
**UPLANDS
FOUR ASHES ROAD
HIGH WYCOMBE HP15 6LB**



A HISTORY

**Researched & written by
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CONTENTS	Page
INTRODUCTION	I
1858-1900	2
• The Hewett family	3
1900-1935	6
• The Cocks family	6
• Changes at Uplands?	7
1935-1956	11
1956 ONWARDS	12
THE ARCHITECTS & MODERN DEVELOPMENTS	14
• The original building – attributed to E.B. Lamb	14
• The 1980s additions – Edward Cullinan Architects	16
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	20
SOURCES	21

Uplands, Four Ashes Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP15 6LB
Parish: Hughenden
Grid ref. SU 874962

INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared in response to a proposal by Redrow Homes to demolish Uplands and redevelop the site for housing (planning application number 13/06423/FUL) and is a follow-up to the writer's preliminary report written in June 2013. It is not a proper buildings appraisal since it is based on documentary research with only a cursory inspection of the buildings from the outside during a walk around the gardens and a visit to the lounge and bar of the hotel. Sources are given in the Sources section.

Although Uplands has stood for some 150 years in one of the most prominent locations in the Wycombe area no published history has been found. The primary purpose of this report is to provide evidence that Uplands should be regarded as a heritage asset within the National Planning Policy Framework, with significance for its historic and architectural interest. But it is also hoped that it will stimulate interest in the history of the buildings and gardens at Uplands and the people who have been associated with them. This is not the full story and suggestions for some further research have been included in this report.

Uplands is currently used as a hotel and conference venue by the De Vere Group. More information and photographs can be found on their website:

<http://www.deverevenues.co.uk/locations/uplands-house.html>

The buildings are set in wooded grounds of some 18 acres within the Green Belt and Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Four Ashes Road runs along a ridge, typical of the Chilterns, with Uplands located between the 180m and 185m contours. The buildings overlook the Hughenden Valley and are within the setting of the National Trust's estate of Hughenden Manor on the opposite side of the valley. The site is, therefore, in a highly visible and sensitive location.

For nearly 100 years Uplands was a gentleman's country residence owned successively by three different families. After 1956 it began a new existence as a training centre; new buildings were added but the old house remained substantially unaltered. In the early 1980s Uplands was given a new lease of life. The service end of the original house was demolished and the front range became the centre of a radical new development, blending the best of the old with innovative modern design by one of the country's leading architectural practices. The philosophy extended to the grounds with new landscaping complimenting historic garden features and planting. The recent expansion of the use of the complex to a hotel and conference centre has made Uplands more accessible to a wider audience, enhancing its value as a community asset.

This report covers the history of Uplands during four periods, 1858-1900, 1900-1935, 1935-1956 and 1956 onwards. It then discusses the contribution made by the architects of the buildings and concludes with recommendations for further research, acknowledgements and finally the sources used by the writer.

1858 - 1900

In his 1862 *History of Buckinghamshire*, Sheahan describes Uplands thus:

“Uplands is the property and residence of Captain J.M.M. Hewett, Adjutant of the Royal Bucks King’s Own Militia. The house was built in 1859, in the Gothic style with castellated embellishments, and stands on an eminence surrounded by pleasure grounds, a lawn etc.”

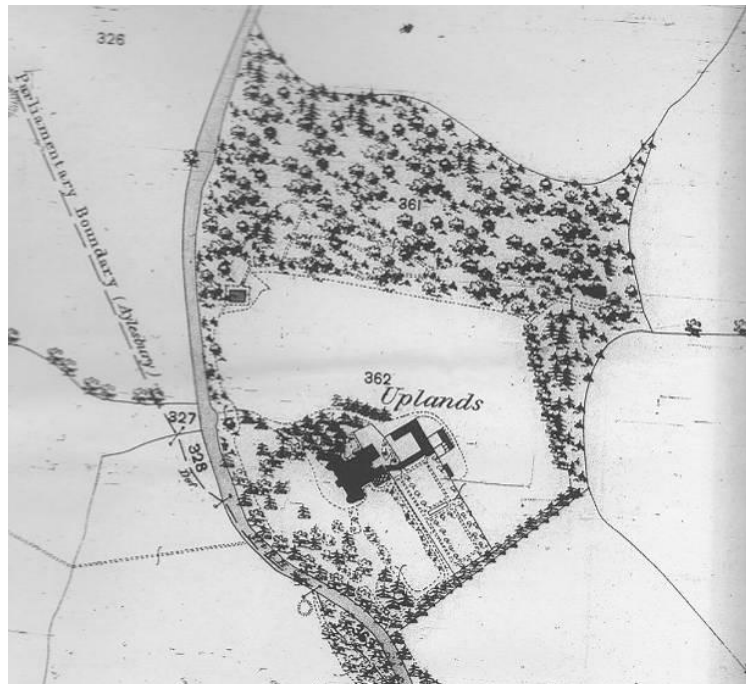
According to deeds held at the Centre for Bucks Studies (CBS) Hewett (then living at Loudwater) had bought some 135 acres of freehold farm land at Widmer End from Frances Fletcher on 25th March 1858. This included a nine-acre arable field called Nine Acres or Great Haggs (numbered 891 on the Hughenden Tithe map of 1844) which appears to be the site on which Uplands was built.

The deeds show Captain Hewett accumulating a substantial landholding between 1858 and 1874, variously called Widmer or Widmer End Farm, with several tenanted cottages. In 1865 a purchase of 40 acres for the sum of £1,900 included Birchin Grove Wood with an extra £465 paid for the timber.

The name Uplands was well-chosen for a house on this hill-top site which would have commanded splendid views over Hughenden valley to the west and looked down upon Hughenden Manor, already owned by Benjamin Disraeli, but not yet remodelled by the architect Edward Buckton Lamb.

Hewett apparently needed to borrow money to finance his later purchases. He mortgaged Ravensings Mere (now Ravensmere) and Birchin Grove for £1,600 in 1865 and Uplands itself was mortgaged for £1,500 in 1874. This mortgage deed refers to the mansion “recently erected.”

The first map to show Uplands is the first edition Ordnance Survey of 1880:



Map courtesy of the Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies

The 1880 map shows a substantial country house of symmetrical plan (perhaps emulating a 16th century E-plan house) with a stable-range on three sides of a yard to the rear of the house. The drive approached the front of the house obliquely with a branch going off to the stables. The landscape had clearly been designed; the map shows two walled gardens, some outbuildings on the south-east side of the house and a conservatory at the south-east (sunny) corner of the house. There also appears to be a sort of wilderness-walk in the woodland to the north of the house and a garden building near the road on the southern edge of the wood. This woodland was presumably the remnant of Birchin Grove Wood added to Hewett's estate in 1865.

The Hewett family

The four ten-yearly censuses from 1861 to 1891 show the Hewett family living at Uplands with their children and servants. John Maddy Moore Hewett had married Jemima Fleetwood at Blackburn, Lancashire in 1849. She was the daughter of a banker then living at Woodfold Park, a large country house at Mellor, near Blackburn. In 1851 the couple were living at Woodfold with the in-laws and their four-month old son, Harry Hyde Hewett. Whilst Jemima was a Lancashire lass from Preston, her husband had been born at Fort William, Calcutta in 1826 where his father, William Wright(e) Hewett was a surgeon with the East India Company. The 1851 census shows that John Maddy Moore Hewett was then a Lieutenant and Adjutant of the 62nd (Wiltshire) regiment. The 62nd had been stationed in India and suffered heavy casualties in the Battle of Ferozeshah during the First Sikh War of 1845. By the end of 1847 the regiment had returned to England. Hewett was appointed Adjutant in 1848 and was based in Bury at the time of his marriage in the following year. A posting to the 62nd's depot in Mullingar, Ireland, followed since the Hewett's baby son, Harry Hyde Hewett had been born there and their other son, William Fleetwood Maddy, was also born in Ireland, a year later. Three daughters followed, Florence born in 1858 in Wycombe (presumably at Loudwater where the Hewetts were living before Uplands was built), Alice and then Kathleen, both born later at Hughenden.

In late 1854 Hewett was appointed Captain Adjutant in the Royal Bucks Kings Own Militia. This appointment would have been made by the Militia's Colonel, the second Lord Carrington. On succeeding the Duke of Buckingham as Lord Lieutenant of the county in 1839 Lord Carrington moved the staff and headquarters of the Militia from Buckingham to his home at Wycombe Abbey. The Militia Act of 1852 which provided for the nationwide voluntary enlistment of 80,000 men was the cue for a grand recruitment drive. Carrington as Colonel was no mere figure-head but was determined to make his Militia into a professional fighting force. He lavished much of his own money on uniforms, equipment and a military band and built a new barracks at High Wycombe. Officers were hand-picked and not limited to the ranks of the local "squirearchy". No doubt Hewett's record of military service and as an Adjutant made him well-qualified for the job and, whilst not an established member of the Buckinghamshire gentry he was well-connected.

His father, William, had been one of the doctors to King William IV whilst his mother, Susan Moore, was the daughter of Revd Dr John Maddy, a canon of Ely, Rector of Somerton and a chaplain to Queen Victoria and the three monarchs before her! William and Susan had married in Suffolk in 1824 and must have returned to Bengal where their first two children, John and Louisa were born. The record of imprisonment for debt in Calcutta of an insolvent William Wright Hewett in 1830 suggests that their time in India was not a happy one. Louisa died aged only nine.

By the time William was appointed “Surgeon Extraordinary” to the King in 1834 they had clearly returned to England and settled in Brighton where their second son Sir William Nathan Wrichte Hewett was born that same year. He was to have a glorious career in the navy, winning the Victoria Cross and becoming a vice-admiral in charge of the Channel Fleet. John’s youngest brother, Edward Hyde Hewett followed him into the Royal Bucks King’s Own Militia as a Lieutenant. Perhaps he was the black-sheep of the family since papers at the CBS show that he resigned his commission after a scandalous event at Woolwich barracks.

William Hewett died in his 40s and Susan remarried in 1843. Her new husband was the Hon. Henry Edward John Upton, fourth and youngest son of the first Viscount Templeton. Her only son by this marriage, and so John’s half-brother, succeeded to the title as the 4th Viscount Templeton after Susan suffered the indignity of court proceedings to prove that both her marriage and child were legitimate. One of the Uptons was a general in the army and no doubt these connections did Hewett no harm in securing his new position with the Royal Bucks King’s Own Militia.

As administrator of the Militia Hewett would have been Lord Carrington’s “right-hand man”. There are many letters between the two in the Carrington archive at the Centre for Bucks Studies. The beginning of the relationship was rather inauspicious with Carrington censuring Hewett for writing letters not from the Militia HQ at Wycombe Abbey but from his home at Loudwater, before the move to Uplands. There is some evidence in the archive of Lord Carrington’s public and private appreciation of Hewett’s efficient and professional handling of the Militia’s affairs. In October 1865 Hewett wrote to thank Carrington for his gift of two orange trees and on occasion he went to Gayhurst to stay with the Carrington family.



Officers of the Royal Bucks King’s Own Militia in front of the orangery cloister at Wycombe Abbey. 1855. Captain Adjutant Hewett is on the far right. Unfortunately the photographer has cut off the Colonel, Lord Carrington on the left. (reproduced with kind permission of the Centre for Bucks Studies – ref. TA/2/10))

Whilst the Adjutant and Colonel were never likely to be social equals Hewett was one of the principal landowners in the area and Uplands was kept-up as a gentleman's residence with the appropriate quota of live-in servants - between five and six - with a cook, lady's maid, two housemaids and a footman generally appearing in the censuses, and a nurse for the two little girls in 1861. An advertisement was placed in *The Times* for a new footman in 1891 – “only abstainers need apply”! Other servants, to look after the grounds, horses, carriages etc, probably lived nearby, perhaps some in Hewett's tenanted cottages at Four Ashes.

Lord Carrington died in 1868 but Hewett continued as Adjutant with the Militia, until 1871, retiring with the rank of Major. In 1863 Hewett's place in Buckinghamshire society was recognised by his appointment as a Justice of the Peace for the County at the age of only 38. He retired as Chairman of the Bench in 1896. His fellow magistrates included Benjamin Disraeli and Philip Rose, a leading Conservative and Disraeli's friend and agent. Newspaper reports show that Hewett also supported the Tory cause. There are numerous mentions of Hewett in the *Bucks Herald*, mainly in his capacity as magistrate, but he was also a church warden at Hughenden and chairman of Hughenden Parish Council. His military background was perhaps in evidence when he resigned from the Parish Council in protest at their not following his ruling over a dispute concerning the church path. His complaint about the misbehaviour of local lads in Hughenden churchyard appears to have caused quite a stir, with reports even reaching the newspapers in Hull and Derby.

There is a report of the The Old Berkeley Foxhounds meeting at Uplands in 1876 and in May 1884 the *Bucks Herald* reported that a detachment of the Royal Bucks Yeomanry Cavalry proceeded to Uplands “the seat of Major Hewett” “where a good sharp drill was gone through”. His son, Harry Hyde Hewett, had been a Lieutenant in the Yeomanry.

Unfortunately there is little or no evidence of the relationship between Hewett and his landowning neighbours. A notice in the *London Gazette* of 26th July 1889 shows he was an executor of the estate of Dame Elizabeth Dashwood of West Wycombe Park. In his “*The Dashwoods of West Wycombe*” Sir Francis Dashwood describes Lady Elizabeth as a good friend of the Disraelis, who, of course, were neighbours of the Hewetts at Uplands. Whether Hewett was appointed executor because he was a friend of Lady Elizabeth, or just a respected and “safe pair of hands” is not clear. However it is an appointment which seems to have been something of a poisoned chalice since Sir Robert sued the Executors, eventually unsuccessfully, over the money Lady Elizabeth had received from felling woodlands on the West Wycombe estate.

Major Hewett sold the house at Uplands and retired to Eastbourne in 1900. The buyer was Thomas Somers Vernon Cocks, but the sale was to leave Hewett embroiled in more litigation. Apparently Hewett originally wanted to keep the farmland but later agreed a private sale to Mr Cocks. The estate agent claimed commission on the later sale, and won.

John Maddy Moore Hewett died on 14th October 1905 at his home in Eastbourne, his wife and eldest son having predeceased him. His estate was valued at over £32,000 (probably around £3M in today's values).

1900-1935

The Cocks family

Thomas Somers Vernon Cocks (generally known as Vernon) was born in London in 1850 and educated at Eton and Christchurch, Oxford. He was a member of the banking branch of the Somers-Cocks family more commonly associated with Eastnor Castle in Herefordshire. The eldest son of Thomas Somers Cocks, M.P for Reigate, Vernon was a partner in the family banking firm of Cocks, Biddulph & Co. which later became a part of Martins Bank, now absorbed into Barclays Bank. His connection with Buckinghamshire started in childhood when his father inherited Thames Bank, a house near the lock at Marlow (since lost in a fire). When Vernon inherited the Marlow house on his own father's death in 1899 he sold Thames Bank and bought Uplands in 1900 and the farmland in 1903.

It is thanks to Vernon's grandson that some of the title deeds to Uplands have been deposited in the CBS and an online history of the Cocks family gives useful information about Uplands (see on.) The 1901 census shows Vernon and his wife Ethel Mary (daughter of Horace D. Fellowes) living at Uplands with their three daughters, Margaret, Jane, Murial (sic) and son Charles Vernon Somers Cocks.

By the time of the 1911 census it looks like Murial and Charles had left home with only the two unmarried daughters living at Uplands with their parents.

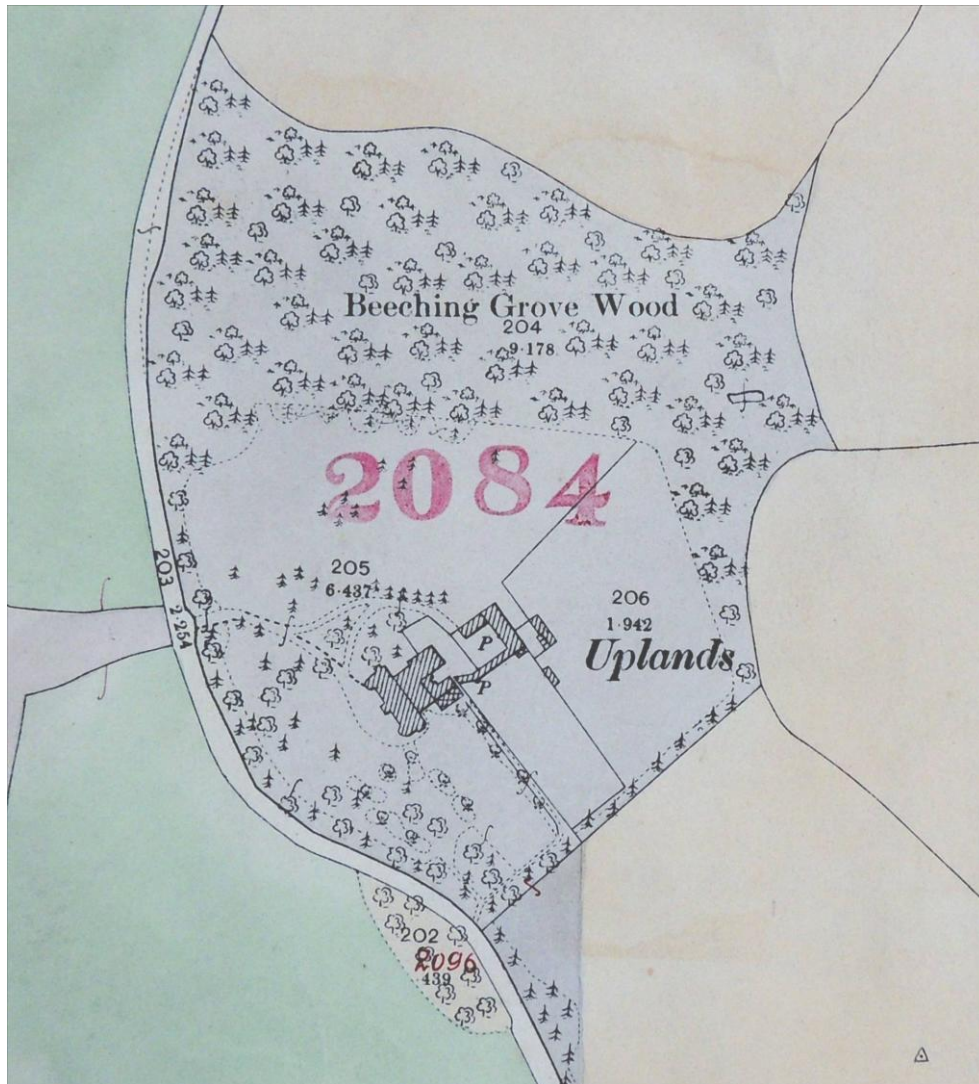
Uplands remained a gentleman's country residence presumably supported by rent from the farm estate. Both censuses show that the Cocks family had six servants living in the house; a cook, ladies maid, parlour maid, two housemaids and a kitchen maid. Like Major Hewett before him Cocks was also a Justice of the Peace (his appointment was recorded in the Bucks Herald 14th February 1903).

Vernon remained at Uplands until his death in 1932. His obituary in the *Bucks Herald* says he retired from the bank in 1920. Ethel moved away and died in 1936. She is buried with her husband and daughter Jane in the churchyard at Hughenden, close to the Church House.

Changes at Uplands?

By the start of the 20th century the map evidence indicates that there had been little or no change at Uplands, apart from the loss of the building in the woods. The walled gardens appear to have been amalgamated into one and lost some of their planting.

The following map was used for the 1910 Valuation Survey (the so-called Lloyds George Domesday) based on the second edition Ordnance Survey map of 1898.



1910 valuation survey map ref. IR126/9/93 held at the National Archives, Kew

The Field Book for the 1910 Valuation Survey unfortunately has no sketch plan of the house and outbuildings but lists the rooms, and so gives us some indication of the house-plan. The date of the actual survey is not given but other High Wycombe surveys were generally done in 1912 or 1913. The extent of the house, stabling and grounds is given as just over nine acres. The area of the woodland, referred to as Beeching Wood in the field book but Beeching Grove Wood on the map, was also nine acres. This is presumably Hewett's Birchin Wood.

The assessment gives the sale price in 1900 as £8,600 and mentions subsequent expenditure of £240 on the grounds and £1,350 on the house, so an indication that a considerable sum had been spent by Cocks on modernising the house.

Building materials were stated to be brick, cement and slate. The list of rooms is in abbreviated form (so some have been guessed at) but the accommodation appears to have been as follows:

Entrance vestibule; hall - board floor; billiard room – board floor 20 x 18; library 20 x 17.6; gun room, smoke room, lavatory; drawing room 2 bay 18 x 28 with marble mantelpiece; dining room 28.6 x 18 & 2 bay marble mould. Pantry; servants' hall; kitchen; scullery; larder.

Lean-to passage; boot room; lamp room, laundry; two cellars.

1 bedroom; 2 small bedrooms; 1 bedroom & bay; 1 bedroom; 1 bedroom; 1 bedroom; bedroom & bay; 2 bedrooms; WC & box room; 4 bedrooms; WC & 1 H ? C; 1 bedroom.

“No bath. Only rain water”. Oil room; cycle room, kennel.

So there appear to have been ten bedrooms and another five, probably for the servants.

In the grounds the following are listed:

Brick, wood and slate woodbarn, potting sheds and two greenhouses measuring 15 x 37 and 8 x 17. [The former may be the conservatory already noted.]

Brick, flint and slate harness room; coachhouse; oddplace; lumber room and washing place all with a loft over.

Built of wood and slate were 4 boxes, 2 pigstyes, and sheds.

Brick and slate acetylene gas house.

Finally there was a tennis lawn.

Cottages and an orchard at Four Ashes also owned by Cocks were included in the valuation of Uplands. They were tied cottages occupied by James Nash and Charles Scott rent-free.

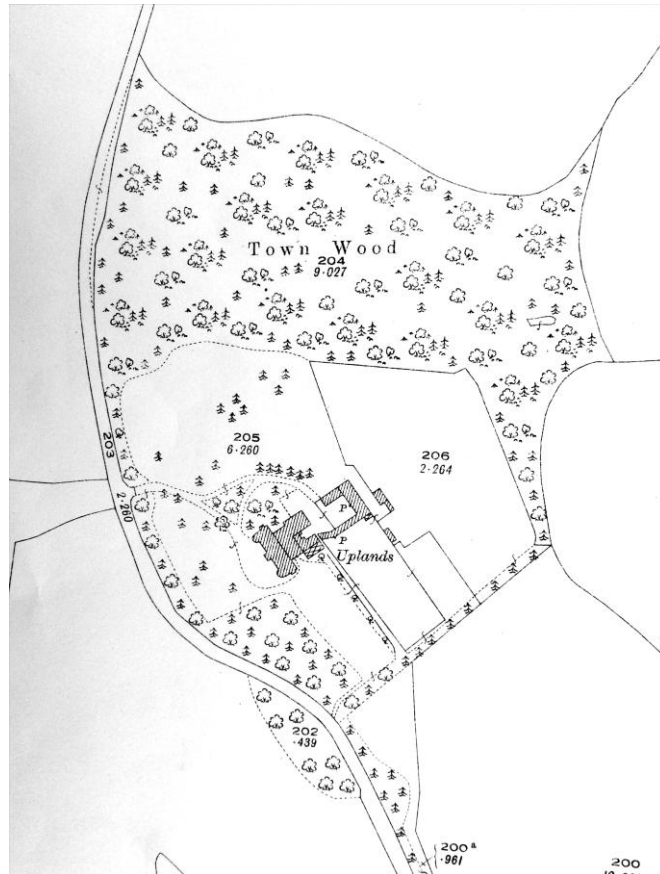
There is a description of the house in J.V. Somers Cocks' *History of the Cocks Family* (p.185):

“Uplands...had a considerable acreage attached to it even if the farm and most of the fields were let off. Its two main rooms, the drawing and dining rooms, were for example connected by a passage which, including the hall, was twenty-two yards long, the length of a cricket pitch, and there was a library, a billiards room, the large hall and a box and gun room apart from the kitchen quarters. Upstairs there were some eight bedrooms. The entire water supply was obtained from the extensive roofs which drained into a large underground tank and the water had then to be hand-pumped up to the storage tanks in the roof space. The gardens were extensive with a croquet lawn, a large walled kitchen garden, a long herbaceous border and a wood. There were also stables round the yard and two cottages lived in by the gardener and the coachman (later to become the chauffeur) respectively. There was also an indoor staff of at least half a dozen.”

Taking the evidence of the maps, 1910 survey and the family history description we can attempt to reconstruct the plan of the house.

The central entrance porch led into a vestibule. On either side of this were the principal rooms; probably the dining room and billiard room on one side and the drawing room and library on the other. The vestibule led onto a corridor running crossways linking the dining room and drawing room along the back of the billiard room and library. All this front range of Uplands, with the rooms above, remains today. Beyond this would have been the entrance hall and staircase and then the service rooms arranged in a quadrangle around a light well all of which have been lost.

The 1925 Ordnance Survey map does not indicate any changes in the buildings but does show what was probably the addition of a tennis court next to the walled garden. By this time the wood was called Town Wood.



1925 Ordnance survey map courtesy of Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies

In 1934 Charles Somers Cocks, Vernon and Ethel's son, put the Uplands Estate on the market. *The Times* of 3rd July 1934 carried an advertisement for the sale, either in whole or lots.

The whole estate being sold amounted to "about 344 acres". This included the dairy farm at Widmer End with four cottages, a small country house (perhaps Ravensmere) two smaller detached houses and Poyntatts Farm at Fingest (the home of Vernon's brother Heneage, the noted Bucks antiquary).

Uplands itself is described as follows:

"Attractive country residence well sheltered from the North. Hall, billiards room, 3 reception rooms, 14 bed and dressing rooms, 2 bath rooms, compact offices. Garage and Stable Block. Lodge. Electric Light. Central Heating. Good drainage. CHARMING PLEASURE GARDENS. Well timbered grounds, tennis court.

There had clearly been some improvements during the Cocks' tenure such as installation of bathrooms, electric light and central heating.

The small and rather grainy photograph in the newspaper shows the front of Uplands looking much as it does now, except that it has a large front porch (no doubt the explanation of the "E-shape" of the house on the maps).

In 1935 there was an auction sale of furniture and effects. The sale catalogue is at the CBS listing the items by room thus:

maids' bedrooms; eight further bedrooms; landing staircase and hall; library; dining room; domestic offices (servants' hall, pantry etc); kitchen and scullery; garage.

The omission of mention of the drawing and billiard rooms is probably accounted for by the sale being held there and/or the many paintings and pieces of china being on display in those rooms.

1935 -1956

The next owner to appear in the directories as living at Uplands is Sir Alexander Robertson Murray (1872-1956). His photograph in the National Portrait Gallery can be seen online:

<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw219919/Sir-Alexander-Robertson-Murray>

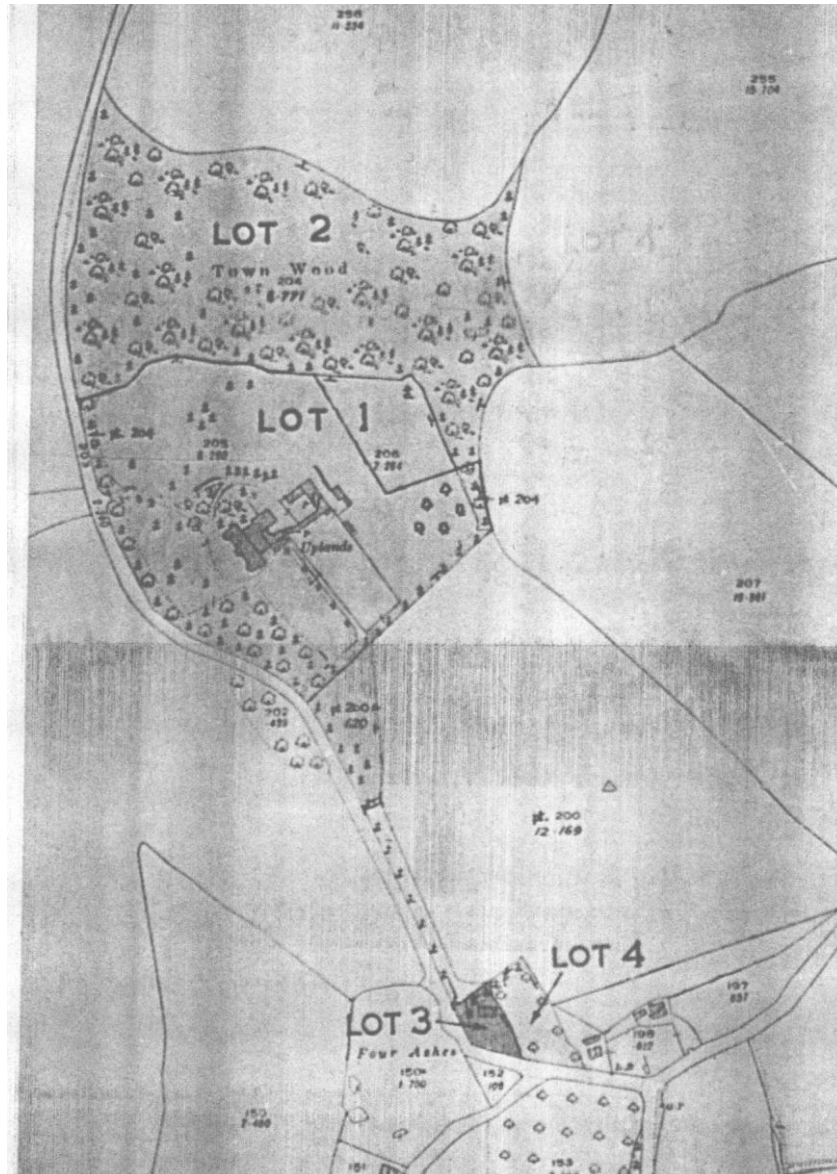
Coincidentally Murray, like Hewett before him, had strong ties with India, and in particular Bengal. The son of a Scottish railway official, as a young accountant he went out to Calcutta, working his way up to become head of two firms based in Clive Street, then the bastion of English mercantile trade in imperial Calcutta. He was evidently a prominent figure in the commercial life of Bengal, becoming President of the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and representing it in the Bengal Legislature. He sat on various committees and commissions relating to Indian business and economics. In recognition of his work he was made C.B.E in 1916, knighted in 1921 and created Knight of Grace of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (K.C.I.E.) in 1936.

On retiring from Bengal in 1928 he moved to England where he was appointed director on numerous company boards, as well as being on the governing body of the School of Oriental and African Studies.

He and his wife Margaret (nee Grant) had a son and two daughters. *The Times* of 19th April 1944 carried a notice of the marriage of Captain A. Grant Murray, The Seaforth Highlanders, only son of Sir Alexander Murray, K.C.I.E, C.B.E., and Lady Murray, Uplands, Hughenden to Pamela Mary Upham, A.T.S. Tragically Captain Murray was to die later that year whilst serving with his regiment, probably in Normandy. His name is included on the plaque in the north aisle of Hughenden Parish Church which commemorates the men of the parish who died on active service during World War II.

The house and parts of the original Uplands estate were up for sale again after Sir Alexander Murray's death in 1956 (*The Times*, 11th July 1956). The advert reads "...the well-known country house. Five reception and 14 bed rooms. 4 bath rooms, modern domestic offices, central heating, 74 acres. In superb order throughout. A detached country cottage, (2 living and 3 beds, bath etc). 8 ¼ acres of thriving woodland and a delightful orchard building site. For sale by auction in lots shortly..."

1956 onwards



1956 auction plan taken from Wycombe District Council planning file WR/1214/56

This copy of the 1956 auction plan shows the property for sale in 4 lots; Lot 1 Uplands, Lot 2 Town Wood, Lot 3 Uplands Cottage and Lot 4 looks like an orchard. The sale of Uplands and the woodland to the Co-operative Permanent Building Society (Co-op) were completed in 1957 and Uplands became a conference and training centre managed for the building society by The Young Women's Christian Association of Great Britain. The Co-op already had its Central Registry in High Wycombe's High Street and its chief solicitor happened to live in Crendon Street so it is perhaps not surprising that it seized upon the chance of acquiring Uplands when it came on the market. (pers.comm.)

The subsequent history of changes to the buildings at Uplands can be traced through the planning records at Wycombe District Council although the quality of those on microfiche is poor and parts are illegible. Some plans are so degraded that they are completely indecipherable.

The building society had been granted permission for the change of use in November 1956 (WR/1214/56) and in 1958 it gained consent for alterations to the main house and for the construction of a new bedroom block and lecture hall (WR/345/58).

This new, flat-roofed block in modern style was to the south-east of the house and connected to it by a covered passage. The plans were drawn up by Norman Royce, Hurley and Stewart, architects of 3 Field Court, Grays Inn.

In 1959 there was a further planning permission to convert the stable block and coach house into staff flats and bedrooms and to convert some rooms in the main house to new uses and for a new kitchen (WR/1427/59).

In 1970 the Co-op changed its name to the Nationwide Building Society and in 1973 its in-house architect, D.S. Hine, prepared plans for conversion of some bedrooms to bathrooms (permission WR/1635/73).

An undated post card produced by Nationwide Building Society shows how Uplands looked from the air after the new additions.



Image of postcard kindly supplied by Dr Anthony Edwards

A brochure advertising the conference centre (copy at High Wycombe library ref. L452.37p) also carries this aerial photograph with other photographs and descriptions of parts of the interior.

By 1980 the building society evidently wanted to carry-out a radical upgrade of its facilities at Uplands. One of the country's leading architectural practices, Edward Cullinan Architects, was commissioned and discussions began with Wycombe District Council. The result was a comprehensive scheme of alterations to the historic house and for the construction of new buildings in a contemporary style permitted under reference W/5041/81. The landscaping works were designed by landscape architect Georgina Livingston. This work and later alterations are discussed below.

1956 onwards

THE ARCHITECTS and MODERN DEVELOPMENTS

The original building – attributed to E.B. Lamb

The first (1960) edition of Pevsner's *Buildings of England, Buckinghamshire* (page 173) describes Uplands thus:

"Uplands, Kingshill. 1859. With pointed window arches and heavy castellation. It could be by *Lamb*, judging by the handling".

There is no mention of an architect for the original house in the second (1984) edition by Pevsner and Williamson, where it is described as "a small Tudor-style country house of 1859 in yellow brick." This edition (page 407) dwells on the 1980s work (see on).

C. R. Gee, in the second (July 1988) edition of his booklet at the RIBA library, *Edward Buckton Lamb, architect 1806-1869*, includes Uplands in the list of houses designed by Lamb and also gives the date 1859.

Edward Buckton Lamb (1805-1869) was an architect who aroused strong emotions. Much of his practice was in church architecture, both in restoration and new-build, and his work was fiercely criticised, even derided, by the Ecclesiologist and the purists of the Camden Society because he refused to conform to their ideas about the "correct" style, i.e. Middle Pointed. In a lecture of 1949 the architect and critic H.S. Goodhart-Rendel coined the phrase "rogue architect" for Lamb (along with Thomas Harris, John Shaw and J.W. Wild).

Some later architectural historians such as James Stevens Curl have taken a more balanced view of Lamb as an Eclectic: "The Rogues employed an originality, a bold eclecticism, and a showmanship (perhaps more suited to commercialism) that did not go down well among the arbiters of taste." (p.242)

Whilst Lamb's individualism upset advocates of the "true" Gothic Revival, Lamb was a busy architect; Farrington says that "between 1845 and 1869 his small practice produced over a 100 buildings, including some thirty to forty churches, a London hotel, and a consumption hospital. He entered upwards of 25 architectural competitions and, while all but three of these came to nothing, his designs invariably attracted much critical praise."

Lamb's relationship with Buckinghamshire began with the restoration of Chequers for Sir Robert Frankland-Russell Bt. in 1937. Russell helped Lamb set up his practice and Lady Russell continued this support after her husband's death, recommending Lamb to her family and friends. As well as work on the main house at Chequers, Lamb designed estate buildings and the local school at Ellesborough (now a centre for Girl Guides). This connection led to the commission to design Prestwood church, school and vicarage (1848-9). Some of Lamb's work in the county, such as Great Brickhill Manor, has been demolished but surviving buildings include the Judge's Lodgings in Aylesbury and Great Kimble vicarage, as well as several church restorations. The remodelling of St. Huberts at Gerrards Cross is "attributed fairly securely" to Lamb (Pevsner & Williamson, page 343).

Lamb's best known work was for the Disraelis at Hughenden Manor, across the valley and in sight of Uplands, where he designed the Isaac Disraeli monument (1862) and remodelled and refaced the house (1862-3) - although Pevsner says he was remodelling the interior in the late 1850s. Pevsner is quite withering in his condemnation of Lamb's changes to the house at Hughenden. For example he describes the stables and coach house as having "characteristically perverse details."

Perverse possibly but Lamb's individualism nonetheless charmed his many clients and achieved good reviews in contemporary journals such as *The Builder*. Patrons were pleased with his originality and non-conformity, perhaps because Lamb aimed for a combination of the picturesque and utility. Disraeli was certainly a satisfied client and expressed his delight with the changes at Hughenden.

Gee cites no authority for his attribution of Uplands to Lamb. Identification of Lamb's buildings has been hampered by the loss of his archive and the fact that his work was often not advertised. Lamb is best known for his churches, where his work was publicised, but he built or remodelled many houses. Kaufman has demonstrated how Lamb's career depended on the patronage of the landed classes. He was recommended by one client to another through the sometimes labyrinthine networks of family and political ties. His clients were generally people who did not need, or want, to advertise themselves or their houses so much of his work may have gone unreported in contemporary journals such as *The Builder* or *Building News*.

Thus attribution often depends on observation of style and details, as for instance, in 1960 when Pevsner referred to "the handling". Uplands does not fit neatly into any particular stylistic box, being a combination of Tudor and Gothic. The loss of its front porch has given it a rather flat appearance, without the exuberance it must have once had. Nonetheless it retains the castellation, oddly shaped window arches, and pale brick with diaper work, all somewhat idiosyncratic. In modern parlance it still looks rather "quirky"!

Lamb is said to have been introduced to the Disraelis by the local Conservative party manager, Sir Philip Rose, who thought Lamb to be "not only a remarkable architect, but a genius and an artist" (Gee, p.23). Rose lived at Rayners in Penn. His father, like John Maddy Moore Hewett's father, was a doctor and had been a surgeon in India so might there have been some connection? As neighbours Hewett and Disraeli must have been known to each other. The complex web of social ties, local or otherwise, may well have been at work in the choice of architect for Uplands.

The 1980s additions – Edward Cullinan Architects

The second edition of Pevsner (p.407) makes much of the work done by Edward Cullinan Architects in 1982-3 for what was then the Nationwide Building Society Training and Conference Centre. As evidence of the significance of the work it includes a black and white photograph of the building (opposite p.417). The entry is set out in full below:

“A small Tudor-style country house of 1859 in yellow brick given a frill of red brick battlements and bold flanking pavilions (by *Edward Cullinan Architects*, 1978-86). This apparently calm Palladian composition is fraught with complexity and contradictions. The mixture of colours, materials and whimsical details is rich – and perhaps indigestible – with the solidity of smooth red brick and lumpy Portland stone combined with coloured steel, glass and timber fretworks. The plan is ingenious. The symmetrical front screens two open courts of study bedrooms which have brick cloisters. The back of the original house has been sheared off and replaced by a long wing with a dramatic top-lit staircase and bridge spanning old and new. The main entrance is at the side, a mysterious slit into a spine corridor reached from a maze of mounded garden.”

We know from other sources that the “frill” of battlements must have been original although the planning documentation indicates that Cullinan’s rebuilt it in “soft red clay bricks, not sandfaced as now” (letter dated 9th January 1981). It is certainly distinctive, thanks to the contrast with the pale brick of the walls and looks like a salute to Disraeli’s red brick battlemented house on the other side of the valley.

Edward Cullinan Architects is a co-operative practice established by Ted Cullinan in 1965. It continues today under the name “Cullinan Studio”. The practice is nationally and internationally significant and has won numerous architectural awards. Ted Cullinan was awarded the RIBA’s 2008 Royal Gold Medal. See the firm’s website:

<http://www.edwardcullinanarchitects.com/practice/about.html>

which has photographs of Uplands in its “Mixed use/workplace” project archive.

The special architectural interest of some other Cullinan buildings has already been recognised by listing.

The 1984 RIBA book *Edward Cullinan Architects* features Uplands in chapter 5: “Working with old buildings”:

“A symmetrical house on a hilltop has been stripped of its many rambling and rather battered additions and is restored as a hall and four South-facing social rooms and meeting rooms on each of its two floors. It becomes the centrepiece and the pivot for a much larger composition. The hall is extended Northwards through a new two-storey grand hall that leads on North to dining rooms downstairs, seminar rooms up. Link blocks of bedrooms stretch East and West of the house and beyond the links are two pavilions. By foot, you can enter the building on axis; by car, you park under the trees and proceed direct or via the maze to any room or to the central hall where the reception desk is. The symmetry of the original house is respected, asymmetrical movement accepted.”

The sketches reproduced in the book show a cloister, and with the new buildings arranged around courtyards the architects were aiming for a college-style, cloistered campus, akin to their design for Worcester College, Oxford (not built), clearly with the purpose of Uplands as a training centre in mind.

Unfortunately the quality of the micro-fiche planning records at Wycombe District Council is poor and much of the documentation is not legible. A letter from Cullinan to the council dated 9th January 1981 enclosing the detailed plans outlines the philosophy behind the scheme:

“The centrepiece of the renewed Uplands will be the south facing façade of the existing house, thoroughly restored to its original form, underpinned to secure it against settlement, the windows renewed and painted white, ironwork restored and the castellated parapets rebuilt in their original delicate form in soft red clay bricks (not sandfaced as now) with stone tops as they were before the post-war rebuilding.” The “rather jumbled warren of old kitchens and service rooms” behind were to be demolished, as was the 1950s additions. “The existing coach house beyond this building will be retained in its present form.”

Unmentioned in this letter, consent to demolish the front porch, said by Cullinan to be a post-war version of unattractive Fletton brick, was given in 1982. The Cullinan scheme has retained the two-storey front range of the house containing the ground floor principal rooms: main hall, library, billiards room, drawing room, dining room and the crossways-passage which runs between the drawing and dining rooms which are in the wings at either end of the house.

Parts of the 1981 letter are illegible but it does stress the symmetry of the buildings with the two end pavilions akin to a Palladian country house, and cloisters creating an academic feeling. The materials with red clay brick details framing the “pale calceous limestone walls” would match the red brick parapets and Gault brick walls of the old house. Roofs, as on the house, were to be of slate.

The landscaping had been carefully considered “so as to preserve and enhance the woodland framework and lawns” and car parking arranged to be out of sight and to allow views of the house and new wings “across the lawn framed by trees.”

The letter concludes:

“It has been our aim throughout to take the best of the old, the main façade of the house, the coach house, the old garden walls, the grass parterres framed by mature woodland and to improve the composition of the whole within its own terms: we have retained the domestic character of the house in its garden and made it slightly larger, respecting the *genus loci* of this important site high on the side of the Hughenden Valley.”

The Cullinan archive at the RIBA library includes a feasibility study dated 8th July 1980. This confirms that the front part of the original house was kept at the insistence of Wycombe District Council: “The main front section of the existing house contains well-proportioned rooms within a characteristic late 19th century elevation, accommodation of a type which remains useful. Local planning officers have indicated that retention of this façade will be a requirement in any future grant of planning permission.”

The *Architects Journal* of 18th August 1982 reported that the British Architecture 1982 Exhibition at the RIBA featured details of Uplands, a “conference centre to be completed next year”. The Cullinan work at Uplands was reviewed well in the architectural press of the time. Articles in the *Architects Journal* (August 1984) and *Architectural Review* (September 1983 and July 1985)) feature photographs and plans.

Construction started in 1982 and was finished by Christmas 1983. Some trees were lost, but others planted, as part of the scheme. A letter dated 28th April 1983 from the landscape architect, Georgina Livingston, refers to a large cedar and Wellingtonia at the front of the house; these splendid specimens remain today. A grand re-opening in May 1984 was timed to coincide with the Nationwide's centenary celebrations.

Kenneth Powell's 1995 monograph *Edward Cullinan Architects* is a detailed study of the practice's designs, both built and not executed, and sets Uplands into the context of the firm's output. He writes (p.30):

"The practice was probably chosen because the project involved retaining, converting and extending an existing historic building – a 'Gothick' house which looks c1800 but is actually of 1859. Though the client saw the centre as a very serious workplace, the architects were determined that there should also be a clear element of enjoyment. Socialising and relaxing, they argued, were important to the success of the events taking place there. Tony Peake played an important role in the scheme: he had come to Cullinan from Evans & Shalev and had a justly deserved reputation as a good organiser and strategic thinker, though his vision of architecture was perhaps less radical than Ted Cullinan's. Nationwide was, in fact, prepared to think quite radically, since they particularly wanted a low-energy building that was economical to run. They responded positively to Cullinan's notion that the centre should have something of the character of a university, a place with character and identity which would inspire the employees who stayed there. The completed scheme is finely balanced between formality and informality, expressiveness and discipline. (Cullinan wonders whether the formal mood should not have been broken by placing one of the end pavilions at an angle). It is radical, rigorous and completely modern, but very much rooted in the site and the landscape around it."

After further describing the buildings Powell continues: "The control which the architects (working with the landscape architect Georgina Livingston) were given over the setting has paid off, and buildings and gardens form a happy totality. Here is a strong concern for context but quite lacking in sentimentality or nostalgia. It exemplifies the Cullinan office on top form."

Apart from accolades from the architectural community the quality of the design of the new buildings at Uplands was recognised both locally and nationally by two awards; the Malcolm Dean Design Award granted by Wycombe District Council in 1985 and a Civic Trust Award in 1986. Ted Cullinan gave a talk on his work to the High Wycombe Society and an exhibition was mounted in the public library (*Bucks Free Press*, 18th Oct. 1985).

The Cullinan archive has been deposited at the RIBA library which is currently undergoing alterations, resulting in limited access to the archive. Photo-transparencies of Uplands (ref CULL11-16) will not be available for viewing until 2014. Photoprints (ref. 459/23-AP459/510) and drawings/correspondence (ref. J200301) are in the RIBA store at Fulham and not generally accessible since they have not yet been catalogued. The writer has inspected this archive which contains numerous rolled-up drawings, boxes of correspondence and photographs. Whilst many of the drawings relate to the 1982-3 work most of the other documentation and photographs post-date the original Cullinan work. Regrettably there are no photographs of the old house before the partial demolition. A small undated and unlabelled plan appears to show the house in its pre-1982 state confirming the arrangement hypothesized earlier in this report.

By 1986 the Cullinan archive shows that Nationwide had a pressing need for additional premises on the site and Edward Cullinan Architects were again commissioned to design a new training centre with Georgina Livingston (of Livingston McIntosh Associates) again responsible for landscaping. J.M. Jones Construction Ltd of Maidenhead were the builders, Benfield & Loxley of Oxford who had done the 1982-3 buildings having gone into liquidation. This new training centre now forms the north-westernmost building in the Uplands complex.

Planning records available online on the Wycombe District Council website show several subsequent planning permissions. The most significant of these was in 1994 (ref. 94/05684/FUL) for alterations to the existing coach house to create 13 bedrooms, including replacement doors and windows and rebuilding of the garage block.

It seems from the 1980 feasibility study mentioned earlier that the coach-house had been spared demolition by the original extension plans in order to save money. In 1989 Cullinan, whilst recognising that the coach house with its cobbled yard contributed historic associations, prepared a proposal for replacement of the coach house, thus closing the fourth (northern) side of their original campus plan. This proposal was evidently never implemented and the coach house still retains its 19th century character.

Since the acquisition of Uplands by the De Vere group around five years ago the training centre use has been extended to a hotel and conference centre with a wider public now able to enjoy the buildings and grounds.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Inspection of the buildings.
- Landscape and tree surveys.
- Further research in the Edward Cullinan archive at the RIBA library.
- Apart from the 1970s postcard the only historic photograph of Uplands found so far is that in *The Times* sale advertisement of 1956. There is an indication (verbal comm) that a member of the Cocks family may hold some old photographs.
- The known owners, Hewett, Cocks and Murray, were all substantial local landowners and establishment figures. More could be found out about them and their families by further research in national and local archives and the press. In particular it would be interesting to find out more about how the Hewetts interacted with their neighbours, especially the Disraelis.
- I am grateful to Mrs Janet Idle for telling me about her research on the history of Hughenden parish which is a valuable resource for further study. Local people may well be able to provide photographs, documents or anecdotal evidence.
- The in-house journal of the Co-operative Permanent Buildings Society is reported to have several photographs and articles about Uplands (pers comm.)

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