

# **BELMONT PARK, BEDHAMPTON THE ESTATE, THE HOUSE AND ITS PEOPLE**



Belmont House c 1908

**JOHN PILE**

**SEPTEMBER 2011**

**Havant**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

This small contribution to the  
History of Bedhampton is dedicated to the memory of  
LESLIE WILLETT  
(1906 – 1977)

whom I met all too briefly before he died and whose own researches  
into the history of the parish began some ninety years ago

# BELMONT PARK, BEDHAMPTON THE ESTATE, THE HOUSE AND ITS PEOPLE

JOHN PILE

## FOREWORD

This outline history of the Belmont Park Estate began as a talk given at The Elms in July 1998 at the invitation of Judith Worley as part of the first Bedhampton Festival. The response was encouraging and I decided that I should attempt to make a permanent record of the content of the talk. In preparing this for publication I have had to omit many of the illustrations shown on the screen, retaining only those necessary for an understanding of the present text. I have also omitted individual references to documentary and printed sources though the bibliography contains references to the most important collections of documents and to a selection of the published sources.

FW Maitland in *Domesday Book and Beyond*, Cambridge University Press, 1897 referred to the Ordnance Survey map, in his much-quoted phrase, as that 'marvellous palimpsest which [...] we are beginning to decipher.' As I have worked on the history of the Belmont Park Estate I have come to realise how, over the centuries, this particular landscape has been redrawn many times but, as with a palimpsest, some of the lines of the earlier drawings were never completely erased. It is part of the task of the local historian to recognise and to interpret these relics of the past and, where possible, to recall the individuals who created them and to explain their motives.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

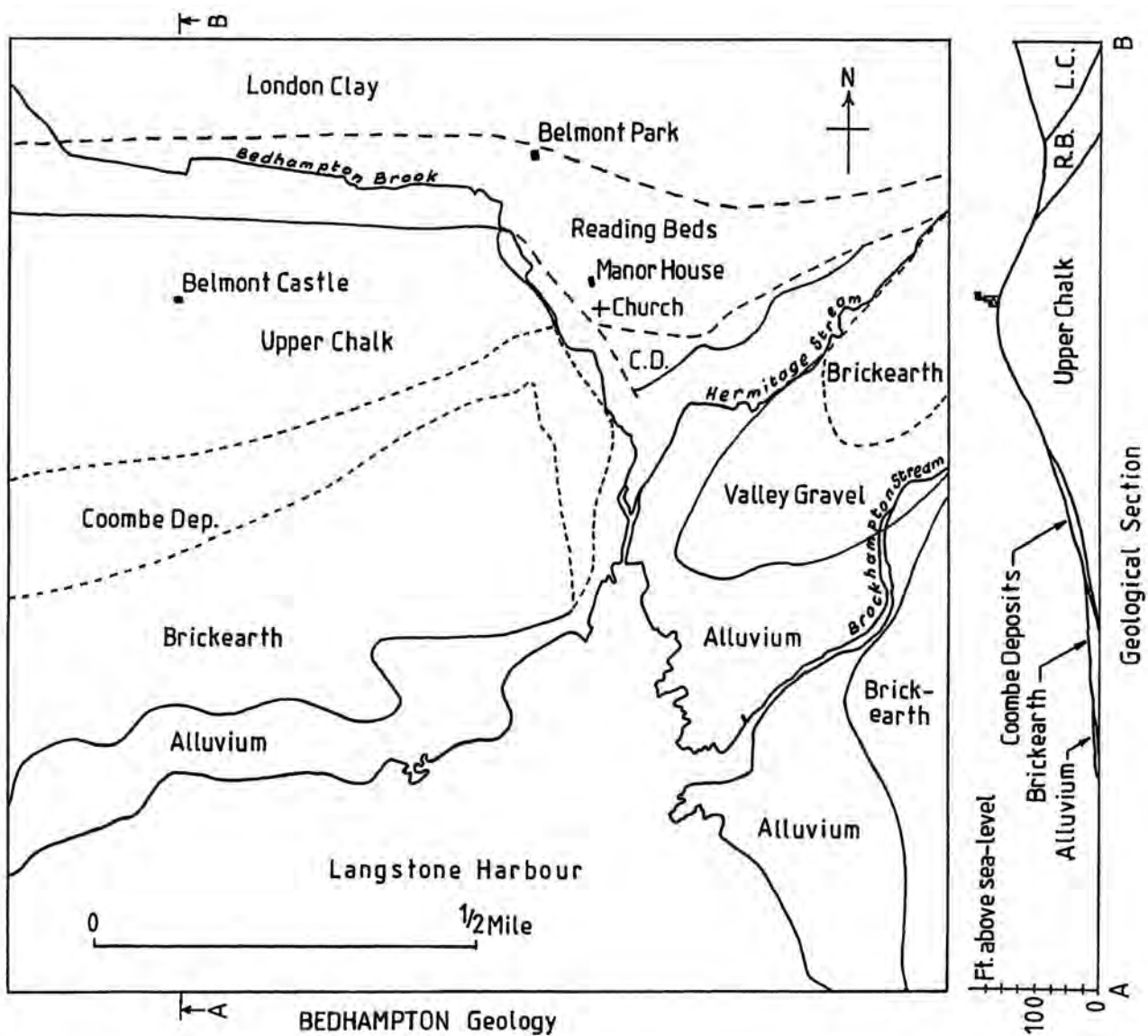
It is a pleasure to acknowledge the help I have received whilst compiling this account of the Belmont Park Estate. The staffs of both Portsmouth City Record Office and Hampshire Record Office have dealt with my numerous requests for documents and maps with patience and good humour. The Local History Librarian and his staff at Portsmouth Central Library have been helpful in providing both reference material and suggestions. Phillipa Stevens and her staff at the Winchester Local Studies Library (now the Winchester Discovery Centre) entered into the spirit of the chase in an unsuccessful attempt to verify the story – apparently originating with the Revd Henry Stokes's account in *Bedhampton* (c1928) – of Princess Victoria's visit to Belmont House. The late Gavin Maidment provided facilities and encouragement at Havant Museum. Bob Hind has been very generous in placing unpublished material that he had collected for his own book on World War 2 camps in the Havant area, at my disposal. The late Eileen Smith, a fellow historian of Bedhampton but in no sense a rival, introduced me to the riches of the Census Enumerators' Books. The late Reg Dunkley brought to my attention Robin Riley's book *The British at the Gates* (1976), in which Sir George Prevost's part in the American War of Independence 1812–14 is described. I am grateful to Steve Jones, formerly an assistant curator at Havant Museum, for his photograph of Sir George's monument in Winchester Cathedral from which I transcribed the epitaph. The late Jack Barrett of Emsworth put me on the track of a complete copy of the 1911 sale catalogue of the Belmont Park Estate, of which I was able to obtain a photocopy. Stuart Stirling a direct descendant of Sir James Stirling of Belmont Park provided me with a copy of his article on his ancestor, which had been published in an Australian newspaper. I have also benefited from a personal acquaintance with Professor Pamela Statham-Drew whose *James Stirling: admiral and founding governor of Western Australia* (2003) remains the outstanding authority on this illustrious resident of mid-19th century Bedhampton. David Lloyd, who is currently working on a revised edition of Pevsner's Hampshire volume in the Buildings of England series, very kindly provided an architectural description of Belmont House from two 19th century views. I am also grateful to Richard Culpin for depositing a copy of his account of the Clarke Jervoise family: *Two Hundred Years of a Local Family* (1996), with Havant Museum in time to save me from some serious errors.

Finally my thanks are due to all those who, over the past forty years in which I have lived in the modern successor to the Belmont Park Estate and thought about its history, have contributed essential details by way of casual conversation.

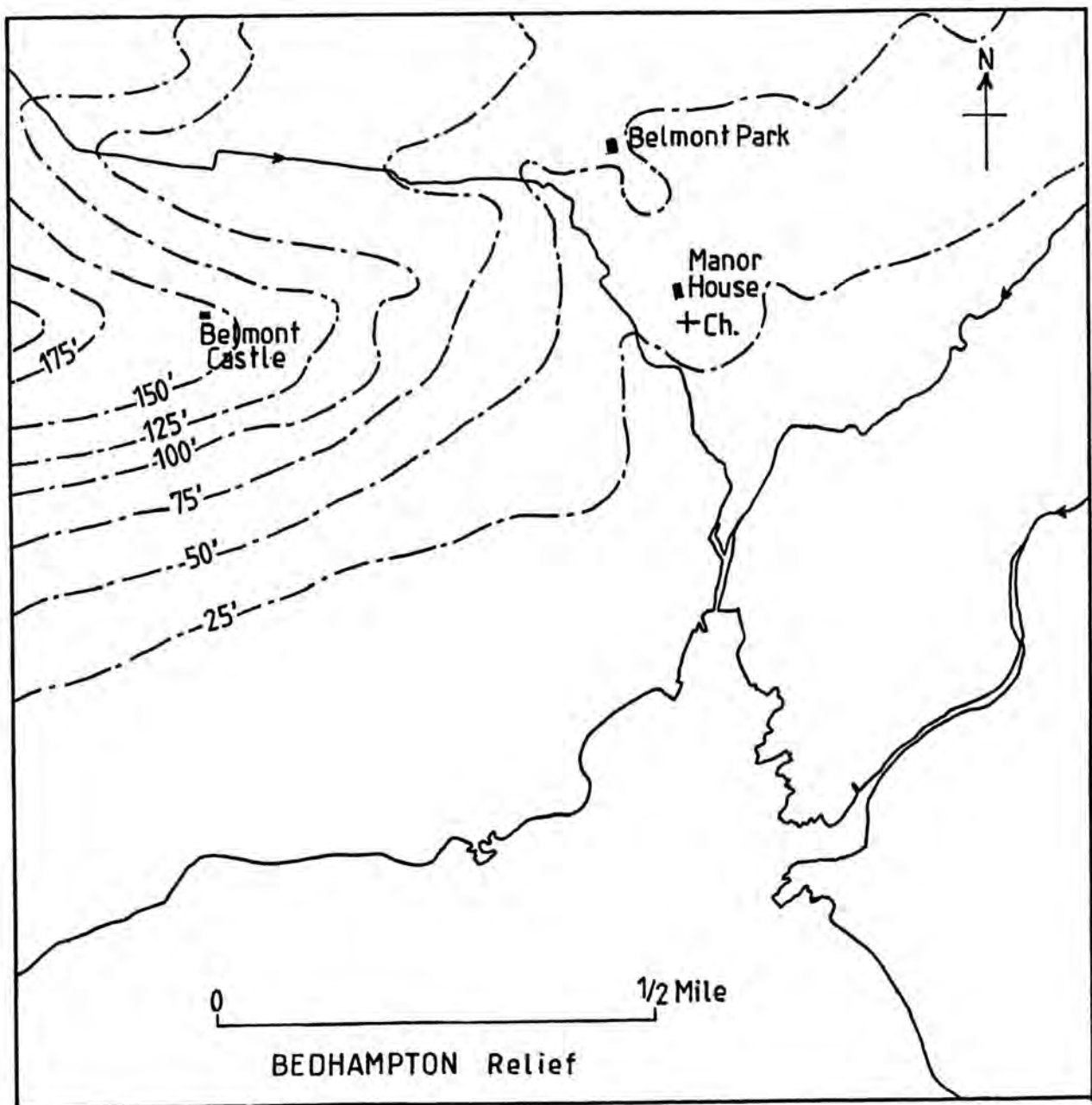
## THE LANDSCAPE SETTING AND EARLY HISTORY

In geological terms, Bedhampton is situated in the extreme south-eastern corner of the Hampshire Basin, a depression formed by folding after the chalk had been laid down under deep sea conditions and subsequently filled with sand and clay sediments beneath much shallower waters. The Portsdown ridge, which rises to a height of a little under 400 feet at Fort Southwick, is an upward fold or anticline and it is this ridge that deflects the southerly flow of underground water towards the village of Bedhampton that is responsible for the numerous springs that are such an important feature of the area.

The lower southern slopes of Portsdown and the coastal plain are covered with Coombe deposits and Brickearth, the latter producing a particularly fertile soil. The Coombe deposits are a mixture of small chalk rubble and flints derived from the former chalk surface under freeze and thaw conditions. The Brickearth consists of flood deposits and, possibly, fine wind-blown material formed in a very cold and dry climate.



The parish church, the manor house and Belmont Park House were all built on the Reading Beds of sands and clays, and they are slightly raised above the immediately surrounding area on a low but clearly defined ridge.



Abundant water supply, the chalk ridge facilitating east to west communications, the light and fertile soils of the coastal plain, the resources of the forest to the north and the sea to the south, combined to form a very attractive environment from the earliest times, and there is abundant evidence for the presence of man in this area from the Stone Age onwards.

Sir Barry Cunliffe, who directed the first excavations on the site of the Roman palace at Fishbourne, suggested that the Chichester to Bitterne Roman road was built during the early stages of the Claudian invasion. Its route westward is defined by the modern Bedhampton Road as far as its junction with Hulbert Road from where it continues through the Belmont Estate on the same alignment to Purbrook where Purbrook Heath Road takes up the route. A section of the road was seen in a builder's trench in May 1938 when the site of Belmont Park was being prepared for a new housing development and another section was uncovered in 1953 when building recommenced after World War 2.

The Roman road was clearly the focus for subsequent settlement as Roman pottery, tile, tesserae and a Greek coin were found in the garden of a house in Roman Way and a little further west, near South Downs College, a villa and a tile-works have been excavated.

The Saxon period is represented by the cemetery which was deliberately sited on the Bevis's Grave Neolithic long barrow on Portsdown, a little to the west of Belmont Castle. Two or three of the earliest Saxon graves were probably pagan, but the 71 burials uncovered by David Rudkin between 1974 and 1976 were Christian, being aligned west to east. It is likely that the 8th or early 9th century settlement served by the cemetery was nearby, also on the Portsdown ridge, but this remains unlocated. It was probably later in the 9th century that the Christianised population moved down to the site of the present village where a cross or a wooden church – the precursor of the present parish church – would have been erected.

Very little can be said with certainty about Belmont in the Middle Ages, except that the estate, which was later to bear this name, did not yet exist. The site of the future Belmont House and park were demesne lands of the manor of Behampton and a few acres of church glebe land. An aerial photograph taken shortly after World War 2 shows what is unmistakably medieval 'ridge and furrow', formed by the action of the ox-plough, on the northern edge of Bidbury Mead, adjacent to Bedhampton Road. As this road did not exist in the Middle Ages – being an early 19th century turnpike road – the medieval ploughland would have extended over at least part of what later became the parkland surrounding Belmont House.

### **THE ORIGINS OF BELMONT PARK ESTATE**

It has been suggested that Belmont belonged to the Pound family in the 16th and 17th centuries, but this is incorrect and due to the confusion of Belmont with Beamonds in Farlington, a manor with medieval origins but with no known connection with Bedhampton.

The Belmont Park Estate appears to have its origin as a consequence of Adam de Cardonnel's purchase of the manor of Bedhampton in 1714 from the Cotton family that had held it since 1547. Adam was the grandson of Peter Cardonnel, a merchant of Caen who had been forced to leave France as a Huguenot refugee. It may have been the family interest in paper-making that attracted Adam to Bedhampton, as a paper-mill had been working here at least since 1632. The Cardonnel family settled initially in Southampton where Adam's father became a collector of customs and an elder of the French church there, but the family soon spread into the surrounding area and two other members of the family, Peter and Daniel, are recorded as customs officers in Portsmouth between 1688 and 1724.

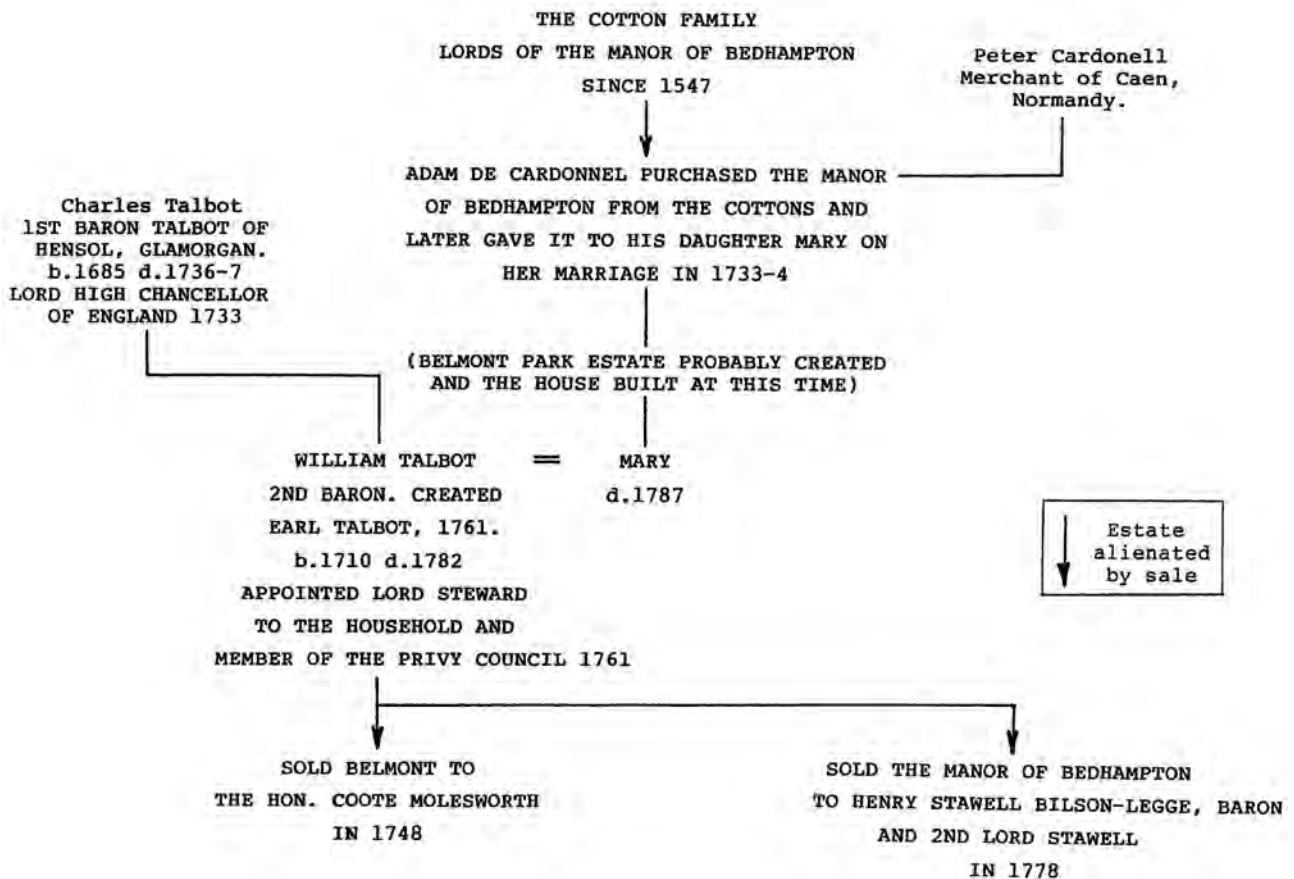
Adam de Cardonnel had been secretary to the Duke of Marlborough and also a Member of Parliament for Southampton from 1701 until 1712 when he was expelled from the House, allegedly for accepting gratuities in return for contracts for the supply of bread to the army, although this may have been part of a wider plot to discredit the Duke himself. When Adam died in 1719 he left a son who died in infancy and daughter Mary who, in 1734 at the age of 15, became the wife of the Right Honourable William Talbot, bringing him, it is said, a fortune of £80,000 as well as the manor of Bedhampton.

The Cottons had been absentee landlords throughout most of their lordship of Bedhampton, probably leaving the manor house in the occupation of bailiffs, so that it is likely that when Lord Talbot arrived, the manor house was neither large nor fashionable enough, nor in sufficiently good order for a man of his rank or income. I suspect that it was at this time that the new house was built and its pleasure grounds laid out, although the name 'Belmont' probably came later.

William Talbot was the son of Charles who, only three months before his son's marriage to Mary Cardonnel, had been elevated to the peerage with the title 'Baron Talbot of Hensol, Glamorgan', having become Lord High Chancellor of England earlier in the same year. William's career was to be no less distinguished, being appointed in 1761 Lord Steward of the Royal Household and a member of the Privy Council, also receiving an earldom, as Earl Talbot.

The Belmont Park Estate, comprising some 150 acres in total, remained in the possession of the Right Honourable Lord Talbot and his wife Mary until 1748, when Talbot conveyed the freehold to its new owner, the Right Honourable Coote Molesworth of Portsmouth. Up to this point, the estate had been part and parcel of the manor of Bedhampton and the new house – as the residence of the lord of the manor – was effectively the manor house. From 1748 however, its owner was not the lord of the manor and the house, park and farm lands were independent of the manor. It was at some time between this date and 1753 when Coote Molesworth disposed of the property that it acquired its new name.

THE DESCENT OF THE MANOR OF BEDHAMPTON AND BELMONT PARK ESTATE IN THE 18TH CENTURY



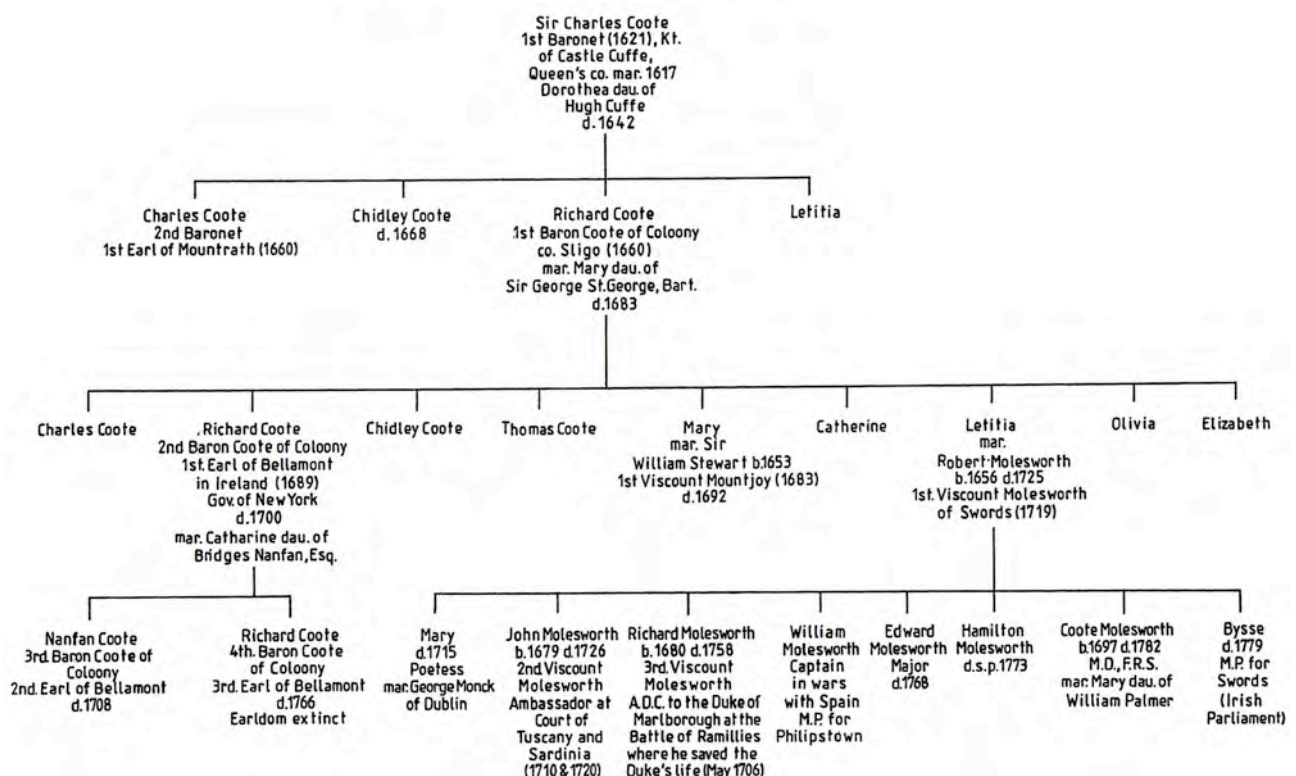


Coote Molesworth was a member of an old Northamptonshire family that rose to prominence and fortune following its involvement in the Irish civil wars of the 17th century. Robert Molesworth, who became the 1st Viscount Molesworth of Swords in 1719, married Letitia, a daughter of Sir Richard Coote of Coloony, co. Sligo and named his sixth son, born in 1697, after that of his wife's family. Coote became a doctor of medicine and a Fellow of the Royal Society. Two of his cousins bore the title 'Earl of Bellamont', but when the 3rd earl died in 1766, the earldom was extinguished. It is possible therefore that Coote Molesworth named his Bedhampton estate after this title on his mother's side of the family when it became evident that it was soon to become extinct.

Belmont is a very common place- and street-name and with Beaumont and its other variations it is derived from the French for 'beautiful hill'. A few Belmonts, like Beamonds in Farlington, are medieval in origin, but most are of 18th century or later date.

Coote Molesworth was one of eight children, of whom his brother Sir Richard Molesworth, 3rd Viscount Molesworth, achieved distinction when, as *Aide de Camp* to the Duke of Marlborough at the Battle of Ramillies, he saved the Duke's life. In 1753 Coote Molesworth sold Belmont to Robert Warner.

### COOTE AND MOLESWORTH FAMILIES



Warner is described in the conveyance as 'of Croydon, county Surrey'. He was one of the three sons of John Warner, a wealthy London goldsmith and banker. Kitty, Robert Warner's daughter and heir, married Jervoise Clarke in 1763 and died soon after the birth of their third son, Samuel. When Robert Warner died in 1765, Belmont passed to his wife Joanna who survived her husband by thirty-seven years. Despite Robert's great wealth,

his coffin was carried from Belmont to his vault in Bedhampton churchyard by six men of the parish dressed in nothing more imposing than their own clothes and they were rewarded for their services with 'forty shillings and a suit of clothes made of English cloth such as are usually worn by labouring men for their Sunday's apparel.'

### **BELMONT PARK IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY**

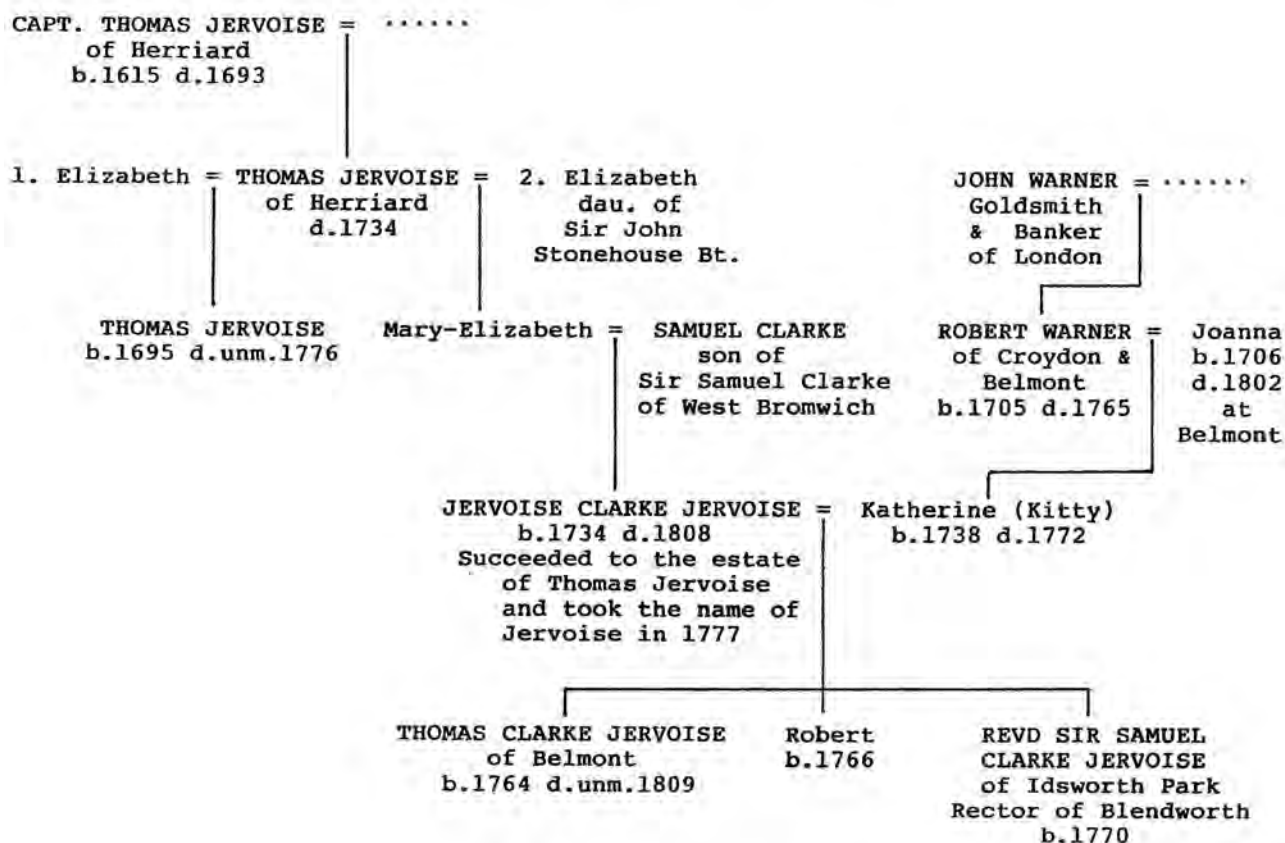
It is said that Joanna continued to live at Belmont until her death in 1802, but it is known that Jervoise Clarke, her son-in-law, who assumed the surname Jervoise when he succeeded to his maternal grandfather's estate, leased Belmont from her for £280 per annum. On Joanna's death, the lease was terminated and Belmont came into the possession of Thomas Clarke Jervoise. Thomas appears to have lived at Belmont for part of his grandmother's lifetime as several anecdotes concerning his activities there are related in a *Hampshire Telegraph* article of 1888 according to which Thomas's eccentric behaviour at Belmont quickly earned him a reputation as the 'mad squire'. In view of the nature of his reputed conduct it is difficult to imagine how he and his grandmother could have coexisted under the same roof. Perhaps Thomas occupied Belmont Castle, which was built about this time; it would have provided an ideal residence for a bachelor, situated as it was at some distance from Belmont House.

The following extract from an article in *Hampshire Telegraph* (12th May 1888) states that Thomas lived at Belmont House, but this may be an assumption on the part of the author, though it is of course possible that it was Joanna who lived at Belmont Castle.

The Hampshire home of the new squire was Belmont House near Havant. The name of Jervoise did not sound very sweetly in the ears of the county at the time of which I write. This was owing to the mad freaks of Mr. Thomas Clarke Jervoise, who cut so strange a figure as heir to the property up to January, 1808, and as the Squire to the end of the following year [...] When he came to Belmont as Squire, he pulled down all the chimnies, and painting his carriage black, dubbed it 'Black Jack', and set it out in the road for sale. He generally lived in a tent near his house, cooking his victuals in a conjuror near the stable-yard, and sleeping on the bare boards in one of the rooms, or on the stones of the hall [...] One of his strongest antipathies was to staircases. Wherever he could he pulled down staircases, leaving his servants to clamber up to their rooms by ladders, while he swung himself up to his own by ropes [...] This mad interlude in the Jervoise family was succeeded by his brother, the Rector of Blendworth, a man of the highest character who was made a baronet in 1813 [...]

Despite the unconventional behaviour of Thomas Clarke Jervoise, who died unmarried in 1809 at the age of forty-five, the period during which the family lived at Belmont witnessed several important changes to the estate. One of these was the building of a belvedere – literally a 'beautiful view' or summer-house – on the eastern shoulder of Portsdown. This first appears on Thomas Milne's map surveyed between 1788 and 1790. The original structure was probably a tower in the fashionable neo-Gothic style containing an upper room for picnics and tea-parties, approachable from the main house by shady footpaths. Being so lofty and conspicuous, the tower was used as a trigonometrical station by the Ordnance Survey in 1794 and as a landmark for navigation. A chart of Spithead published in 1801 shows the belvedere as 'Clerk Jervois Folly'.

PEDIGREE OF THE CLARKE JERVOISE FAMILY

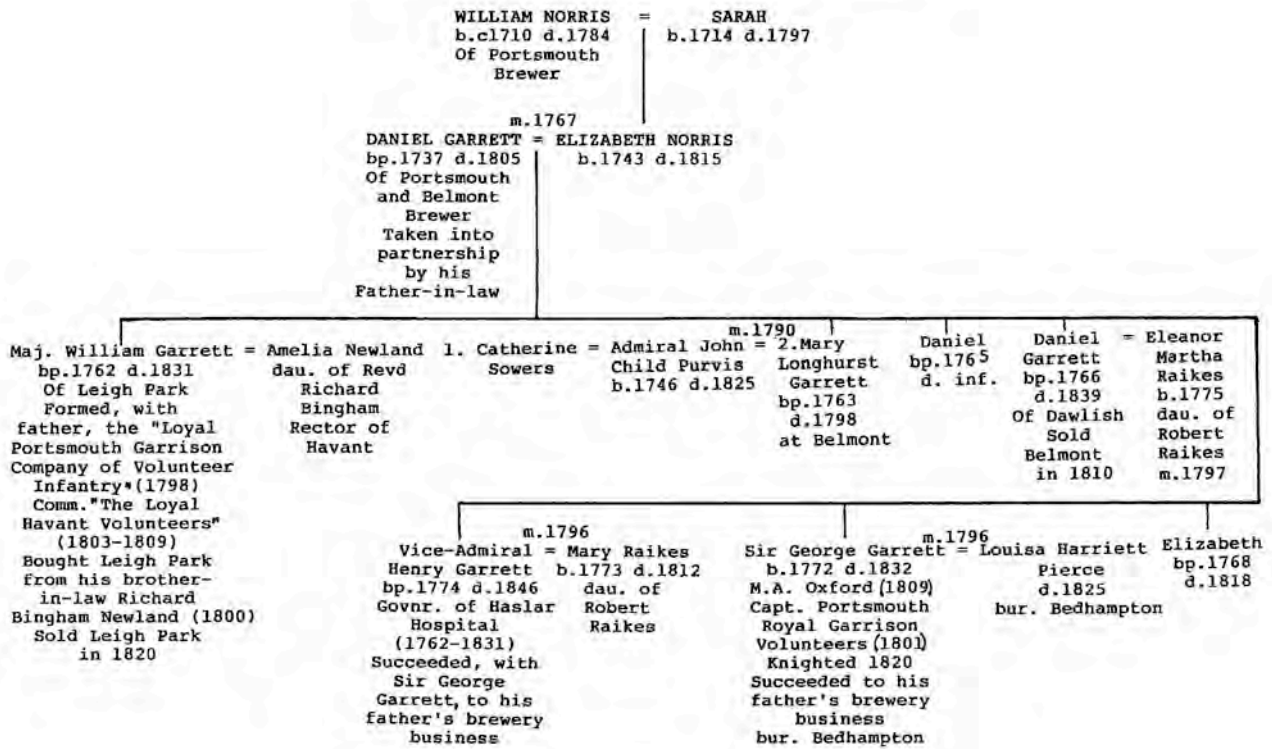


It is difficult to date the existing house, known as Belmont Castle, precisely, but the evidence suggests that the original belvedere was extended between 1803 and 1810 perhaps as a house for Thomas, as suggested above. The enlarged house with its grounds remained part of the Belmont Park Estate for a further fifty years or so, but was frequently let as a self-contained residence.

Although the *Hampshire Telegraph* article suggests that Thomas Clarke Jervoise remained the 'Squire' of Belmont until 1809, the title deeds of the property preserved at Portsmouth City Record Office show that Thomas sold the estate to Daniel Garret, the proprietor of the Portsmouth Brewery in Penny Street, in 1803. Garrett having been taken into partnership by his father-in-law, William Norris, on his marriage to his daughter and heir, Elizabeth, eventually succeeded to the whole of the brewery business, including two farms in Widley and a large number of public houses in and around Portsmouth. On Daniel Garrett's death in 1805, Belmont and his other properties were divided between his wife and five surviving children including Major William Garrett of Leigh Park; Vice-Admiral Henry Garrett, Governor of Haslar Hospital; Sir George Garrett and Daniel Garrett junior of Dawlish in Devon.

Two of the brothers, Henry and Daniel, married two of the daughters of Robert Raikes the Gloucester newspaper proprietor and promoter of Sunday Schools. The leading brewing and merchant families in 18th century Portsmouth, including the Carter and Pike families, tended to be Whig in politics and nonconformist in religious matters, dominating the local government scene throughout the second half of the 18th century and much of the 19th. Daniel Garrett senior's and his sons' association suggests similar political and religious attitudes.

THE GARRETT'S OF PORTSMOUTH, BELMONT & LEIGH PARK, ETC.



Daniel Garrett junior sold the Belmont Park estate, which still included Belmont Castle, to Sir George Prevost in 1810. Prevost, born in 1767 and 43 years of age when he acquired Belmont, was a soldier. He had commanded the troops at St. Vincent in 1794 and '95 and had been appointed military governor of St. Lucia in 1798 and civil governor in 1801. On his return to England in 1805 he was placed in command of the Portsmouth District, a post he appears to have held until 1809.

On the 6th December 1805, Prevost was created 1st Baronet of Belmont, Hampshire, suggesting that he had already taken a lease of Belmont Park from Daniel Garrett on his appointment as Lieutenant-Governor of Portsmouth before his purchase of the estate in 1810. In 1808, Sir George Prevost became Lieutenant-Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Nova Scotia, followed in 1811 by his appointment as Governor of Lower Canada and Governor-General of British North America. Prevost adopted prudent policies in both offices but he soon found himself in a difficult situation. On the 18th June 1812 the United States declared war with a view to extending her northern territories. According to the *Dictionary of National Biography* 'Prevost's intervention in the military operations of the campaigns of 1812-14 was most unfortunate.' What should have been the successful capture of Plattsburg turned into a serious fiasco and Prevost was ordered home for court-martial, but he died of dropsy on the 5th January 1816 a month before the day fixed for the meeting of the court. (Appendices A & B).

Belmont House was advertised in *Hampshire Telegraph*, 22nd April 1816 to be sold by auction on 3rd May, but the proposed sale does not appear to have happened. Sir George's wife Catherine Anne Prevost and her three children remained at Belmont where her son George became the 2nd Baronet Belmont at the age of 11. The title remains extant and the 6th Baronet is Sir Christopher Gerald Prevost, born 1935.

The next owner of Belmont was Sir James Stirling who first leased the estate from the 2nd Baronet in 1844 and then purchased it in 1846 for £9,750. Sir James was 52 at the time of the purchase. (Appendix C). As a young post-captain in the Royal Navy Stirling had explored the Swan River in Western Australia in 1827, returning in 1829 with his wife, his two young sons and seventy settlers. On their arrival, Captain James Stirling, now in his role as Lieutenant-Governor, took formal possession of Western Australia in the name of King George IV and proceeded with a small party of men to sail up the Swan River to choose a site for the future city of Perth. Stirling remained as Governor of Western Australia until 1839, when he and his family returned home. Sir James later served in the Mediterranean, China and the East Indies, being promoted to the rank of Admiral in 1862.

Stirling sold Belmont Park in 1860 to William Phillip Snell, a barrister of the Inner Temple since 1854 and the son of a London horse agent. William must have possessed a private income of some size, as he is invariably described in census returns as 'not in practice'. When the census enumerator called at Belmont Park on Monday 8th April 1861 he recorded a fairly typical upper middle class mid-Victorian household in which the living-in domestic servants outnumbered the family. (Appendix D). In addition there were both a lodge on the Havant to Portsmouth road and a gardener's cottage that were fully staffed. The 1860 conveyance indicates that several portions of the estate had been sold, including Belmont Castle and its surrounding land.

John Snook senior, the miller at the Lower Mill, had rented Belmont Castle from Sir George Prevost since 1843 and the lease had apparently continued under Sir James Stirling's ownership, but in 1846 Snook purchased the freehold. The Snooks retained Belmont Castle until 1887 when John Snook junior – known as the 'Master Baker' – died. The house was then acquired by a well-to-do maiden lady, Isabella Denniston Meiklam of Carnbroe in Lanarkshire. Miss Meiklam took a great interest in village affairs and in 1902 she built the Gospel Hall in Bedhampton Road and the adjoining manse still called Dennistoun House. Miss Meiklam died in 1912 aged 77 and was buried close to the south door of the parish church.

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## **THE BELMONT PARK ESTATE: ITS LAST YEARS**

The Snells remained at Belmont Park for fifty-two years until the death of Commander William Cecil Howard Snell in 1910. The estate was then divided into lots and sold by auction at The Bear in Havant on Tuesday 17th October 1911.

The house and its immediately surrounding garden and grounds, comprising about 30 acres, were purchased by Harold Wigan of Widley Court in Cosham. The 1911 sale catalogue provides a detailed description of the house and gardens and this is supplemented by further details of the grounds which appeared in the *Portsmouth Evening News* of Thursday 10th May 1923, following a visit by a party of about fifty members of the Portsmouth Literary and Philosophical Society

[...] at the kind invitation of Mr. Harold Wigan. They were met at the lake by Mr. Wigan, and were charmed at the transformation of this part of the estate since their visit of last summer, for what was then mostly mud land is now a sheet of silvery water with grassy flowery banks, and well stocked with brown and rainbow trout. Under the guidance of Mr. Wigan, a tour was made of the grounds, shrubberies, and nuttery, the flower and kitchen gardens, and the conservatories, which were well stocked with choice flowers, including many varieties of rare orchids, now at their perfection. Next came the vineries and greenhouses, which, although it is early in the season, are showing great promise of fruit.

Harold Wigan took a great interest in local affairs and he allowed a field, now on the site of Wigan Crescent, to be used for village cricket matches. Mr Wigan lived at Belmont Park from June 1912 until his death in March 1937 after which, according to the terms of his will dated 14th April 1935, the estate was put up for sale.

Messrs Bailey and White of Portsmouth purchased the Belmont Park Estate in July 1937, then about 28 acres in extent, for £27,000 with the object of demolishing the house and developing the land as a private housing estate. John Compton Nicholls of Cosham started building in 1938 with what is now No. 2 Queen Anne's Drive and Belmont Park House was demolished later in the same year. The new detached houses were offered for sale as they were ready and in this way each sale helped to finance the building of the next.

## **BELMONT PARK IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939 – 1945**

By the beginning of World War 2 in September 1939 the estate roads had been laid down and ten houses completed, but further building stopped and the remaining land was taken over by the Royal Navy for use as a transit camp. The three completed houses in Parkside appear to have been requisitioned for use as administrative offices and the camp dentist and No. 2 Queen Anne's Drive became the Commanding Officer's residence. The remaining private houses were fenced off from the camp and access to them was from Hulbert Road. The main entrance to the camp and the guardhouse were in Belmont Grove and opposite this, on the other side of Bedhampton Road, was an anti-aircraft gun. (Appendix E).

Admiral Sir William James, Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth recalls, in *The Portsmouth Letters* (1946), a visit he made to Belmont Park Camp on Wednesday, 7th September 1942:

In the afternoon R. [Lady James] and I went to Sports at Belmont Camp, where the C.O. is my old term-mate, Tindal. A very happy affair. Good contests and good fellowship. I took my grandson, who thoroughly enjoyed himself. I had good talks with several old Petty Officers.

Commander Ralph Tindal (1881-1966) was Commanding Officer of Belmont Park Camp from 20th November 1941. He was baptised with the name of Ralph Tindal-Carill-Worsley but changed his name legally to Ralph Tindal in 1913. Tindal was the great-great grandson of Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) and thus related to Charles Darwin the naturalist and author of *The Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection* (1859).

### **BELMONT PARK FROM NAVAL CAMP TO HOUSING ESTATE**

After the war ended in 1945, Belmont may have been used for a short period as an overflow from the camp for displaced persons, mainly from Eastern Europe, on the site now occupied by Hazelholt Drive. Eventually Belmont Camp became surplus to war-time requirements and Bedhampton Parish Church Council took the opportunity to purchase two Nissen huts from the Ministry of Works, one on either side of the entrance to the camp in Belmont Grove, for parish meetings and other activities. Then, in 1950, it was decided to purchase the freehold of the camp sick-bay on a large site at the junction of Belmont Grove and Queen Anne's Drive. The site was offered by Bailey and White for £1,940 and the sick-bay buildings for an additional £140. The latter served the purpose of a parish hall and meeting rooms quite adequately until, with the growth of the local population consequent upon the resumption of building development in the 1950s, it was decided in 1959 to demolish the north wing of the former sick-bay and build a new hall and the Sanctuary of St Nicholas at a cost of £14,000.

The final phase of building on the residential estate began in 1952, but it was not until about 1969 that the last vacant plot was developed. This was the site of the Post Office that had occupied one of the redundant huts on the west side of Belmont Grove, opposite the present parade of shops. When the old Belmont Tavern, which stood at the junction of Bedhampton Hill and Portsdown Hill Road, was demolished its successor was built on the site of the Post Office.

### **BELMONT AND ITS SETTING**

Although Belmont House was demolished in 1938, several views survive including picture postcards; an engraving of c.1857 by W Pink; and a late 19th century watercolour sketch, probably by Rose Paynter, of the rear of the house, which together have enabled David Lloyd, the architectural historian to arrive at the following conclusions about its history.

The painting [...] by Rose Paynter shows arched heads to the windows, suggesting a date not after the mid 18th century (these went out of fashion earlier in London but in Hampshire could have been used up to, say, the 1740s). The stringcourses at first and second floor levels are, similarly, features characteristic of the earliest 18th century. So is the prominent cornice



below the broad parapet but, almost equally, this particular feature could date from later in the Georgian period.

The engraving by W. Pink shows the opposite elevation. Here the proportions of some of the windows (the taller ones) and the apparent thinness of the glazing bars suggest a later Georgian date – say from about 1790 to 1830. The Doric porch in Pink's engraving is clearly later Georgian, as is, probably, the simpler entrance shown less clearly in Paynter's picture. The bow window shown on the ground floor in her picture could be a later Georgian addition. The conservatory must date from after mid-century; such things were made fashionable by the Crystal Palace.

In short I suggest, on the evidence of the prints of the two illustrations, that the house was built in the early to mid 18th century, say c.1725–50, and altered, especially on the side illustrated by Pink, c.1790–1835, with a conservatory added after 1850.



Belmont House from the East, by W. Pink, ?1857.

This agrees remarkably well with our knowledge of the history of the estate and it suggests that the house was built shortly after the Right Honourable William Talbot acquired the manor of Bedhampton, together with his wife's fortune, on the occasion of his marriage to Mary Cardonnel in 1734. The enlargement of the house during the late 18th or early 19th century is more difficult to equate with its ownership, but it may have taken place during the first decade of the 19th century when it is believed that the belvedere was extended, possibly during Sir George Prevost's time.

The reconstruction of the landscape of Belmont c.1750 is based upon the series of deeds preserved at Portsmouth City Record Office and contemporary maps. (Appendix F).

The house was built fronting the old main road from Havant to Portsmouth, at its junction with the ancient trackway to Purbrook known as Pudding Lane owing to its deep muddy surface. Around 1790, the old lane was diverted to the north to form Scratchface Lane and at the same time, or soon afterwards, the main road from Havant – under the control of the Cosham to Chichester Turnpike Trust since 1762 – was diverted to the south thus providing the house with greater privacy and more extensive grounds. The section of the old road to the south of the house became the carriage drive and gates and a lodge were placed at its junction with the turnpike road, now Bedhampton Road. The site of the gate survives as a kink in the rear property boundary to the houses in Park Side at a point immediately opposite the junction of Brookside Road and Bedhampton Road.

Prior to these changes, the road from Havant followed the line of the Roman road as far as Belmont House where it swung to the south, passing the lower end of the Portsdown ridgeway on the right and descending Brookside Road. The road then turned to the right as it does today, passing The Elms and continuing along Lower Road to Farlington. During the Middle Ages Lower Road was known as Binethwaye or 'beneath way' and in 1749 it is recorded as Somerway, both names serving to distinguish this road, often impassable during the winter months, from the Portsdown ridgeway which would have remained usable at all times of the year. A further improvement, which was made c.1800, was the construction of another new stretch of turnpike road from the top of Brookside to Fir Tree Corner to cut out Brookside and Lower Road. (Appendix G). The existing road pattern in this area was finally established with the opening of Hulbert Road in 1881.

Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries Bedhampton remained a rural parish. It included a large area of Langstone Harbour where the islands and marshlands were used to graze cattle and sheep. The parish stretched as far as Cowplain in the north where it was largely forest, but it was narrow, extending from Farlington church on its western boundary to the Hermitage Stream on the east – a width of little more than a mile. The north of the parish, with the exception of the 100 acres of Padnell common, had been a manorial deer-park, formed from the Royal Forest of Bere shortly after the Norman Conquest, but this had been disparked around 1600 and the land divided into several farms. Portsdown was largely unenclosed sheep-pasture, and the coastal plain was among the most fertile arable land in the kingdom of which William Cobbett, who rode through Bedhampton on Saturday, 2nd April 1823, observed:

Portsdown Hill is very much in the shape of an oblong tin cover to a dish. From Bedhampton, which lies at the eastern end of the hill, to Fareham, which is at the western end of it, you have brought under your eye not less than eight square miles of corn fields, with scarcely a hedge or ditch of any consequence, and being, on an average, from twenty to forty acres each in extent. The land is excellent. The spot is the earliest in the whole Kingdom [...] The corn under the hill is as good as I ever saw it [...] no beans here. No peas. Scarcely any oats. Wheat, barley and turnips [...] and the barley as good as it is possible to be. In looking at these crops, one wonders whence are to come the hands to clear them off.

A description of Bedhampton written at the close of the 18th century, probably by the rector of Bedhampton, the Revd Edward Tew, adds that:

There are also a great number of sheep kept for fattening, and several kept to be shorn; this parish is not remarkable for its breed of hogs. Servants in husbandry receive from 6l. to 10l. a year, according to age and circumstances, as they are able and willing to work, or as they show a disposition to discharge their duty without murmuring. Labourers receive in general 2s. per diem, and work in summer from six in the morning till five in the evening, in winter from day break till dusk. We estimate the number of houses to be thirty; and the number of inhabitants upon a fair calculation to be 180 [...]

This figure for the population of the parish is certainly an underestimate, as there were 305 inhabitants at the first official census of 1801. The population increased slowly but steadily throughout the 19th century, reaching 818 in 1901.

It is appropriate at this point to mention the farmlands that formed a large part of the Belmont Estate during the 18th and 19th centuries. In 1749, when Lord Talbot sold Belmont to Cootes Molesworth, the estate was some 150 acres in extent, most of which – with the exception of the gardens and grounds surrounding the house – was farmland. The farmhouse and the farm buildings were close to the house and the whole was worked as a home-farm. One hundred years later, in 1842, Sir George Prevost retained 50 acres in hand and leased the remainder to local farmers. At some date between 1860 and 1872, Belmont Farmhouse and farm-buildings were erected on a site on the north side of Portsdown Hill Road adjacent to an old chalk pit that would have provided shelter from the prevailing wind. This was initially part of the Belmont Park Estate, but it was sold together with 85½ acres of land in 1911. Having been separated from the estate, the fields around the farmhouse were the first to succumb to residential housing development in the 1930s when Maylands, Hilton, Woodville and Brooklands Roads were laid out, although the farmhouse itself survives.

The formation of the turnpike trust led to improvements in communications with Portsmouth and Chichester, and consequently with London and other towns to the north. The coasting trade was also important during the 19th century and vessels coming into Langstone Harbour could pick up cargoes of chalk and lime from the chalk pit and grain, flour, timber and other local produce. Incoming goods would have included a wide variety of food and hardware products from London; slates and possibly other building materials from Wales and the West Country; and coal from the Durham and Northumberland coalfields.

The railway came to Havant in 1847, but although goods sidings served both the Upper and Lower Corn Mills from the late 19th century, Bedhampton had to wait until 1906 for its passenger halt. With its improved road and railway communications, Bedhampton became a favoured residential location for army and naval officers, both serving and retired, as well as for business men with interests in Portsmouth.

## APPENDIX A

### THE CHARGES PREFERRED AGAINST SIR GEORGE PREVOST BY COMMODORE SIR JAMES YEO

Reported in *Hampshire Telegraph*, 16th October 1815

1. For having on or about the 11th of September, 1814, by holding out the expectation of a co-operation of the army under his command, induced Capt. Downie, late of his Majesty's ship *Confiance*, to attack the American squadron on Lake Champlain, when it was highly imprudent to make such an attack without the co-operation from the land forces, and for not having afforded that co-operation.
2. For not having stormed the American work on shore at nearly the same time that the said Naval action commenced, as he had given Captain Downie reason to expect.
3. For having disregarded the signal for co-operation which had been previously agreed upon.
4. For not having attacked the enemy on shore, either during the said Naval action or after it was ended, whereby his Majesty's Naval squadron under the command of Capt. Downie might have been saved.

## APPENDIX B

### MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTION TO SIR GEORGE PREVOST IN WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL

#### SIR GEORGE PREVOST BART.

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF  
LIEUTENANT GENERAL SIR GEORGE PREVOST BARONET,  
OF BELMONT IN THIS COUNTY  
GOVERNOR GENERAL AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE BRITISH FORCES IN NORTH  
AMERICA,  
IN WHICH COMMAND BY HIS WISE AND ENERGETIC MEASURES  
AND WITH A VERY INFERIOR FORCE HE PRESERVED THE CANADAS TO THE BRITISH CROWN  
FROM THE REPEATED INVASIONS OF A POWERFUL ENEMY.  
HIS CONSTITUTION AT LENGTH SUNK UNDER INCESSANT MENTAL AND BODILY EXERTION  
IN DISCHARGING THE DUTIES OF THAT ARDUOUS STATION,  
AND HAVING RETURNED TO ENGLAND HE DIED SHORTLY AFTERWARDS IN LONDON  
ON THE 5<sup>TH</sup> OF JANUARY 1816. AGED 48 YEARS,  
THIRTY FOUR OF WHICH HAD BEEN DEVOTED TO THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY.  
HE WAS INTERRED NEAR THE REMAINS OF HIS FATHER MAJOR GENERAL AUGUSTIN PREVOST,  
AT EAST BARNET IN HERTFORDSHIRE.  
HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE REGENT  
“TO EVINCE IN AN ESPECIAL MANNER THE SENSE HE ENTERTAINED  
OF HIS DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT AND SERVICES  
DURING A LONG PERIOD OF CONSTANT ACTIVE EMPLOYMENT  
IN STATIONS OF GREAT TRUST BOTH MILITARY AND CIVIL,  
WAS PLEASED TO ORDAIN AS A LASTING MEMORIAL OF HIS MAJESTY’S ROYAL FAVOUR  
THAT THE NAMES OF THE COUNTRIES WHERE  
HIS COURAGE AND ABILITIES HAD BEEN MOST SIGNALLY DISPLAYED,  
THE WEST INDIES AND CANADA, SHOULD BE INSCRIBED ON THE BANNERS OF THE SUPPORTERS  
GRANTED TO BE BORNE BY HIS FAMILY AND DESCENDANTS.”  
IN TESTIMONY OF HIS PRIVATE WORTH, HIS PIETY, INTEGRITY AND BENEVOLENCE,  
AND ALL THOSE TENDER DOMESTIC VIRTUES WHICH ENDEARED HIM TO  
HIS FAMILY, HIS CHILDREN, HIS FRIENDS AND HIS DEPENDANTS  
AS WELL TO PROVE HER UNFEIGNED LOVE, GRATITUDE AND RESPECT,  
CATHERINE ANNE PREVOST HIS AFFLICTED WIDOW  
CAUSED THIS MONUMENT TO BE ERECTED, ANNO DOMINI 1819.

Inscription on ‘Newspaper’: LONDON GAZETTE SEP. 10. 1816

Inscription on scroll: ST LUCIA TAKEN

DOMINICA DEFENDED

CANADA PRESERVED

Monogram on helmet: GHIR

## APPENDIX C

THE STIRLING HOUSEHOLD  
 AT HOME ON MONDAY, 31ST MARCH 1851  
 (From the Census Enumerator's Returns)

		Age of		Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
		M	F		
<u>BELMONT HOUSE</u>					
James Stirling	Head mar.	60		Kt. Br. Cpt. R.N. Farmer of 50 acres employing 4 labourers	Scotland
Ellen Stirling	Wife mar.		44		Surrey, Guildford
Ellinor Stirling	dau.		12	Scholar at home	Australia
Anna Stirling	dau.		10	do.	London
Dorothea Stirling	dau.		9	do.	Lisbon, British Subject
Georgina Stirling	dau.		6	do.	Hants. Havant
Elizabeth Buckenshot	Govern- ess u.		29	Instructress	Holstein
George Parker	Visitor u.	23		Commander R.N. half pay	Cheshire, Chester
Justine Huchard	Servant u.		24	Lady's Maid	Paris, France
Sarah Williams	do. u.		29	Cook	Pembrokeshire
Hannah Peters	do. u.		23	Housemaid	Sussex, Midhurst
Charity Harland	do. u.		16	Housemaid	Sussex, Brighton
James Alfield	do. u.	20		Groom	Surrey, Compton

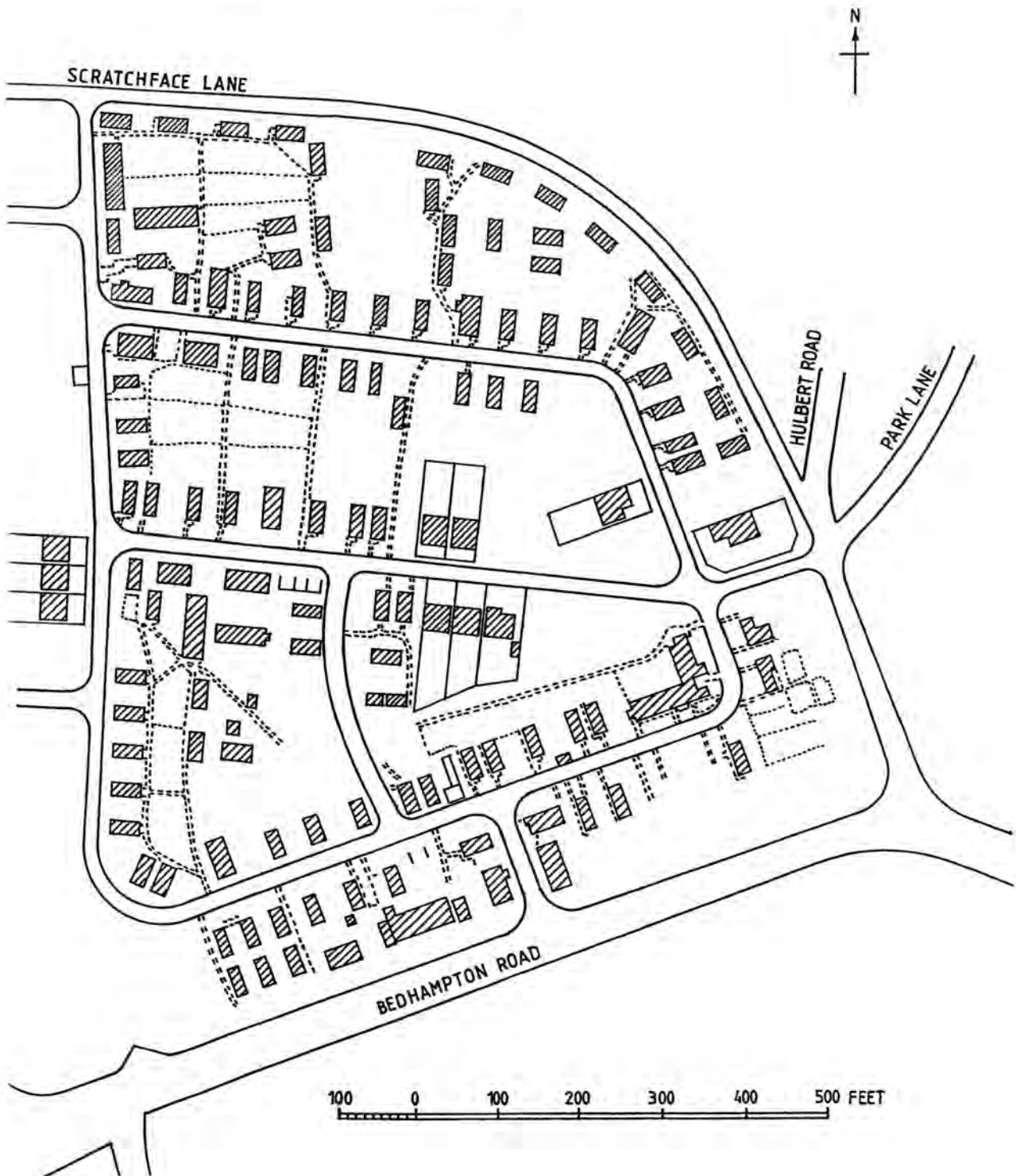
## APPENDIX D

THE SNELL HOUSEHOLD  
 AT HOME ON MONDAY, 8TH APRIL 1861  
 (From the Census Enumerator's Returns)

			Age		Rank, Profession or Occupation	Where Born
			M	F		
<u>BELMONT HOUSE</u>						
William Phillip Snell	Head	mar.	46		Barrister, M.A. Cantab. Not in practice	Middx. St. Martins in the Fields
Rosa Jane Snell	Wife	mar.		31		Devonshire, Heavitree
Mary Louisa Snell	Dau.	unm.		11	Scholar	Middx. St. Georges, Hanover Sq.
Willm. Cecil Howard Snell	Son	unm.	10		Scholar	Do. St. Georges, Hanover Sq.
Mildred Snell	Dau.	unm.		8	Scholar	Do. St. Georges, Hanover Sq.
James Smith	Servant	mar.	50		Butler	Hants. Fawley
Charles Hawkins	Servant	mar.	40		Coachman	Dorset, Beaminster
Bridget Elizabeth Hoskins	Servant	mar.		39	Cook	Yorkshire, Sheffield
Deborah Andrews	Servant	unm.		20	Housemaid	Hants. Bentworth
Jane Durrell	Servant	unm.		16	Housemaid	Hants. Havant
George Andrews	Servant	unm.	15		Dairyman	Hants. Bentworth
Emily Rebecca Bennett	Governs.	unm.		20	Governess	Middlesex, Islington
<u>LODGE</u>						
Sarah Smith	Head	mar.		30	Lodge-keeper at Belmont	Sussex, Newhaven
Henry Smith	Son	unm.	6			Middlesex, Hoxton
Albert Smith	Son	unm.	1			Hants. Alton
<u>GARDENER'S COTTAGE BELMONT</u>						
Robert Tile	Head	mar.	50		Gardener	Sussex, Pagham
Eliza Tile	Wife	mar.	49		Poultry Woman	Sussex, Bosham

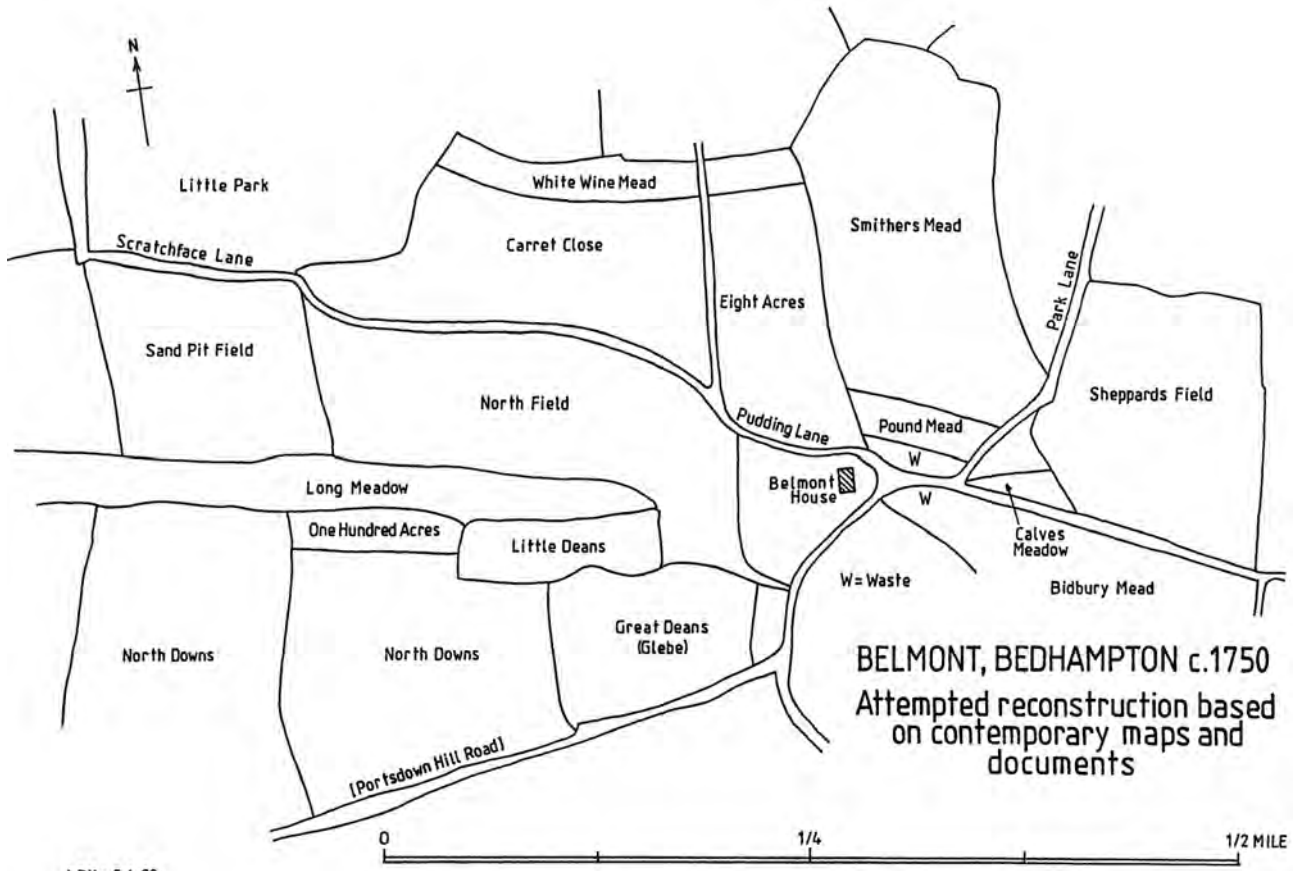
APPENDIX E

ROYAL NAVAL CAMP  
BELMONT, BEDHAMPTON  
1948



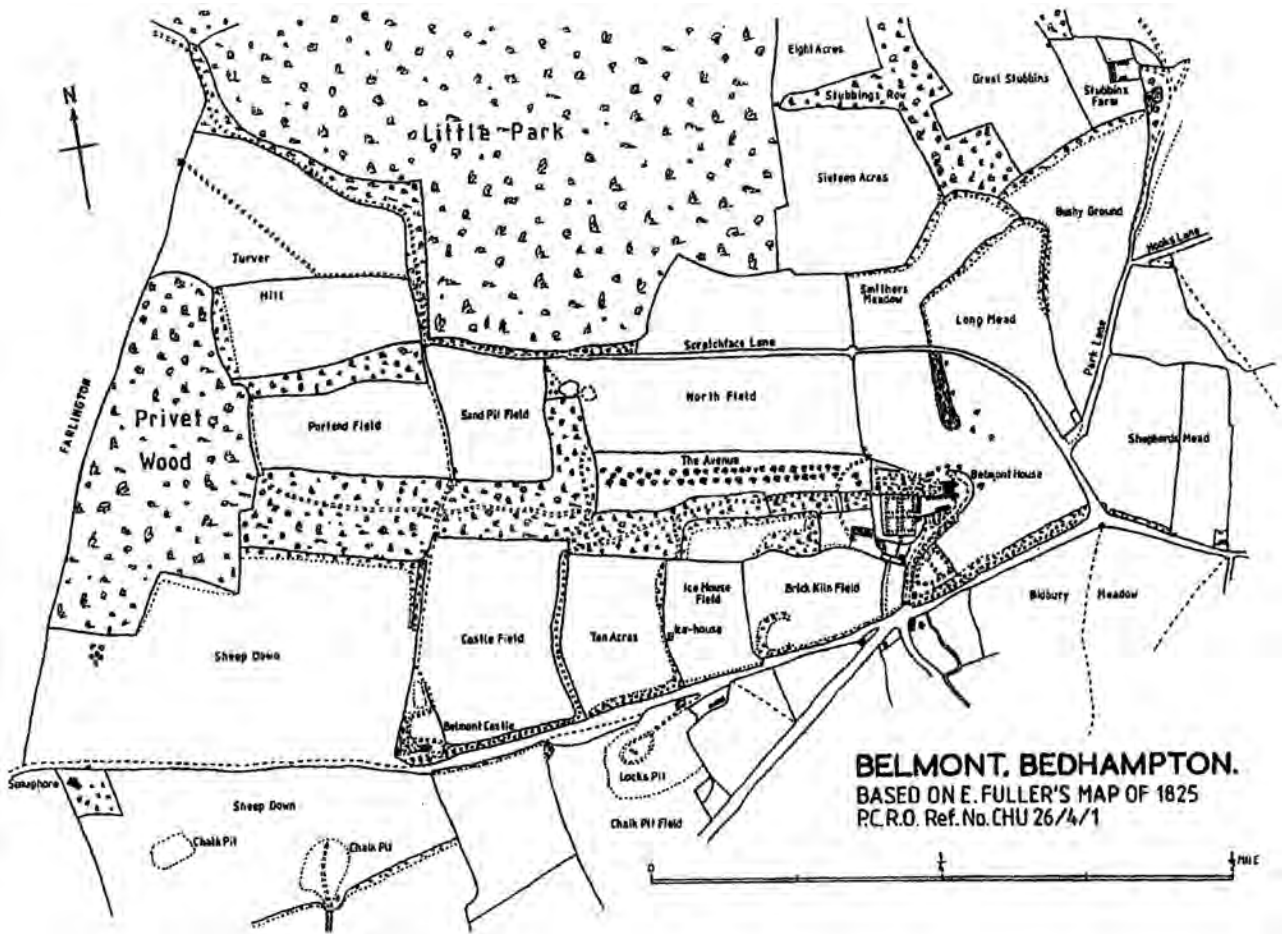


# APPENDIX F



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# APPENDIX G

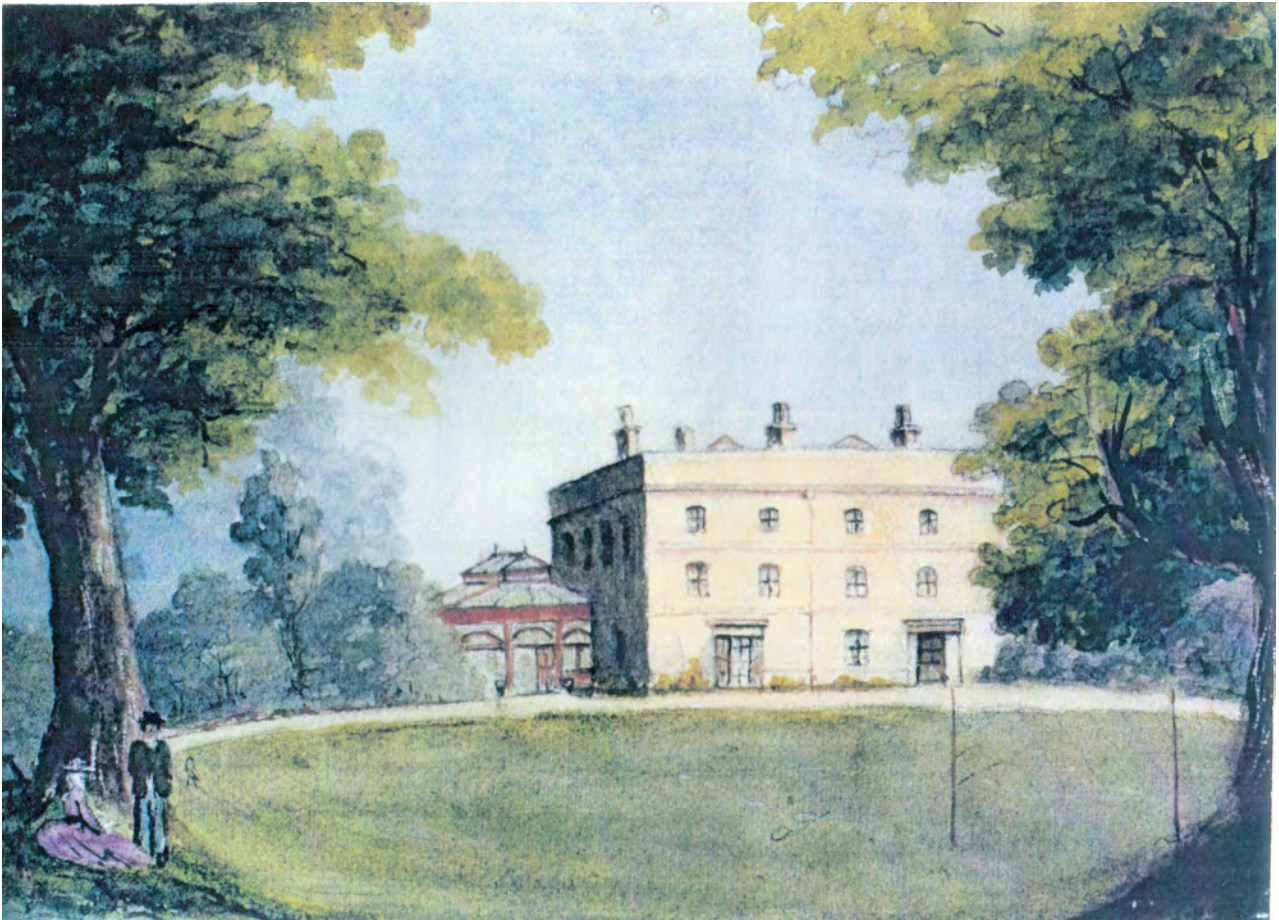


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Belmont House from the west c 1870. Watercolour attributed to Rose Paynter (1857-1909).

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