1 and 2 Jasmine Villas. On the South Side (now the odd numbers) most of the houses had names rather than numbers (see table).

Current Number	Pre-1905 Name
1	Haroldene
3 & 5	1 & 2 Brighton Villas
7	Evelyn Villa
9	Hacton Villa
11 & 13	1 & 2 Florence Villas
15 & 17	1 & 2 Francis Villas
19	Woodland Villa
21	Binfield Villa
23	Warfield Villa
25-39	Vacant land
41-51	1-6 Rainscombe Villas
53	Springfield
55 & 57	1 & 2 Myrtle Villas
59-69	1-6 Grotto Terrace

One of the questions about Upper Grotto Road is why there are no numbers 2, 4, 6, 8, 25 or 37? It seems likely that there may have been a possibility of using the garden of Radnor Lodge for four lots which could be used for building numbers 2, 4, 6 and 8 Upper Grotto Road, although this never happened. As we have noted 25-39 was initially a vacant lot. Number 27, was built around 1916, and it occupied two lots which explains why there is no Number 25. The first occupant was William Slark. Similarly, the double-fronted Number 39 explains the absence of number 37, it was first occupied in 1907 by Miss Amelia Ardy. Numbers 29, 31, 33 and 35 were all built in 1926 making them the only 1920s properties on the street.



The 1920s block - numbers 29-35

In 1901, when the bulk of the houses were built, there was a gap where the current numbers 44-46 are located. They were built between 1910 and 1911.

1901 Census

In the 1901 Census, the first heads of household in Upper Grotto Road worked in a narrow range of employment sectors: 9 were clerks; 8 were in the building trades; 6 were in retail. There were a number of interesting people with varied backgrounds.

House number	Name	Occupation
6 Rainscombe Villas (51)	Julius Henry Sherwin	A German born watchmaker with a US-born wife
Haroldene (1)	Albert Charles Haynes	A waterman on the Thames
May Villa (16)	George King	A US-born stone mason
9 (26)	Alfred Thomas Hurdle	A US-born bricklayer
7 (22)	Arthur Oughterson	A Belgium-born civil engineer
19 (52)	Eugene Thiollier	A French retired silk agent

1911 Census

By the time of the 1911 Census, 53 houses were occupied in Upper Grotto Road. A few on the North side/evens were divided into two apartments: 22, 24, 26, 34, 36, 42 and 50. There were a number of residents who lived in the road for some years.

- The family of Alfred Bell, a Metropolitan Police Constable, lived at no.9 from 1911 until 1939.
- Walter England, a wine merchant's clerk, was the first resident in 1 Florence Villas (no.11) who was still in the house in 1934.
- John Frederick Mills, a grocer's assistant and, later, a collector and clerk, lived at no.34 from 1901 until at least 1934.
- Members of the Brett family, Edmund Henry and Charles Alfred, lived at numbers 42 and 44 between 1911 and 1934.
- William Henry Ashwood, a railway clerk, lived at Number 70 between 1911 and 1934.
- Harry Pierce, a building depot foreman on the railway, lived at no.32 between 1911 and 1934.
- Amelia Ardy, a dressmaker, lived at no.39 from 1911 to 1934.

In 1911, there were other interesting occupations. Archibald Sinclair, at no. 47 was a 'sports journalist' and one of his children was an 'orchid cultivator'. Samuel Jones at no.13 was a Baptist Minister. The 1911 Census, the last before the outbreak of War, revealed the Nicholes family living at no.52. Frederick Nicholes senior was a wine merchant who later became a male nurse. His family lived in Upper Grotto Road from at least 1911 until 1939. A photograph of his son, also called Frederick was recently presented to the Twickenham Museum after it was found, some years ago, in the antique shop on Twickenham Green (pictured).

The Great War

A Medal Records Card indicated that Frederick Nicholes was a private and driver in the Royal Field Artillery (Regimental no.45149). He was awarded the Victory and British Medals, but not the 1914-15 Star, indicating that he joined up later in the War – consistent with his birthdate of 3 November 1898 in Brentford. The photograph had the initials 'RFA' on his shoulder badge. Fred survived the War and married Beatrice Searle in 1926, when they lived at 88 Queen's Road, Twickenham. He worked as a lathe operator and died in 1992.



Albert Victor Read (1892-1916) and his brother William George Read lived at 74 Upper Grotto Road⁵. Albert enlisted in the Royal Navy in January 1910 and served on a number of ships before joining the armoured cruiser, HMS Black Prince in February 1914. He was a signalman on the ship when it was sunk by German battleships during the May 1916 Battle of Jutland. William George Read worked as a car driver before enlisting in the Army Service Corps on 1 December 1915. He also died in the Great War.

1939 Register

On the eve of the Second World War the 1939 Register was a national survey of every household. It showed that 212 people lived in Upper Grotto Road.

Age range	Number of residents
0-14	33
15-24	18
25-34	32
35-44	29
45-54	31
55-64	23
65 plus	46
Total	212

There were 83 people with occupations of whom 60% were in manual and 40% were in non-manual jobs. Non-manual workers included: a building inspector; civil servant; engineering inspector; meteorological observer; scientific instrument maker in Government Laboratory; insurance agent. Typical manual jobs included: lamplighter; domestic help; locomotive cleaner; heavy transport driver; sign writer; painter.

20th Century

⁵ Peter Lamb, 'Hunt for Heroes', *Strawberry Hill Residents' Association Bulletin*, No.166, Spring 2018, p.4

No.57 Upper Grotto Road was for many years (at least 1923-1939) used by the Salvation Army as Officers' Quarters.

In 1930/31, No.76 was built as a detached house on the north side of the street next to No.74. The first occupants were Hubert Athelstan Grady, a journalist, and his wife, Ethel. The house was demolished presumably to make way for the building of Hollies Close in 1973.



Hollies Close looking north from Upper Grotto Road

In 1939, a large detached, wooden-clad house was built at the western end of the road. This was No.78 and it was demolished prior to the building of four new houses (Nos.78-84) and a block of four flats at 71 in 2003. The first occupant of No.78 was Benjamin Yeadon, a boat warehouseman, who was born in 1873.



Nos. 78-84 Upper Grotto Road built in 2003 to replace a 1939 house No.78

In 1945, Corporal Shepherd (108th Company Royal Army Service Corps) of 50 Upper Grotto Road saved the life of John Langley, a 9-year-old boy, by diving into a river and giving him artificial respiration⁶. He was visiting friends at a nearby farm.

Photo-gallery



Detail from the walls of the grotto Stanhope's Cave – under Radnor Road at the end of Upper Grotto Road

⁶ British Newspaper Archive, 'Rescued by a Soldier', *Surrey Advertiser*, 1 September 1945, p.3



Heavy snow makes for a picturesque Upper Grotto Road looking East on 2 February 2009



Filming Mr and Mrs Jones with Nathaniel Parker outside no.72 Upper Grotto Road on 5 July 2012



Street party for the HRH Prince Harry and Meghan Markle on 19 May 2018