

## **‘A perfectly unspoiled site of priceless beauty’: Lord Francis Hope, Leopold Salomons and Box Hill, 1894–1914**

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*In 1914 Leopold Salomons purchased 230 acres on Box Hill from the Hope Settled Estates and gave it to the National Trust to secure public access to recreational open space. There were formidable complexities in the negotiations for this gift to the nation, which Salomons overcame with the support of Sir Robert Hunter, Lord Farrer and Lawrence Chubb. The sale notices on the slopes of Box Hill were the culmination of twenty years of threatened ‘enclosure’, which Robert Louis Stevenson had noted with dismay in 1894 in Samoa. Deepdene was the principal seat of the encumbered Hope Settled Estates, whose life tenant, Lord Francis Hope, was twice bankrupt in 1894 and 1902. The private tradition of Hope liberality enabled a fragile public access to parts of Box Hill, which became a case study of exemption from Undeveloped Land Duty during the People’s Budget. But by 1913 this ‘unspoiled land’ was the proposed site of building leases. This article uses estate, personal and amenity archival material held by the Surrey History Centre, University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections and National Trust. In the context of the political and social history of the Land Question in England, it evaluates the relationship between the preservation of open country and the prerogatives of private landownership on the most popular hill in Surrey, as the National Trust began to protect places of natural beauty in perpetuity. Locally rooted voluntary social action in the form of the Salomons Trust Deed, in effect practical liberalism, saved the summit and provided a keystone for the acquisition of the remainder of Box Hill after the Great War.*

### **A letter from Samoa**

In 1894 Robert Louis Stevenson was in his sixth year of exile from Britain and intent on renouncing his European perspective while living in Samoa. Nonetheless, he delighted in the company of naval officers from *HMS Curacoa* and other intrepid British visitors to Vailima. He also dwelt upon associations of youth, family and nation in correspondence with relatives and sympathetic men of letters. Stevenson often appealed for documentary sources for his research into family genealogy, Scots history 1690–1700, and literary monuments in Edinburgh.<sup>1</sup> In his letters there were few memories to match youthful perambulations along the Lothian Road, Edinburgh and the track that crossed the burn near Glencorse Church in the Pentland, least of all from the Bournemouth years.<sup>2</sup> But in late March 1894 Sidney Lysaght, a young man of letters, arrived in Vailima with a letter of introduction in characteristic blue ink from George Meredith. Robert Louis Stevenson first stayed at the inn at Burford Bridge in March 1878 with his parents.<sup>3</sup> His deep admiration of Meredith’s poetry and prose became a warm Celtic friendship. Meredith’s son, William, remembered Stevenson sitting on the steps of Flint Cottage, ‘dressed in brown tweed with black flannel shirt’.<sup>4</sup> Stevenson enjoyed Lysaght’s brief visit, but it brought dismaying news from Surrey. In a letter to Meredith, dated 17 April 1894, Stevenson exclaimed, ‘I heard with a great deal of interest the news of Box Hill. And so I understand it is to be enclosed! Allow me to remark, that seems a far more barbaric trait of manners than the most barbarous of ours. We content ourselves with cutting off an occasional head’.<sup>5</sup> A witness to war in Samoa, Stevenson’s letter to Meredith sought to ‘remember each other as we were’ for he knew that they would not

<sup>1</sup> Colvin 1900, 2, 310.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 288.

<sup>3</sup> Colvin 1900, 1, 100.

<sup>4</sup> Meredith 1922, 422; Hammerton, 1910, 35–6.

<sup>5</sup> Colvin 1900, 2, 299, letter to George Meredith, 17 April 1894.

meet again.<sup>6</sup> However, rarely did his letters contain such a future-oriented expression of concern, let alone one focused on the South Country.

This quotation from Stevenson's letter resurfaced in newspaper commentaries whenever Box Hill's future appeared in doubt, as if the long history of saving its summit, slopes and hinterland originated far away in beautifully crafted epistolary form. In 1913 *The Observer* highlighted "'RLS" on Box Hill', which was stimulated by an article in *The Spectator*.<sup>7</sup> F E Green's *The Surrey Hills*, published in 1915, quoted from the letter, which also reappeared at critical moments in the following decades.<sup>8</sup> On 27 January 1894 the *Illustrated London News* reported that public enjoyment of Box Hill would cease because building leases were to be sold. That issue contained a printed lithograph by the royal portraitist and illustrator, and Streatham resident, Joseph Holland Tringham, entitled, 'The Suggested Enclosure of Box Hill'. Typically, the drawing comprised five interlocking circular and rectangular frames. In a gently persuasive depiction of quietly historicised solitude, a lone visitor sat at the top of Box Hill with views towards Leith Hill and Dorking, who might have stayed at the White Horse Hotel and had luncheon in the garden of Burford Bridge Hotel. These three scenes were complemented by roundels of Beech trees and Deepdene.<sup>9</sup> The captions left no room for doubt that historic buildings and scenes of natural beauty near Dorking should concern readers of this weekly periodical. More reassuringly, *The Daily Telegraph* stated that villas would not prevail over pic-nics and that there was no possibility of a 'Box Hill Estate'. *The Surrey Times* extensively quoted *The Daily Telegraph* on 20 January 1894, also intent on diminishing the 'scare' that Box Hill was to be enclosed. It is the first pasted entry in the volume of newspaper cuttings which was maintained by the Box Hill Management Committee (BHMC).<sup>10</sup>

A single sheet, dated 2 December 1893, survives in the sixth deposit of the Newcastle manuscripts at the University of Nottingham. It is headed 'Hope Settled Estate Notice by Lord Francis Hope to the Trustees of Mrs A.A. Hope's Will of his intention to sell the Deepdene Mansion House', pursuant to Section 45 of the Settled Lands Act, 1882. This short note sought consent from the trustees to the sale of the Deepdene, including its 'Pleasure Grounds Park and Lands', if a purchaser could be found.<sup>11</sup> This piece in the extensive estate papers of the Dukes of Newcastle-under-Lyne, is unaccompanied by drafts, replies, or other contextualisation. Fleeting, William Meredith alluded to the threat of villadom on Box Hill in the 1880s, 40 years later.<sup>12</sup>

Box Hill comprised woodlands, downs and rough pasture on the northerly edge of the Deepdene estate. Unusually, the grass-covered escarpment and dip slope was unenclosed in the early 20th century and on the lower slopes small arable farms harvested wheat. Although Hilaire Belloc's poem 'The South Country' celebrated the 'great hills' of Sussex, his accolade of 'the strongest and most simple of our southern hills' went to Box Hill.<sup>13</sup> The chalk hills defined his version of South Country more than clay or sand. Where he noted a monotonous outline and bare surface, countless visitors took delight and found charm in a natural playground on privately owned land at Box Hill. Seemingly, the Deepdene estate's hospitality and liberality co-existed with dysfunctional finances and the assertion of landowning prerogatives to sell the land. The purpose of this article is to examine the cultural, political and economic history of Box Hill from Stevenson's letter in 1894 to Leopold Salomons' gift of

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 300.

<sup>7</sup> *The Observer*, 4 May 1913 "'RLS" on Box Hill.

<sup>8</sup> Green 1915, 95; RLS would have appreciated Grey's speech in November 1923, *Country Life* 1 December 1923, 743.

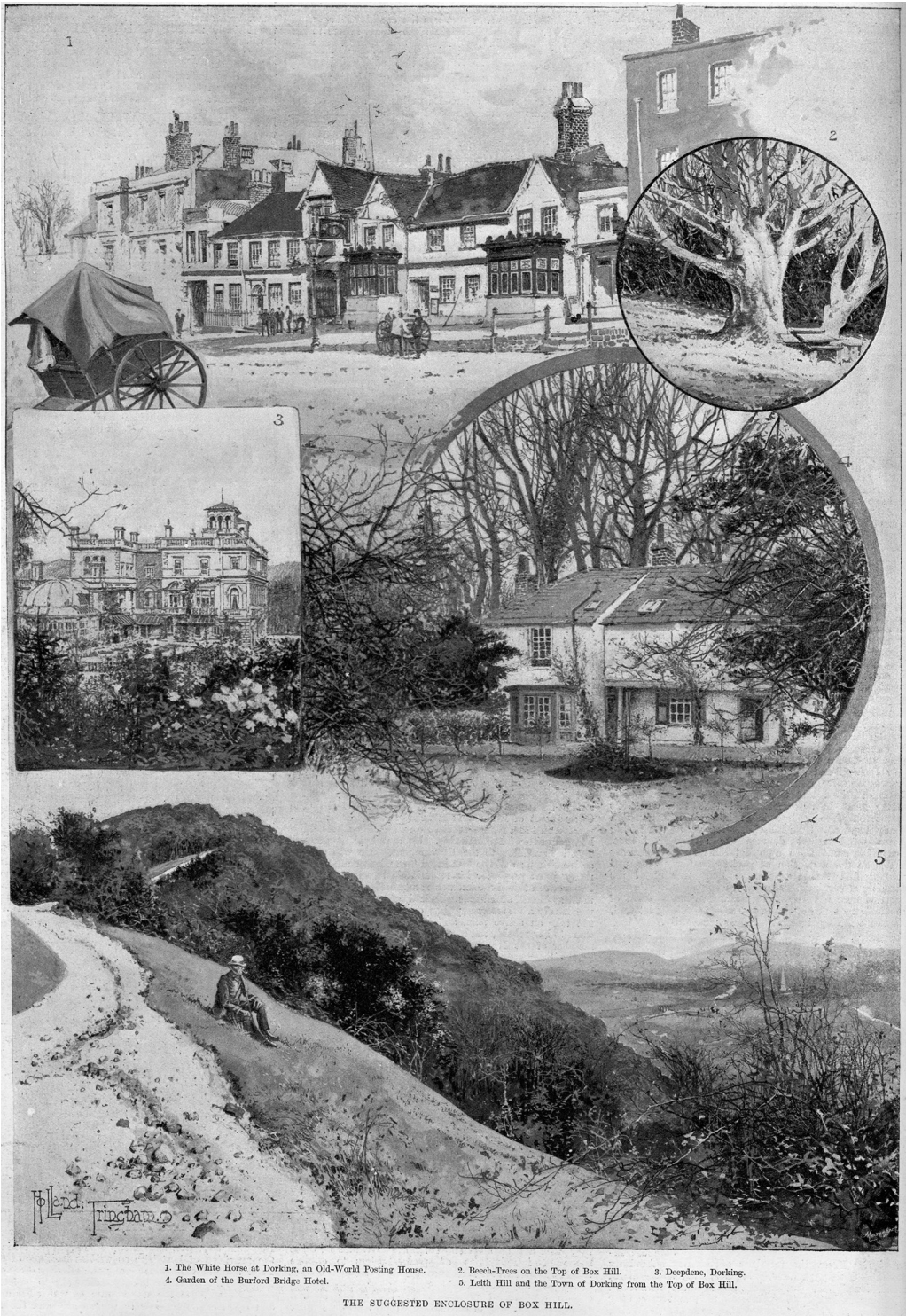
<sup>9</sup> *Illustrated London News* 27 January 1894 Suggested Enclosure of Box Hill, 3 & 8.

<sup>10</sup> NT: BHMC newspaper cuttings Vol 1, f 187, *Surrey Times* 20 January 1894.

<sup>11</sup> UN: Ne 6D 13/3/120, Notice by Lord Francis Hope to the trustees of Mrs A A Hope's will of his intention to sell the Deepdene Mansion House, Francis P Clinton Hope, 2 December 1893.

<sup>12</sup> Meredith 1922, 417.

<sup>13</sup> Belloc 1952, 178–9; For Belloc's poem 'South Country' see Cook 1914, 5–7.



1. The White Horse at Dorking, an Old-World Posting House. 2. Beech-Trees on the Top of Box Hill. 3. Deesplene, Dorking.  
4. Garden of the Burford Bridge Hotel. 5. Leith Hill and the Town of Dorking from the Top of Box Hill.

THE SUGGESTED ENCLOSURE OF BOX HILL.

Fig 1 The Suggested Enclosure of Box Hill, *Illustrated London News*, 27 January 1894, 8.  
(© *Illustrated London News*/Mary Evans)

230 acres to the National Trust in 1914. The intervening themes of a picturesque landscape, the life tenancy of a settled estate, visiting a popular hill near London, bankruptcy and an encumbered estate, the introduction of Undeveloped Land Duty and voluntary social action in the district are the main themes for enquiry. Their evaluation will frame some conclusions on the relationship of public interest and private wealth in the process of ‘saving’ one of the most well-known places of natural beauty in Surrey. The intersecting lives of Lord Francis Hope, Sir Robert Hunter, Leopold Salomons, Lord Farrer and Lawrence Chubb and the work of amenity organisations, notably the Commons and Footpaths Preservation Society (CFPS) and the National Trust, will be signified. Consequently, local social and political action to secure a wooded hill on the North Downs with a scenic vista will be explored, before the onset of town and country planning and the more systematic protection of beauty spots and county amenities after the First World War.

### Deepdene’s Italianate picturesque

In 1907 T H S Escott’s account of a literal journey across English landed society was published. He observed that Thomas Hope (1769–1831) had ‘raised the lordly pleasure house of art in the Dorking district’.<sup>14</sup> Soon after its sale, William Meredith evoked a mansion set among beech trees and rhododendrons, which had been ‘a treasure house of sculpture’.<sup>15</sup> Thomas Hope, merchant, scholar of antiquity, collector, and arbiter of Regency taste, acquired Deepdene in 1807. He started to substantially remodel it in 1818 to form an asymmetrical grouping amid the landscape’s irregularities, having ‘escaped’ from active partnership in the family firm, Hope and Company of Amsterdam.<sup>16</sup> The mausoleum at Deepdene was constructed that year. His brother, the art collector and gem connoisseur Henry Philip Hope (1775–1839), purchased the adjacent Chart Park, where a Doric temple was built to commemorate the gift and inscribed, *Fratri Optimo H.P.H. 1810*.<sup>17</sup> Thomas Hope coveted a peerage, but Deepdene’s restoration as a seat of the nobility would have to await the social and legal consequences of his grand-daughter’s marriage to the 6th Duke of Newcastle-under-Lyne.<sup>18</sup> In his illustrative survey of gentlemen’s seats in Surrey, J P Neale summarised in 1826, ‘The Pleasure-grounds, of considerable extent, are most happily placed in the very midst of England’s richest scenery: and careful attention has preserved the extensive and noble prospects, which the eminence upon which it stands commanded’.<sup>19</sup> From the mansion’s garden front, views of natural scenery extended to Ranmore Common, Box Hill, Betchworth Clump and Reigate Hill.<sup>20</sup> ‘Much improved by art’, an Italianate landscape in the deep vale, including terracing, an amphitheatre and grotto, was complemented by Henry Thomas Hope’s (1807–62) acquisition of the West Betchworth estate in 1834.<sup>21</sup> In 1903 a newly-found collection of old newspaper cuttings included an advertisement from the *County Chronicle* for the sale of the manor, which was dated 11 July 1831. In twenty lots, the estate of 2777 acres included Box Hill, ‘celebrated ornament’ of Surrey.<sup>22</sup> The dismantling of Betchworth Castle and the purchase of Brockham Manor in 1838 consolidated an estate, which extended from Holmwood in the south to the northern slopes of Box Hill and was 12 miles in circumference.

<sup>14</sup> Escott 1907, 409.

<sup>15</sup> Meredith 1922, 421.

<sup>16</sup> Watkin 1968, 118–19; Ingram 1980, 428.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 163; Cox 1910, 185; Cartwright 1911, 101.

<sup>18</sup> Escott 1907, 409.

<sup>19</sup> Neale 1826, 11–12.

<sup>20</sup> Prosser 1828, unnumbered pages.

<sup>21</sup> Robinson 2011, 83–4.

<sup>22</sup> NT: BHM newspaper cuttings Vol 1, f 148, *Dorking Advertiser* 28 April 1928, quotation from the *Dorking Advertiser* 2 May 1903.

Henry Thomas Hope substantially rebuilt Deepdene, the new entrance front of which, twin Italianate towers and stuccoed extensions elaborated the process of making a Renaissance palazzo. The illustrations by W H Bartlett in John Britton's companion volumes on the history of the Deepdene included external and internal details and views of the grounds and adjacent country. There is a watercolour of a view towards Box Hill and a sketch from the summit with Deepdene in the distance.<sup>23</sup> 'Environed by hills', David Watkin explained that the illustrations dramatised them, especially by heightened tree growth to represent 'Italianate vistas of the steep wooded Surrey hills beyond' the pleasure grounds.<sup>24</sup> In his captivating exposition of 'complex Italianate Picturesqueness' at Deepdene, the wooded hills were prerequisites for the cumulative effect of the formal Italian garden, asymmetrically reconstructed entrance, galleries and towers, parkland of forest trees and distant undulating vistas.<sup>25</sup> He identified the spatial transitions of the 'Picturesque evocation' from the terraced balustrade towards the hills.<sup>26</sup> Henry Thomas Hope had an estimated fortune of £300,000 at his death, and was identified in *The Spectator*, which used files from *The Illustrated London News*, in its report on 'English Millionaires'. It concluded that 224 men left fortunes of more than £250,000 at their death in the 1860s, to preface an essay on 'portable property'. This commentary on the acquisition of worldly goods, and their removal to England, observed the 'growth of the desire for purchasing costly and beautiful things'.<sup>27</sup>

### Lord Francis Hope and the Hope Settled Estates

Henry Francis Hope Pelham-Clinton, subsequently Henry Francis Hope Pelham-Clinton-Hope (1866–1941), was the fourth child and second son of the 6th Duke of Newcastle-under-Lyne of Clumber Park in the Dukeries. His mother, Henrietta Adela, Duchess of Newcastle-under-Lyne (1843–1913), was the daughter and heir of Henry Thomas Hope. His grandmother, Mrs Anne Adele Hope, had married in 1851, been widowed in 1862 and died in 1884. She had estates in Surrey, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire and County Monaghan, which totalled 21,773 acres and a gross annual rental of £22,138 in 1873.<sup>28</sup> The principal seat of the Hope Settled Estates was Deepdene, which comprised 3931 acres and an annual value of £4799. It was similar in acreage to the Evelyns' estates at Wotton, but of much greater annual value. Her last will of 11 April 1876 named Henry Francis as a life beneficiary of the Hope Settled Estates and his 'first and every son', provided that he adopted the name and arms of Hope within one year of his 21st birthday.<sup>29</sup> The Royal Licence was granted by Queen Victoria on 7 April 1887.<sup>30</sup> By this timely act, Lord Francis Hope secured the life tenancy of the Hope Settled Estates, including the rents and profits of the freehold estates and the heirlooms associated with them, such as the pictures, sculptures and books at Deepdene. Subsequent sale particulars addressed from the Deepdene Estate Office contained the statement, 'The Royal Licence can be seen here at any time'.<sup>31</sup> The adoption of surname and arms integral to an estate enabled the 'terrilineal' functioning of landed society, whereby a designated heir sustained the undivided family possession of

<sup>23</sup> Watkin 1968, 30, 37, 250, 253.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 174, 159.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>27</sup> *The Spectator* 16 November 1872, English millionaires.

<sup>28</sup> Bateman 1883, 226.

<sup>29</sup> UN: Ne 6D 13/2/12, Copy licence, 7 April 1997; Mercer & Jackson, 25; *The Times* 22 April 1941, Obituary Duke of Newcastle. Former owner of the Hope Blue Diamond.

<sup>30</sup> UN: Ne 6D 13/2/12, Copy licence, 7 April 1887; TNA BT 266/366 The Official Receiver's Report Re Lord Francis Hope, 1902.

<sup>31</sup> UN: Ne 6D 13/2/8/3 Copy Requisitions on title, Lord Francis Hope to Leopold Salomons, 17 November 1913.



Fig 2 (Henry) Francis Hope Pelham-Clinton-Hope, 8th Duke of Newcastle-under-Lyne, Bassano Ltd, whole plate glass negative, 24 March 1926 (© National Portrait Gallery London)

mansion, land and heirlooms.<sup>32</sup> The rank of ‘Landed proprietor’ was entered on all official documents, including his son’s baptism certificate in 1907.<sup>33</sup>

Lord Francis Hope was the heir presumptive to the dukedom, and succeeded his brother, the 7th Duke (1864–1928), but not to the ownership of Clumber Park. From Castle Blayney Lord Francis Hope signed a Statutory Declaration on 3 March 1916 to provide his childless brother with a certified continuation of the family pedigree.<sup>34</sup> The envelope of papers, entitled ‘Hope Pedigree 1893–1929’, was originally held at the Duke of Newcastle’s Estate Office at Newark. It contained a chart of lineage and copies of relevant certificates of

<sup>32</sup> Robinson 2011, 14.

<sup>33</sup> UN: Ne 6G 17/2, Certificate of Baptism, Henry Edward Hugh Pelham-Clinton-Hope, signed and witnessed at Castle Blaney, 1907.

<sup>34</sup> UN: Ne 6G 17/21, Draft Statutory Declaration, Lord Francis Hope, 3 March 1916.

marriages and births.<sup>35</sup> Two years earlier, the 7th Duke's 'accustomed service' for the Priory and Manor of Worksop was celebrated on his silver wedding anniversary at Clumber Park. One of the photographs in the full page report of the local newspaper was captioned, 'Our Picture shows the Duke and Duchess with the children of Lord Francis Hope, the brother of the Duke'.<sup>36</sup> The estate in Nottinghamshire comprised 34,467 acres, which had a gross annual value of £73,098 in 1873, and land was also possessed in Derbyshire and Yorkshire.<sup>37</sup> The dukedom was created in 1756 and there numbered 31 in the English, Scottish and Irish peerages by 1908, excluding the royal princes. Only two were created in the 19th century of this highest rank of nobility, which were Wellington and Westminster.

F M L Thompson, the distinguished historian of English landed society, explained that the resettlement of property in each generation might protect a landed estate from extravagant expenditure by the family head. A settled estate constrained the owner to be a life tenant; 'in theory unable to do any lasting damage to the inheritance of generations yet to come'.<sup>38</sup> Through this expression of primogeniture, incomes for entitled family members were generated, alongside the maintenance of an undivided estate. The survival of an intact territorial unit was critical to the owner's social status and the legal and administrative functions of landed society. Thompson concluded, 'To the outside world, however, the unbroken shell of a landed estate, even if in reality it was empty within, was the object which conferred position, authority and responsibility on the owner for the time being'.<sup>39</sup> Younger sons might have large private incomes, which their status and upbringing entitled them to enjoy, and 'indulge' in less onerous roles than first-born sons. Lord Francis Hope, educated at Eton College and Trinity Hall, Cambridge, held few military, administrative or judicial functions appropriate to his social rank. A commission in the Nottinghamshire (Sherwood Rangers) Yeomanry, 1890–4, reflected the territorial influence of the ducal seat and the limited duties of High Shirevalty in County Monaghan in 1891 arose from ownership of the Castle Blayney estate.

Until the 1880s, life tenants were limited owners whose beneficiary rights to derive income from settled land was supervised by trustees who protected the terms of the strict settlement, such as the will of Mrs Anne Adele Hope. However, the Liberal Government's Settled Land Act, 1882, permitted small portions of estate land to be sold for the more effective working of strict settlements, especially to fund land improvements during the agricultural depression. The Settled Land Act granted life tenants near-absolute ownership over land and chattels, but not the power to sell or lease the principal mansion house, unless settlement trustees agreed.<sup>40</sup> Moderate land reformers almost sympathised with younger sons of the aristocracy, who, 'inheriting an honoured and great name', did not have the means to sustain or embellish it.<sup>41</sup> Instead, they might face labyrinthine negotiations over property law with the trustees of the testator's will and lose interest in their obligations to servants, tradesmen and cottagers on their settled estate. In short, soon after inheriting the Hope Settled Estates, Lord Francis Hope acquired the power to dispose of heirlooms and land, if a court order was obtained.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>35</sup> UN: Ne 6G 17/17/1 Certified Continuation of my family pedigree, drafted by the 7th Duke of Newcastle-under-Lyne, 3 February 1916; The top copy, UN: Ne 6G 17/17/2, was signed by the Windsor Herald on 13 July 1916.

<sup>36</sup> UN: Ne X 411 *Gainsborough and Worksop Times*, 24 April 1914, The Clumber Silver Wedding, full page report with photograph.

<sup>37</sup> Bateman 1883, 331.

<sup>38</sup> Thompson 1980, 66.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>40</sup> Settled Land Act 1882, Section 15 ([http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1882/38/pdfs/ukpga\\_18820038\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1882/38/pdfs/ukpga_18820038_en.pdf) (accessed 14 February 2018))

<sup>41</sup> Fisher & Hunter, 1882, 12, 15; Challis 1883, 10, 17.

<sup>42</sup> Settled Land Act 1882, Section 37 ([http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1882/38/pdfs/ukpga\\_18820038\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1882/38/pdfs/ukpga_18820038_en.pdf) (accessed 14 February 2018))

At Clumber Park the weekly schedules and six-monthly reports of agricultural and forestry departments provide rich insights into the estate's paternalistic functioning. In contrast, fragmentary sources, such as account books for Forestry and Game of limited duration, bereft of memoranda and out-letters, conveyed 'snapshot' moments at Deepdene Estate Office, whose economic activities lacked integration with the social life of the mansion house. Estate employees at Woodmans Cottage and Keepers Cottage on Box Hill testified to the importance of shooting parties and Swiss Cottage, built by H T Hope, was used to host their luncheons.<sup>43</sup> From afar, rambles on Box Hill in 1891 saw 'game laws personified in velveteen and gaiters'.<sup>44</sup> In the Game Book for 1891–3 there was a glimpse of the estate's relationship with Dorking and nearby villages, shortly before its sale was proposed. It itemised the number of guns in each party, the totals of game killed and to whom it was given, or sold. A loosely inserted paper recorded the 'Game kild [*sic*] at Box Hill' by Lord Francis Hope's party on 5 January 1893.<sup>45</sup> After the *battue*, hares and rabbits were freely distributed to tenants, and pheasants were sent to the mansion and large neighbouring properties. The estate's benevolent oversight of St Paul's School, Dorking and Brockham National School was illustrated by the allocation of pheasants for the masters. The Dorking Station Master and the Booking Clerk (London, Brighton and South Coast Railway) and the Goods Clerk at Box Hill Station (South Eastern Railway) also received pheasants. Ground game was sent to the police at Holmwood and the Dorking Superintendent of Police was listed for two pheasants. Lord Francis Hope's precise directions on the dispersal and sale of game constituted the main documentary evidence of his occasional visits to Deepdene. This was a local world where rural social relations appeared unchanged, despite the pronounced contact with local railway stations. However, in 1894 Lilian, Duchess of Marlborough, acquired a 21-year lease to Deepdene Mansion, which included full shooting and fishing rights over the entire estate.<sup>46</sup>

An isolated entry for October 1890 in the 'District Notes' of the *Abinger Monthly Record*, sponsored by W J Evelyn at Wotton House, offered tantalising record linkage of the social function of aristocratic shooting parties. It noted that Lord Francis Hope had visited Deepdene and left with his uncle, Lord Edward Pelham-Clinton.<sup>47</sup> Colonel Lord Edward Pelham-Clinton (1836–1907), brother of the 6th Duke, returned the following year to join a shooting party. An ensign in the socially prestigious Rifle Brigade in 1854, and trustee of Clumber Park, with W E Gladstone, during his nephew's minority, his 'quiet dignity' appealed to Sir John Denham, who chronicled the discretion and devotion to duty of courtiers in the late Victorian and Edwardian era. Denham observed: 'To all who knew him Lord Edward Pelham-Clinton was held as the beau-ideal of a gentleman'. There was 'no hint of swagger'.<sup>48</sup>

Master of the Household to Queen Victoria and King Edward VII in the years 1894–1901, aristocratic preferment facilitated an appointment where familiarity with landed society, military service, notions of deference and obligation, and rituals of pageantry and chivalric spectacle were necessary accoutrements of courtly service. David Cannadine has summarised, 'Being brought up 'on the steps of the throne' was the best recommendation, and the best training for royal service'.<sup>49</sup> Lord Francis Hope inhabited the same social world

<sup>43</sup> King 1898, 92–3.

<sup>44</sup> *The Times* 20 May 1891, Box Hill Ramblers.

<sup>45</sup> SHC: 2226/15/A, Deepdene Game Book 1891–3.

<sup>46</sup> Menzies 1917, 283–7; On the Duchess of Marlborough's sporting and fishing rights see UN: Ne 6D 13/2/9/1, Copy Conveyance of Boxhill in the County of Surrey, 6 March 1914. In grateful remembrance of a 'benefactress' see the prominent large exquisite *Opus Sectile* Duchess of Marlborough Memorial Resurrection tablet by Powell of Whitefriars in St Martin's Church, Dorking. Powell's *Opus Sectile* locations (<http://www.tilesoc.org.uk/pdf/opuslist.pdf> (accessed 25 March 2018)); *Whitaker's Peerage* 1908, 720.

<sup>47</sup> *Abinger Monthly Record*, 2, 10 October 1890, 153.

<sup>48</sup> Denham 1922, 88, 92; Goschen 1905, 4; *Webster* 1885, 899.

<sup>49</sup> Cannadine 1992, 249.



of dynastic privilege and territorial power, whose function was to preserve the *status quo* in rural localities on behalf of the Crown through social deference and benevolent obligation. For example, the Pelham-Clinton pedigree chart solemnly recorded the year in which the 7th Duke first attended the House of Lords. It conveyed continuities of ownership, service and entitlement, which presumed the permanency of strict settlement and its value for social cohesion in rural England's 'small and remarkably self-sufficient worlds'.<sup>50</sup>

### Hope liberality and public access to Box Hill

In the mid-Victorian era Louis Jennings, the American observer of downland and Wealden scenes in Surrey and Sussex, referred to 'scores of visitors' who walked to the summit of Box Hill along the path, which was accessed near the inn at Burford Bridge. He also observed the 'sandwich papers and broken bottles which were left on the hill'.<sup>51</sup> In 1950 I H Swait recollected the visitors who enjoyed 'pic-nics' on Box Hill in the 1890s, 'They came in private carriages, in dog-carts, waggonettes, brakes, bicycles and by train'.<sup>52</sup> In 1900 the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway started to offer bicycle storage on its Sunday train service to Horsham, for outings to Fittleworth, but not to Box Hill, which was within 'the compass of a day's ride from London without the aid of a railway'.<sup>53</sup> Route 107 was one of five London omnibus services to the hills and commons in Surrey in 1914. On Whitsuntide Sunday and Monday the first omnibus service to Box Hill and Ranmore Common left Clapham Common at 9.00 am and the last returned from Dorking at 9.28pm.<sup>54</sup>

Teas were available at Upper Box Hill Farm and every summer week-day donkeys were saddled there and ridden in the clearing, near the swings. In Hope Moncrieff's depiction of Surrey, as London's pleasure ground in 1906, picnic excursionists entered a 'cockney paradise'. They were 'free to roam over turf slopes and among the groves'.<sup>55</sup> Light refreshments were served to the public on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays in the grounds of Swiss Cottage.<sup>56</sup> Topographical guides to the district concurred that Box Hill was 'practically unspoilt'. In comparison, signs of 'vulgarity' were presumed to touch Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest.<sup>57</sup> Edwardian wonderment of thronged scenes on Box Hill on bank holidays and summer week-ends was joyfully summarised by Joseph Morris, 'Of Box Hill as a famous holiday resort it would be superfluous to write, no place, perhaps, in the whole neighbourhood of London is so widely and justly popular'.<sup>58</sup> Morris claimed its popularity in global terms, which J Charles Cox modified with reference to the numerous visitors to Mount Vesuvius and other European resorts.<sup>59</sup> Still, Parker contended, 'Box Hill must be pretty nearly the best-known hill in the world'.<sup>60</sup>

Although school classes, choir outings and metropolitan excursionists walked to the summit in large groups from the London Road, visitors of the carriage-owning class and resourceful walkers, who were intent on covering the ground from a distant railway station, wrote of curative experiences, adventures and solitude. One such visitor, afflicted with insomnia, was the Prime Minister, Lord Rosebery. He temporarily withdrew from public view in 1895, and stayed at home in Epsom, 'While at the Durdans he has been out for drives on the Downs to Box Hill and other places in the neighbourhood daily, and has taken

<sup>50</sup> UN: Ne 6G 17/17/1 Draft Certified Continuation of my family pedigree, Duke of Newcastle, 3 February 1916; Howkins 2003, 20.

<sup>51</sup> Jennings 1884, 119.

<sup>52</sup> DM: SC 266/30 newspaper cuttings *Dorking Advertiser* 1 September 1950.

<sup>53</sup> *The Daily News* 7 May 1900.

<sup>54</sup> *The Times* 29 May 1914, 12, The London General Omnibus Co Ltd. Advertisement.

<sup>55</sup> Hope Moncrieff 1934, 134.

<sup>56</sup> King 1998, 92.

<sup>57</sup> Cox 1910, 179.

<sup>58</sup> Morris 1920, 44.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 34; Cox 1910, 178.

<sup>60</sup> Parker 1937, 306.

short walks in addition'.<sup>61</sup> More energetically, three 'scribblers' detrained at Dorking from Victoria in rain-soaked conditions to climb Box Hill in 1891. It was covered in mist, but weather conditions improved and the 'mountain in miniature' was ascended, as if they were in Scotland.<sup>62</sup> Earlier, John Page likened Box Hill to 'an immense park' on his epic walking tour of Box Hill's woodland from Ashted Station.<sup>63</sup> There were few routes southwards from Epsom Downs that were unknown to the sporting journalist, Martin Cobbett. The Vale of Mickleham was his gateway to open country. For respite from writing duties at the race course, he found spacious open country on Box Hill 'to wander at discretion and with discretion'.<sup>64</sup> This insightful remark drew attention to a 'lovely playground', where there were no rights of access over the 'unique territory of down land, thickly wooded'.<sup>65</sup> On Leatherhead Common golf links and housing had banished solitude within living memory, but Cobbett's search was amply repaid amid the trees at Box Hill. His open air essays for the sporting magazine *Referee*, which were edited by his daughter, were published in 1906, shortly after he was laid to rest in Stoke d'Abernon churchyard.

Martin Cobbett's discretion on Box Hill accorded with private traditions, which sometimes allowed public customary access to places of natural beauty. *The Dorking Advertiser* used the word on 'sufferance' in 1913, but that remark might not accord with the estate's provision of seats for public use over Box Hill.<sup>66</sup> In the draft conveyance in 1913, the vendor's solicitor explained, 'No public or private rights exist, but the Public have been allowed access to the land in some parts of it as a privilege'.<sup>67</sup> The estate's land agent clarified in 1914 the context in which improved access to the southern slopes was proposed, 'Lord Francis Hope has so distinguished himself in the past by the great freedom with which he has always thrown open the hill'.<sup>68</sup> However, for use of a path through a plantation George Meredith signed a Memorandum of Agreement on 15 July 1893; 'it being understood that the privilege may be withdrawn at any time when the annual payment of five shillings shall cease'.<sup>69</sup> The word 'privilege' occurred twice in this one paragraph folded page, which also identified two other inhabitants of Box Hill who sought the access to the pathway by payment. In 1928 Mr Justice Tomlin concluded, 'Box Hill was a place to which for many years, the public had resorted with or without the right to do so'.<sup>70</sup> Disputed access to a path between the occupants of Pinehurst and Bencomb revealed the indeterminate legal status of woodmen's tracks, which were used for gathering blackberries and bluebells on Sunday walks. Customary access to paths over many decades had not created rights of way, but use was sufficiently time-honoured for an injunction against trespass to fail.<sup>71</sup>

In 1898 Julia Cartwright advised walkers that Box Hill was the 'chief attraction' near Dorking and the fine parks of Deepdene and Betchworth should be visited.<sup>72</sup> Earlier, Jennings had advised that Betchworth Park could be entered at the gate near the Punch Bowl Inn to see the double avenue of Lime trees, Spanish chestnuts and castle remains.<sup>73</sup> Readers of *A Handbook for Travellers* were advised to walk through Deepdene Park into Betchworth

<sup>61</sup> *The Times* 22 March 1895, quoting an undated bulletin from *The Lancet*.

<sup>62</sup> *The Times* 20 May 1891.

<sup>63</sup> SHC: Page, pages cut 1896, 4.

<sup>64</sup> Cobbett 1906, 156.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, 154, 144–5.

<sup>66</sup> NT: BHMC newspaper cuttings, 1, f 32, *Dorking Advertiser* 15 November 1913, Box Hill saved; Fedden 1974, 98.

<sup>67</sup> UN: Ne 6D 13/2/8/3 Copy Requisitions on title, Lord Francis Hope to Leopold Salomons, dated 17 November 1913; see also UN: Ne 6D 13/2/8/4 Further Requisitions on Title and replies, 12 December 1913.

<sup>68</sup> *The Observer* 31 May 1914.

<sup>69</sup> UN: Ne 6D 17/1/9/2 Memorandum of Agreement, signed George Meredith, 15 July 1893.

<sup>70</sup> NT: BHMC newspaper cuttings, 1, 154, *Dorking Advertiser* 27 October 1928.

<sup>71</sup> NT: BHMC newspaper cuttings, 1, 153–4, *The Times* 20 October 1928, Box Hill and a Right of Way & *Dorking Advertiser* 20 October 1928.

<sup>72</sup> Cartwright 1911, 98.

<sup>73</sup> Jennings 1884, 119–20.

Park.<sup>74</sup> Public access to estate parkland, as well as the unenclosed Box Hill, was known to elementary school teachers in London. Pupils from the Ben Jonson School in Stepney stayed for one week in Brockham in the summer term, 1913. Their learning resource *Boxhill Guide Book* noted of Betchworth Park, ‘Not a public park like London but owner allows people to walk through some parts. We shall see Spanish Chestnuts and an avenue of Lime trees’.<sup>75</sup> In two double rows for 300 yards in length, 175 lime trees conveyed the scale and grandeur of a cathedral nave and aisles near the castle ruin, where Lord Francis Hope had first carried a firearm in his boyhood to shoot rooks.<sup>76</sup> The felling of many diseased lime trees in the 1930s evoked memories of an open space for those who journeyed to the town from Brockham and beyond. These sparse evidences of Hope liberality offered some insights into the hill’s public appeal in the context of an estate, which was routinely explored by village inhabitants and suburban autodidacts who had few well-defined rights to do so.

### **Bankruptcy and an encumbered estate**

Under the terms of the Receiving Order in September 1893 and bankruptcy on 3 August 1894, Lord Francis Hope had liabilities of £58,529 and assets of £173,920. He had created numerous mortgages for large amounts on his life interest in the Hope Settled Estates. Under the Deed of Trust, of 11 September 1895, the Official Receiver conveyed his entire life interest to three trustees in bankruptcy, who received all rents and profits from the Hope Settled Estates. His life interest in the estate became a mortgage of £160,000, which paid premiums on some assurance policies. The residue was invested in a sinking fund to repay the sum of £210,000, which included a prior mortgage of £50,000.<sup>77</sup> Thereafter, the Gresham Life Assurance Society, and the three trustees, became parties to asset sales for which Lord Francis Hope was the beneficial owner. The creditors provided an annuity of £2000 per year for his maintenance and support, which was his sole source of income in the years 1896–1902.<sup>78</sup>

His first Certificate of Marriage was dated 27 November 1894 and an entry read, ‘commonly Lord Francis Hope of Deepdene, Surrey and Castleblayney, Co. Monaghan’.<sup>79</sup> He married Miss Mary ‘May’ Augusta Yohe, whose theatrical career began in Chicago in 1887. There was much confusion at the *Metropolitan Magazine*, which informed its American readership that her marriage would be followed by her social elevation as Duchess of Manchester, because the current Duke was sickly and childless. Alongside two portraits of a ‘vivacious’, confident and talented actress, the journey of a ‘Chicago chorus girl’ was charted, which might have been scandalous had not ‘lofty personages’ in England married music hall artistes in the preceding decades.<sup>80</sup> J M Bulloch, the prolific *Notes and Queries* contributor, kept scrapbooks of newspaper articles on 37 actresses who married British peers, including 22 during the years 1889–1929’.<sup>81</sup> F M L Thompson identified a ‘veritable wave of marriages between the old nobility and actresses’.<sup>82</sup> Her appearances in musical productions at the Lyric Theatre and Avenue Theatre in 1893–4 led *The Times* to entitle her obituary notice in 1938, ‘A favourite actress of the nineties’.<sup>83</sup> Miss May Yohe returned to the American variety

<sup>74</sup> King 1898, 102.

<sup>75</sup> Ben Jonson LCC School [nd], 12.

<sup>76</sup> *The Times* 16 February 1935, letter, Duke of Newcastle, Ancient Avenue to be felled, dated 15 February 1935.

<sup>77</sup> *The Law Reports* 1899, 680.

<sup>78</sup> *The Law Reports* 1899, 680; UN: Ne 6L 37/1 In the matter of the estates settled by the Will of Mrs Anne Adele Hope deceased, June 1914.

<sup>79</sup> UN: Ne 6G 17/1 Certificate of Marriage, Lord Francis Hope and Miss May Yohe, Hampstead Registry Office, 27 November 1894. Lord Francis Hope married Olive Muriel Owen née Thompson in 1904 and they had three children. She died in 1912 and was buried in the Hope Mausoleum.

<sup>80</sup> *Metropolitan Magazine* (USA) 1, 3 April 1895, 163–4.

<sup>81</sup> Bulloch 1935, 93.

<sup>82</sup> Thompson 1980, 301.

<sup>83</sup> *The Times* 19 August 1938, obituary Miss May Yohe.

stage in 1896 and the marriage was dissolved in 1902. Her appearances in silent movies included 'The Hope Diamond mystery' in 1921 and reference was inevitably made to the jewel's role in her later misfortunes.<sup>84</sup>

Lord Francis Hope's receipts amounted to £13,300 between the two receiving orders of September 1893 and March 1902, but his personal expenditure, excluding legal costs, totalled £27,000. At the time of his second bankruptcy in 1902, unsecured creditors included a tobacconist in Piccadilly for 'about' £120 for goods supplied in 1897–9. Invoices from two wine merchants for 1898–9 totalled £243 and £235.<sup>85</sup> In his memoir of landed society at play, the Irish peer Lord Rossmore dwelt upon the aristocratic imperative of generous hospitality, which was vigorously pursued in County Monaghan, 'Our neighbours round Rossmore were delightful people and we managed to have some very good times'.<sup>86</sup> Castle Blaney was 'a very fine place'; its owner also possessed the blue diamond and was the husband of the actress May Yohe.<sup>87</sup> Lord Rossmore had the advantage of 'perpetual joy' in his park, where timber was not felled to offset losses on the Turf.<sup>88</sup> When interviewed in 1902 on the cause of his insolvency, Lord Francis Hope replied, 'My household & personal expenses exceeding my income'. He was unable to state his average yearly expenditure, had not maintained a Cash Book and had mislaid his Bank Book, issued by the Piccadilly Branch of the Capital and Counties Bank. Lord Francis Hope was supported by friends and summarised, 'since 1895 I have lived in different places in London & abroad'. The Official Receiver concluded, 'That the Debtor has brought on his bankruptcy by unjustifiable extravagance of living'.<sup>89</sup>

In 1893 Lord Francis Hope had applied to the Chancery Division for the sale of the Hope collection of Dutch and Flemish pictures, which counsel argued was 'homeless' after the disposal of the town house in Belgrave Square. The 83 pictures included Vermeer's 'Delft interior of a woman drinking with a man'. Under the Settled Land Acts 1882–90, the High Court was required to consider whether the life tenant's application abided by the testatrix's wishes and was in the interests of all entitled parties. The applicant's financial need was not a sufficient condition for approval.<sup>90</sup> Unsuccessful in 1893, Lord Francis Hope reapplied to sell the picture collection and secured a court order on 27 July 1898. The picture sale raised £121,550, which was transferred to the mortgagees of Lord Francis Hope's life interest and brought no addition to his annuity.<sup>91</sup> The court stipulated the payment of £600 per year from investment income to his sister, Lady Beatrice Lister-Kaye, for the maintenance and education of her young son at Eton College. At Denby Grange near Wakefield, her political role as Dame President of the local branch of the Primrose League and philanthropic work for the 'welfare of operative and friendless girls' was highlighted, alongside her husband's entry, in the county's biographical gazetteer of landed society.<sup>92</sup> The long list of titled members of the General Committee of the Royal Fete at Claremont in July 1907, to relieve poverty in Deptford, contained her name.<sup>93</sup>

In 1898 Lord Francis Hope proposed the sale of the blue Indian, or Hope, diamond which was valued at £18,115 to secure additional income for the Hope Settled Estates. Part of the French Royal Treasury until 1792, the diamond was acquired in 1830 for £30,000.<sup>94</sup> Lord Francis Hope had a provisional contract to sell, but newly discovered large diamonds

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> TNA: BT 226/366 The Official Receiver's Report Re Lord Francis Hope, 1902.

<sup>86</sup> Rossmore 1912, 43.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 6.

<sup>89</sup> TNA: BT 226/366 The Official Receiver's Report re Lord Francis Hope, 1902; Manning 1908, unnumbered pages.

<sup>90</sup> *The Law Reports* 1899, 680.

<sup>91</sup> *The Law Reports* 1899, 681; *The Law Journal Reports* 1899, 626.

<sup>92</sup> Manning 1908, unnumbered pages.

<sup>93</sup> Anon 1907, unnumbered pages.

<sup>94</sup> *The Law Journal Reports* 1899, 627; *The Law Reports* 1899, 681; *The Times* 25 June 1909, Sale of the Hope Diamond.

in South Africa threatened to diminish its market value. The 44¼ carat diamond, set in 22 brilliantines, was deposited at Parr's Bank, Cavendish Square in 1894. Lord Francis Hope stated, 'it at present afforded neither pleasure nor utility to himself or his wife'.<sup>95</sup> The two presiding judges dismissed the case on appeal in 1899. Sir Nathaniel Lindley, Master of the Rolls, concluded that the wish of the 'extravagant young tenant for life' to increase his income was not sufficient grounds for sale.<sup>96</sup> Judge L J Romer agreed and attached significance to the wishes of Mrs Adele Hope, as settler, that the diamond should be part of the Hope heirlooms. Furthermore, the interested parties under strict settlement had pride in possession which should not be ignored, 'It is a diamond called by the name of this family, and is widely known'.<sup>97</sup> As remaindermen of the Hope Settled Estates, two siblings stated their sentimental attachment to the jewel and the appeal judges recalled the 'Warwick vase'.<sup>98</sup>

The widely-reported appeal judgment shed light on the familial, judicial and territorial implications of a life tenant who could not afford to live at the principal seat of the Hope Settled Estates, 'according to the usages of his class of society'.<sup>99</sup> The Hope Settled Estates had yearly profits of £16,500, but charges on the life interest left £500 towards the annual allowance of £2000 from the Deed of 1895.<sup>100</sup> Consequently, Lord Francis Hope argued that the annual sum of £6000–7000 required to maintain Deepdene House was not available. His elder brother disagreed. In the bankruptcy proceedings in 1902 an entry in the Receiving Order contained the statement, 'Assets – available apparently Nil'.<sup>101</sup> For permission to sell heirlooms under Section 37 of the Settled Land Act, 1882, the life tenant's pecuniary problems were not supposed to outweigh the interests of the remaindermen. But after protracted judicial scrutiny, the diamond was sold in 1902 for £29,000.<sup>102</sup>

In 1910 the Chancery Division approved Lord Francis Hope's application to sell twenty pictures at Deepdene, which were valued at £24,750 and included a family portrait by Joshua Reynolds.<sup>103</sup> In the same year the sale of Brockhamhill Farm evidenced the necessary consent of The Gresham Society, trustees for the will, and the incumbrancers, with dates of the separate indentures.<sup>104</sup> For every land and heirloom sale investments in stocks and shares ensued.<sup>105</sup> Finally, receivers were appointed to the Hope Settled Estates on behalf of five mortgagees on 28 October 1912, when the gross annual rental value of the Deepdene estate was £5481 18s 11d.<sup>106</sup> The settler's intention by her will to secure the landed estate and its treasures, indivisibly, for future generations had been dismantled. The sale of outlying portions of the Deepdene estate, including Box Hill, could be delayed no longer. Alongside judgments in the Chancery Division, the 'People's Budget' also demanded consideration of this privately owned undeveloped land.

<sup>95</sup> *The Law Reports* 1899, 681; TNA BT 266/366 Official Receiver's Report Re Lord Francis Hope, 1902.

<sup>96</sup> *The Law Journal Reports* 1899, 629.

<sup>97</sup> *The Law Journal Reports* 1899, 626.

<sup>98</sup> *The Law Reports* 1899, 687. The display of the restored Roman vase in the Conservatory at Warwick Castle, found in fragments at Tivoli in 1770, and the careful management of its reproduction rights exemplified a family's delight in portable property to which the siblings of Lord Francis Hope aspired.

<sup>99</sup> *The Law Reports* 1899, 692.

<sup>100</sup> *The Law Journal Reports* 1899, 629; *The Law Reports* 1899, 681.

<sup>101</sup> TNA: BT 226/366.

<sup>102</sup> Cannadine 1992, 112.

<sup>103</sup> *The Times* 16 April 1910.

<sup>104</sup> UN: Ne 6D 13/1/426 Copy Draft Conveyance Brockhamhill Farm, Lord Francis Hope and his incumbrances and trustees to O E Warburg Esq, 12 August 1910.

<sup>105</sup> UN: Ne 6A 12/8/1 Estate of Mrs A A Hope, Return of Investments in Stocks Funds, Bonds etc on 27 October 1916.

<sup>106</sup> SHC: 2226/1 Hope Settled Estates. Appointment of Receivers, 28 October 1912. On the consolidated seven separate indentures see UN: Ne 6D 13/2/10/3 Lord Francis Hope and the National Trust. Contract for sale of a piece of land at Boxhill Dorking in the County of Surrey, 25 May 1921.

## The private landscape and Undeveloped Land Duty

Landscape historians Tom Williamson and Liz Bellamy have emphasised the longevity of the ‘private landscape’ in England. The landed elite’s aesthetic preferences, economic interests and leisure pursuits shaped the countryside until land sales in 1910–14 and 1918–22, whose scale brought comparison with the Henrician dissolution of monastic lands.<sup>107</sup> In 1909 the Liberal politician, C F G Masterman, depicted a decaying, deserted English countryside in *The Condition of England*.<sup>108</sup> The labourer’s persistent ‘Love of the Land’ was ill-served by vast tracts of sparsely cultivated private land; ‘The beauty of English landscape is the beauty of ‘landlords’ country’ – the open woods, the large grass fields and wide hedges, the ample demesnes, which signify a country given up less to industry than to opulence and dignified ease’.<sup>109</sup> George Bernstein, historian of Edwardian liberalism and liberal politics, has argued that land reform was a keystone of the government’s social policy after 1906.<sup>110</sup> The land taxation proposals in 1909 were intended to promote trade by ‘opening up land’ for building, especially in urban areas, and to fund welfare policy and naval rearmament.<sup>111</sup>

In the ‘People’s Budget’ David Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer, proposed that the capital value of ‘Unbuilt on land’ should be liable for an annual duty of one halfpenny in the pound, where no business, trade or industry occurred. Agricultural land, and all other land whose capital value was under £50 per acre, were exempted from Undeveloped Land Duty. Clause 25 allowed the ‘Exemption of land held for public or charitable purposes’, such as municipal amenities.<sup>112</sup> At the Committee stage, Conservative politicians demanded that the taxable status of privately owned ‘unbuilt land’, such as rifle clubs, horticultural societies and public school playing fields, needed clarification. For example, Earl Winterton was concerned that the increment value of 1000 acres at Hindhead, which was held in trust to prevent house construction, might be taxed.<sup>113</sup> Lloyd George explained that the halfpenny tax would not be applied, ‘On the site value of any woodlands, parks, gardens or open spaces reasonable access to which is enjoyed by the public or by the inhabitants of the locality’.<sup>114</sup> His broadening conception of local amenities depended for its enactment on a ‘new domesday’ land register, which mattered greatly to the Radicals.<sup>115</sup> Local valuation officers required owners to identify land where there was a public interest.<sup>116</sup> This process opened up discussion of local amenities and their relationship to the timeless authority of landowning prerogatives.

Short of nationalisation, private open spaces became assessable. Lord Francis Hope complained that the Undeveloped Land Duty was imposed to break up estates. From Edgecumbe, in Berkshire, he wrote to *The Observer* to justify the sale of land for building on the Deepdene estate, ‘of which Box Hill forms part’. He stated that the ‘claims now received for undeveloped land duty’ were for a large area, which ‘yields practically no income’ and had considerable building value.<sup>117</sup> One hundred years after the acquisition of Deepdene estate, Lord Francis Hope suggested that his family’s control was in doubt, which he regretted for two reasons, ‘not only as a matter of pride in its ownership, but for the almost

<sup>107</sup> Williamson & Bellamy 1987, 192.

<sup>108</sup> Masterman 1909, 150–2.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, 157, 150.

<sup>110</sup> Bernstein 1986, 58.

<sup>111</sup> Lloyd George 1909, 132.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, 51.

<sup>113</sup> HC Deb cc1030–31, 27 September 1909, Clause 25 Exemption of Land held for public or charitable purposes ([http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/1909/sep/27/clause-25-exemption-of-land-held-for\\_#S5CV0011PO\\_19090927\\_HOC\\_314](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/1909/sep/27/clause-25-exemption-of-land-held-for_#S5CV0011PO_19090927_HOC_314) (accessed 22 June 2017)).

<sup>114</sup> Lloyd George 1909, 61.

<sup>115</sup> Douglas 1974, 155.

<sup>116</sup> Short 1997, 343–7.

<sup>117</sup> *The Observer* 27 April 1913 letter, Lord Francis Hope.

boundless enjoyment of countless multitudes'.<sup>118</sup> His letter proposed a connection between the introduction of Undeveloped Land Duty and the sale of building leases on Box Hill. Like many landowners, he expected increased taxation in subsequent budgets. Scholars, such as Seligman, agreed that the land duty was an 'entering wedge'.<sup>119</sup> *The Observer* reminded readers that the whole hill was in private ownership and that public access 'depended on the generosity of the owning family'.<sup>120</sup> Unenclosed landscape seemed to invite financial penalties. But on 28 April 1913 Lloyd George confirmed that no notice had been given to assess any part of Box Hill, 'More than that, inasmuch as Box Hill is open to the public, and as long as it is open to the public, under the Act of 1909, not a single penny of Undeveloped Land Duty can be levied. It would be levied if the land was no longer available for public use'.<sup>121</sup> Two days later, Lloyd George restated, 'No Undeveloped Land Duty has been charged in respect of Box Hill, which is exempt from that duty on account of the public access now allowed thereto'.<sup>122</sup>

Lord Francis Hope continued to assert his property rights. In a second letter which was published in *The Times* on 1 May 1913 he acknowledged that no valuation of Box Hill had occurred, but other parts of the estate had been assessed. Would its use *in part* as a playground be sufficient for Box Hill to escape assessment in the years to come? If public access became a defining feature of the taxable status of Box Hill, where lay proprietorial control? If not to remain private property, might the CFPS determine its future prospects more than he? Lord Francis Hope concluded that the 'political emasculation of the House of Lords' menaced hereditary control.<sup>123</sup> The threat of taxable assessment appeared to outweigh the benefit of sustaining an elite landscape. Indeed, Masterman foresaw the inheritance of accessible nature for all amid the financial collapse of large estates.<sup>124</sup>

Lloyd George's contention that land was not forced into the market by Liberal fiscal policy, where it had value to the community, was exemplified by the case of Box Hill. In a letter to *The Times*, Joseph Morris, drew on his personal knowledge of this 'unspoilt corner of Surrey', and devotion to this 'exquisite tract of country', to examine the problem without criticising the government.<sup>125</sup> His article-length letter mobilised Matthew Arnold's Populace to resist the Philistine impulse. A 'ring of villas for plutocrats at Box Hill' would cause scenes of ruination already evident at Hindhead and Crowborough Beacon.<sup>126</sup> His topographical guide observed that walkers on the North Downs encountered too many private enclosures between Box Hill and Reigate. In an Arnoldian cultural appeal to the English mind, informed by place awareness and representative democracy, Joseph Morris raised the calamitous prospect of a suburbanised Box Hill. It would be more disastrous than the destruction of the British Museum or the National Gallery. If a recreation ground was left, it might have no greater value to the nature lover than Clapham Common or the grounds of Crystal Palace.<sup>127</sup>

In October 1913 Lloyd George's land campaign, to which few of his Cabinet colleagues subscribed, intended to improve the wages and housing conditions of agricultural labourers. More broadly, it sought to challenge, by reversing in order, the three tenets of landed society:

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Seligman 1913, 490.

<sup>120</sup> *The Observer* 27 April 1913.

<sup>121</sup> HC Deb 52 c879, 28 April 1913, Budget Resolutions: Tea Duty ([http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1913/apr/28/budget-resolutions-tea-duty#S5CV0052PO\\_19130428\\_HOC\\_358](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1913/apr/28/budget-resolutions-tea-duty#S5CV0052PO_19130428_HOC_358) (accessed 16 June 2017)).

<sup>122</sup> HC Deb 52 c1177, 30 April 1913, Deepdene Estate ([http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1913/apr/30/deepdene=estate#S5CV0052PO\\_19130430\\_HOC\\_184](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1913/apr/30/deepdene=estate#S5CV0052PO_19130430_HOC_184) (accessed 16 June 1917)).

<sup>123</sup> *The Times* 1 May 1913, letter, Lord Francis P Clinton Hope, dated 30 April 1913.

<sup>124</sup> Masterman 1909, 151, 159, 213.

<sup>125</sup> *The Times* 29 April 1913, letter, J Morris, The Menace to Box Hill.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*; Although Philistines had converted the wilderness into a 'fruitful garden' with energy, self reliance and capital, the free-born Englishman also had the propensity to do as he liked, Arnold 1882, 37, 71.

<sup>127</sup> Morris 1920, 47.

power, amenity and the public interest.<sup>128</sup> Despite much hesitancy on whether progressive opinion would support the land campaign, ‘The Use of the Land in the public interest’ was a significant feature of the fiscal crisis.<sup>129</sup> Amid the many debated instances of exemption from Undeveloped Land Duty, the fragility of public access to Box Hill was revealed. Its perpetual enjoyment for recreational purposes might depend more on voluntary social action than state authority, involve a beneficent gift at market value rather than Liberal taxation policies, and necessitate locally improvised management rather than national oversight and policy.

### **Purchasing Box Hill**

Nearly twenty years after the sale of the estate was first proposed by Lord Francis Hope, noticeboards on the slopes of Box Hill advertised building leases. Reluctant to sell their freehold interest, landowners might grant a long lease to a contractor to build houses and thereby retain some control, such as shooting rights. Metropolitan and local opinion were forced to contemplate buildings astride Meredith’s ‘long green roller of the down’.<sup>130</sup> Perhaps, a country house, sanatorium, private boarding house or residential hotel might be built on the northerly ascent to the crest. *The Observer* summarised, ‘That this long gentle slope is an inviolable part of the Box Hill of common knowledge is indisputable’.<sup>131</sup> On 17 June 1913 Sir Robert Hunter wrote to Lord Farrer, on Reform Club stationery, with the information that 233 acres on both sides of the motor road at Box Hill were for sale for £17,000. If the capital value of the woodland was retained by the estate, the land could be acquired for £15,000.<sup>132</sup> This ‘L’ shaped acreage comprised the ridge from above Burford Bridge to Upper Box Hill Farm and Oak Wood, including the northerly ascent along the footpath accessed from the London Road, the valley with the Zig Zag road, the clearing often referred to as Donkey Green and the derelict military fort.<sup>133</sup>

Robert Hunter was Honorary Solicitor and Vice President of the Commons Preservation Society in the years 1868–82. Founded in 1865, and characterised by Lord Eversley as the ‘People’s Watch Dog’, it became the Commons and Footpaths Preservation Society in 1898. The CFPS was not a corporate legal entity and could not acquire land. Hunter continued to undertake a substantial voluntary case work for the CFPS after he became Solicitor to the Post Office in 1882. He was deeply ‘engaged in all the great Commons cases’, which included legal proceedings to oppose enclosure at Wimbledon, Epping Forest, Dartford Heath and Banstead.<sup>134</sup> Hunter’s knowledge of commoners’ rights through the centuries was critical to these successful campaigns.<sup>135</sup> He founded the National Trust in 1895, with Octavia Hill and Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley, and chaired its Executive Committee. John Gaze identified its early focus, ‘The open space was, and largely still is, the principal target for preservation by the Trust. It meant any area of unenclosed land to which people could freely resort’.<sup>136</sup> For Robin Fedden, also an historian of the National Trust, the trinity of founders possessed ‘idealism, common sense, vision and determination’.<sup>137</sup>

<sup>128</sup> Wilson 1970, 69, C P Scott private conversation with Lloyd George, 16 January 1913; Bernstein 1986, 144.

<sup>129</sup> Wilson 1970, 69–70.

<sup>130</sup> NT: BHMC newspaper cuttings, 1, f 32, *Dorking Advertiser* 15 November 1913 Box Hill Saved; Trevelyan 1919, ‘The Thrush in February’, 327; On building leases see University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections research guidance (<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/researchguidance/deedinddepth/leasehold/building.aspx> (accessed 25 March 2018)).

<sup>131</sup> *The Observer*, 27 April 1913, The Danger to Box Hill. Letter from the Owner.

<sup>132</sup> SHC: 2572/36/1 Farrer mss., Sir Robert Hunter to Lord Farrer, 17 June 1913.

<sup>133</sup> NT: BHMC newspaper cuttings, 1, f 32, *Dorking Advertiser*, 15 November 1913, Box Hill Saved.

<sup>134</sup> Eversley 1910, 92, 141.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, 329.

<sup>136</sup> Gaze 1988, 63.

<sup>137</sup> Fedden 1974, 20.



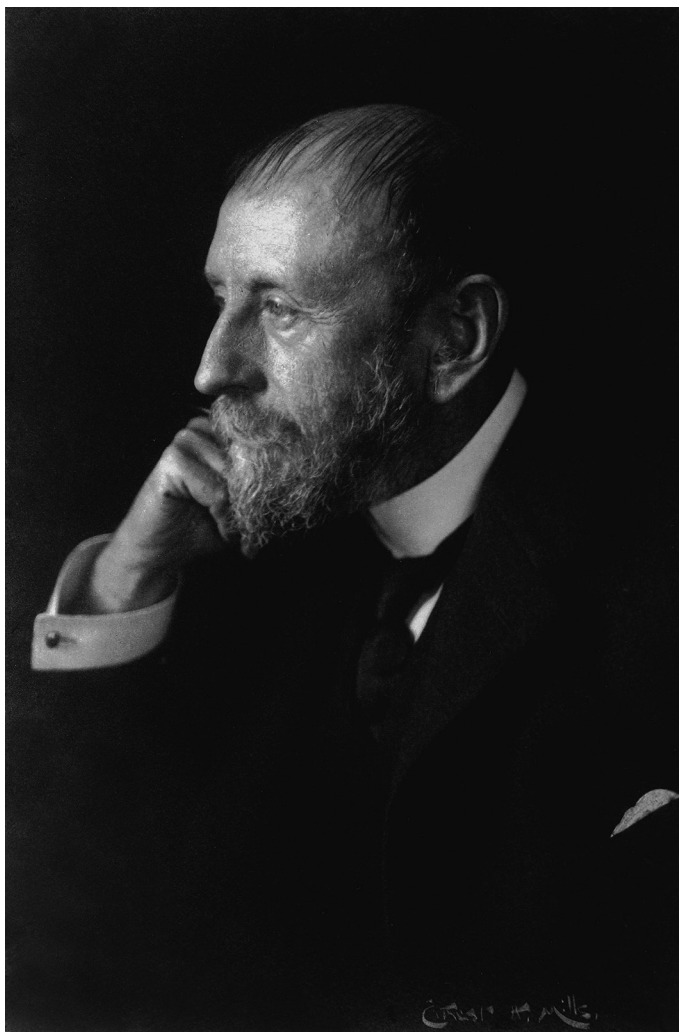


Fig 3 Sir Robert Hunter (photograph courtesy of Haslemere Educational Museum; acc no EPP-7-690)

Hunter lived at Haslemere and had spent school holidays near Box Hill.<sup>138</sup> He initiated the purchase of 750 acres of common land in the parishes of Thursley and Witley to curb the disfigurement of heathland on Hindhead Common by gravel digging.<sup>139</sup> He could not be on the spot at Box Hill and wondered who Leopold Salomons, of Norbury Park, might be. Salomons was prepared to fund the entire sale price, but did not wish his interest to become public knowledge until the transaction was complete. Hunter wanted to know whether the property would be transferred to a public body on its purchase. Two letters to Lord Farrer from Lawrence Chubb, Secretary of the CFPS, revealed Hunter's search for Salomons' *bona fides*. They included Chubb's acknowledgement on 25 June 1913, 'I am very much obliged to you for your kind assurance in regard to Mr Salomon's [*sic*] position respecting Box Hill'.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>138</sup> Gaze 1988, 40.

<sup>139</sup> Eversley 1910, 236–7.

<sup>140</sup> SHC: 2572/36/3 Farrer mss. Lawrence Chubb to Lord Farrer, 25 June 1913.

In a short message Sir Robert Hunter wrote on 15 July 1913, 'Salomon [*sic*] wants me to go on Box Hill with him on Thursday. I think I shall go'.<sup>141</sup>

Leopold Salomons, financier and countryman, had Liberal sympathies. He was among the largest contributors to Liberal election expenses in Surrey known to Lord Farrer. For example, he subscribed £200 to the Epsom constituency organisation in 1914.<sup>142</sup> A fleeting reference to the National Trust in 1913 suggested that he hoped that the Liberal elder statesman, Lord Bryce, would become its next chairman.<sup>143</sup> Long before, in 1889, his purchase of a portrait of John Bright at Christie's, an advocate of peace, financial reform and free trade, and its presentation to The National Portrait Gallery, was an early example of Salomons' philanthropy.<sup>144</sup> In 1941 the Board of Management of Leatherhead Cottage Hospital placed a wall tablet in the children's ward of the new hospital in appreciation of their generous benefactors, Mr and Mrs Salomons. Under her will, a further gift of £7273 in December 1940 brought their total donations to the hospital to over £10,000.

Salomons' fortune originated in the late-Victorian growth of personal accident insurance as industrial employees began to secure the right to compensation for workplace injury.<sup>145</sup> His pioneering Employers' Liability Assurance Corporation pre-dated the statutory intervention of 1880 and its board comprised numerous representatives from manufacturing companies. Lionel Earle's memoir mentioned Salomons as the 'leading spirit' of the Trustees and Executors Corporation. He recalled a lunch meeting when a Founder Share of £1 was acquired for more than £10,000.<sup>146</sup> After the acquisition of Norbury Park, Salomons was appointed Justice of the Peace on the Dorking Bench. His commitment to the countryside found expression in the presidency of the Guildford Agricultural Association in 1906 and subscription to the encyclopaedic *British Hunts and Huntsmen*, which was published in 1909.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, a select list of principal Shire horse stud owners published in 1907 included Leopold Salomons.<sup>148</sup> Huge auction prices for Shire mares and stallions were stimulated by overseas purchasers. In 1901 Leopold Salomons paid the record sum of 1550 guineas for the stallion Hendre Champion. In the compendium *The Shire Horse in Peace and War*, J Albert Frost concluded, 'It used to be said that the shires did not flourish south of London, but Mr Leopold Salomons, Norbury Park, Dorking, has helped to prove otherwise'.<sup>149</sup> At the Shire Horse Society Annual Show in 1914, Norbury Coronation was sold for 850 guineas and Norbury George for 600 guineas. That year he won the livestock prize at the Shrewsbury Show in the class 'Shire Mares foaled before 1914'.<sup>150</sup> Consequently, Salomons could reassure Lord Farrer that one of Box Hill's most important features would be protected, 'Of course I will not allow the donkeys to be disturbed'. At Norbury Park a donkey aged 43 years, which he was given 23 years before, would be available for Lord Farrer's inspection on his next visit.<sup>151</sup>

The annual meeting of the National Trust in July 1913 received news that the situation at Box Hill had been under observation for some time. Its purchase for the nation by an unnamed gentleman would obviate the necessity for a subscription list. It was unclear

<sup>141</sup> SHC: 1260/7 Hunter mss, Robert Hunter note, 15 July 1913.

<sup>142</sup> SHC: 2572/1/65, Farrer mss. W M Crook, Secretary of the Home Counties Liberal Federation, to Lord Farrer, 26 January 1914.

<sup>143</sup> SHC: 2572/1/65 Farrer mss, Leopold Salomons to Lord Farrer, 4 March 1914; 2572/1/64 Farrer mss, Lord Eversley to Lord Farrer, 28 November [1914].

<sup>144</sup> Cust 1902, 2, 202.

<sup>145</sup> Raynes 1948, 302–3.

<sup>146</sup> Earle 1935, 30.

<sup>147</sup> Salomons subscribed to the second volume of *British Hunts and Huntsmen*, which focused on south-east England.

<sup>148</sup> Wallace 1907, 423.

<sup>149</sup> Frost 1915, 114.

<sup>150</sup> *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society* 1914, 75, 111.

<sup>151</sup> SHC: 2572/1/64, Leopold Salomons to Lord Farrer, 1 December 1913.

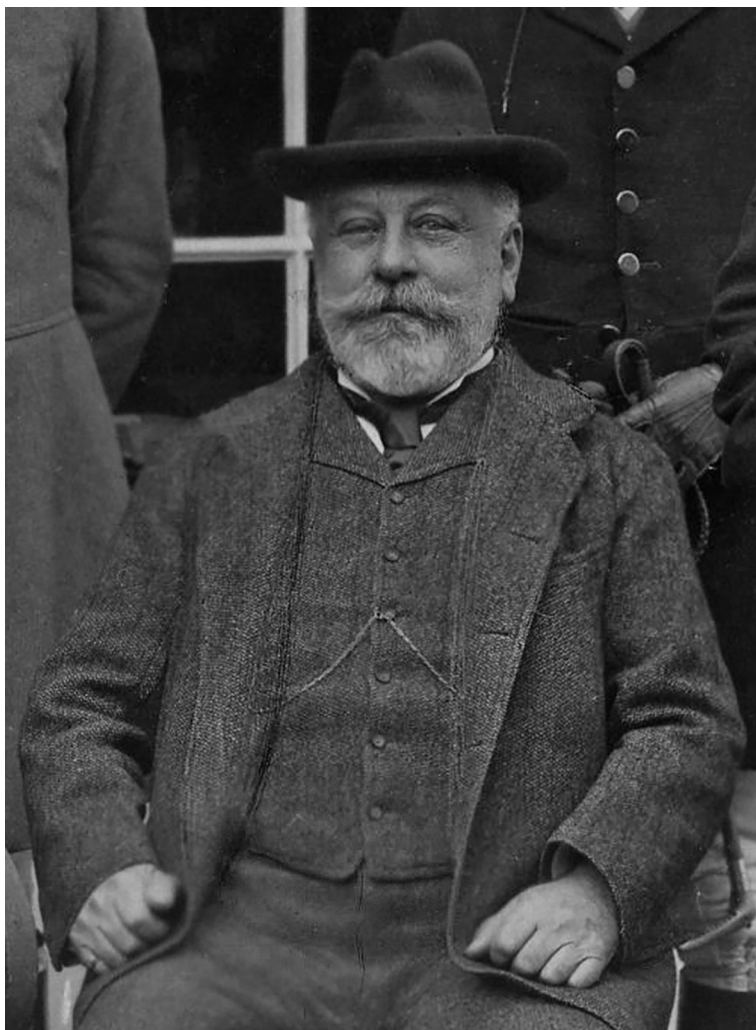


Fig 4 Leopold Salomons, April 1914 (extract from SHC: 2572/143/2). © Emma Corke. Reproduced by permission of Emma Corke and Surrey History Centre.

whether the property would be given to the National Trust.<sup>152</sup> Lawrence Chubb undertook detailed preparation for the draft conveyance, often by walking the ground, and at site meetings with the land agents for Lord Francis Hope, Humbert and Flint of Lincolns Inn and Reigate. Chubb seemed to embody the public interest until the respective roles of the purchaser and the National Trust were clarified. Only then would the CFPS ‘stand aside’.<sup>153</sup> He reported progress to Sir Robert Hunter and to Lord Farrer, who visited Salomons at Norbury Park. Meetings were also held at the Grosvenor Hotel, where Salomons stayed to fulfil business commitments in London. These principled advocates of public access to Box Hill exemplified local voluntary social action. They acted in the hope that the National

<sup>152</sup> SHC: 1260/7 Hunter mss. newspaper cuttings *The Standard* 11 July 1913, Box Hill Saved & *Manchester Guardian* 11 July 1913.

<sup>153</sup> SHC: 2572/36/3 Farrer mss. Lawrence Chubb to Lord Farrer, 23 June 1913.

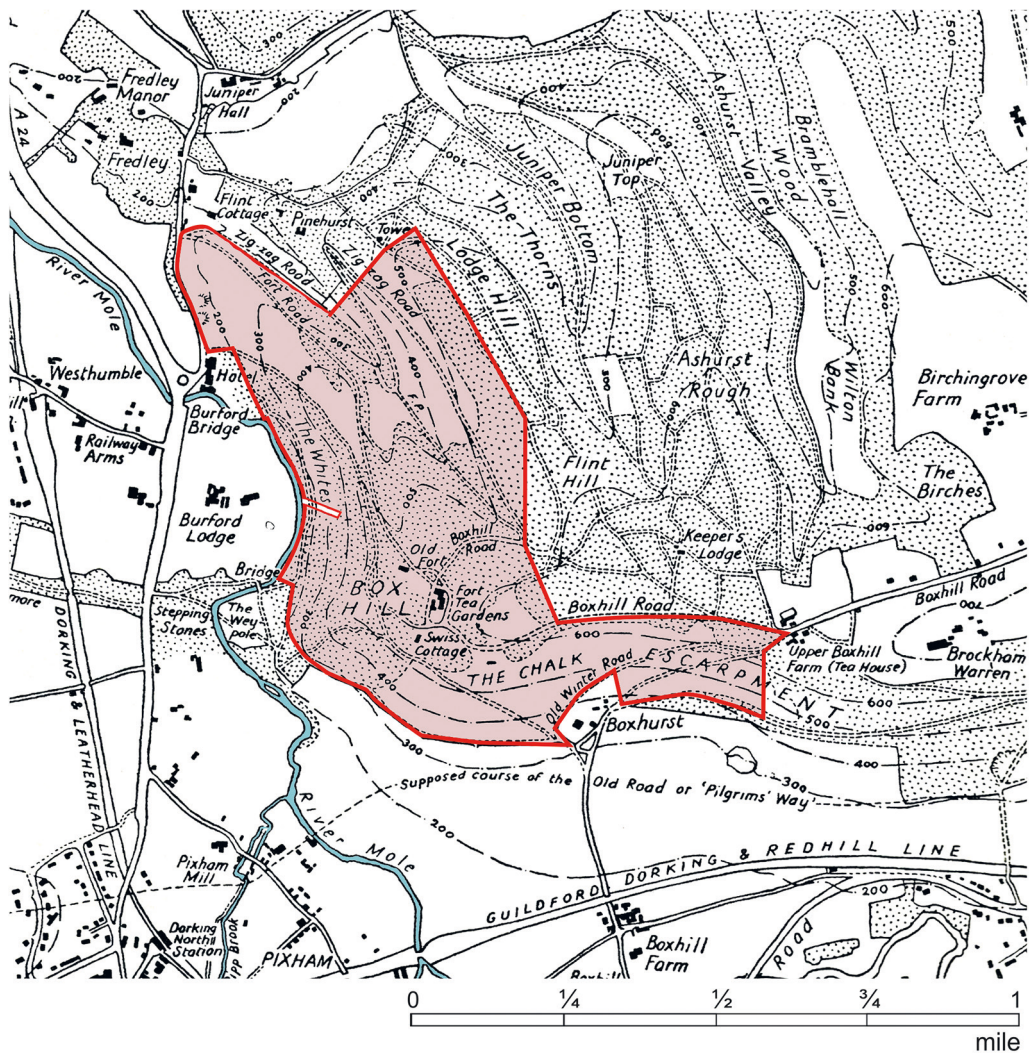


Fig 5 Extract from a map of the Box Hill area at a scale of 4 inches to 1 mile based on an Ordnance Survey map (undated, but published between 1938 and 1950). The 230 acres of land purchased by Leopold Salomons and later given by him to the National Trust is outlined in red and shaded in pink.

Trust, which had not more than 700 members, would agree to own the land.<sup>154</sup> Negotiations with the vendor included the siting of boundary markers, the protection of standing timber near the ridge and efforts to clarify the ownership of the Zig Zag road. On 25 September 1913 Chubb reported to Sir Robert Hunter, 'The long zig-zag road up and around the Hill is in part a private road maintained by the Estate. I declined to assent to a proposal put forward by Mr Flint yesterday that the Estate should retain a right to haul timber over it'.<sup>155</sup> By late September 1913 the land to be purchased was staked out and boundary stones, or posts, were to be positioned within six months of purchase. However, Salomons did not wish the area to be enclosed and argued that the remainder of Box Hill should not be fenced.

<sup>154</sup> Swenson 2010 (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/95571> (accessed 10 June 2017)); On voluntary social action see Prochaska 1988, 7, 88–9.

<sup>155</sup> SHC: 1260/6, Hunter mss. Lawrence Chubb to Robert Hunter, 25 September 1913.

The draft conveyance for sale and purchase of part of Boxhill was dated 23 October 1913. Annotations in red and green revealed protracted legal complexity, which involved solicitors for five incumbrancers of the life tenants' interest in the Hope Settled Estates, including the Phoenix Assurance Company and Coutts and Co, the beneficial owner, the testator's trustees and the purchaser. The expectation that the property's legal identity might have an earlier title than H T Hope's Will drew the rejoinder, 'There can be no question as to the land comprised in this agreement being part of the Hope Settled estate'.<sup>156</sup> The price for 230 acres in the parishes of Mickleham and Dorking was £16,000, excepting the tenancies of Swiss Cottage, Boxhill Fort, Boxhill Farm and the reservoir let to Sir Trevor Lawrence of Burford Lodge. The Contract for Sale stated that the remaining estate land atop Box Hill would not be built upon during the vendor's life interest. Nor would any 'timber or timberlike trees or bushes or shrubs' be cut on estate land within 120 feet of the main road. Salomons' solicitor added, 'nor within the same area alter or destroy the natural beauty of the said land'.<sup>157</sup> Earlier, an attempt was made to identify a tree line frontage, which could not be precisely described. The purchaser strove to retain the integrity of the wooded hill by negotiating restrictions on timber felling on the 'remainder of Box Hill'.<sup>158</sup>

Salomons understood Box Hill to be a larger entity than the 230 acres, even if public access to remaining estate land was subsequently lost. This agreement was presaged by a smaller example of private action for public benefit. In 1902 Leopold Salomons negotiated with his neighbour Samuel Watson of Vale Lodge, his solicitor in 1913 with whom he had founded the Employer's Liability Assurance Corporation, to maintain an unbuilt upon 300 foot corridor either side of the high road between Leatherhead and Mickleham. Across their property boundaries, the signatories agreed that the road's open aspect should be retained. No buildings, except lodges with gates, nor hedges and fences higher than five feet, would be constructed for twenty years.<sup>159</sup> In 1913 the draft conveyance for the 230 acres stated that the land would be purchased 'for the use of the Public for ever'. Watson, the purchaser's solicitor, clarified, 'as a place of Public resort and recreation'.<sup>160</sup> The Conveyance, dated 6 March 1914, included the phrase 'open space for the recreation of the public', which was added in green annotation by Horne and Birkett, Honorary Solicitors for the National Trust, with whom Hunter had his first partnership.<sup>161</sup> The Conveyance revealed the intended role of the National Trust, which would enter into a management agreement on completion of the purchase.<sup>162</sup> Salomons' generous private initiative to acquire the land at market value was a far more expensive undertaking than land acquisitions to extend the National Trust's Box Hill estate in the 1920s. Critically, the National Trust Act, 1907, provided the statutory instrument of inalienable land. It empowered the organisation to buy or receive gifts of land of natural beauty, and places of historic interest, in perpetuity.<sup>163</sup>

There were few alternative means of saving Box Hill for the nation, least of all by direct state intervention. Earlier in 1913, D E Hutchins proposed that a State forest, comparable to Compiègne near Paris and Soignes near Brussels, would retain intact the natural beauty

<sup>156</sup> UN: Ne 6D 13/2/8/2 Draft contract for Sale and Purchase of part of Boxhill near Dorking, Surrey, dated 23 October 1913. Marginal notes and alterations in red on behalf of the purchaser are dated 9 October 1913, and signed, Watson Sons.

<sup>157</sup> UN: Ne 6D 13/2/8/2 Draft contract for Sale and Purchase of part of Boxhill near Dorking, Surrey, dated 23 October 1913.

<sup>158</sup> UN: Ne 6D 13/2/8/1 Contract for sale and purchase of part of Boxhill, near Dorking, Surrey, Lord Francis Hope and Leopold Salomons, 23 October 1913.

<sup>159</sup> SHC: 2116/1/6 Deed of Covenant, Leopold Salomons to Samuel Watson, 1 May 1902.

<sup>160</sup> UN: Ne 6D 13/2/8/1 Contract for sale and purchase of part of Boxhill, near Dorking, Surrey, Lord Francis Hope and Leopold Salomons, 23 October 1913.

<sup>161</sup> UN: Ne 6D 13/2/8/1 Contract for sale and purchase of part of Boxhill, near Dorking, Surrey, Lord Francis Hope and Leopold Salomons, 23 October 1913.

<sup>162</sup> UN: Ne 6D 13/2/9/1 Copy Conveyance of Boxhill in the County of Surrey, 6 March 1914.

<sup>163</sup> Fedden 1974, 169–70; Wright, 2009, 46–7.

of Box Hill.<sup>164</sup> Home after 23 years of Imperial administration, including the posts of Chief Conservator of Forests in Cape Town and Nairobi, Hutchins admired 'life and labour in German forests' and was devoted to the everlasting economic and social benefits of well-managed national woodland.<sup>165</sup> But in England afforestation plans to help revive the rural economy depended on the fledgling Development Fund under emerging fiscal powers in the 'People's Budget'. The Development Commission's scientific and co-operative remit for investment in national resource priorities did not embrace the amenity value of unprotected woodland. Box Hill had neither the scale nor the legacy and organisation of high value timber harvesting to become a state afforestation project near London. More speculatively, after news spread of land sales on Box Hill, Edward Cope of Croydon posed the wider question, 'How are we to keep them for the people?'<sup>166</sup> He argued that a political party should frame legislation to enable a new public authority to secure open spaces.

Instead, voluntary social action, involving substantial financial outlay, knowledge of open space preservation initiatives, local understanding of landscapes of recreational value and the involvement of the nascent National Trust, provided just sufficient conditions for the Conveyance to be signed on 6 March 1914. Several days before, Salomons feared that the vendor's position had strengthened. He also needed reassurance that the National Trust was committed to the scheme.<sup>167</sup> Critically, the membership of the Box Hill Management Committee needed confirmation on the day that the Conveyance was signed. In addition to the donor, Salomons' list of members comprised Sir Benjamin Brodie Bt, the Rt Hon Lord Farrer, A C Powell Esq, H H Gordon Clark Esq, F de la Garde Grissell Esq, and A W Aston Esq. Salomons chaired the BHMC, after Lord Farrer declined the role, despite the reassurance that quarterly meetings would be sufficient and 'there will be little to do'.<sup>168</sup> All Committee members were Justices of the Peace in Surrey and therefore landed proprietors with principal seats of residence in the locality. Financial, local government and land management expertise was embodied in the membership, which 'represented' nearby town and country. Brodie, Aston and Gordon Clark were High Sheriffs of Surrey in the years 1912, 1917 and 1920 respectively.<sup>169</sup> Salomons, Farrer and Aston were Liberals, whereas Gordon Clark later held regional office in the Conservative Association.

Alfred Withall Aston of Woodcote Grove stepped forward to represent Epsom on the BHMC, having been member and Chairman (1901) of the Urban District Council and a parliamentary candidate in 1905. He was a member of the Stock Exchange for 55 years and became one of the trustees for Leopold Salomons' residuary fund. Frank de la Garde Grissell of The Priory, Mickleham, whose father was a past owner of Norbury Park, also brought experience of local government as a Parish Councillor in Mickleham and member of Dorking Rural District Council for over 25 years. His 'valuable service' to Mickleham was appreciatively recorded at the Parish Council meeting on 15 January 1924, especially in helping to fund the village school.<sup>170</sup> Lord Farrer later suggested that local government was critical to people's happiness, which he illustrated by Grissell's 'modest, unassuming and devoted' council work.<sup>171</sup> At Mickleham Hall, Henry Herbert Gordon Clark took delight in ornithology and wrote to the journal *British Birds* on several occasions. One letter concerned the mating ritual of a hedge sparrow in Dorking in 1930.<sup>172</sup> Another wondered

<sup>164</sup> *The Times* 30 April 1913, letter, D E Hutchins, The menace to Box Hill. Plan for a state forest, dated 28 April 1913.

<sup>165</sup> Gifford 1900, 381–93.

<sup>166</sup> *The Observer* 4 May 1913, letter, E A Cope, The Lesson of Box Hill, dated 29 April 1913.

<sup>167</sup> SHC: 2572/1/65 Farrer mss, Leopold Salomons to Lord Farrer, 4 March 1914.

<sup>168</sup> SHC: 2572/1/65 Farrer mss, Leopold Salomons to Lord Farrer, 5 March 1914; For a photograph of the members of BHMC at the first meeting see Grievs 2017, 172.

<sup>169</sup> SHC: CC 69/1 The Book of the High Sheriffs of Surrey, facsimile copy.

<sup>170</sup> SHC: 2442/2 Mickleham Parish Council minute book, 15 January 1924.

<sup>171</sup> NT: BHMC newspaper cuttings, 1, f 92, *Dorking Advertiser* 17 November 1923 East and West Road. Progress of the Widening Scheme.

<sup>172</sup> *British Birds* 24, 12, 1 May 1930, letter, H H Gordon Clark, 342.

whether a cuckoo with a distinctive call might have visited the Vale of Mickleham for twelve successive years from 1917, but had not been heard in 1930.<sup>173</sup> He was a subscriber to Seebohm's *Coloured figures of the eggs of British Birds*, which was published in 1896.<sup>174</sup> Arthur Crofts Powell of the stained glass manufacturer, James Powell and Sons (Whitefriars glass), had lived near the western end of the Zig Zag road and been Chairman of the Dorking Bench of Magistrates. Sir Benjamin Brodie's Brockham Warren estate occupied the north eastern slopes of Box Hill. The Committee first met on 28 March 1914 at the Burford Bridge Hotel.<sup>175</sup> In quarterly meetings on Saturday afternoons the custodian and workforce was directed, without operational reference to the National Trust's head office. Where legal issues arose, such as the responsibility for the repair of the Zig Zag road when damaged by timber haulage in wartime, the Secretary of the National Trust attended the meeting, but rarely so. John Gaze described the Committee as 'virtually independent'.<sup>176</sup> Its largely autonomous action was rooted in knowledge of local government, woodland management, property law and a disposition to build citizenship in the countryside.

Shortly before his death, Sir Robert Hunter knew that the purchase of Box Hill had been agreed.<sup>177</sup> Salomons' remarkable gift to the nation won widespread admiration. Mickleham Parish Council passed a resolution at a special meeting on 14 November 1913, which expressed 'deep gratitude for the public-spirited action of Mr Leopold Salomons in purchasing, and presenting to the public, Box Hill'.<sup>178</sup> Lord Farrer confirmed that party politics played no part in the saving of Box Hill. But there was a political effect from which he derived much satisfaction, 'nothing tended to a better understanding among all classes than a common pride in the land in which they lived (hear, hear)'.<sup>179</sup> A W Chapman, a sympathetic County Councillor wrote, 'It is a splendid thing to have achieved'.<sup>180</sup> Leopold Salomons communicated through the Court Circular in *The Times* to thank readers for their appreciative letters and telegrams. He regretted that prompt replies were quite impossible.<sup>181</sup> Sadly, this epistolary collection appears not to have survived. Ever watchful and deeply committed to the defence of threatened Surrey Hills, *The Spectator*, edited by St Loe Strachey of Newlands Corner, summarised, 'This is one of the most munificent donations in the history of the dedication of open spaces'.<sup>182</sup>

### **'It is to remain a perfectly unspoiled site of priceless beauty'**

In June 1914 the National Trust announced that Box Hill was open to the public and dedicated to its use.<sup>183</sup> Salomons insisted on public access to all parts of the preserved land, which should remain in its natural state. Shortly before the Conveyance was signed, his vision for Box Hill was quoted in *The Observer*, 'I should like to emphasise the fact that nothing whatever will be allowed to impair its natural beauty and rural simplicity. There will be no gardening, no flower-beds or ornamental shrubberies, no kiosks, no new buildings – nothing,

<sup>173</sup> *British Birds* 24, 1 August 1930, letter H H Gordon Clark, 88.

<sup>174</sup> Seebohm 1896. H.H.Gordon Clark was heavily involved in the Leith Hill Music Festival, which was founded by Lady Farrer and Margaret Vaughan Williams in 1904.

<sup>175</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 1, f 1–2, 28 March 1914.

<sup>176</sup> Gaze 1988, 52.

<sup>177</sup> *The Spectator* 15 November 1913 Sir Robert Hunter and Box Hill, The Spectator Archive (<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/15th-november-1913/27/sir-robert-hunter-and-box-hill> (accessed 10 March 2017)); *The Observer* 9 November 1913, letter Lawrence Chubb; Gaze 1988, 41.

<sup>178</sup> SHC: 2442/2 Mickleham Parish Council Minute Book, 14 November 1913.

<sup>179</sup> NT: BHMC newspaper cuttings, 1, f 32, *Dorking Advertiser* 15 November 1913, Box Hill Saved.

<sup>180</sup> SHC: 2572/1/64 Farrer mss. A W Chapman to Lord Farrer, 8 November 1913.

<sup>181</sup> *The Times* 20 November 1913.

<sup>182</sup> *The Spectator* 15 November 1913, Sir Robert Hunter and Box Hill, The Spectator Archive (<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/15th-november-1913/27/sir-robert-hunter-and-box-hill> (accessed 10 March 1917)); Tatham 2014, 12.

<sup>183</sup> *The Times* 4 June 1914, Gift to the Nation.

in fact, that can interfere in the slightest degree with its character. Box Hill will remain what it has always been a perfectly unspoiled bit of woodland of great beauty'.<sup>184</sup> In *The Surrey Hills*, which was largely written before the outbreak of war, F E Green, socialist, trade unionist and Newdigate farmer, approvingly noted Salomons' intention with some reordered phrases, 'There are to be no new buildings, no kiosks, no ornamental shrubberies. It is to remain a perfectly unspoiled site of priceless beauty'.<sup>185</sup> As if to evidence this commitment, he encountered a litter collector on Box Hill, who avoided 'an official and suburban touch' because he did not wear a buttoned uniform. His workplace was not a municipal park, but an open space of wild charm, with woodland as well as vistas across undulating scenery. Unlike parks and urban commons under local authority control, Salomons did not intend to embellish or improve Box Hill.

In her richly detailed survey of parks in the County of London, Alicia Cecil complained that 'improved' open spaces of straight narrow paths, grass enclosures and iron railings were unduly uniform and formal expressions of beauty.<sup>186</sup> Beautiful illustrations by Lady Violet Manners depicted garden scenes in urban open spaces, but Alicia Cecil's misgivings on Clapham Common were unmistakable, 'There is nothing wild about the Common, and the number of paths which intersect it are edged by high iron railings to prevent the entire wearing away of the grass'.<sup>187</sup> Walter Besant admired the protection of 'beautifully kept trees and grass', but for Alicia Cecil the Common was literally 'down-trodden'.<sup>188</sup> From the Plough Inn, on this largest open space in south London, omnibuses journeyed through Epsom and Ashted to Mickleham and Burford Bridge. She was reassured that bracken and gorse survived on Hampstead Heath. However, in 1899 the new periodical, *The Home Counties Magazine* warned that the 'laying out' of Hampstead Heath, where 'Plants that should grow on the heath had been replaced by ones that should not', should not be repeated at Tooting Common, which remained a wild and picturesque open space.<sup>189</sup> Although chimney pots were ubiquitous and soot covered nature, May, Gorse and Horse Chestnut trees provided a 'sense of genuine country'.<sup>190</sup> No paths nor iron railings intruded on the scene, except to protect an old Elm tree. In London's open spaces the survival of trees from previous centuries proclaimed an immemorial scene, which were often signified by railings.

But public health advocates of freely accessible wooded open spaces advised, 'the less elaborate the treatment the better; as the public love areas over which they wander at will, and are too often hindered in their games and exercise by enclosures, railings and notices'.<sup>191</sup> Henry's published lectures at the Royal Society of Arts in 1917 recognised the 'extreme importance of afforestation' in wartime, but he still insisted upon publicly accessible woodlands.<sup>192</sup> Box Hill was enlisted to advance the healthy properties of forest scenery. Similarly, Salomons insisted that the 'wild charm' of the woodlands should be open to the public every day. In a general pocket guide to wayside and woodland trees, Edward Step acknowledged, without enthusiasm, the rise of the scientific forester and their timber factories to underline the beauty of natural forests. He hoped that some woods and wastes would survive for the 'recreation of simple folk'.<sup>193</sup> Salomons summarised, 'For Box Hill, in its own beauty and in its associations with the present and the past, stands almost alone among the hills and downs of the South Country'.<sup>194</sup> Despite the redundant mobilisation centre, it had

<sup>184</sup> *The Observer* 1 March 1914.

<sup>185</sup> Green 1915, 97.

<sup>186</sup> Cecil 1907, 173.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>188</sup> Besant 1912, 230; Cecil 1907, 206.

<sup>189</sup> *The Home Counties Magazine* 1899, 1, 13–14.

<sup>190</sup> Cecil 1907, 4.

<sup>191</sup> Henry 1919, 40.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 49, Preface, v.

<sup>193</sup> Step [nd], 9.

<sup>194</sup> *The Observer* 1 March 1914.



the appearance of a centuries-old natural playground and the garden metaphor of walled enclosures did not inform his purchase. Instead, Salomons' notion of the 'public's hill' in its natural state was amplified in the newspaper reports of his generous deed in 1913.<sup>195</sup> It also resonated with Lord Meath's late-Victorian vision of a 'Greater London' beyond the metropolitan open spaces, 'There are still vast tracts of land round London, with lammas or common rights, and beautiful hill-tops and view-points, which ought to be preserved as open spaces'.<sup>196</sup>

In contrast, municipal open spaces were mostly gated, enclosed, laid out, by-law regulated and superintended for public enjoyment. Local authorities were empowered by the Open Spaces Act 1906 to purchase or lease land, where parks and pleasure grounds could be designed or acquired.<sup>197</sup> By 1909 open spaces around Dorking, with some public access, included The Nower, Ranmore Common, Box Hill, Betchworth Park and, under Council control, the Dene. That year the Dorking Chamber of Commerce vigorously lobbied the Urban District Council, by letter and deputation, for a town recreation ground.<sup>198</sup> In 1911 the revised Meadowbank scheme forsook the expensive bandstand, shelters and boat house. Nonetheless, a fenced enclosure with a gated main entrance to the lake and playground would comprise a precisely designed embellishment of nature. Intersecting paths around the mill pond would be bordered by willow trees and flowering shrubs. A rustic building over the brook would need sufficient clearance for boats to pass underneath. A bowling green, lavatories, drinking fountain and seats would necessitate a caretaker's building and roadway access for which additional land was purchased.<sup>199</sup> This scheme was costed at £1200, funded by a loan at 3¾%, and required an additional annual rate of ½d in the £. A proposal first suggested in May 1909 still awaited agreement by the Council's Special Committee in June 1911.<sup>200</sup> In contrast, lavatories and drinking fountains took many years to be erected at Box Hill, where the only rustic structures in its wild country were seats in carefully considered locations.

### Salomons' legacy

Leopold Salomons not only purchased 230 acres in 1914, but also endowed Box Hill's care and maintenance. Initially, the BHMC had an income of £50 per annum from a fund of £2800 under the terms of his will.<sup>201</sup> In 1917 the Leopold Salomons residuary estate provided a bequest of £1000 to the Committee.<sup>202</sup> A further gift of £4000 was made in 1922.<sup>203</sup> An additional sum of £2820 was negotiated by A W Aston in 1924, to provide an annual income of £100.<sup>204</sup> Mrs Salomons and the trustees, Viscount Cave and Sir Charles Stuart, were sent appreciative letters on each occasion. These bequests were widely reported in national and local newspapers and brought some financial stability to the Committee's work to preserve the hill, while enhancing public access.<sup>205</sup> In appreciation of her deep interest in the hill, Mrs Salomons was asked to accept a Box wood walking stick in 1919.<sup>206</sup>

<sup>195</sup> *The Observer* 27 April 1913, A Meredith Memorial; *The Spectator* 26 April 1913.

<sup>196</sup> Meath 1906, 132.

<sup>197</sup> The Open Spaces Society 1999; Lauder 1907, 170–1; NCSS 1951, 87.

<sup>198</sup> SHC: 1358/1/16 Dorking Urban District Council Minute Book, f. 312, 11 May 1909.

<sup>199</sup> SHC: 1358/1/16 Dorking Urban District Council Minute Book, Report for laying out the Proposed Recreation Ground for the Dorking Urban Council, f. 312–14, dated December 1910.

<sup>200</sup> SHC: 1358/1/17 Dorking Urban District Council Minute Book f. 170, 4 July 1910; f. 428, 17 July 1911.

<sup>201</sup> *Country Life* 1 December 1923, History of the Box Hill movement, 743–4.

<sup>202</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 1, f. 36, 29 December 1917.

<sup>203</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 1, f. 99, 7 January 1922.

<sup>204</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 1, f. 131, 5 January 1924 & 1, ff. 104–5, 8 April 1922.

<sup>205</sup> NT: BHMC newspaper cuttings, 1, f. 86 *Morning Post* 23 November 1923, & f. 88 *Morning Post* 24 November 1923 & f. 89, *Surrey Times* 24 November 1923.

<sup>206</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 1, f. 54, 12 July 1919.

Her death on 27 November 1932 was recorded in the BHMC minutes.<sup>207</sup> A gift of £1000, with unspecified wishes, was subsequently received from her trust fund.<sup>208</sup>

Salomons made the cosmopolitan claim that the views from Box Hill were the ‘most magnificent in Europe’.<sup>209</sup> In 1914 some discussion of a memorial to George Meredith encountered the apprehension that it might damage the hill’s natural beauty. Salomons supported the idea of erecting an educative view-pointer in Meredith’s memory, as located on hills in Europe, for he acknowledged the ‘general lack of topographical instinct’. A memorial to Meredith did not proceed, but the idea of an ‘orientation table’ was incorporated into the proposal for a Donor’s memorial, which was first discussed by the BHMC in 1917.<sup>210</sup> It was unveiled on 16 August 1920 by his widow. Unusually, the report of the event in the *Dorking Advertiser* was pasted into the BHMC Minute Book, with a photograph of the platform party.<sup>211</sup> After six ‘terrible’ years, the importance of common ownership of the hill’s unadorned beauty, with ‘charms of wood, dale, water and view’, was restated at the unveiling ceremony in Lord Farrer’s remembrance of Leopold Salomons’ wishes.<sup>212</sup> Two years later, distances in blackened lettering were cut to make a directional stone, atop the inscribed stonework, pavement and seats.<sup>213</sup> The Committee also gave early approval for seats on the summit and at the foot of the hill.<sup>214</sup>

Salomons’ gift secured part of the hill. The appeals to fund additional purchases at Box Hill after 1918 often acknowledged the vital contribution that he made to the development of a larger landscape unit. There was a strong sense of an unfolding movement to preserve Box Hill. It would gradually include Lodge Hill, The Thorns, Juniper Bottom, Ashurst Rough, White Hill, Cockshot Wood, Mickleham Downs, Juniper Hall and Flint Cottage. Funds from his residuary estate provided ready capital to vital effect for at least one subsequent land transaction. These acquisitions were directly managed under the terms of the Salomons Trust Deed of 1914.<sup>215</sup> Consequently, the BHMC developed an expansive conception of amenity lands, which the notion of a ‘beauty spot’ ill-represented. The BHMC would even temporarily care for Norbury Park, after its acquisition by Surrey County Council. Its financial independence enabled the hill to be safeguarded locally. Committee members walked the ground and had a sensuous love for the much-neglected woodland that the BHMC sought to repair.<sup>216</sup> The balance between unfenced access points and curbing trespass on neighbouring properties was carefully discussed by the BHMC, which on one occasion noted its affiliation to the ‘National Trust for the preservation of footpaths & open spaces’.<sup>217</sup> Within a few years National Trust by-laws were needed to prohibit fires, lights and camping. In 1921 a strengthened Deed provided more management powers than were available on 6 March 1914.<sup>218</sup>

This unembellished wooded hill on the chalk escarpment near Dorking has a rich sociocultural history, where private wealth and the public realm converged to secure a portion of Box Hill in 1914, whatever might happen next to the encumbered Deepdene estate. At great cost the gift of 230 acres secured more land than was known to the public, whose footpath route to the summit was well trodden. Its access before 1914 depended on ill-defined Hope liberality on land where the sale of building leases was expected to follow

<sup>207</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 2, f 127, 7 January 1933.

<sup>208</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 2, f 152, 7 April 1934.

<sup>209</sup> NT: BHMC newspaper cuttings, 1, f 32, *Dorking Advertiser* 15 November 1913, Box Hill Saved.

<sup>210</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 1, ff 31–32, 26 May 1917.

<sup>211</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 1, ff 74–5, 2 October 1920, Memorial to Mr Salomons.

<sup>212</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 1, ff 74–5, 2 October 1920, *Dorking Advertiser*, undated cutting; Grievés 2014, 77–95; Grievés 2017, 181.

<sup>213</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 1, f 113, 7 October 1922.

<sup>214</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 1, f 36, 29 December 1917.

<sup>215</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 1, f 118, 7 April 1923.

<sup>216</sup> SHC: 2572/1/70, Farrer mss, F de la Grissell to Lord Farrer, 6 December 1919.

<sup>217</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 1, f 67, 17 April 1920.

<sup>218</sup> NT: BHMC minute book, 1, f 88, 2 April 1921.

the disposal of the heirlooms. Outside the tumult of Hampstead Heath and following the ruination of Hindhead, Box Hill was ripe for residential development. In concert, Sir Robert Hunter, Leopold Salomons, Lawrence Chubb and Lord Farrer responded resourcefully, knowledgeably, expeditiously and forensically to sale notices, which prefigured the land sales of 1918–22. The notices arose after nearly twenty years of well-publicised financial turbulence in the Hope Settled Estates. Topographical writers of Surrey counselled visitors to recognise that places of natural beauty near Dorking had historical associations which should interest school pupils from London, walkers on the supposed course of the Pilgrims' Way,<sup>219</sup> seekers of solitude from Epsom race meetings, omnibus passengers in search of unenclosed open country and all who sought to spend time in the countryside. Salomons' remarkable intervention to purchase the land for the National Trust won appreciation nationally, alongside the better-known Lake District preservation schemes. But although an oft-described gift for the nation, this well-loved corner of Surrey was acquired by local social action amid newly emerging 'public interest' statements, such as those known to land valuation officers. Leopold Salomons' quest to protect land of 'natural beauty and rural simplicity' at Box Hill would inspire numerous appeals after the Great War, when the search for 'land for the landless' intensified on Surrey's heights.

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 2116/1/6 Deed of Covenant, Leopold Salomons to Samuel Watson, 1 May 1902  
 2226 Deepdene mss  
 2442/2 Mickleham Parish Council Minute Book  
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<sup>219</sup> A number of authors have concluded that there is no evidence that the 'Pilgrims' Way' ever existed (Hooper 1936; Owen & Pilbeam 1992, 64; Calow 2017, 9–10).

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