

## Normanby Cottage, Claypits Lane, Shrivenham

A general history by Neil B. Maw



The Estate Map that George Merryweather had drawn up in 1815 (below) has been most useful in helping to identify the origins of some of the properties in Shrivenham. He used the map as an aid to his letters that he issued in a constant stream between himself as Steward, and his boss Lord George Viscount Barrington (5<sup>th</sup>). There is a building shown at the location of Normanby but it wasn't clear if it represented the house or perhaps something else.



A problem that is encountered by all historical researchers of property, is a lack of the exact location. It is made worse when dealing with rural locations due to the contemporary reality

that everyone knew where everyone lived, so it wasn't necessary to explain the exact location. But fortunately, some legal documents do try and make it clearer and often cite a schedule, whereby previous owners and occupiers are listed, often very helpful to confirm a location. This has been the case with Normanby Cottage.

An Indenture dated 24<sup>th</sup> January 1828, (BCA. D/EX52/T5) an Assignment of a 99year lease contained the description, *'All that cottage or tenement and garden formerly in the possession of William Willoughby otherwise Twilley, since of Richard Martin and then of Thomas Meads containing in the whole about 10 Luggs (an obscure 18<sup>th</sup> century measurement) having the Almshouse lying on the west and a ground of Lord Barrington called Common Close on the north. And also all that piece or parcel of land as then marked out and divided from Common Close and added to the garden containing by estimation 36 perches having the cottage or garden on the west and the house and land in the occupation of William Greenaway on the east side thereof.'*

The above paragraph provided a useful amount of detail and identified information from entries made in other files, i.e. under the heading, *'A scheme of the estates that are in tenant's hands for lives by Copyhold or Indenture and fall into Hand after the determination of those lives in the Parish of Shrivenham in 1768.'* (BCA. D/EX52/M1). Here is recorded in an earlier lease a property where the tenant is William Willoughby. There is a note attached to the entry; *'NB: Since my letting this he hath built a new house for his son at the end of his garden on part of the premises which will fall to the Lord with the rest.'* Using the above description and the aerial photo below it is possible to make sense of it.

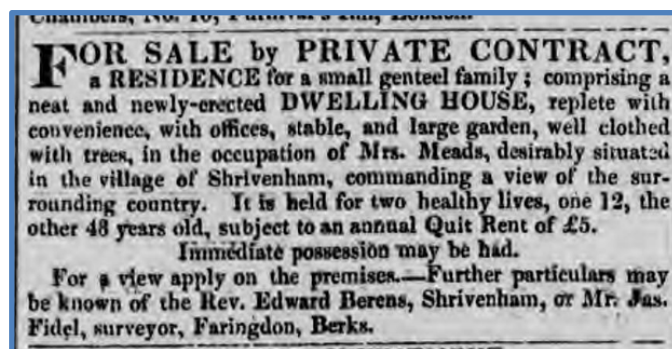


The property occupied by William Willoughby was clearly located in the spot now occupied by Normanby Cottage and is the one featured in the Merryweather map shown above. It was customary in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for cottages to have large gardens for the tenant's self-sufficiency. The new house that William built for his son at the end of his garden must be the dwelling known today as *'Wisteria Cottage.'* Please see listing:

<https://www.shrivenhamheritagesociety.co.uk/listing.asp?listID=949>

Described as a *'Gentleman of Shrivenham.'* Joseph Bliss made his Will dated 15<sup>th</sup> October 1801, just 13 days before he died. In one of the clauses, he added that his cottage and garden late Willoughbys, occupied by Richard Martin, situate in Shrivenham with the appurtenances should go to his wife for her natural life, then after her decease it should go to their daughter Mary Bliss. His wife passed away on the 6<sup>th</sup> December of the same year. This lease was granted to Joseph Bliss by William Lord Viscount Barrington (2<sup>nd</sup>) on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1792 (BCA. D/EX52/E1).

The 1828 Assignment document referred to above also provided the fact that after occupier Richard Martin came Thomas Meads, and although we don't have documentary evidence, it seems likely that Mary Bliss mentioned in her father's Will above, was Thomas Meads' wife. She seems to have gone by the name of Maria as this is mentioned within the Assignment as a mistake. It also refers to the original lease that was dated 24<sup>th</sup> January 1819, and made between Lord George Viscount Barrington on the first part, Thomas Meads of Shrivenham, then deceased, a Steward to the Right Hon the Countess of Effingham (she lived in Shrivenham House at the time) on the other part. Thomas Meads died in 1826 and was buried in St Andrew's churchyard on the 16<sup>th</sup> November, aged 58.



The above advert appeared in the Oxford Journal on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1827, and with what is now known, it's clear that the property being referred to is the Normanby Cottage of today.

The Assignment indenture was dated 24<sup>th</sup> January 1828 between Maria Meads of Shrivenham, widow, on the first part, George Lord Viscount Barrington (5<sup>th</sup>) on the second part and the Hon Elizabeth Courtenay of Duke St, Westminster, Middx, Spinster, on the third part. The reason for the sale was stated that Thomas Meads had recently died intestate (without a Will) and since his death letters of administration were granted on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 1827 by the Archdeaconry Court of Berks to Maria Meads who was made his personal representative. In order to secure his debts, Maria agreed with Elizabeth Courtenay for the sale of the remainder of the lease on the property for £350. This would enable Maria to clear her late husband's debts and presumably walk away.

Elizabeth Courtenay (see below) was the sister-in-law of the Rev. Edward Berens, Vicar of Shrivenham whose wife was Lady Catherine Courtenay, hence the reason he is named in the above advert. It's not known if after buying the house, she lived there for any length of time or rented it out. The wording contained within the advert of a '*newly erected*' dwelling house suggests a build date of 1825 which agrees with the assessment of Historic England. (included at the end of this article).



There is now a gap in our knowledge of this premises of about a decade. It then still stood on land belonging to Lord Barrington and it was clearly influenced by the Barringtons because of the name '*Normanby.*' Lord Normanby was a high-ranking public servant holding the positions of Governor of Jamaica, Viceroy of Ireland, a Cabinet Minister with the British Government, and more, and was a long-term friend of the Barringtons.




Construction of the new Beckett House started in October 1829, and whilst the building work was underway, William Keppel Lord Viscount Barrington (6<sup>th</sup>) occupied Shrivenham House, opposite to Normanby. Although we have no documentary evidence, it is highly likely that the Normanby's stayed at the cottage during this period and the name was attached to it from thence onwards.

The first documentary information we have for Normanby comes from the Tithe survey of 1844, where it is listed that it was owned by the Barrington Estate and the occupier was Adam Henly. A search so far has failed to discover any information about him; neither was he listed on the census of 1841 and it was not possible to discern just who was the occupier that year. But the following census of 1851 showed that Dr Charles Gunning Parker was in residence. He was a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, and had been in general practise in London. He was 40 years of age and with him was his wife Ann. He was quite heavily involved in developing a vaccine for Small-Pox which had taken a terrible toll among humans for a long time. There is a newspaper article that is a letter from himself explaining how he had vaccinated sheep and placed them among other flocks that had raging smallpox, with very good results (Berks Chronicle 29<sup>th</sup> Nov 1862). His wife Ann died in 1870 and was buried in St Andrew's churchyard on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1870, aged 55. Six years later Dr Parker re-married a lady called Eliza, who was the widow of Thomas Coakley. (Berks Chronicle 15<sup>th</sup> April 1876). But sadly, she passed away at Normanby Cottage three years later. (Berks Chron 6<sup>th</sup> December 1879). In general, Charles Parker was a well-respected doctor and member of the community, but at times he did face criticism. When a young Shrivenham boy was seriously injured whilst larking about on machinery, he was placed under the care of Dr Parker. As the newspaper reported, *'For the space of eighteen days the poor child lay in a wretched, dirty state, upon a bed of old coats and a blanket.'* He subsequently died and at the inquest held at the Barrington Arms, Dr Parker was censured for, *'allowing the child to lie in a state of filth.'* (Western Daily press 29<sup>th</sup> December 1877). And a few years later, after an accident whereby a 9year-old boy called Percy Tovey had broken an arm falling out of a tree, the lad unfortunately died. At the inquest held at the Victoria Inn, Shrivenham Station, the jury returned a verdict of, *'Accidentally killed by a fall from a tree,'* to which the rider was added, *'the jury are unanimously of opinion that the conduct of the surgeon in this matter is decidedly reprehensible and regret that he did not pay such attention as the case demanded.'* Upon hearing the verdict with the rider, the reporter for the newspaper added that he, the surgeon, *'made use of an expression unbecoming a man in his position and anything but complimentary to the jury.'* Dr Parker died at Normanby

Cottage on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1887 aged 76. His funeral was covered in quite a large article in which it stated he had been at Shrivenham for nearly 40 years and was a man who had spent, '*a useful public life.*'

The next occupant of Normanby Cottage was also a medical man, a General Practitioner by the name of George Eccles Priestley Nixon, who was born in Dublin, Ireland. News of his appointment had been announced in the newspaper back in 1881 when it stated that he had been appointed, '*medical officer and public vaccinator for the Shrivenham district of the Faringdon Union.*' (Dublin Daily Express 18<sup>th</sup> August 1881). The union being the multitude of villages that surrounded Faringdon, that decided upon medical aid to local people and entry into the workhouse. It's not sure where he resided, but it seems that when Normanby Cottage became available after the death of Charles Parker, George Nixon took on the lease. He was also listed as the occupier on the 1891 census. We are not certain when George Nixon vacated the house but by 1901 Albert Persee Macnamara was resident, another medical practitioner and also from Ireland.

 **Record Transcription:**  
1901 England, Wales & Scotland Census  
Private House, Shrivenham, Faringdon, Berkshire & Oxfordshire, England  
[Learn about this record set](#)

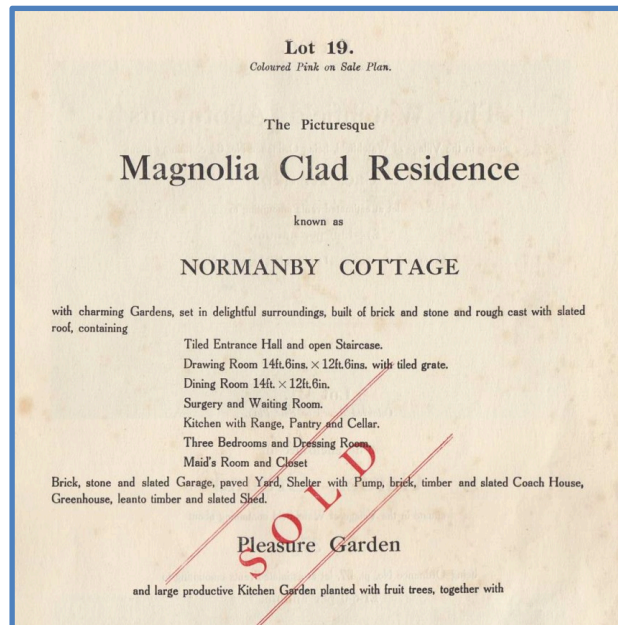
**Household Members** ⓘ

First name(s)	Last name	Relationship	Marital status	Sex	Age	Birth year	Occupation	Birth place
Albert P	Macnamara	Head	Single	Male	28	1873	Medical Practitioner	Ireland
Clementina	Butler	Servant	Single	Female	42	1859	Housekeeper (Domestic)	Chippenham, Wiltshire, England
Charles	Smarrt	Servant	Single	Male	20	1881	Groom (Domestic)	Minety, Wiltshire, England

Qualified medical doctors at this time, seemed to work from home. They could be called upon at any time of the day or night and quite frequently were. Albert Macnamara featured in numerous newspaper articles where he attended accidents and medical emergencies. He was also fond of music and not only attended but joined in many of the village social gatherings.

The house being part of the Beckett Estate, was included in the sale of 1922. It was sold by private treaty before the auction date but we have no confirmation of who bought it.

Perhaps it was the resident tenant Dr Albert Macnamara. In 1925 he purchased Elm Tree House in Shrivenham High Street and this would be the very beginnings of what is today, Elm Tree Surgery.



More brief information comes from two Electoral Registers. The register of 1958-9 listed Patricia E. Edwards-Heathcote at Normanby Cottage as well as Margaret Skene. The register of 1978-9 listed Robert W. Robinson. We have no further information on these people.

At the moment, this is as far as we can go with the occupation of Normanby Cottage.

If you would like to comment on anything in this information gathering, or you have further information to add to this listing, please contact us on

[info@shrivenhamheritagesociety.co.uk](mailto:info@shrivenhamheritagesociety.co.uk)

The Historic England description:

*'Circa 1820 of brick faced with limewashed render and a hipped slate roof with end roughcast stacks. 2 storeys with a 3 bay S front lit by sashes 4 panes wide and with a centrally placed full glazed door under a slightly projecting gabled porch. 2 storey extension to the W with a 2 light C20 casement above a plank and batten door beneath a porch with flat hood.'*