



Remarkable Women (1)

The Rectory Lane Cemetery Project



INTRODUCTION

Women have always played an important part in society over the centuries but until comparatively recently have been overlooked. Frequently the female line is ignored in family trees, with their family names lost through marriage.

In this booklet we highlight a few women who left their mark, one way or another, on Berkhamsted and further afield. They went beyond being a subsidiary to their male counterparts, gaining recognition at the time for their achievements. This is particularly so in the case of Mary Ann Smith-Dorrien, Katherine Finch and the Countess of Bridgewater. Each came into prominence after she was widowed.

1888 saw the foundation of Berkhamsted Girls' Grammar School and Mary Ann Smith-Dorrien served on the Board of Governors with a few other women '*duly qualified to discharge the duty of office.*' Their own education had almost certainly been provided by a Governess.

Eliza Quincey Lane was perhaps remarkable in her achievement but, in accordance with the prejudice of the time, she had to disguise the fact that she was a woman.

We have the Countess of Bridgewater to thank for the Cemetery itself – she gave the land in the first place.

We are delighted to share their stories in this, the centenary of the 1918 Suffrage Act. This granted women the right to vote (if they were over 30 with £5 of property in their own name or that of their husband).

Numbers refer to the gravestone locations –

www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk/

In Catherine Partridge's case, no gravestone survives.

Front cover shows Mary Ann Smith-Dorrien (seated left) and some of her family

CHARLOTTE CATHERINE ANNE EGERTON, COUNTESS OF BRIDGEWATER 1763-1849

Local benefactor

Although Charlotte Catherine Anne, Countess of Bridgewater, is not buried in Rectory Lane Cemetery she is of supreme importance in its history.

She was born in 1763, the daughter of Samuel Haynes, Bishop of Durham, and Elizabeth, his wife. At the age of twenty she married John William Egerton, who was to become the 7th Earl of Bridgewater in 1803. He was ten years her senior, a cavalry officer and a Tory member of Parliament. It was a childless marriage. The 7th Earl died in 1823 at the age of 70 at Ashridge and is buried in Little Gaddesden Church. The Countess was to live for another twenty-six years, dying at the age of 85 in 1849. She is also buried in Little Gaddesden.

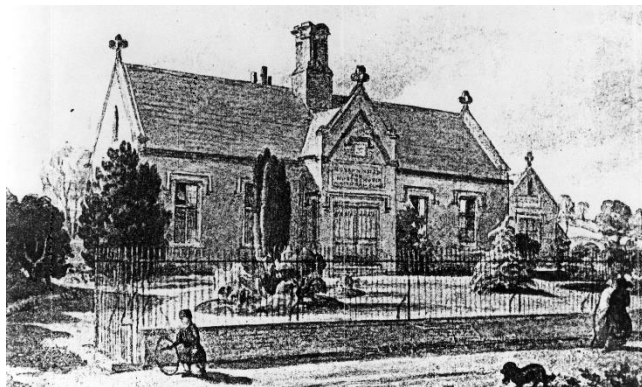


Portrait of Charlotte Catherine Anne Egerton, Countess of Bridgewater by James Poppelwhite, after Henry Edridge, stipple engraving (1805)

As a widow, the Countess carried out a number of benevolent activities to improve the welfare of the people of the villages and towns near to Ashridge, concentrating particularly on the educational needs of the children and improving the welfare of the poor. There appears to be no evidence of such activities whilst her husband was alive. The Countess established an Educational Trust in the parish of Ivinghoe, whereby the schools there and in the surrounding villages received an annual grant of £10. This Trust exists to this day, and whilst of little value now, was at the time a very generous bequest.

Berkhamsted was the nearest town of any size to Ashridge and the Countess soon turned her attention to the needs of its children.

In 1834 she gave land at the bottom of Cross Oak Road (Gilham's Lane), to build a school 'based on the principles of the Church of England', a National School, for the children of Gossoms End, a heavily populated area at the time.



Northchurch and Gossoms End National School

The Junior school was demolished in 1972 to be replaced by a garage. The Infants' School was demolished more recently, used latterly by the Gossoms End Cubs.

The Countess was very aware of the difficulties of the poor, especially in harsh winters when work on the land was not possible and work in other trades was also restricted. It is not clear exactly when the soup kitchen was established, but we do know that in 1841 the Countess ordered the Soup House to 'be built and fitted up for the use of the charity at the building in the Old Castle.' This could imply that the soup kitchen already existed elsewhere in the town and was to be moved to the Castle. It is not clear how long the Soup House remained in existence but there are references to the charity until the late 1890s.

It appears from recent research that the present Visitor Room at the Castle is the Soup House which the Countess of Bridgewater ordered to be established. While not many documents relating to the Charity remain the Berkhamsted Soup kitchen receives many references in the local press.



Caretaker's Cottage at Berkhamsted Castle – Soup Kitchen to the left

We turn now to the Countess of Bridgewater's valuable contribution to the people of Berkhamsted with her gift of land to provide a new burial ground for St. Peter's Church The land was sited between the former Rectory and the present Three Close Lane, shown on the tithe map of 1842 as plot number 454. The ground became known officially as St Peter's Churchyard (Detached).

A commemorative monument bears witness to this gift of land and to those who, with their voluntary donations, contributed to its building and to its later consecration.

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1842 THIS LAND
 WAS PRESENTED FOR A BURIAL GROUND TO
 THE PARISH OF BERKHAMSTEAD ST PETER'S
 BY CHARLOTTE CATHERINE ANNE COUNTESS
 OF BRIDGEWATER
 THE WALLS ENCLOSING THE SAME WERE
 ERECTED WITHOUT THE AID OF A RATE BY THE
 FOLLOWING VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

The Rev. John Crofts	50	0
The Rt Hon. Mark Ld. Somerville	25	0
The Hon. W Booth Grey	25	0
The Hon. Harriot Grimston	50	0
Sir Charles Deacon KCB	5	0
James Smith Esq	25	0
London and Birmingham Railway Company	40	0
Grand Junction Canal Company	6	0
In smaller sums	30	0

CONSECRATED BY JOHN LORD BISHOP OF
 LINCOLN ON THE 11TH DAY OF OCTOBER IN THE
 SAME YEAR

JOHN CROFTS	RECTOR
AUGUSTUS SMITH	CHURCHWARDEN
HENRY LANE	CHURCHWARDEN



Foundation Stone

This list of those who contributed voluntarily to the extension of the churchyard, initiated by the grant of land from the Countess, merits its own study. It was indeed a community project.

ANNE HEWSON 1777-1853

Anne Hewson features in this booklet as a remarkable woman, because towards the end of her life she was declared to be a lunatic. But she also played an extraordinary role in helping her nephew, William Parkins, who was Berkhamsted born and bred, to establish his highly successful stationery business, Parkins & Gotto, in Oxford Street, London.



Anne (nee Sherwin) married Thomas Ansaldo Hewson, a recently qualified surgeon, in 1823. She was nine years his senior – Thomas having been born on Christmas Day, 1786. Under their marriage settlement, Anne had the power to dispose of £37,900, a very substantial sum in those days. Thomas had clearly been strategic in marrying Anne, as the agreement confirmed that the expenses of their 'establishment' should be paid out of her property, 6 Woburn Place, whilst he would provide for the charges of horses and carriages.

What comes as a surprise is that in 1845, Thomas, a seemingly respectable London surgeon, was acquitted at the Central Criminal Court of '*conspiring to procure an order for the confinement of a person of sound mind in a Lunatic Asylum.*' The report does not state who that person was. However, it is surely no coincidence that from exactly that date until his death, Thomas received the whole income of Anne's property, and 'continued the Woburn Place establishment.'

Thomas died on the 6th January 1851 aged 65, and is buried at All Souls, Kensal Green. His will, from December 1846, did '*give the use of his furniture, plate, linen, jewels and household effects, including the jewels and effects which belonged to his wife before her marriage and which he has assumed by marital right, unto his wife for her life, and such wines and liquors as she might require.*' At the same time, he made generous donations of £500-£1,000 to nine London Hospitals and to the Society for the Relief of the Widows and Orphans of Medical Men.

Within a month of his death, an Inquisition was held at which Anne was formally declared to be of 'unsound mind' and backdating her lunacy to 3rd April 1845 – the year her husband had been acquitted. Her wealth at that time amounted to an income from freehold and leasehold property of £4,000 a year, besides the initial sum which had grown to £42,000, and was clearly being wrangled over by two camps.

Two nephews were at the centre of the tussle. One *'had a large family and was a lay preacher – a missionary – recently gone out to India with a salary of £180 per year.'* The other nephew was William Parkins, who had grown up in Berkhamsted. It was clear which she favoured. Regarding the missionary nephew – *'there was no evidence of any disposition on the part of the aunt to be generous towards her nephew, nor did it appear that she had ever made him an object of care and consideration.'* In contrast, she had placed William *'at school, and had subsequently paid his apprenticeship fee and discharged the costs of his maintenance, and had intimated to him her intention to advance him in life; it was also shown that before her lunacy, Mrs Hewson had promised to let him have £500 to start in business on his own account, upon the faith of which he quitted a situation he held in a wholesale house, and before the lunacy she partly performed this promise by a gift of £50, and after the lunacy Mr Hewson gave Mr Parkins a check for £250, which was paid by the bankers out of the money to the account of Mrs Hewson's money.'*

So, by the time of the census on 30th March 1851 William Parkins, then aged 37 and described as a stationer, had moved into 6 Woburn Place with his wife and son, clearly to look after his widowed Aunt, who in the census is described as a Lunatic. The scale of her assets had probably kept her from an asylum.

By April that year he was clearly able to inject money into his thriving business, selling off the whole of the Fancy Stock at their Warehouse, 25 Oxford Street (opposite Soho-square) *'previous to extensive alterations and improvements'*.



Anne, was still residing at Woburn Place when she died just one year later, on the 18th July 1852, aged 75. William died in 1872. The *Bookseller* in November that year lamented that *'a good man has passed away from amongst us ... Mr WILLIAM PARKINS, the late head of the firm of Parkins and Gotto, in Oxford Street. Born at Great Berkhamstead, Herts, he was a man singularly active and energetic. Commencing some thirty years ago in Hanway Street, then Hanway Yard, he speedily established a considerable business by the introduction of the five-quire packets of paper (now so popular), the cheap manufacture of envelopes and the embossing of the same with initials, a branch of the trade then quite in its infancy. He soon*

removed to Oxford Street... and there, in conjunction with Mr. Gotto, entered upon a system of advertising which produced most satisfactory results, the business now being one of the largest in London. Before his death he amply provided for all related to him, and most generously remembered many who had no claims on him whatever. His loss will be most deeply felt, his unostentatious goodness making his memory blessed amidst those who knew him'.

One manifestation of this 'unostentatious goodness' was the very fine tomb to Anne Hewson in Rectory Lane Cemetery that he paid for, which bears the inscription: *'This monument was erected by William Parkins (of this town) in memory of his aunt.'*



The fine tomb, paid for by a grateful and successful nephew

William was buried at Kensal Green, so why did he particularly choose this Berkhamsted Cemetery for his aunt's memorial? Very close to her monument is another elegant Classical memorial to John and Mary Parkins. **(190)** These were William's parents. John Parkins was the first Sexton appointed to look after Rectory Lane Cemetery, so William was both celebrating his roots but also the fact that without his Aunt, he would probably have remained in the town. Towards the end of Anne's life, *'it was the wish of the lady, that she should be taken into the country during the summer months.'* It seems likely that William would have been taking her out to Berkhamsted, where his family still resided. William's father died two years after Anne, and his daughter, Eliza Jane, later Quincey Lane **(245)**, features as another of our remarkable women. **(169)**

MARY (POLLY) PAGE 1787 – 1865

Mary, or Polly, as she was known, was the eldest of three daughters born to John and Mary Page. She was born on 21st September 1787 and baptised in St Peter's Church on the 21st October. Earlier in that same year John had purchased the Kings Arms, the principal coaching inn in the centre of Berkhamsted, for £933. The Inn flourished under his management of fifty-three years and became a social hot spot frequented by the gentry. He provided a room *'most tastefully fitted up with artificial flowers and laurels'* and provided musical entertainment.



The Kings Arms, Berkhamsted High Street

John's tenure coincided with the heyday of the coaching era and the maintenance of the road by the Sparrows Herne Turnpike Trust, the very first meeting of which had been held in 1762 in the Kings Arms. He became a very important and well-known figure in the town. As well as Innkeeper he was constable and coach master. The Post Office was also operated from the Kings Arms. The Universal British Directory of 1791 designates the Kings Arms as the best inn in the town. The Tring coach stopped at the Kings Arms every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 10 o'clock and returned from the Bell and Crown in Holborn, at 8 o'clock every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Other coaches stopped at the Kings Arms on their way to Banbury and Birmingham. The Kings Arms was a favourite stopping point for the gentry, where they could change or rest horses, since there was stabling for up to forty horses as well as coach houses and facilities for harness storage.

No doubt one of the main attractions of the Kings Arms were the three pretty daughters, Mary, Sarah and Catherine, especially the eldest Mary, always known as 'Polly'. It was widely reported that King Louis XVIII, living with his court in exile at Hartwell House near Aylesbury, made a point of changing or resting his horses at the Kings Arms en route to London purely to see sweet Polly Page, who according to *The Times* was '*the sprightly, chatting entertainer of King Louis XVIII*'. John Page doubtless encouraged this since these royal visits were good for trade of a superior nature.

It is reported that after Louis XVIII was restored to power he invited Polly to visit him at Versailles, which led to some malicious rumours. Polly felt obliged to issue a statement to the effect that '*nothing improper had taken place*.' Polly was not, however, just an attractive young woman, she also had artistic and good organising skills. In 1815 she was complimented on her arrangements for a party – '*the arrangement of the ball and supper rooms, which was highly nouvelle and elegant, does great credit to the taste of Miss Page*.'

John Page died in 1840 and the running of the inn passed into Polly's capable hands. It was Polly who welcomed the royal visitors, Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, when they changed horses and no doubt also partook of some refreshment, in 1841. They were on their way to visit the Duke of Bedford at Woburn. The townspeople made an elaborate welcoming arch across the road.



The Triumphal Arches as erected for the visit of Her Majesty Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, passing thro' Gt Berkhamsted to Woburn Abbey 26th July 1841

The event was captured for posterity in pre-photographic days by William Claridge in two prints, one of which hangs in the Clock Room at the Town Hall. The enjoyment of this event was somewhat clouded by the sudden death of Polly's younger sister, Sarah.

Although the importance of the Kings Arms as a coaching inn gradually declined with the coming of the railway, it remained a focal point of the town. As a post and excise office, links were made with the station to transport parcels and luggage, and important meetings were held there.

Not a great deal is known about Polly's old age nor how long she remained together with her sister Catherine in charge of the Kings Arms, the inn which she and her parents had made the best inn in Berkhamsted. She remained single, although it appears she was married by Licence in the church of St Paul Shadwell (Tower Hamlets) to Charles Monk from St Peter's Berkhamsted on 4th June 1810. This marriage was annulled by the Ecclesiastical Court since the young man, still a minor, had not received parental approval. Subsequent events, including a case of 'breach of promise' need further research, but it seems that Polly who had received the attention of the exiled King of France was not very successful in her personal affairs. One gains the impression from her probate report that she might have lived a rather lonely old age, on Berkhamsted Common away from the bustle of the Kings Arms. She died on 23rd April 1865, but probate was not granted until 27th November 1866. *'The Will of Mary Page, formerly of Berkhamsted St. Peter, but late of Northchurch, both in the County of Hertford, Spinster, deceased, who died 23rd April 1865 at Berkhamsted Common in the Parish of Berkhamsted St. Peter aforesaid was proved at the Principal Registry by the Oath of Catherine Page of St Peter aforesaid Spinster, the Sister, the sole Executrix.'* Polly had apparently moved from the centre of the town before she died. Had she collapsed and died suddenly whilst walking on the Common? We shall probably never know.

Mary (Polly) Page is buried in Rectory Lane Cemetery. A simple grave marks her resting place: *'Mary Page who departed this life 23rd April 1865 aged 75.'* She was, in fact, 77 years old. Pretty Polly Page who once turned the heads of many young men, including royal ones, had almost sunk into oblivion. We shall remember her! (146)

KATHERINE FINCH 1794-1872

It is always difficult to give recognition to women among those buried in the cemetery, especially those of more noble birth. This is also evident in memorial inscriptions, where a widow's or wife's name is sometimes added almost as an afterthought. Yet so often the woman of the household can be the '*power behind the throne*', or if that is too extreme, at least a very active supporter of her spouse's aims, ideals and benevolent actions. That could well be said of Katherine Finch, who remained resident at Berkhamsted Place (or 'The Castle' as it was sometimes known) for a further eleven years after the death of her husband, General the Honourable John Finch. He is buried in Packington Hall, the seat of the Earls of Aylesford and his childhood home, whilst Katherine is buried in Rectory Lane Cemetery.



Katherine Ellice was born in Middlesex in c.1794. On 29th July 1835 she married Lieut. Colonel the Honourable John Finch, brother to the Earl of Aylesford. According to the report in *the Belfast Newsletter* Katherine was the daughter of the late Alexander Ellice, Esq and niece to Earl Grey. It was a childless marriage. What brought the couple to Berkhamsted, we do not know. We know from the 1841 census that they were living in a comparatively small household in Wellington Crescent, Preston by Wingham, near Ramsgate, Kent. Finch is listed as Colonel in the Army. Sometime in the 1840s Finch retired partially from the army and came to live at Berkhamsted Place (the Castle, as it was known from the 18th century onwards.) Perhaps Finch wanted to retire to an estate which reminded him of his childhood at Packington Hall. By 1851 the couple were living at the Castle, and Finch is listed as Colonel in the Army on half-pay. The estate had sixty acres of farmland for which two men and a boy were employed.

They had many servants, including a house keeper, two ladies' maids, a housemaid, dairymaid, kitchen maid, butler, coachman and footman.



Berkhamsted Place - 'The Castle'

General Finch, and no doubt his wife too, were actively involved in the affairs of St Peter's soon after their arrival in Berkhamsted. Finch was a churchwarden from 1847 until his death in 1861. No doubt Mrs Finch, as the Churchwarden's wife, paid particular attention to Sunday School attendance and the welfare of the Women's groups. In the early days of Berkhamsted's first photographer, William Claridge, both General Finch and his wife feature among the early photographs of Berkhamsted residents. She appears to be a very serious-minded woman, interested in improving the education of the poorer sections of the community, girls as well as boys. All Finch's benevolent acts have an educational basis. By 1853 it had become obvious that a larger schoolroom was required for the Bourne School. An additional room was built at the back by public subscription. Of the £391 raised, Finch contributed over £200. In the following year, he defrayed the entire cost of rebuilding the original school which was in a dilapidated state.

General Finch is particularly remembered for his work in establishing the Market Hall, Town Hall, with rooms for the Mechanics' Institute, which replaced the Market House which had burnt down in 1854. Nash in his *Reminiscences* pays tribute to his contribution: *'The part he took in the erection of the Town Hall called forth the admiration of all who were acquainted with the difficulties surrounding it ... His determined*

perseverance combined with influence which he exercised in high places enabled him to bring it to a successful issue.' In all these matters Finch was particularly supportive of the interests of the Mechanics' Institute.

Additionally, Finch erected a school for poor children in Potten End. We know from reports in the school log books that Katherine Finch was a regular visitor, showing particular interest in the children's progress in reading. In his Will, Finch bequeathed to his wife an immediate legacy of £500 with his furniture, carriages etc, *'she being otherwise amply provided for.'* She almost certainly had additional independent means. On her death £200 was to be invested towards the support of the school at Potten End.

On Katherine's death the contents of the house and estate were sold by auction. These show a fairly simple way of life of an aristocratic family, with a well-stocked wine cellar, but also 1,200 volumes of well-bound books and a plentiful supply of board games, furnished with needle-work top ottomans, gilt and china candelabra, where the difference in the sleeping arrangements of the General and Katherine were sharply distinguished from those of the maids in the attics.

Katherine died on 12th January 1872 aged 78. The Will of the Honourable Katherine Finch, late of Berkhamsted Castle in the County of Hertford, was proved by William Ellice, her nephew, one of the Executors. She left effects of under £50,000. (314)

MARY ANN SMITH-DORRIEN 1825 - 1909



The Smith-Dorrien family at Haresfoot (Mary Ann seated in the centre)

Mary Ann, the daughter of Thomas Drever MD and Mary Ann Dorrien, was born in the parish of St George's, Hanover Square. Her father at the time of his marriage in 1821 was Physician Extraordinary to Prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg. Her mother Mary Ann was the daughter of Thomas Dorrien of Haresfoot, Hertfordshire. The Drevers lived at Norcott Court so consequently Mary Ann spent a lot of time at Haresfoot. In fact, as her mother suffered from deteriorating health for some years, she spent an increasing amount of time there. At the time of the 1841 census she was at Haresfoot with her grandfather whilst her parents were at Norcott Court.

The death of Mary Ann Drever was reported in the 'Times' of Friday 30th June 1843 as follows '*At Clifton on 25th instant after years of extreme ill-health and very protracted suffering, terminating in disease of the heart Mary Ann the ever to be lamented and much beloved wife of Thomas Drever Esq. MD*'. Mary Ann's grandmother had died on 18th August 1829 when Mary Ann was only four years' old. Because of her mother's ill-health, she was largely brought up by her mother's older sister Aunt Isabella and her grandfather,

Thomas Dorrien. It appears that her grandfather was a powerful influence in her life. He outlived his wife and all his children, living to the ripe old age of 92, dying on 1st January 1847.

Thomas lived long enough to see his granddaughter married on 9th February 1845 at St. Peter's Church to Robert Algernon Smith, son of James Smith and Mary Isabella Pechell of Ashlyns Hall. On his marriage, Robert by royal licence acquired the name Dorrien and the Dorrien coat of arms, becoming Robert Algernon Smith-Dorrien. Between 1846 and 1863 Mary Ann bore him fifteen children, six boys and nine girls. Only one boy died in infancy, all the other children surviving to adulthood, a remarkable achievement even if that were the end of the story, but it is not! Several of the boys went on to achieve fame in military and naval fields. Some of the unmarried daughters gave valuable service and support to the community during WWI and lived long lives, as did their mother.

Perhaps the best known of all the children was General Sir Horace Lockwood Smith-Dorrien, the youngest of the six sons, who distinguished himself in the Second Boer War and held positions of senior command in the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in the First World War. He fought a vigorous and successful defensive action at Mons and at Le Cateau, contrary to the wishes of his Commander in Chief Sir John French, with whom there was a clash of personalities. Owing to continued disagreement, Smith-Dorrien was relieved of his post in 1915. He played no further role of prominence in the First World War. He was appointed Governor of Gibraltar from July 1918-May 1923 where he introduced an element of democracy. In his retirement he devoted much of his time to the welfare and support of WWI veterans. History has largely exonerated Smith-Dorrien for his actions.

The fifth son achieved distinction in the Navy. Rear-Admiral Arthur Hale Smith-Dorrien took part in operations of the Egyptian War 1889-1893. On his retirement in 1909 he returned to Berkhamsted and lived with his unmarried sister Beatrice at New Lodge. He took an active part in local affairs, especially during WWI, arranged garden parties to raise money for charity and defended the reputation of his brother General Sir Horace. He avidly supported the newly-formed British Legion.

Henry Theophilus also had a distinguished career in the Navy but, unlike his brothers and most of his sisters, did not remain in Berkhamsted and is therefore less well-known and did not play a prominent part in the local community.

Equally, the eldest son Thomas Algernon did not remain in Berkhamsted since he became Proprietor of the Isles of Scilly, where he cared for his island community much as his brothers and sisters did for the people of Berkhamsted. In doing this they were following their mother, who once she had passed child-bearing age, took an active part in local affairs. She had been a widow since 1879. We know that she subscribed to the Tring and Berkhamsted Ambulance Fund and that she served as a Governor on the Board of Governors for the Girls' Grammar School, taking part in the opening ceremony and prize-giving at the new buildings in Kings Road in 1903.

Typically, the report of her death in the Times, Saturday July 31st 1909, mentions her sons and says less about her. *'The death is announced of Mrs Smith Dorrien at Haresfoot, Berkhamsted, at an advanced age. She was the mother of Mr Dorrien Smith who holds the Scilly Isles by quasi-feudal tenure from the Duchy of Cornwall, of Sir Horace Lockwood Smith-Dorrien in command at Aldershot and of Admiral Smith-Dorrien. For very many years Mrs Smith-Dorrien had been a familiar figure in the social life of West Herts, where she was popular and most respected.'*

The memorial inscription in St Peter's Church equally puts her in her place – sandwiched between her husband and her son. *'Robert Algernon Smith-Dorrien of Haresfoot, Captain 3rd Light Dragoons and 16th Lancers, Colonel Herts Militia, 4th son of eldest marriage. Born 2nd October 1814 died 8th October 1879. His Body rests in the cemetery.*

*Mary Ann Smith-Dorrien, his wife born 25th January 1825 died 28th July 1909
Thomas Algernon Smith-Dorrien Smith, eldest son of the above, Lord Proprietor of the Isles of Scilly. Born 7th February 1846 died 6th August 1918.*

From the report of her funeral in the Bucks Herald we get a better idea of the esteem and indeed affection in which Mary Ann was held by the people of Berkhamsted. *'The funeral of Mrs Smith-Dorrien of Haresfoot where she had resided first as a child and afterwards as mistress for just about 80 years took place at Berkhamsted Cemetery, after a service in the Parish Church, on Saturday. The remains were conveyed through the Park in a hearse, which with the mourners' carriages was high with wreaths. At the foot of Chesham Road the coffin was removed to a hand bier, and the mourners followed on foot to the church, passing through a double line of the tenancy and estate labourers each holding a wreath.'*

Of Mary Ann's 14 surviving children all but one was present, together with spouses where applicable. In addition, almost every large estate or family

seat for miles around was represented and many military and naval dignitaries and important members of the community were present.

Mary Ann is buried in Rectory Lane Cemetery together with her husband and a few of her children but it is on the Smith-Dorrien Memorial in Castle Street that she is remembered, a memorial not to one of her illustrious sons but to a remarkable woman, Mary Ann, the founder of the Smith-Dorrien dynasty. The Luton Times and Advertiser of 31st May 1912 reports '*A magnificent cross 25ft. in height, has been erected in Berkhamsted Churchyard in memory of the late Mrs Smith-Dorrien and was dedicated on Wednesday by the Rev W C E Newbolt, MA, Canon and Chancellor of St. Paul's*'. (309)



Consecration of the cross erected to the memory of Mary Ann Smith-Dorrien

ELIZA QUINCEY LANE 1847 - 1901

'Edited by Quincey Lane. Vol: I 1888 Berkhamsted. Printed and Published by the Post Newspaper Co. Ltd.' This title page heralded the arrival of a new magazine in September 1888, aimed at the following readership: *'In presenting this Magazine to the people of Hertfordshire the Proprietors are assured that they meet a long-felt want... No Pains will be spared to make the contents interesting and instructional in the highest degree,' The fact that it is a 'Constitutional Magazine' should win it a place in every home in Hertfordshire, in which reigns that loyal and conservative spirit, for which the county is so justly celebrated.'*

The contents were to be varied to meet all tastes and to include 'serial tales' by local authors, scientific and artistic contributions. The ladies were to be especially catered for. *'All Letters relating to Political, Historical, Archaeological, Astronomical, Geological, Musical and Artistic information ... should be addressed to the Editor, Hertfordshire Constitutional Magazine, High Street, Great Berkhamsted, Herts.'* The magazine was available from G. Loosley, Castle Street and A. Slater, High Street, price 1/6. The Editor was one Quincey Lane.

Who was this Quincey Lane, then? There was a Frederick Quincey Lane, who, according to the 1881 census, lived at 'The George' in the High Street, but he was a nurseryman and a brewer and an unlikely candidate to produce such a magazine. Examination of the 1891 census shows Frederick living with an ever-growing family and his wife, Eliza, listed not as 'brewer's wife' but as 'journalist.' In the same column was written faintly, for explanation, 'author'.



Eliza Quincey Lane at her writing desk

Various press notices which appeared after the first volume give us further clarification. *The Hertfordshire Standard* wrote, 'It must be confessed as surprising that no such effort before has been made or sustained in this Shire, and now a lady at Berkhamsted leads the way... It is edited by Mrs Quincey Lane, who a few months since was the first lady journalist enrolled on the books of the London District of the National Association of Journalists.'

Eliza Quincey Lane was not born in Berkhamsted, but in Marylebone, in 1847. Her father, William Parkins, of Parkins and Gotto (see Anne Hewson above) came from Berkhamsted and from the 1851 census we learn that Eliza, aged 6, and her elder sister Mary attended Merry Hall School in the High Street in Berkhamsted. In addition to this the two girls were grand-daughters of John Parkins, sexton of the church, who also lived in the High Street. From the 1861 census we learn that Eliza, now 15, is listed still as a scholar, so she was quite an educated young woman.



Eliza Quincey Lane's home, The George pub

Frederick Quincey Lane and Eliza Parkins were married on 15th October 1868 at All Saints, St. John's Wood. The couple lived in the High Street, Berkhamsted, not at *The George* initially. By the time of the 1871 census they had a one-year-old son, Frederick John Lane. Ten years later they were living at *The George* and they had five children.

Perhaps because of the success of the *Constitutional Magazine*, although Quincey Lane remained Editor, Volume III, published in 1889, was no longer printed in Berkhamsted nor published by the Post Newspaper Co. Ltd but printed in London and published by the Counties Constitutional Magazines' Syndicate. From that time on the magazine seems to have lost some of its individuality and relevance to Hertfordshire and especially Berkhamsted. No issues of the magazine remain extant after 1889, either in the Society's nor Hertfordshire's archives. Eliza died at the comparatively young age of fifty-five in 1901. Perhaps the strain of motherhood combining with a career in journalism took its toll. (245)

CATHERINE PARTRIDGE (NEE STANNERS) 1859-1926

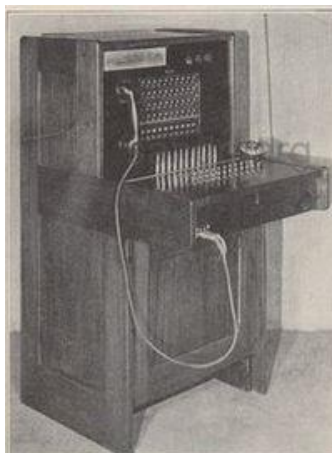
Catherine Stanners (known as Kate) was born in Little Gaddesden and baptised in the church there on 9th October 1859. Her father, James, a watchman, was born in Little Gaddesden but her mother, Eliza, came from the Willesden area of London. From the 1861 census we learn that there were several older siblings.

Ten years later they were still living in Little Gaddesden and James was still a watchman; her mother, Eliza and also Catherine, were straw plaiters. By the time of the 1881 census the family is living in Peacock Lodge, Nettleden and Catherine, now 21, is listed as an unemployed domestic servant. She could well have been between jobs since on 29th May 1882 she married William Partridge at the church of St Philip Kensington, London. He was a native of Witheridge in Devonshire. It seems likely that they were both in service, having come to London to find work.

The young couple settled in Willesden, possibly close to where there were relations living, since Catherine's mother Eliza had been born in Willesden. The first two sons were born in London. From the 1891 census we learn that William was a turncock, working for a waterworks. Sometime between 1894 and 1898 the family moved to Berkhamsted.

What brought the family to Berkhamsted, so that Catherine was nearer her roots, we do not know, but it is possible that Catherine left London so that she could look after an elderly aunt, Sarah Stanners, aged 75, who lived with them for several years. On arriving in Berkhamsted William obtained a job as caretaker at the newly established telephone exchange at No.5 Chapel Street. The exchange was in the front room of the house and passers-by were intrigued to witness this new technology in operation.

A private telephone number was a service afforded by the privileged few and by 1906 there were still only 46 telephone numbers listed in the Berkhamsted and Tring district.



Example of a telephone exchange



No 5 Chapel Street is on the extreme left

Unfortunately, William Partridge passed away on 17th April 1908 at the young age of 53. His role as caretaker of the telephone exchange was taken over by his wife who worked as telephone operator for 28 years. Percy Birtchnell recalls seeing her in operation through her front window on his way to and from Chapel Street Infants School.

Catherine, like many another Berkhamsted family, lost a son in WWI. John Stanners Partridge, the third of her four sons, enlisted as a driver at Watford early in the war. He was killed in action on Friday 6th April 1917, on his 19th birthday. For his services his mother received posthumously three medals – the Victory, the British War and the Star. Later, she also received his effects, amounting to £7 3s 5d. John is buried far from home in the Anzin-St Aubin British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France (Grave Reference II.A.6). Catherine was determined he should be remembered in his home town too and on her husband's grave in Rectory Lane Cemetery are the words '*And of John 3rd son of the above (William Partridge) born on April 6th 1898 killed in action April 6th 1917. A young life laid down.*' Ironically, it was Catherine who received the news of the Armistice in 1918 and the first person she told was a soldier on leave from France who was in the office at the time.

Catherine Partridge died on 25th March 1926. *'She was familiar to very many by reason of the able and excellent manner in which for 28 years she carried out her duties at the telephone exchange.'* What sort of person was Catherine who was known to so many from all walks of life? From the lengthy obituary in *the Berkhamsted Gazette* we learn more and see from those who attended her funeral or left floral tributes how very respected she was by all the community.

Catherine was keenly interested in the work of the Wesleyan church, of which she was a member. Her funeral took place at the Congregational Church and was conducted by the Rev. McCullagh of the Berkhamsted Wesleyan Church. He also officiated at the Cemetery afterwards. The chief mourners were her three surviving sons and grandchildren, sisters and brothers-in-law and cousins from London. One of these may well have been Dorothy Partridge, a relative, who appears to have taken up the reins of telephonist at No 5 Chapel street following Catherine's death.

As well as close family and friends, floral tributes were given by Sir Richard and Lady Cooper and family, Brigadier General and Mrs Foot and Mr and Mrs F.E. Priestland; next door neighbours in Chapel Street, *'With deepest sympathy from all at No.6'* and Castle Street Mothers' Meeting *'in affectionate memory of a fellow member.'* It seemed as if the whole community was there to pay their respects to Catherine of the Telephone Exchange. **(Mrs C. Partridge is listed in the burial books occupying an unmarked plot between 863 and 864)**

LUCY ANNE FOOT (NÉE COOPER) 1876 - 1946

Lucy Anne Cooper was the second of five children born to Sir Richard Powell Cooper and Elizabeth Anne Asmall. Sir Richard was the first baronet of Shenstone Court; an honour bestowed on him in 1905 by Edward VII in recognition of his contributions to agriculture. There is little known about the early life of Lucy Anne. The autobiography of MRD Foot, Lucy's step-grandson, states that she went to Cape Town in search of a husband and there in May 1902 she married (then Major) Richard Mildmay Foot, whose first wife had died seven years before. Richard Foot had two children from his first marriage; Richard Cunningham Foot and Linsey Kathleen Foot.

A few years after their marriage Lucy and Richard Foot moved to White Hill, Berkhamsted, which was owned by the Cooper Family and was located close to Berkhamsted Castle i.e. to the east of the road also called White Hill.



The Foot's Home at White Hill (now demolished)

Richard, who had been promoted to the rank of Brigadier General, died in 1933 shortly after his 67th birthday when Lucy was 57 years old. Shortly after his death, Lucy installed a Seat of Remembrance by his grave in Rectory Lane Cemetery.

After her husband's death, Lucy, who was always known as Dolly, continued to live at White Hill. She was a keen dog-owner, having three Cairn terriers and a breeder of greyhounds. She continued with the breeding of the Beorcham line of prize-winning Irish Setters which had been started by her husband, including the renowned 11-year-old sire Beorcham Blazes, veteran at Crufts 1935.



In addition, she was a well-respected farmer breeding cattle at Hamberlins Farm, Northchurch. According to the *Bucks Herald* 23rd July 1937, '*Mrs Foot escorted a tour of international sheep farmers arranged by Thomas Cook & Son Ltd ... to see her famous prize-winning Jerseys Red Poll milking herd*'.



Dolly specialised in producing milk low in tuberculosis bacilli. It is recorded that during WWII this milk was purchased by Madame De Gaulle while she lived close to Ashridge with her daughter.

It was during WWII that Lucy received a letter from the Hertfordshire War Agricultural Executive Committee (HWAEC) instructing her to plough and sow wheat on part of Northchurch Common. She initially refused to do so, saying that it had been common land since before the Normans came. The reply from the HWAEC threatened jail if she did not comply with their request. Consequently, she did agree and according to MRD Foot, "*produced 3 excellent crops of wheat*".

In September 1946, following a minor operation at a London Clinic, Lucy unexpectedly and suddenly died. She was buried in the same grave as her husband, located between the Cooper Memorial and the central arch.

Following Lucy's death, White Hill was taken over by the Cooper family, who sold it to a builder. According to MRD Foot, the builder made sure the house burnt, felled all the trees, built 17 houses and then died.

The *Bucks Herald* 27th September 1946 announced that '*The Death of Mrs L A Foot of Berkhamsted, well-known cattle breeder and exhibitor is a sad loss to the farming community of this district. She had proved herself a sound businesswoman, a keen breeder of pedigree cattle and an active worker for the NFU. Mrs Foot followed her father's example with a life-long practical interest in agriculture. In 1917 she took over Church Farm, Great Gaddesden and in 1925 she established the model dairy farm at Hamberlins, one of the finest 'clean milk' farms in the country.*' (365)

SISTER COTTINGHAM 1886 – 1918



A simple tribute 'Erected by the Inns of Court O.T.C. in memory of Sister Cottingham, Matron at 'the Beeches' V.A.D. Hospital, died there 27th October 1918' marks the grave of someone who was much loved and respected. She died at the age of 31, not as a result of enemy fire but by succumbing to the Spanish 'flu whilst caring for others. Who then was Sister Cottingham? Was she a local girl, and did she have family to mourn her passing?

Hannah Maude Cottingham's birth was registered in the December quarter of 1886 in Downpatrick, Northern Ireland, a moderately-sized town, 21 miles south of Belfast. Her father was Thomas Cottingham. Her mother died while Hannah was still a child, leaving her and a brother who was two years older. On the Northern Ireland census returns

of 1901 and 1911 no information is given of her father's occupation. The family's religion was Church of Ireland. The family was sufficiently well off to employ one servant even when Hannah was an adult.

The family appear to have moved fairly frequently, since Hannah's birthplace was given as Downpatrick but by 1901 she was living at Margarett Terrace Portadown in County Antrim and by 1911, the family was now in the district of Magheragall, still in County Antrim.

At some stage she trained to be a nurse, probably in Belfast. From various sources we know that she worked at the Baltic and Corn Exchange Hospital in 1915 and in the Brundall Auxillary Hospital in Norwich. The Baltic and

Corn Exchange was officially No.8 British Red Cross Hospital, in France-Calais, Paris-Plage and then Boulogne.

The Medal Information Card shows her as Hannah Maud Cottingham (British Red Cross Society and order of St John of Jerusalem). At the time of her death at 31 she was the Matron (or Sister-in-Charge) at 'The Beeches' V.A.D. (Voluntary Aid Detachment) Hospital [aka The Detention Hospital].



'The Beeches' V.A.D. Hospital, Berkhamsted

Her cause of death is given as Influenza and Bronchopneumonia. The British Red Cross Register of Overseas Volunteers shows her as Nursing Sister Hannah Maude Cottingham. Obviously, she was much loved and respected by the young men of the Inns of Court OTC in her care. The IOCOTC, which was stationed in Berkhamsted from 1914-1919, paid for her memorial, a young woman who died far from home, in the service of her country. (917)

MARY WIMBUSH 1924 - 2005

Mary Wimbush was not born in Berkhamsted but in Kenton, Middlesex, on 19th March 1924. Her father was a schoolmaster; her mother had been to RADA but had never pursued a career on the stage, although the family enjoyed taking part in amateur dramatics when they came to live in Berkhamsted, when Mary was four. Both her father, Nelson Norman Wimbush, and her mother, Ida Margaret Hughes, came from the West Midlands and were married in Bromsgrove in 1921. They remained in their adopted town, Berkhamsted, for the rest of their lives.

Mary was the younger of two daughters, the elder Joanna, was two years her senior. Her father had served on the Western Front in the London Regiment during World War I where he had received severe facial injuries. It is likely that the family's arrival in Berkhamsted was timed to coincide with the girls' educational needs since they both attended Berkhamsted School for Girls. Afterwards, Mary was sent with her older sister to board at St Agnes' and St Michael's, an Anglican convent at East Grinstead, Sussex. Although she had set her heart on becoming an actress, her father sent her to Edinburgh to take a course in domestic science – a decision that did not go down well with his daughter, who later managed to secure a place at the Central School of Speech and Drama.

Both girls were well-known locally, auburn-haired and attractive to the young men of the town, as is shown in a local Home Guard Diary, written by a young contemporary. '*I saw H... and the elder Wimbush girl hand in hand.*' Joanna, however, did not marry.

Mary began her acting career at Amersham Rep, a career which was to span sixty years, in theatre, film and radio, the last medium, being her favourite, since she found that it best fitted with the needs of her young son. In 1946 Mary married the actor Howard Marion-Crawford and they had a son Charles F Marion-Crawford in 1947. The marriage did not last and the couple were divorced in 1954. Mary was later in a happy relationship with the poet Louis MacNiece from 1956 until his death in 1963. She lived for a number of years in Stocks Road, Aldbury.

Mary first acted in radio for the BBC in 1945, her most active medium. She played in hundreds of series, serials and plays, *Mrs Dale's Diary*, *The Governor's Consort*, *The Horse's Mouth*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. For these latter two she was awarded Best Actress in the 1991 Sony Awards.

She was not particularly active in TV, film and theatre until later in her career. Prominent roles included Miss MacKay in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* and Rebecca Nurse in *The Crucible*.

In more recent years she was perhaps best known among the general public for the last role she played in *The Archers*, that of Julia Pargeter, and it was after she had finished recording an episode in that series that she collapsed and died in the Birmingham studio on 31st October 2005, acting until the end.

Mary is buried in the Rectory Lane Cemetery, together with her mother Ida Margaret Wimbush, who died on 14th October 1963 and her father Nelson Norman Wimbush, of Edgehill, Kingsdale Road, who had died in Mainz, Germany on 3rd October 1965. Mary's elder sister, Joanna, lived for almost another eight years, dying on 25th September 2013, and is also laid to rest in the family grave. (361)



As Prudie in *Poldark* (1975)
and as Aunt Agatha in
Jeeves and Wooster (1990)

Acknowledgements and further information

The biographies in this booklet were researched and written by Jenny Sherwood, with the exception of two: Anne Hewson's by Dr James Moir and Lucy Foot by Alan Mosley. Further contributions were made by members of the Project team and the booklet was edited by Kate Campbell.

With over 1,200 memorials in the Rectory Lane Cemetery there are many more remarkable and fascinating lives to discover and stories to be told. If you are connected to anyone buried in the Cemetery please get in touch with the Project Manager, James Moir jamesmgmoir@aol.com. We are always keen to hear from relatives.

Support from the Heritage Lottery Fund is now funding a programme of conservation, landscaping and community activity. The aim of the project is to:

'change the perception of cemeteries as "dead space", transforming ours into a vibrant and diverse contemporary garden of commemoration, a pivotal heritage asset and an environmental haven by making connections, promoting health and wellbeing and welcoming all'.

If you would like further information or to become involved in this exciting project, please visit our website at www.stpetersberkhamstedfriends.org.uk

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