

THE COUNTRY HOUSES OF SOUTHAMPTON

By JESSICA VALE

ABSTRACT

This article considers the history of the country houses in and around Southampton from about 1700 to the present. In the first half of the eighteenth century most such houses were long-established manor houses, but with the popularity of Southampton as a spa town the number of houses and wealthy families greatly increased, especially around 1800. The growth of Southampton's port from 1842 onwards brought great changes, including the break-up of estates and depression of the larger houses. The last country house was built in 1854, and from the early 1850s onwards their gradual decline is visible, with a phase of heavy demolition early this century, until at the present only a small handful remain. Most of these have institutional uses, not their original functions as private residences, and the estates which went with them have been lost in the expansion of the town.

THE HOUSES

Southampton's country houses, and there may have been as many as forty of them, illustrate very clearly one aspect of the development of Southampton from a small town with an estimated 3000 inhabitants in the early eighteenth century to the large residential and maritime city of over 300,000 people in more recent times (Monkhouse 1964). In the course of research it was very difficult to decide which houses were large enough to be included in the project. A wide variety of relevant criteria could be applied to the available evidence – number of servants, size of house, size of estate, for example – but all these varied with time and occupancy. Moreover, it would be very difficult to apply a set of criteria to all the houses because of the lack of uniform evidence, so that the term 'country house' cannot be used very strictly. It must nevertheless imply houses which have more than seven bedrooms, excluding servants' rooms, set in extensive grounds, whether garden or parkland, and built and inhabited by people who obtained their income from elsewhere, in

business or from property, thus making them private residences and excluding large farmhouses.

Few of the houses still standing are now sufficiently important to appear in modern guidebooks, for example Bitterne Grove is not mentioned by Pevsner and Lloyd (1967), but many houses were mentioned in the popular guides to Southampton issued by local publishers from the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries. The descriptions of the houses are usually complimentary because their occupants' interest in the books was to be encouraged, and the books were designed to impress the many visitors to the town (see p. 174). At the beginning of the twentieth century there was another spate of publication in the form of large books about the nobility and gentry of Hampshire, for example W T Pike's *Hampshire at the Opening of the Twentieth Century* (1905), and these lavish volumes included photographs. Sale particulars provide details of properties, including outbuildings, gardens and farmland. Directories are very useful, but along with the early guidebooks have one drawback in that they name the occupant of the house, who was not necessarily the owner. This difficulty, and problems with empty houses, can be overcome by examination of surviving deeds. Other information, descriptions and illustrations come from a wide variety of sources, including newspaper archives, as will be apparent. Figure 1 shows the location of the houses in relation to Southampton.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the town of Southampton only reached as far north as the Marlands, with hamlets at Northam and around St Mary's church. Beyond this lay fields and commons. Most of the country houses therefore were village manor houses, built for influential local land owners, and often stood close to the parish church. Peartree House was

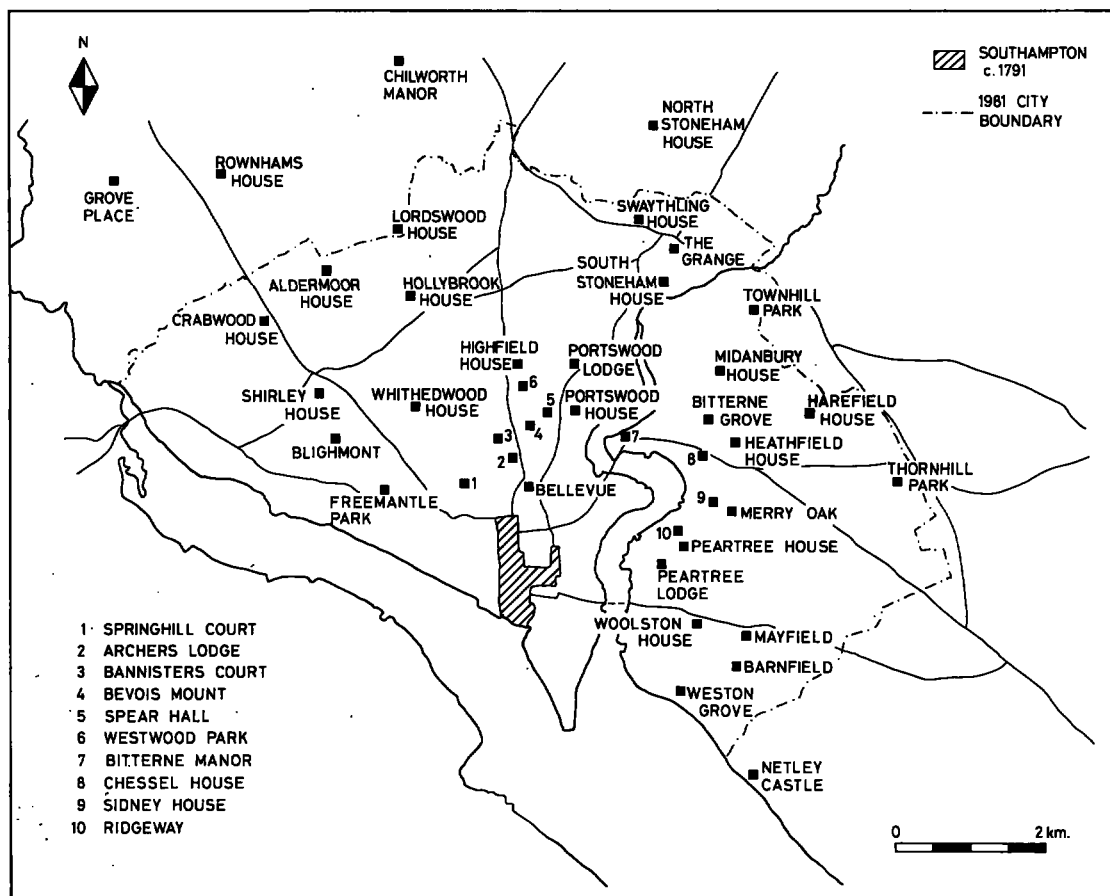


Fig 1. Map to show location of houses.

built for the Mill family in the late sixteenth century. The original North Stoneham House, property of the Fleming family, also stood close to the church. Bitterne Manor (Fig 2) was a fine stone building of medieval origins, owned by the bishops of Winchester who were lords of the manor of Bitterne. Grove Place, a sixteenth century gabled red brick mansion built on the classical E-shaped plan with two fine octagonal turrets housing the staircases, was, in the early eighteenth century, Crown property leased to the Knollys family (Greenfield 1895, 122–3). Swaythling manor house, depicted on Isaac Taylor's map of Hampshire of 1759 as a gabled Elizabethan or Jacobean mansion, was situated

just west of the junction of what are now Bassett Green Road and Channels Farm Road (Milne 1791). The Grange nearby (Fig 3) was the home of the Dummer family. In 1705 a London branch of the Dummer family acquired the manor of South Stoneham and built a red brick mansion there in Queen Anne style – the architect may have been Nicholas Hawksmoor (Pevsner and Lloyd 1967, 581). Several other large houses, or at least their predecessors, may have existed in about 1700. Certainly Chilworth, Rownhams, Shirley, Portswood and Bannisters Farm already existed as units of land, but no evidence for large houses has been found.

Changes were shortly to begin, however. In 1723 the Third Earl of Peterborough began renting some land just north of the town which included a farm known as Padwell (Hearnshaw 1905, 109). He laid out gardens, improved and enlarged the farmhouse, and named the property Bevois Mount after the earthwork in the grounds said to have been raised by that legendary character. This romantic name and the figures of national importance who visited the Earl there are new features in the history of country houses of the Southampton area. South Stoneham House was bought in about 1735 by William Sloane, whose uncle Sir Hans Sloane's collection formed the nucleus of the British Museum.

From 1750 onwards the course of Southampton's history changed dramatically as the town

became a fashionable spa and bathing resort enjoying royal patronage. Famous names begin to be associated with Southampton houses; the poet William Cowper stayed at Freemantle (Fig 4) in 1752. In 1768 work began on a new house called Bellevue at the southern end of the Avenue for Nathaniel St André, physician to George I. The house had an impressive north-facing pilastered classical front with small wings either side which were demolished early in the nineteenth century (Bullar 1819, 176).

Lancelot 'Capability' Brown was responsible for the landscaping of the grounds of several houses in the Southampton area. He drew up plans for Testwood House and carried out works at Paultons Park, near Ower, and at South Stoneham House from 1772 onwards. Water-colour landscapes of these last two places,

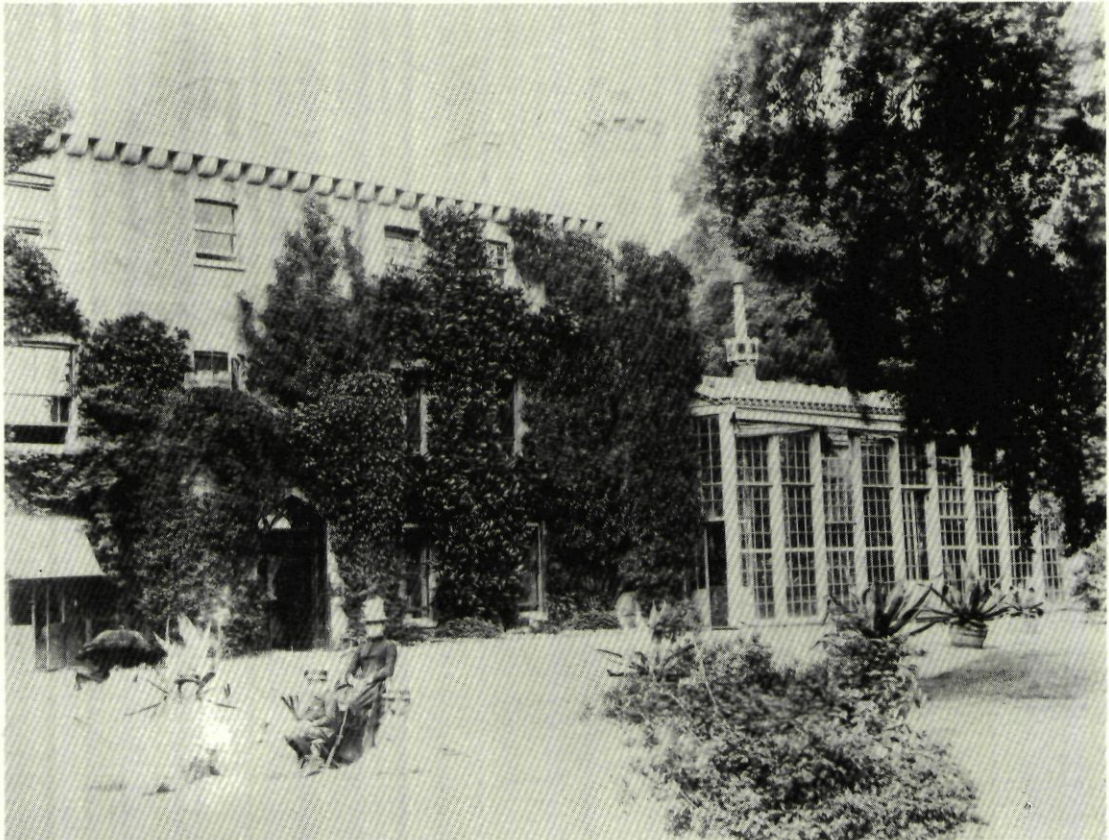


Fig 2. Bitterne Manor c 1890 (SRO P37/1).

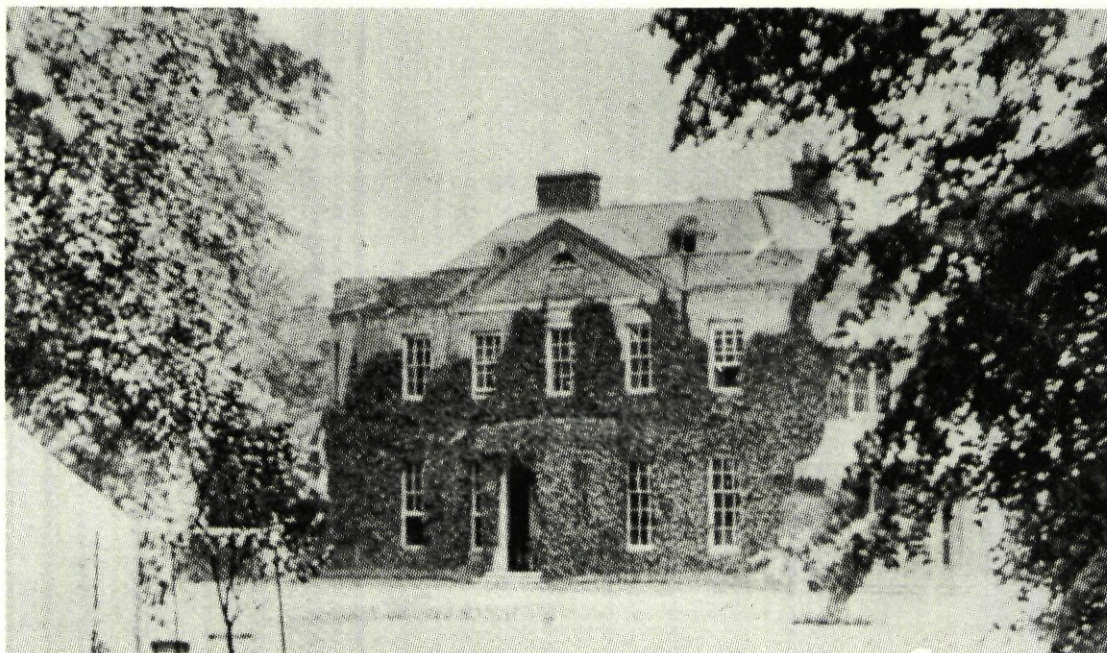


Fig 3. The Grange c 1900 (Pike, 1905).

thought to be by Brown, survive in private hands; they were more probably designs for his employer's approval than pictures of the actual results. 'Capability' Brown also drew up the plans for John Fleming's 400-acre deer park at North Stoneham in 1775 but then moved to work at Cadland on the west side of Southampton Water (Stroud 1975, 219, 236, 241, 242).

Several new country houses appeared in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Although Southampton was then a small town, it is difficult now to imagine or agree with Skelton's sentiments (Skelton 1818, 62–3) on the location of Portwood House (Fig 5), which was situated on the east side of Bevois Hill just north of what is now Lawn Road, and therefore had a southerly aspect. Skelton said that it was

one of the most healthy and agreeable situations we know, and commands the most beautiful prospects the imagination can conceive; viz. Northam-yard; Peartree Green; Itchen Ferry; the New Forest;

Southampton river. The new bridge at Northam adds considerably to the beauty of the views.

This house was built to designs by a Mr Crunden in 1776 for General Giles Stibbert, an officer of the East India Company (Britton and Brayley 1805, 120–1). Spear Hall, to the west of Portwood Road, was built by 1768 for William Bricknell (SRO D/MW/281). Although architecturally not impressive, it made local history as the home of Charles Day, founder of the marine engineering firm Day, Summers & Co at Northam and Millbrook in the early nineteenth century. Peartree Lodge, on the west side of Peartree Green, was a ten-bedroomed house built in 1775 for Anthony Munton (SRO D/PSR 11/1). Shirley House (Fig 6) situated close to what is now the junction of Clarendon Road and Henty Road, was built sometime between 1760 and 1790 on land owned by the Mill family. The 1792 sale particulars describe it as a 'spacious new-built freehold house' in grounds of 48 acres

(SRO D/PM Box 79). The house may have been extensively altered in the early nineteenth century since the architectural style as depicted in Figure 6 is clearly Regency.

The years 1790 to about 1810 saw the most rapid expansion of country houses around Southampton; the fame of the spa town had spread, and to a certain extent declined, so that residence near Southampton became desirable and attainable for a greater number of people. The east bank of the Itchen seems to have been especially popular. Ridgeway Castle was an 'old turretted mansion' set in extensive grounds (White 1859, 221). Baker (1814, 58) says that it had formerly been the home of 'the celebrated Miss Minifie'. In around 1820 it was sold to James Ede. Another house which the Ede family owned was Merry Oak. This was built about 1800 and occupied by Hugh P Keane; from him it passed to George Ede, James' brother. Sidney Farm or House (not to be confused with Sidney

Cottage nearby or Sidney Lodge at Hamble) stood at the junction of Peartree Avenue and Freemantle Common Road. It cannot have been an impressive building as it received no glowing appraisals from the guide books, but its inhabitants were mentioned and so must have been reasonably wealthy.

Chessel House was built for David Lance in 1796, in Georgian style and apparently on a very similar plan to Portswood House. Jane Austen went there several times to visit Mrs Lance (Austen-Leigh 1949, 27–8). In about 1820 the property was acquired by Lord Ashtown, who was famous for his futile attempts to convert the Irish to Protestantism. Bitterne Grove, now part of St Mary's College was one of the largest houses in the area. It was built around 1790 by Richard Leversuch, who shortly after sold it to Mr James Dott. Midanbury House, situated close to the junction of Witts Hill and Woodmill Lane, with its castellated entrance on to Witts



Fig 4. Freemantle Park c 1840 (engraving by G F Prosser).



Fig 5. Portswood House c 1840 (SRO SC20/3/2/12).

Hill, may also have been built around 1790; a list of members of the Royal Southampton Archers drawn up in about 1793 (Skelton nd, 42) names 'John Morse, Esq Midannbury'. In about 1820 Midanbury became the home of Southampton merchant Michael Hoy, whose nephew the MP James Barlow Hoy inherited the property. In 1787 Nathaniel Middleton acquired land at Townhill and created a large park to surround the farmhouse which he converted. This was rebuilt in about 1800 after a fire (Campion 1923).

During the 1790s there were several new developments closer to the town. Close to Bellevue, Archers Lodge was built in 1798 on the site of the Royal Southampton Archers' ground for Samuel Harrison, a Southampton banker. Skelton (1815, 59) described it as 'a beautiful rural retreat'. The house was of compact Georgian design built of pale brick (Leonard 1979, 52–5). To the north of this was the Bannisters Court estate, comprising about 140 acres, which had been a farm since at least

medieval times. In 1791 the property was bought by William Fitzhugh, who built there a mansion with an oval drawing room. Two lakes were excavated in the garden, and a small valley with a pretty stream running through it was made a feature of the grounds. This valley was called the Dell and is now the site of Southampton Football Club's ground.

A new house in Regency style was built at Portswood in 1800 for Walter Taylor, the marine engineer. This was called Portswood Lodge to avoid confusion with Portswood House. It stood close to the main road almost opposite the junction with St Denys Road. Springhill Court, on the east side of Hill Lane, first appears on a map of 1800 (SRO Doswell), when it was the home of Alexander Scott. By 1834 the large house (Fig 11) had been turned into an academy run by the Reverend James Crabb, a Wesleyan minister, and his son. Westwood House and its farm stood in about 45 acres of land bounded by the Avenue, the Bevois Mount estate and the grounds of Highfield

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ON THE SECOND FLOOR—Of Boudoir,—Seven Handsome Bed Rooms,—and Secondary Staircase.

ON THE THIRD FLOOR—Of Eight Spacious and Airy Bed Rooms.

IN THE BASEMENT—Of Ample Cellarage and Sundry Apartments.

External of the House are Servants' Offices, Stabling, and Coach Houses.

Attached are Kitchen Gardens, Orchard, and Flower Garden.

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consists of 45 Acres, part Dairy Farm; but the House may be possessed with 3, 5, or other number of Acres, not exceeding 45.

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Fig 6. Shirley House c 1856 (SRO D/Z 332/2).



Fig 7. Thornhill Park c 1910 (Mr K D Le May).



Fig 8. Westwood House c 1840 (SRO SC20/3/1).

House. This house seems to have been gradually built up out of a farmhouse, although its owners were certainly not farmers, and the farm buildings were later rebuilt further away from the house. In 1826 the property was bought by George Fullerton who literally 'put' Westwood House 'on the map' by adding more land to the property and bringing the house to its completed appearance (Fig 8). Highfield House, situated further north on the edge of Southampton Common, is described as a 'Georgian residence' (Edwards 1947), although little is known of its origins.

The period from 1800 to about 1830 was also one of agricultural improvement and enclosure of land. Some of the high ground around the town was not worth cultivating commercially but made an attractive parkland setting for several large houses. Aldermoor House was built some time around 1800 on part of Nursling Common; by 1840 the house, gardens and farmland, totalling 72 acres, were rented from

the Barker Mill family (SRO Tithe Map). Heathfield House above Bitterne was built some time after 1814 on former common land which was enclosed expressly for housing development. The columns of the porch were repeated by another pair in the entrance hall. At some time an ironwork verandah was added to the west side of the house. Whitedwood Farm nearly Shirley, later upgraded to Whitedwood House, was built in 1818 for the farm owner William Howard on part of Whitedwood Common (SRO PR 10/7/1). As at Heathfield, there was a pillared porch, and granite columns in the dining room and drawing room. The garden front had a very elegant verandah and Regency window mounts. Thornhill Park and House were created for Michael Hoy around 1827 (Fig 7). Hollybrook House (Fig 13) a two-storey mock-Tudor mansion, was built in about 1835 for local landowner Nathaniel Jefferys on land recently enclosed from Shirley Common (SRO Knowlys Coll.).



Fig 9. Blighmont 1941 (SRO P149/1/130).

In the early nineteenth century the son of Admiral Bligh of Bellevue leased an estate of nearly 50 acres at Millbrook, and a large house was built there probably in 1824 (SRO Knowlys Coll). Blighmont was an elegant two-storey house situated on an elevated area which provided good views of Southampton Water. The first-floor windows had shutters which were arranged on sliding rails because of the central curved windows (Fig 9). On the other side of town, Barnfield at Weston was built in the late eighteenth century for the Hulton family. The red brick fabric was covered with plaster to create a 'pretty neat cottage, in the gothic style' (Skelton 1818, 71). Barnfield was almost surrounded by the Weston Grove estate. Weston Grove, situated south-west of Archery Road, was built in 1801 for the MP William Chamberlayne. In 1826 William Cobbett wrote of the place:

To those who like water scenes (as nineteen twentieths of people do) it is the prettiest spot, I believe, in all England. Mr. Chamberlayne built the house about twenty years ago. He has been bringing the place to greater and greater perfection from that time to this. All round about the house is in the neatest possible order. I should think that, altogether, there cannot be so little as *ten acres of short grass*; and when I say *that*, those who know anything about gardens will form a pretty correct general notion as to the *scale* on which the thing is carried on. (Cobbett 1830, 469).

So much for the new houses. The early years of the nineteenth century also produced changes in the older ones. In order to keep up with the times, Bitterne Manor and Peartree House were both provided with crenellated stucco facades in the Gothic revival fashion in about 1804 (Fig 2). A conservatory was added to the east end of Bitterne Manor House during this period. Upon the completion of Northam Bridge in 1799 it was decided to convert Bitterne Manor into a hotel in view of the new traffic passing by: this venture however failed, and within a few years the house had reverted to a private residence (Macnaghten 1953, 474). From the late 1830s until his death

in 1842 Peartree House was the home of General Shrapnel, inventor of the shrapnel shell. Grove Place at this time belonged to the Mill family and was let to various tenants. In 1813 it was let to one Dr Middleton as a lunatic asylum. He added several outbuildings to the house which were demolished in the mid-nineteenth century when the house became a private residence again and Tudor charm was popular. Freemantle House, a Georgian mansion set in a park of 143 acres, was 'improved' in about 1800 by its owner John Jarrett (Fig 4). The parlour is said to have been inlaid with Italian marble, and two lodges were built which were surfaced with stone 'of Coade's manufacture' ornamented with 'figures in bas relief of the same' (Bullar 1809, 15). Rownhams House, a mid-eighteenth century red brick building set in a park of 39 acres, was greatly enlarged around 1800 by the Barton family: the brick facade of the stables was of an unusual design.

During this period two houses were demolished. Swaythling manor house, former home of Admiral Lord Hawke, was demolished in 1801, as the site was leased out in 1802 (HRO 102M 71/E41). Woolston House, a former farm house (VCH 1908, 3, 297), was probably pulled down in about 1811 and had been little used for some time previously. It belonged to the Dummer family in the eighteenth century, then came to the Hollands of Cranbury Park. William Chamberlayne, their heir, lived at Swaythling manor house while Weston Grove was being built, but after this both houses were presumably surplus to requirements.

Another old house demolished in 1818 was North Stoneham House. In its place however was to rise a grander building, probably the largest country house in the vicinity of Southampton. The Fleming family were very wealthy local landowners (the monument to John Fleming in North Stoneham church records that he died in 1844 on board his yacht at Piraeus, Athens). The new house, designed by Hopper, had a magnificent classical facade and was lavishly decorated. Hopper also designed a lodge as a model of a Greek temple, and rebuilt the Belvidere as a classical gateway. Work was, however, slow. In 1831 the office

wing was destroyed by fire and had to be rebuilt. John Fleming may also have begun to encounter financial difficulties which passed to his son after his death. In fact the plans were never completed and the house was never fully occupied. While building was going on at North Stoneham, John Fleming lived at another Fleming property, South Stoneham House. He acquired Chilworth Manor, a smaller house, and its estate in 1825, and it was let to various tenants.

The new Southampton docks were opened in 1842, with profound effects on the town which were felt by all the country house owners. Much more of the area's wealth was based on business of some sort. The traditional type of gentry – smaller landowners, widows and people retired from the armed services – were often displaced by younger merchants, agents and surveyors with busy town centre offices who were seeking more peaceful homes. There were two side-effects of this expansion with consequences for the larger houses. Firstly the need for land for working-class housing, which was partly met by farmland but also affected the estates of various houses. Secondly, demand grew for schools for the children of businessmen, and large houses were suitable for this use.

Bellevue had ceased to be a country house for some time before 1842. In 1835 it was sold to John Watkins Drew, businessman and for a time Director of the London & South-Western Railway Company. He leased the house in 1854 to the Diocesan College, which ran there till 1886, when Bellevue was demolished. Bevois Mount was sold in 1844 to William Betts, partner of the Kent building firm Peto and Betts which was engaged in work in Southampton (Temple Patterson 1971, 2, 75). The house was considerably enlarged and the main gateway enhanced with two pillars surmounted by stone stags. Much of the estate was built upon in the 1860s after Betts went bankrupt. Part of the house was demolished when it became a girls' school in 1869 (Hearnshaw 1906, 125). Across the Avenue at Bannisters Court much the same thing happened; the property was acquired in 1858 by Sir Edward Hulse of Breamore House, who added a tower to the east end of the build-

ing. He was dissuaded from living there by his family, so the house stood empty for nearly a decade before being leased as a boys' school. During the 1860s he also began to divide the estate into leased building plots for large houses. He acquired Archers Lodge in 1864 and sold it in 1879 to a local builder. The following year the house and some of the grounds were acquired on behalf of the Congregation de La Sainte Union des Sacrés Coeurs, who opened a 'superior school for young ladies' in 1881.

Springhill Court, having been a school until 1882, reverted to a private house and was slightly altered and refaced; the plain light-painted walls were replaced by a more complex gabled brick design (Fig 10). The Westwood estate was sold in 1872 for housing development and the house then demolished. Ten years later the same thing happened to the Spear Hall estate. Portswood House (Fig 5) and the St Denys estate were acquired in 1834 by George Jones, who was selling building plots on the estate by the early 1840s. The house itself was demolished in 1852. The Freemantle estate was sold in 31 lots for development in the same year, and the house immediately demolished (Fig 4). Shirley House, which belonged to W H Roe, a builder and surveyor, was let, and building began on the estate with the leasing of three plots for large houses in 1852 (SRO T793). From about 1854 Shirley House was let as a school, but it was unoccupied by 1863 and later demolished (Fig 6).

Further away from Southampton the town's influence was slower to take effect, and indeed in some places was negligible up to the beginning of the twentieth century, especially for the smaller houses. The large landowning families seem to have easily found tenants for their vacant properties.

Grove Place reverted to a private house after Lord Palmerston of Broadlands bought the estate in 1860. The nineteenth century additions were demolished, but full restoration of the house did not take place until it was acquired by Colonel Bulmer de Sales La Terriere in 1895 (Crawford 1948, 23). None of the Fleming estates were directly affected by the dock building, but John Browne Willis Fleming in the

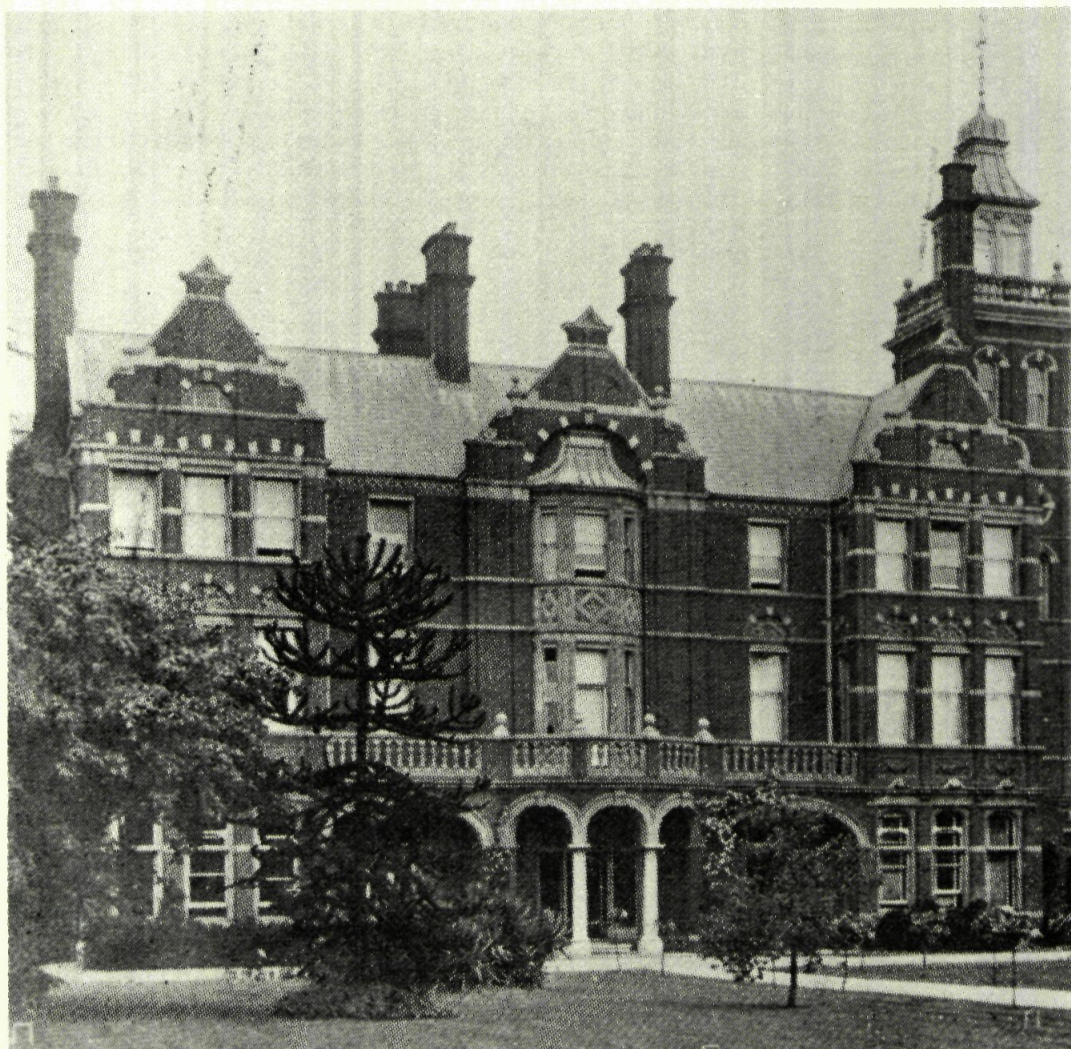


Fig 10. Springhill Court c 1900.

early 1850s leased several large plots of heathland near Bassett for the construction of houses such as Bassett Wood and Glen Eyre. In about 1860 Chilworth Manor became the principal family residence because it was smaller than North Stoneham, which was divided and let as flats. Aldermoor House, Barker Mill property, was let to various Southampton businessmen. Thomas Chamberlayne, William Chamberlayne's heir, also let Weston Grove.

In 1844 the Portswood Lodge estate was the site of the Royal Agricultural Society show. The house seems to have been unoccupied from about 1860 until the estate was bought in 1875 by Walter Perkins, a Southampton estate agent. The Middleton family left Townhill Park around 1850, and by 1875 the house belonged to John Cardus, partner in a Southampton wine merchants' firm. Bitterne Manor was inherited in 1844 by Agnes, wife of Sir Steuart

Macnaghten, who was a country magistrate and Director of the Southampton Docks Company. He was responsible for the addition of a large ballroom to the house.

Only a few houses seem to have continued to be occupied by the older style of gentry – Mrs Ede, widow of James Ede, at Sidney House, the Richardson family at Chessel, the Reverend and Mrs Preston Hulton at Barnfield, and the Naghten family at Blighmont (Fig 9). Ridgeway Castle was demolished in around 1855 and replaced only by a much smaller, five-bedroomed house with circular entrance hall lit from a glass dome in the roof (SRO D/PSR 11/1). The general impression is that country houses were no longer family homes but suitable residences.

Several new country houses were built near Southampton in the 1840s and 1850s, some of them by local businessmen. Harefield House near West End was built in the late 1840s in mock-Tudor style for Sir Edward Butler, one-

time chairman of the Southampton & Salisbury Railway Company. While it was being built he had rented Chilworth Manor. In about 1887 Harefield House was bought by Edwin Jones, founder of a Southampton drapery. Crabwood House, to the north-west of the town, was built in around 1845 for Francis Marrett, owner of a shipyard by the Westgate. The house and its 30-acre estate were acquired in about 1850 by Rolles Driver, a 'foreign timber and slate merchant'. In about 1850 Netley Castle, which had been a residence of some sort for over 200 years, was altered and a tower added to designs by Guillaume. The owner at this time was probably George Hunt, a Southampton brewer and property speculator. G W Sherriff acquired the castle and 24-acre grounds in 1866 and instigated twelve years of extension and alteration to the designs of Sedding. The finished building, looking much as we see it today, had 22 bedrooms (*SDE* 1937). Mayfield was built on part of the Weston Grove estate bought by



Fig 11. Springhill Court c 1850 (engraving by P Brannon; Mr P J Tipper).

Robert Wright in 1854. When he moved there in 1856 his previous home, Oak Bank, near the Itchen Ferry, was sold and the site developed for industrial use and shipping. Mayfield, set in 30 acres of grounds, was a magnificent mansion with a long, south-facing verandah. Lordswood House, a smaller house built in Swiss chalet style, is first mentioned in a directory of 1875 when it was the home of Field Marshal Sir Neville Bowson Chamberlain. Its origins were supposed to have been much earlier as a hunting box created out of a cottage, possibly in the 1840s. A wing was added to the house in about 1886 (*SDE* 1940). Throughout its history the property belonged to the Barker Mill family.

The forty years from 1900 to 1940 form a critical period in the history of Southampton's country houses. Large houses were already beginning to be obsolete as private dwellings, and this change extended much more widely in the early twentieth century. The reasons for this are apparent in the social changes of the times, increasing difficulty in obtaining staff after 1918 causing special problems to occupiers of large houses. Estates continued to be broken up for development, especially from the 1920s onwards. It could be said that the relatively early conversion of a house to institutional uses in some cases permitted longer survival of the building, as private owners do not seem to have been able to keep their houses in saleable condition.

Ridgeway seems to have been unoccupied after about 1903 and was demolished some time around 1920 when the estate was turned into a golf course. Chessel House similarly was left empty when the Richardsons departed in about 1900; it was demolished during the 1920s, the estate having been purchased in 1911 by a housing development company. Weston Grove was occupied by Tankerville Chamberlayne, a keen yachtsman, at least until 1905. In 1914 the London & South Western Railway Company acquired 400 acres of land along Weston Shore for building docks, but after the outbreak of war an ammunition factory was built on the shore directly below Weston Grove, which was occupied by the superintendents of works. The house and grounds were acquired in 1918 by the

Minister of Munitions under the powers of the Defence of the Realm (Acquisition of Land) Act of 1918, despite opposition from the owner which ended in the Court of the Railway and Canal Commission (*HA* 1918). The exact fate of the house is not known, but it had fallen into ruins by the late 1940s (*OS* 1949). Harefield House, home of Edwin Jones' widow, was gutted by fire in 1915, and it is significant that it was not rebuilt. The estate of 238 acres was sold in 1917 and developed in the late 1940s. Highfield House remained empty after the death of its owner Mrs Morley Lee in 1910. The estate was sold for housing, and the house was demolished in about 1930. Thornhill Park was put up for sale in 1923. Although the estate was divided into building lots the house itself, with 61 acres of grounds, is described in the sale particulars as suitable for institutional adaption (*SRO D/PSR* 10/242). Clearly however no-one was interested, for it was demolished the same year (*Fig* 11). Portswood Lodge was empty after Mrs Perkins' death in 1910, and the estate divided into building plots. During the First World War the house was used as a Red Cross clothing depot, but it was demolished in 1923. The stone pillars from one of the entrance gateways are still preserved in Abbots Way nearby (*Lawrence* 1962). The Merry Oak estate was developed in the 1930s – the site of the house must lie under Magnolia Road. Aldermoor House and its estate were purchased by Southampton Corporation in 1932 under the powers of the 1925 and 1926 Housing Acts for a housing estate development. Midanbury House was demolished not long after 1932; houses had already been built over some of the grounds by this date.

Bevois Mount had ceased to be a school by 1900, when it was acquired by the Hartley Institute as a hostel for female students. During the First World War it was used as a prisoner-of-war camp. The stag gates were donated to Southampton Corporation in 1919 as a war memorial, but were shortly demolished in order to widen Lodge Road. Bevois Mount was still in existence when 'Townsmen' was writing (*Townsmen* 1938, 83), but must have been demolished by 1940. (The stone balustrade which decorates the former Pirelli social club in

Lodge Road might have come from the magnificent house). In 1927 Banister Court School left its home to join another boys' school at Whitedwood House (Ellaby 1927, 1151–2). Bannisters Court was then demolished and a speedway and greyhound stadium built on the site.

In October 1939 the demolition of North Stoneham House began. In 1905 it was described as being 'in a bad state of repair' (Pike 1905, 59), and by 1939 its condition had become dangerous (Moray-Williams 1969, 15–16). Part of North Stoneham Park continued to be used as a golf course. It is uncertain what happened to the Belvidere: the Greek temple lodge fell into ruins and was demolished a few years ago. Some of the stonework from the house may have been moved to Chilworth Manor.

Therefore, out of the numerous country houses demolished between 1900 and 1939, only two, Bannisters Court and Bevois Mount, were ever used for institutional purposes.

The Second World War affected several of the remaining large houses. Springhill Court, an orphanage since 1923, and Archers Lodge were both burnt to the ground by enemy action in

December 1940. Bitterne Manor, still belonging to the Macnaghten family, was also gutted (Fig 12). Sidney House, which had been acquired by Southampton Corporation in about 1930 for use as a clinic, and its grounds for a nursery, was badly damaged too, as was Peartree Lodge, which had been divided into flats since 1925, and so they both had to be demolished. Grove Place was used for the storage of some Ordnance Survey records. Whitedwood House and Bitterne Grove were both used for defence purposes. Mayfield took in families whose own homes had been destroyed by bombing. Lights were set up in the grounds of Chilworth manor to distract enemy aircraft away from the town.

From 1941 onwards no particular phases of demolition are visible, but the remaining country houses nevertheless gradually disappeared. Whitedwood House, the home of C F S Day until 1920, became a school in 1926 and much of its estate was developed in the late 1920s. After being a Civil Defence Centre during the War it was requisitioned by the Council and converted into flats, but was demolished in 1950. Hollybrook House (Fig 13), part of an

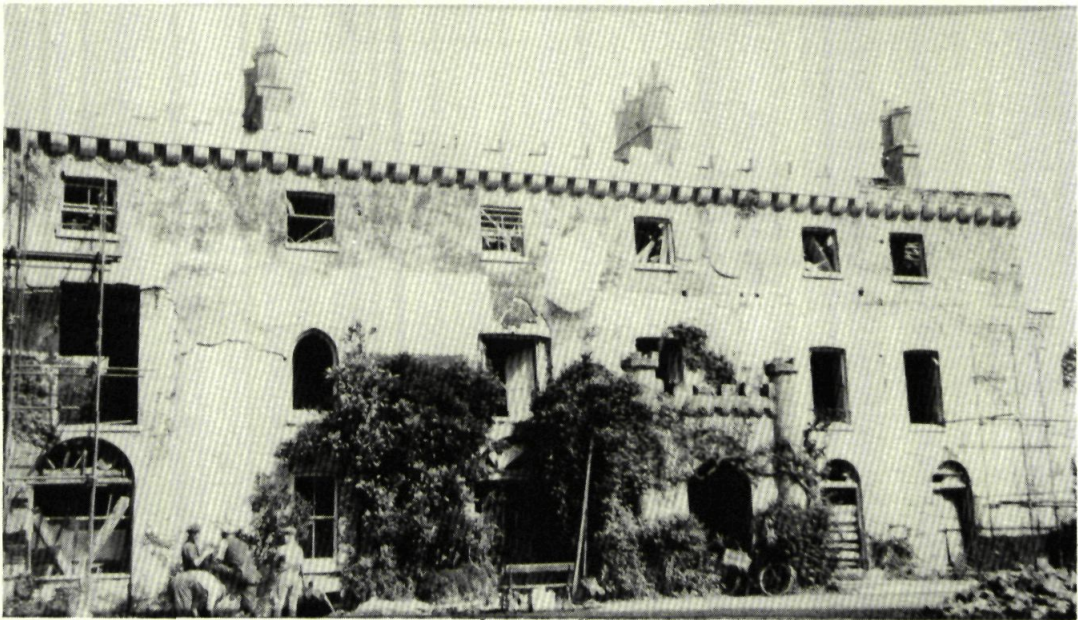


Fig 12. Bitterne Manor 1941 (SRO P149/1/10).

estate of children's homes since 1910, was pulled down around 1950. Mayfield was the next house to go in 1956 (Fig 14). It was acquired by the Corporation from Lord Radstock's family in 1937 and the grounds turned into a public park in respect of Lord Radstock's wish that the land should not be built on. The Council could not find a use for the house before or after it was used as temporary housing during the War. The old stables with attractive clock and cupola still stand to the south of Wright's Hill.

Blighmont, which had been a nursing home since 1920, was pulled down in 1963, not long after acquisition by its factory neighbour the British American Tobacco Company. The site has not been developed and is still marked by a few piles of rubble. Lordwood House was opened as a hotel in about 1938 and passed through several proprietors before being demolished by the Barker Mill trustees in 1972 to make way for housing development. The Grange met its end in 1974, having been purchased by the City Council a few years previously with the intention of demolishing it to

make way for a road junction. A fire in 1964 had rendered part of the building uninhabitable and it was generally in a very poor condition. Thus, out of the six country houses demolished since the Second World War, three had had institutional uses since the 1920s, two more from before 1939, and only one was a private residence right up to the time of its demolition.

Now we come to the houses which have survived the twentieth century so far in one form or another. In 1951 Bitterne Manor was virtually rebuilt to designs by Herbert Collins into a group of flats. In the process of restoration the stucco and crenellation were removed, revealing several medieval features. St Mary's College, which had occupied Bitterne Grove since 1922, returned after the Second World War, when the house was used by the Home Guard, and it is now the brothers' residence. Some original interior features survive: the roof was altered in about 1910 to provide rooms at the top of the house. Peartree House was a school for a few years after 1915, but then was sold as a private residence. During the 1930s much of the sur-



Fig 13. Hollybrook House 1838 (Tudor House Museum M3284).



Fig 14. Mayfield 1956 ('Echo' Library).

rounding land was built over, and in the later 1940s the house became a hotel. Since 1949 Peartree House has been an old people's home run by Southampton Corporation. Some modern extensions have been added to the rear of the building. Heathfield House became a hotel in 1931, and at some later time most of its grounds were sold off, but the stable block was retained for staff accommodation. By 1946 it had become a nursing home, which it still is, but planning application has recently been received and granted for its demolition.

South Stoneham House was sold by the Willis-Flemings in 1878. Ten years later it became the home of Sir Samuel Montagu, head of a London banking firm, who was created

Lord Swaythling in 1907. In about 1900 he made alterations to the house, including the addition of a porch to the main entrance. In 1921 the University of Southampton acquired the house and some grounds as a hall of residence. The servants' wing was demolished in 1962. In about 1910 Lord Swaythling bought the adjoining estate of Townhill Park for use by his son and family. The house was considerably altered and extended in 'Italian villa' style. A great deal of work was put into the gardens, which are still well maintained, and when the property was sold in 1948 it still comprised over 300 acres. The buyers were the London borough of Hounslow who converted the house into a school. In 1969 Townhill Park House became

the property of Southampton City Council who use it as a student hostel. Chilworth Manor was rebuilt in yellow brick in the late nineteenth century after a series of fires (*HC* 1968), and a domestic wing was added in about 1910. In 1946 the Willis-Fleming family sold the manor house and home farm, and in 1964 most of this property was sold to the University of Southampton who until recently used the house as a hall of residence.

Barnfield still stands on the north side of Weston Lane, having lost almost all its grounds and undergone great changes since being converted into flats in 1948. The house, its west wing demolished, now consists of eleven flats, all the windows in the west side of the building being modern insertions. Netley Castle was sold to Middlesex County Council in 1937 for use as a men's convalescent home: clearly the sea air of Southampton was still considered beneficial nearly 200 years after the town had first become a resort.

Crabwood House and estate were saved by the Ordnance Survey, who acquired the estate in 1939 from a local estate development company which had owned it since 1935. The house is now converted into the employees' social club. Grove Place appears to have remained a private residence until 1961 when it became a boys' preparatory school, which still occupies the house despite suffering a severe fire in 1969. Rownhams House changed hands several times

in the early twentieth century, but was greatly restored in around 1922 (Campion 1923). In 1955 the house became business premises for the firm which is now Greenwood Transport, and for a while the stables were threatened with demolition. The house is now well maintained but the gardens and lake rather neglected.

Thus it can be seen that many of the country houses which have survived are those situated further away from the town, and all have been converted in various ways. Only Bitterne Manor and Barnfield are still dwellings, but this follows major alterations in both cases. The survival of these houses, however, does not ensure their future well-being; Heathfield House, despite being a listed building, is threatened with demolition and the future of Chilworth Manor is at present uncertain. Only twelve of the Southampton country houses still exist. The rest are often recalled only in street names, in memory, and sometimes in out-of-place-looking lodges and even old trees.

Acknowledgements

I should like to thank A B Rance, Miss S Thomson, Mrs P Mather, the staff of Southampton Reference Library, Dr T B James and my father for their help in the preparation of this article. The map has been prepared by the author and drawn by Andrew King. The other figures were created from prints, negatives and photographs in possession of the Southampton Civic Record Office, Tudor House Museum, Mr K D Le May, Mr P J Tipper and the 'Echo' Library.

APPENDIX

List of Houses mentioned in the Text

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| Aldermoor House built c 1800, demolished 1932 | Blighmont built c 1820, demolished 1963 |
| Archers Lodge built 1798, destroyed by incendiary bomb 1940 | Chessel House built 1796, demolished c 1920 |
| Bannisters Court built 1791, additions c 1860, demolished 1927 | Chilworth Manor built late 18th century, rebuilt c 1870, wing added c 1910 |
| Barnfield built c 1800, converted into flats by 1928 | Crabwood House built c 1840 |
| Bellevue built 1768, wings demolished c 1810, demolished 1886 | Freemantle Park built c 1750, demolished 1852 |
| Bevois Mount built 1723, altered 1844, demolished c 1939 | The Grange built c 1650, several phases of building, demolished 1974 |
| Bitterne Grove built 1790, roof altered 1911 | Grove Place built mid-16th century |
| Bitterne Manor medieval building, refaced c 1804, gutted by bomb 1940, rebuilt as flats 1951 | Harefield House built 1848, destroyed by fire 1915 |
| | Heathfield House built c 1820 |
| | Highfield House built c 1800, demolished c 1935 |
| | Hollybrook House built 1835, demolished c 1950 |

- Lordswood House built c 1830, extended c 1875, demolished 1972
 Mayfield built 1854, demolished 1956
 Merry Oak built c 1800, demolished c 1930
 Midanbury House built c 1790, demolished c 1935
 Netley Castle built as house c 1620, enlarged c 1850 and 1878–1890
 North Stoneham House old house demolished 1818, new building unfinished, demolished 1939
 Peartree House built c 1600, refaced c 1800, modern extension
 Peartree Lodge built c 1770, converted to flats c 1922, demolished 1949
 Portswood House built 1775, demolished 1852
 Portswood Lodge built 1800, demolished 1923
 Ridgeway Castle built 18th century, demolished 1855, replaced by 1859 by Ridgeway, demolished c 1920
 Rownhams House built c 1750, enlarged c 1800
 Shirley House built 1790, demolished c 1870
 Sidney House built c 1790, demolished after war damage
 South Stoneham House built 1708, alterations c 1900 and c 1962
 Spear Hall built c 1765, demolished 1882
 Springhill Court built c 1795, altered c 1895, destroyed by incendiary bomb 1940
 Swaythling House built c 1600, demolished 1801
 Thornhill Park built c 1827, demolished 1923
 Townhill Park built c 1790, rebuilt after fire c 1800, extended c 1920
 Weston Grove built 1801, probably fell into ruin c 1920 onwards
 Westwood House built c 1800, extended 1827, demolished 1872
 Whithedwood House built 1818, demolished 1950
 Woolston House built before c 1760, demolished c 1815

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Abbreviations (see also p4)

HA Hampshire Advertizer

HC Hampshire Chronicle

SDE Southern Daily Echo

Maps

Milne, T 1791 Map of Hampshire.

OS 1949 edition.

SRO 1840 Tithe Map of the parish of Shirley.

SRO tracing of map surveyed by John Doswell and Son.

Taylor, I 1759 Map of Hampshire.

Source from HRO

102M 71/E41 Lease of site by John Fleming, 1802.

Sources from SRO

PR 10/7/1 Millbrook parish church rate book.

T793 Leases dated 24 January and 13 August 1852.

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D/MW 281 Copy will and probate of William Bricknell.

D/PM Box 79 1792 Sales particulars of Shirley House.

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