

# Shrivenham House formerly The Rectory Manor

The history so far, by Neil B. Maw



The location of Shrivenham House and the huge size of the ground that it occupies, must make it the primary dwelling in the village. And being so close to the parish church must also enhance its status and justify the assumption that historically, it would have been owned by a person of high social standing. A close second could have been the Manor House, standing as equally close to the church, but now demolished and replaced by modern Manor Close. Local historians have suggested that these two locations could have been the administrative centres for the Manors of Shrivenham Salop and The Rectory Manor, but no documentary sources have been discovered to confirm it. However, recent research by Shrivenham Heritage Society members have made progress.

There are several pieces of documentary evidence that confirm that what is now called Shrivenham House, was once the site and grounds of the Rectory Manor. The building that is Shrivenham House today is a mixture of architecture from the early 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, with a very small piece of 17<sup>th</sup> century wall in the north range. Maps in the Royal Berkshire Archives provided valuable information concerning the Shrivenham House site. One map from the Pleydell papers showed the property named as '*Rectory.*' (RBA D/EX192/10

p.22). A map dated 1804 clearly showed the property named '*Lord Radnor.*' (RBA D/EZ148/3/1). It was the Pleydell family that became part of the name Radnor with the second Earl of Radnor being Jacob Pleydell-Bouverie in 1750. And the third evidence comes from an explanation of the Manors of Shrivenham. An entry dated 1768 and owned by Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell is '*The Parsonage House*' occupied by Edward Hunt junior and previously by Edward Hunt senior. Interestingly it also refers to another property in the grounds and another called the Slathouse. (RBA. D/EX52/M1).

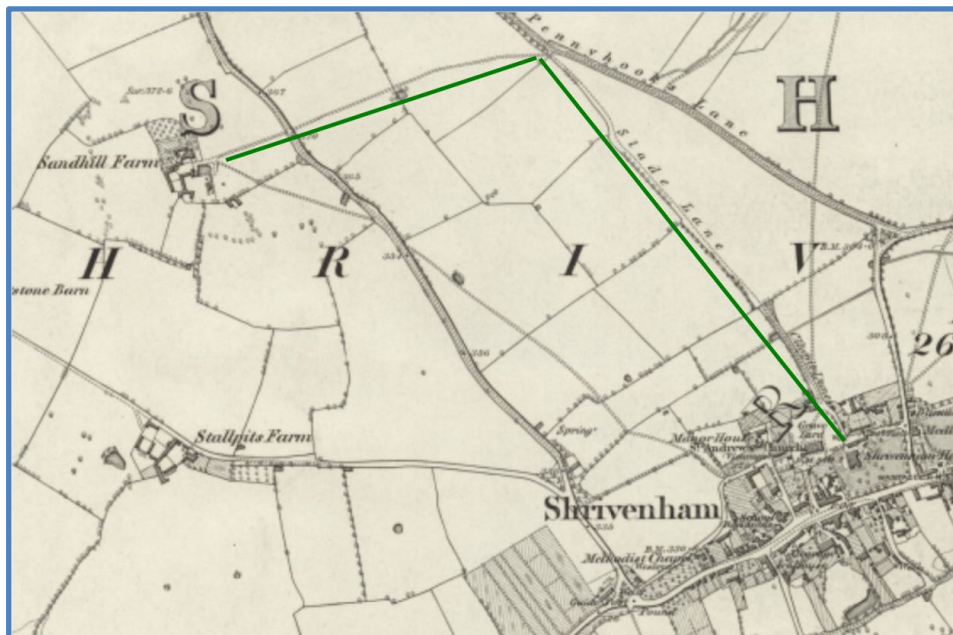
The maps referred to above, also show that the entrance to Shrivenham House was from the main street to the south. This is what would be expected of such a prestigious property that occupied a large piece of ground next to the main street. The house that must have stood before what is there today is likely to have been large and on a different orientation. The formal approach to it would have been through what is now the access to the rear of the Prince of Wales public house. The high perimeter stone wall that surrounds it today was likely an early 20<sup>th</sup> century addition. The map of Berkshire that was drawn by the well-known Cartographer John Roque contains the layout of Shrivenham circa 1761. His maps of London are considered of historical importance because of the accuracy of his surveying at the time. The building depicted at the Rectory Manor House site would suggest a house with a central range facing south with the gable ends of ranges either side, east and west. (Below)



Other documents have revealed more information on the Rectory Manor. Alexander Giles took on the lease of the Rectory Manor and Farm in March 1772, from the Earl of Radnor. The description within the Indenture stated, '*All that Manor House of the Rectory of Shrivenham with the said Rectory and farm belonging in the said county of Berks together with the Barns, Stables, Dovehouse, and other outhouses to the same adjoining and belonging.*' (RBA D/EPB/T4). Another Indenture dated 9<sup>th</sup> September 1726, between Mark Stuart Pleydell and John Benwell the description was given as, '*All that the Manor and Site of the Manor of the Rectory of Shrivenham together with all the Buildings, Barns, Stables, Dovehouse, Orchard and other appurtenances.*' (RBA D/EPB/T49) In both Indentures the description of the land that goes with the leases, the field names are contiguous with Sand Hill Farm. It's therefore clear that the Rectory Manor House was on the site of present day Shrivenham House, and the farm belonging to the Manor was on the site of Sand Hill Farm.

With this knowledge other factors begin to make more sense. Of Shrivenham House, the gate that today is the main entrance, opens directly onto a narrow lane that leads north, past Pennyhooks Farm to join the Highworth road – close to Sand Hill Farm. (Below map). It would have been completely logical to have a road running from the Manor House to the Manor Farm. It may also explain why Dowager Elizabeth Lady Viscountess Barrington (Relict of George 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount), built the Elizabethan style house at Sand Hill. It is well documented that she built a similar house range at Shrivenham House and her monogram dated 1834 is clearly displayed. (First photo below). But the same monogram is also clearly displayed on the house at Sand Hill, dated 1841 the year of her death. (Second photo below). The farm by then was part of the Barrington Estate and it is highly likely that Lady Elizabeth and her family were aware of the status and history of the Rectory Manor and Farm. However, it is unclear if she commissioned the farmhouse or her family had it built as a memorial to her. We have also discovered when and how the Rectory Manor joined the Barrington Estate, but more on that later. (Also, below – Elizabeth Barrington's coffin in the family vault with coronet on top. Photo by Margaret Andrews)

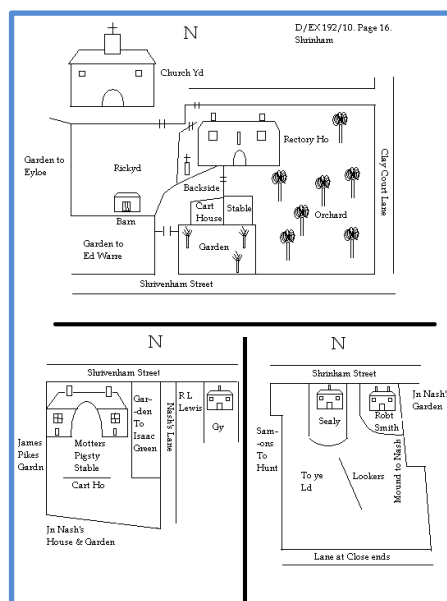




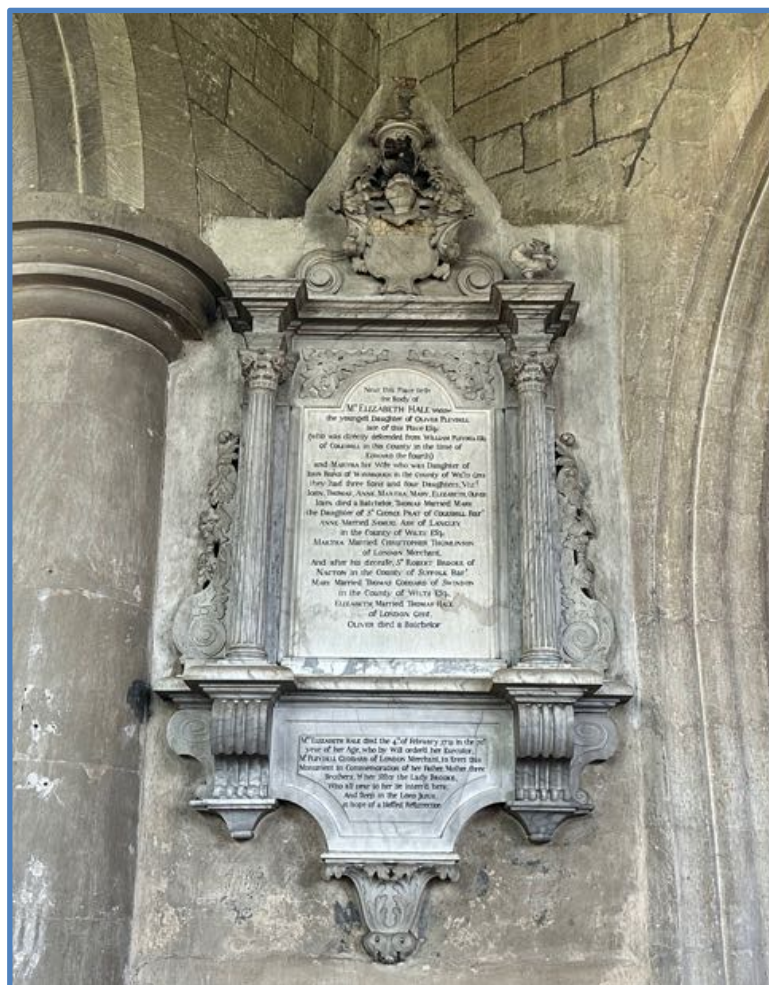




At the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII, the site of the Manor or Rectory of Shrivenham was held by William Pleydell of Coleshill, under a lease to himself and to his sons, made by the Abbot of Cirencester Abbey in 1535. And after the dissolution the Pleydell family held on to it. (VCH Berks, Vol 4, p.531 – 543). Within the Pleydell Papers at the Berkshire County Archives, there is a, ‘*Quarto Survey Book.*’ (D/Ex192/10). The book is dated between 1730 – 1753, and contains little maps that are sketched as simple line drawings, and we can only assume that they assisted in the collection of rents and tithe payments. Two of the drawings clearly depicts Shrivenham House and one has it sectioned on its own, but both name it as, ‘*Rectory.*’



The Pleydell family were well established in Coleshill, and according to an 18<sup>th</sup> century plaque located in the village church, had been a ruling class since the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The same plaque describes that Thomas Pleydell (1515-1605) received from his father William (1481-1555) the Manor of the Abbey in Cirencester in Shrivenham. Specifically, the following two descendants, John Pleydell (1580-1635) and Oliver Pleydell (1600-1680) are similarly described as *'of Shrivenham.'* Their family house at Shrivenham was the Rectory Manor, and documentation now confirms that this was the site of present day Shrivenham House. The three Pleydells mentioned above were the generators of some of the documentation that survives today in several archives. But after the family of Oliver and Martha Pleydell, the Rectory Manor was leased out to people other than those of the family. Examples of this have already been given above and this seemed to be the situation through the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the remarkably lavish memorial that is appended in the Chancel of the church, gives the same impression - that this was the end of the Pleydell era in Shrivenham.



But the situation was to change at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was a period of much change within the parish of Shrivenham. The Barrington Estate was still in a period of being in Trust. (1793-1814. See Beckett & The Barrington SHS N1481). The main Trustee still alive was Shute Barrington, the Bishop of Durham. In 1805 the Trustees purchased the beautiful Georgian building today called Elm Tree House in the centre of Shrivenham, ending a 15-year legal wrangle. (See SHS N943 & N920 for detail). The Trustees also acquired the Rectory Manor, that included the Rectory Farm known today as Sandhill farm. (RBA D/EPB/T4). The process used was in a similar manner to the act of enclosure brought about by the government in the 1790s. It was a mixture of land swapping and payment. The assessments and valuations were carried out by two gentlemen known as commissioners or arbitrators. They were assisted by two surveyors for the land and timber. The solicitors were John Heath of Chippenham for the Earl of Radnor and James Crowdy of Highworth for the Barrington Trustees. The schedule that included the Rectory Manor (Shrivenham House site) and the Rectory Farm (Sandhill Farm) was dated 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1808 and required the Barrington Trustees to pay the Earl of Radnor £2275. This also included the ancient responsibility for the Chancel of the church, a responsibility to keep it in good repair. (Something the Earl of Radnor had done in 1793 See SHS Listing No N1335)

Once the Rectory Manor, or today's Shrivenham House, was in the hands of the Barringtons, it meant that when the Trust period ended, it would feature in the day-to-day running of the estate. That day came in 1815 with the arrival of George Merryweather, who was the new Beckett Estate Steward, brought in by George Barrington, the fifth Viscount, in April 1815. Within the Letters of George Merryweather, (published by SHS in 2020), there is much talk of Lady Effingham who took up residence in Shrivenham in 1818. We only know that it was Shrivenham House that she moved into, by the flurry of work that had to be organised before her arrival. In letter No 54, dated 19th June 1818, Merryweather noted, '*Your Lordship said the £500 to be expended in fitting up the house for Lady Effingham was to be defrayed out of the £10,000 taken upon Moses Akerman's and other farms. (Mortgaged).*' And in April 1819, a note in Merryweather's accounts that refer to Lady Effingham, '*now living in The Rectory.*' (BCA D/EX52/E1). Lady Effingham was related to Lady Catherine Berens, the wife of Rev. Edward Berens, the Vicar of Shrivenham 1804 -1859.

The Memoires of Augusta Barrington (Published by SHS in 2020), provided more information when on page 27, she wrote of Shrivenham House that it was, '*originally a farmhouse, altered*



*and improved by a Lady Effingham.'* (Could she have been confusing the house with the farm?) She continued by adding that, *'It was the home of my parents from 1824 until 1832.'* Here she is referring to William Keppel the sixth Viscount who commissioned the removal of the old Beckett House and the building of the new one. (See *Beckett & The Barringtons* published by SHS in 2020). The Viscount and his family lived at Shrivenham House that was nick-named, *'Fangs'* by the Barrington children, until part of the new house was ready for habitation in 1832. (*Memoires of Augusta Barrington* P.22). Dowager Elizabeth Barrington, the widow of the late George Lord Viscount Barrington (5<sup>th</sup>), having moved out of Shrivenham House that was granted to her by the Will of her husband, then returned. She had agreed to move to Watchfield House whilst work on the new Beckett House was carried out. She died in March 1841 and was interred in the family vault at St Andrew's Church. (See SHS N799 for more details on the vault). The first regular census took place in June of 1841 and as might be expected, some of the Dowager's grandchildren were at Shrivenham House at the time. (Below)

Barrington	Caroline	Independant	40
Barrington	Charlotte	Independant	35
Barrington	Henry	Independant	30
Byle	Elizabeth	Servant with the Barringtons	45
Cuthbert	Mary	Servant with the Barringtons	25
Dowlin	Mary	Servant with the Barringtons	20
Haines	Mable	Servant with the Barringtons	30
Hamble	Sarah	Servant with the Barringtons	20
Cox	Francis	Servant with the Barringtons	20

Augusta Barrington mentioned that after the death of her grandmother, Shrivenham House was kept on by her aunts. There is a curious entry on the Tithe Survey of 1844, that listed the occupier of Shrivenham House as, Captain Felix Venus Smith. We can find no information on him and he is not mentioned by Augusta Barrington. Her brother, George Barrington, who would become the 7<sup>th</sup> Viscount, married Isabel Morritt in the Spring of 1846, and for a time resided at Beckett. But the following year he moved into Shrivenham House and remained there until 1851, when he moved to London and from there abroad. Augusta continued with the tenancy of Mr & Mrs Van Notten Pole, during which time, the north part of the house caught fire and was completely gutted. A newspaper article described that the fire, *'commenced in the upper part of the premises, it was supposed, from the ignition of a bond timber in one of the flues, and obtained so firm a hold that it was impossible for the*

*domestics to stop it. In less than two hours afterwards the whole place was burned to the ground, the walls alone remaining.'* (John o' Groat Journal 16th April 1852). Whilst sounding very dramatic, the report is misleading and leads the reader to think that the whole house was destroyed, but it was only the northern range of the house that was damaged. The new western part built in 1834 by Elizabeth Barrington was unscathed. Augusta also wrote an interesting point that the rebuilding of the damaged part of the house was commissioned by her father William Keppel the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount.




Above. It was the northern part (on the left) that was destroyed by the fire of 1852. Below. The western wing, built by Elizabeth Barrington in 1834, was not damaged



After the Van Notten Pole's, the next tenant was G. Glyn. We can only presume that this man was George Glyn, who went on to become the first Baron Wolverton. He was a banker with interests in the railways, a partner in the family firm of Glyn, Mills & Co. (Info from Wikipedia). Why he was at Shrivenham has not yet been discovered. The newspapers provided details of a tragic incident that took place within his household whilst he was there. On 27th March 1854 an inquest took place at Shrivenham on a newly born infant, the child of Sarah Baxter. She was in service with Mr Glyn as a kitchen-maid, and had given birth to a child that she had allegedly tried to conceal. The details were quite gruesome but it seemed most likely that the child was dead at birth. 20year old Sarah Baxter was committed for trial at the next assizes. (Berks Chronicle 1st & 15th April 1854). But at the assizes in July, the judge interrupted the learned counsel for the prosecution, stating that there was no evidence about to be produced that Sarah Baxter had intended to conceal the birth, and directed the Jury to acquit her. (Berks Chronicle 15th July 1854). The Hon. W.B. Portman was in residence in 1857, but perhaps honourable might not be an appropriate title. There were two items in the newspapers that refer to Mr Portman. The first was dated 7th February 1857, when a large notice appeared in the Berkshire Chronicle giving details of the bankruptcy of the Hon. Edwin Berkeley Portman. Confirmation that it was the same person appeared in the text that listed his many addresses, one being Shrivenham House. Later that year the same newspaper reported, *'an extensive robbery took place on Sunday night last at Shrivenham House.'* The details portrayed rather suspicious information that suggested the break-in was



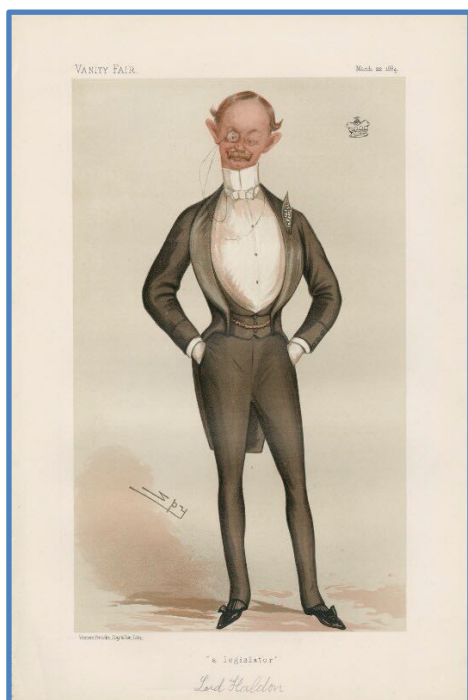
carried out by someone from within the house. (Berkshire Chronicle 28th Nov 1857). The next tenant was described by Augusta Barrington as, '*old Mr Joseph Murray.*' The census of 1861 confirmed his tenure and a newspaper article of the same year described the marriage of his son, George, to Miss Augusta Deane of Alresford, Hants. (Hampshire Chronicle 7th Sept 1861). He was still there in 1863 according to the Dutton Allen & Co Directory.

<div>  <b>Record Transcription:</b> </div> <div> 1861 England, Wales &amp; Scotland Census  Shrivenham House, Shrivenham, Faringdon, Berkshire &amp; Oxfordshire, England  <a href="#">Learn about this record set</a> </div>								
Household Members ⓘ								
First name(s)	Last name	Relationship	Marital status	Sex	Age	Birth year	Occupation	Birth place
Joseph	Murray	Head	Married	Male	74	1787	Land Owner	Scotland
Grace	Murray	Wife	Married	Female	71	1790	-	Scotland
George Joseph	Murray	Son	Unmarried	Male	27	1834	Land Owners Son And Holder Of Bank Shares And###	Scotland
Frederic Aug	Franter	Servant	Unmarried	Male	31	1830	Butler	Gloucester, Gloucestershire, England
Christian	Robertson	Servant	Unmarried	Female	45	1816	House Keeper	Scotland
Catherine	McEwan	Servant	Unmarried	Female	37	1824	House Maid	Scotland
Eliza	Knapp	Servant	Unmarried	Female	19	1842	Kitchen Maid	Shrivenham, Berkshire, England

Alfred Sartoris Esq, of Warnford Park, Bishop's Waltham, Hants, married the Hon. Mary Frances Barrington, the daughter of William Keppel Lord Viscount Barrington (6th) at Shrivenham Parish church on 28th October 1856. (Bath Chron 13th November 1856). Around 1864, the couple moved in to Shrivenham House whilst they were waiting for their new house to be built at Abbotswood, in the Cotswolds of Gloucestershire, which was completed in 1868. Later that year another marriage took place involving a Barrington girl. On 7th October 1868, Constance Mary Barrington, daughter of George Lord Viscount Barrington (7th), married Lawrence Hesketh Palk, who would become the second Baron Haldon. With Shrivenham House available after the Sartoris' left, the Palk's took up residence. The census of 1871 showed a large number of people at the house, mainly made up of servants.

Palk	Lawrence H	24	Shrivenham House
Palk	Constance	24	Shrivenham House. Wife of Lawrence- daughter of 7th Viscount Barrington
Palk	Lawrence	1	Shrivenham House. Son of Lawrence
Palk	?	0	Shrivenham House. Son of Lawrence. 7 months old
Cotton	Augusta	21	Shrivenham House. Visitor to Shrivenham House
Hilton ?	Jane	31	Shrivenham House. Cook
Scott	Mary	41	Shrivenham House. Servant
Anger ?	Isabella	29	Shrivenham House. Lady's Maid
Stannard ?	Ann ?	21	Shrivenham House. Lady's Maid
Lorne ?	Jamina ?	25	Shrivenham House. Housemaid
Marham	Sarah	17	Shrivenham House. Nursery Maid
Rice	Sarah A	16	Shrivenham House. Kitchen Maid
White	Daniel	28	Shrivenham House. Butler
Poole	Robert	21	Shrivenham House. Footman
Chivers	?	26	Shrivenham House. Coachman
Derby ?	?	17	Shrivenham House. Groom
Palmer	George	23	Shrivenham House. Servant

Apparently, unlike the rest of his family, Lawrence Palk had no real interest in politics or the military. What he excelled at was being a gentleman, a dandy, being among the Victorian aristocracy of London. It was this reputation that gained him a caricature in the society magazine, *Vanity Fair*, (see below.)



Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery. Lawrence Hesketh Palk: NPG D44166. Constance Mary Palk (nee Barrington): NPG 21711

But it was that side of his character that his wife Constance did not approve of and by the end of the 1870s, their marriage was coming to an end. In the summer of 1880, Constance Palk left for a trip to Italy and Egypt, leaving her husband and marriage behind. She filed for divorce in 1882 on the grounds that Lawrence was having an affair, which he denied. The following year, Lawrence became the second Baron Haldon upon the death of his father, and to avoid the scandal of a divorce, he came to an agreement with his estranged wife and the lawsuit was dropped.

It was another Barrington family member by marriage, who moved in to Shrivenham House after the Palks left in 1880. Georgiana Liddell, the youngest child of the first Baron Ravensworth, had married John Bloomfield, the second Baron Bloomfield. Before her marriage, Georgiana had been maid of honour for Queen Victoria. Upon the death of her husband in 1879, she moved to Shrivenham to be near her sister Dowager Elizabeth Barrington, widow of the 6th Viscount. In the short time she was in Shrivenham she showed her benevolence by offering to pay £150 for the old church organ, much above what it was worth, in order to provide a good start to the fund for the purchase of a new one. (Swindon Adver 18th December 1880). Sadly, her sister Elizabeth died in 1883, and Georgiana moved to Bramfield House near Hertford for the rest of her life.



The elegant Georgiana Liddell (Lady Bloomfield) dressed for a Ball in 1843. Picture from Wikipedia



The census for 1891 below, listed that Walter Bulkeley Lord Viscount Barrington (9th) and his family were in occupation, and with the lack of any evidence to the contrary, we assume that they moved in after Lady Bloomfield.

Barrington	Walter B	42	Dower House. (Shrivenham House) J.P. William Viscount Barrington
Barrington	Mary Isabella	43	Dower House. (Shrivenham House) Wife of Walter
Barrington	Violet M	18	Dower House. (Shrivenham House) Daughter of Walter
Barrington	Rupert E.S	13	Dower House. (Shrivenham House) Son of Walter
Barrington	Percy E	6	Dower House. (Shrivenham House) Son of Walter
Power	Elizabeth	42	Dower House. (Shrivenham House) Servant - Cook
Evans	Margaret	46	Dower House. (Shrivenham House) servant - Ladies Maid
Williams	Amie	27	Dower House. (Shrivenham House) Servant - Housemaid
Metcalf	Emma	19	Dower House. (Shrivenham House) Servant - Nursery - under housemaid
Burt	Ruth	20	Dower House. (Shrivenham House) Servant - Nursery Maid
Saunders	Bessie A	22	Dower House. (Shrivenham House) Servant - Kitchen Maid
Hudson	Frederick	14	Dower House. (Shrivenham House) Servant - Page
Scott	George M	31	Dower House. (Shrivenham House) Servant - Footman

Walter Barrington was liked and respected by the local people and his passion for cricket was always evident during the summer months. It was his second wife Charlotte, who organised an, '*American Fair*,' to aid the funds of the Cricket Club during the summer of 1891. It was unusual and very successful.

**SHRIVENHAM.**  
**AN AMERICAN FAIR**

In aid of the Funds of the Cricket Club,  
will be held in the  
Garden, at Shrivenham House,  
**On Wednesday, July 8th, 1891.**

All Contributions, namely, Garments (Old or New)  
Fancy Work and other articles, Poultry (alive or  
dead), Eggs, Fruit, Vegetables, Flowers, Rabbits,  
and Live Stock generally, will be most thankfully  
received by the Hon. Mrs BARRINGTON, who has  
undertaken the management of the Entertainment.


**Tea & Coffee, with other Refreshments**  
Will be provided in the Grounds, and any  
supplies which may be sent towards furnishing  
the tables will be most acceptable. Tea has  
already been promised.

**The Grounds will be open at Four o'clock,**  
Dancing in the evening, Admission 2d each. Mem-  
bers of the Club Free.

At Easter the following year a big wedding took place at St Andrew's, Shrivenham with the bride being Walter's daughter by his first marriage, Violet Mary Barrington. She married Mr John Charles Evelyn Hope Brooke of Brackley, Northants. Even though it rained it did nothing to spoil the festivities of the occasion with marques set up on the lawns of Shrivenham House, next door to the church. (Faringdon Adver 30th April 1892).

By 1893 the Viscount had left and the house was placed, *'To Let for the Hunting Season.'* (Sporting Gazette 14th October 1893). The next tenant was Mr Francis F. Daniell, who appeared to be a country sports person. He appeared in the winners listings in the Lechlade Horse Show in 1895. (Wilts & Glos Standard 20th April 1895). The following year a newspaper clip announced the birth of his son. (Morning Post 24th April 1896). A month later he advertised a Deerhound and Borzoi dogs for sale, *'both beautifully bred and grown.'* (Field 2nd May 1896). But from then we hear nothing more of him.

The census of 1901 listed Justina C. Milligan, 56 years of age and of independent means. The listing below suggest that it was just herself and her servants. She was in residence earlier as a newspaper item noted that she had written a letter to the Clerk of the Parish Council, offering to pay for a water cart. (Faringdon Adver 13th May 1899). And it may be that she took over the tenancy immediately after Francis Daniell.

<div> <b>Record Transcription:</b></div> <div>1901 England, Wales &amp; Scotland Census</div> <div>Shrivenham House, Shrivenham, Faringdon, Berkshire &amp; Oxfordshire, England</div> <div><a href="#">Learn about this record set</a></div>							
<b>Household Members</b> ⓘ							
First name(s)	Last name	Relationship	Marital status	Sex	Age	Birth year	Occupation
Justinn C	Milligan	Head	Single	Female	56	1845	Of Independent Means
Amelia	Mills	Servant	Single	Female	36	1865	Ladys Maid (Domestic)
Ethel Rose	Davis	Servant	Single	Female	28	1873	Cook (Domestic)
Laura	Bennett	Servant	Single	Female	31	1870	Parlour Maid Domestic
Emma	Edwards	Servant	Single	Female	21	1880	Housemaid (Domestic)
Amelia	Holway	Servant	Single	Female	25	1876	House & Kitchen Maid
							Birth place
							Belgravia, London, England
							Cirencester, Gloucestershire, England
							Gloucestershire, England
							Silverstone, Nottinghamshire, England
							Skenfrith, Monmouthshire, Wales
							Ightham, Kent, England

The tenure of Justina Milligan was to be quite a lengthy one. She seemed to have come from a wealthy family. Upon the death of her brother, William Milligan, in April 1906, a newspaper article noted that he was the son of the late Major Milligan. In his Will he left estate valued at £74,000. After some minor legacies, he left the remainder of his estate in trust for Justina and his other sister Alice for their lives. (Glos Citizen 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1906). The census of 1911 showed that sister Alice had moved in with Justina, and between them they had several servants. (Below).

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1	Justina C. Milligan	Head		66	single
2	Alice Milligan	Partner		64	single
3	Isabel Hope Hume	Visitor		50	married
4	Amelia Mills	Servant		46	single
5	Ellen Chesterman	Servant		28	single
6	Mary Tombs	Servant		20	single
7	Edith Ingram	Servant		30	single
8	Gertrude Pauson	Servant		19	single
9					

In February 1918, Alice passed away. The small article that appeared in the newspaper, noted that she had been in delicate health for some time, but gradually her condition worsened. It added that she was well known for her kindness and generosity. (Faringdon Adver 16<sup>th</sup> February 1918). Her Will that was published later that summer, revealed that she left estate valued at £17,000. After some small legacies to various people, the remainder went to her sister Justina for her life. (Faringdon Adver 15<sup>th</sup> June 1918). Justina Charlotte Milligan died in 1927 and was buried in St Andrew's churchyard on 9<sup>th</sup> November, aged, 'about 83.' There appeared in the newspaper in 1929 an advertisement for a sale on the premises at Shrivenham House, a large amount of quality furniture, the 'contents of the residence.' But even though it doesn't provide the name of the owner, it's highly likely that it was Justina Milligan's executors. (Faringdon Adver 28<sup>th</sup> June 1929).

We are aware of the next tenant by means of a newspaper article concerning a matter in the Court of the King's Bench, London. Wealthy Calcutta Tea Merchant, Alexander Douglas Gordon, was trying to fend off his wife's creditors for £963. He claimed he gave Mrs May Gordon no authority to buy dresses and jewellery on credit against his name, and that the



£200 per month allowance was adequate. Mrs May strongly denied that the allowance was adequate, and that the goods were necessities suitable to her station in life. (Daily Mirror 15<sup>th</sup> December 1931). Two years later, a young lady by the name of Katherine Grizel Clarke Kennedy, aged 17, of Shrivenham House, appeared in Swindon Borough Magistrates Court, for driving her Talbot Coupe of 14 horsepower, '*in a manner dangerous to the public.*' She was fined £2 and her licence was suspended for six months. (North Wilts Herald 6<sup>th</sup> January 1933. The Driving Test was introduced in the UK on 1<sup>st</sup> June 1935).

It was the beginning of 1937 when Lord & Lady Gifford moved in to Shrivenham House. Lady Gifford had begun recruiting staff at the end of 1936 when she advertised for a, '*Good Cook.*' (North Wilts Herald 11<sup>th</sup> December 1936). They had come to Shrivenham because Lord Gifford had a lot of family in the area and he was then of an age to enjoy a graceful retirement. But it was not to be as tragically, but a few weeks after arriving, Baron Gifford died.

(Below – part of the beautiful grounds today. Photo by Neil B. Maw).



## AGED PEER'S DEATH.

**Baron Gifford, of  
Shrivenham House.**

**FORMER MILITIA OFFICER.**

Baron Gifford, the fourth holder of the title, died on Friday at Shrivenham House, Berkshire, aged 79.

He succeeded in 1911, his brother, who won the V.C. in the Ashanti Expedition of 1873-74.

The new peer is a nephew, Lieut.-Commander Charles M. E. Gifford (retired), secretary of the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Camperdown, Sydney (N.S.W.). He is 36 and is an hon. A.D.C. to the Governor of New South Wales.

The late Peer was formerly an officer of the South Gloucestershire Militia. He was twice married. His first wife, who was the daughter of John Osborne, Q.C., and the widow of Thomas Booth, of West Ashby Manor, Lincolnshire, died in 1913, and five years later he married Anne Maude, daughter of the late Colonel Aitchison, of Drummore, Musselburgh, by whom



**LORD GIFFORD.**

he leaves a daughter, the Hon. Serena Mary Gifford.

Lady Gifford continued to live at Shrivenham House with her daughter Serena, and busied herself with goods causes. She became Commandant of the new Red Cross in Swindon, and was publicly acclaimed for so doing. (North Wilts Herald 28<sup>th</sup> July 1939). The following year, Serena married Mr Patrick de G.V.G. Warren, younger son of Mr Guy de G. Warren, general manager of the Midland Colliery Owners' Indemnity Company. The ceremony was held at St Andrew's, Shrivenham, and although a happy occasion, it was not a huge affair on account of the Second World War that had just begun. (Derby Daily Telegraph 1<sup>st</sup> October 1940).

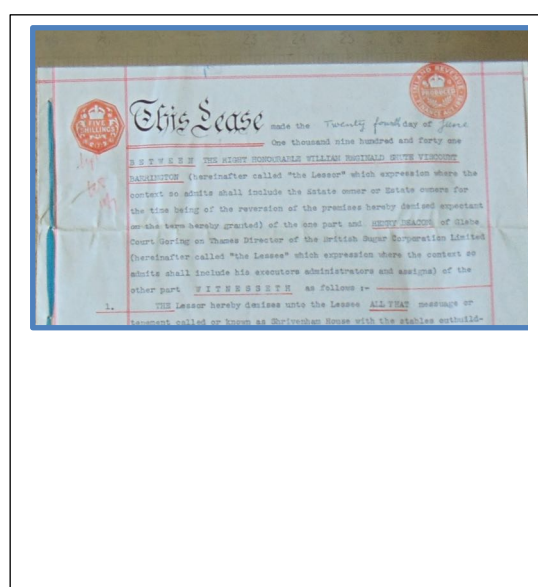
*Mr. Patrick Warren and the Hon. Serena Gifford*



Lord Gifford dies North Wilts Herald 5<sup>th</sup> February 1937. The Hon. Serena Gifford marries, The Bystander, 9<sup>th</sup> October 1940

The following year, a short article in the newspaper announced that the, *'People of Shrivenham and Red Cross workers throughout this part of the country will be sorry to hear that Maude Lady Gifford, is giving up her residence at Shrivenham House in order to be near her married daughter at Sturminster Newton, near Yeovil.'* (North Wilts Herald 30<sup>th</sup> May 1941).

The information of the next tenant was provided courtesy of Antony Alderson of Bristol, a family descendant of the Barringtons. In a copy of the lease dated 24<sup>th</sup> June 1941, we learn that at that point in time, the house was still in the possession of the Barringtons. The agreement was between the Right Hon. William Reginald Shute Barrington (10<sup>th</sup> Viscount) and Henry Deacon of Goring-on-Thames, Director of the British Sugar Corp Ltd. The terms were an annual rent of £210 for seven years.



We have no information as yet as to how long the house was leased by Henry Deacon. Living memory of several local people suggest that there then followed a succession of high-ranking military officers in residence, usually the Commandants of the nearby Royal Military College of Science. The whole of Beckett Park, including Beckett House, had been sold to the Ministry of Defence in 1937.

A newspaper article of 1955 confirmed local memory, when it reported on the tragedy that befell Major-General E.H.Q. Cobb, aged 52, who died after a fall. He was the Commandant



at the college, resided at Shrivenham House and had slipped at the top of a staircase whilst wearing shiny slippers. The inquest also heard the information that a golf ball was present at the staircase and may have been a contributory factor. A verdict was recorded of, '*Accidental Death.*' (Birmingham Daily Post 30<sup>th</sup> March 1955).

We glean one more piece of information from the Electoral Register for Shrivenham of 1958-9, that listed Ethel Newton Douglas as a resident. We have no further information about her.

And that is as far as we can go at the moment. The current owners and occupiers are Roger and Alison Davis, and the property is completely private. If any reader has further information or would like to comment on any of the above, please contact us on:

(Below. The house and grounds from the air. Photo by Neil B. Maw)

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