

THE CLARKES AND TAN YARD WHARF: A 19th-CENTURY INDUSTRIAL SITE IN FENNY STRATFORD, AND ITS OWNERS

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A programme of archaeological work was undertaken in 2007/8 on a former industrial site alongside the Grand Union Canal in the High Street, Fenny Stratford, in advance of the redevelopment. The site was first developed for industrial use during the 19th century, and originally comprised a brickyard, canal wharf and house belonging to Gregory Odell Clarke, one of Fenny Stratford's more notable entrepreneurs during the 19th century. Archaeological excavation revealed a brick-built canal dock alongside the canal, and traces of associated buildings. A detailed survey of the house was undertaken, revealing that it was in fact an 18th-century structure that had been extended, remodelled and refurbished in the late 19th century, probably by Clarke's son William Edward. Research into the Clarke family, undertaken in the preparation of this article, has shed light on the Clarke family and their association with the site and the locality.

BACKGROUND

In 2007/8 a former industrial site on the south-eastern edge of Fenny Stratford was subject to residential redevelopment. As part of the planning process, a programme of archaeological work involving desk-based study, excavation, historic building recording and a watching brief was required in relation to the planning application by Milton Keynes Council's Archaeological Officer. This work was undertaken by Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd (ASC), to site-specific strategies agreed with the MKC Archaeological Officer. Although none of the investigation results were in themselves deemed worthy of publication at the time, taken together and with the addition of subsequent historical research they present a picture of industrial development at Fenny Stratford in the 19th century, and of one of the local families who made it possible.

The archives resulting from the archaeological fieldwork related to this site are deposited with the County Museum, under accession numbers AYBCM: 2007.51 and AYBCM: 2007.162. Copies of the detailed reports prepared by ASC (Zeepvat 2004; Hancock 2006; Zeepvat 2007) are held by the MK Historic Environment Record (HER); some can also be accessed online through the

Archaeology Data Service ([www.http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/](http://www.archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/greylit/)).

SITE DESCRIPTION

The development site was centred on NGR SP 8844 3416, on the south-eastern (towpath) side of the Grand Union Canal and to the north-east of Fenny Stratford High Street, which crosses the canal and the river Ouzel, continuing south-eastwards towards London (Fig. 1). The site is located on a south-east facing slope at an elevation of c.70m OD: the land here falls quite steeply from c.78m OD at the crossroads in Fenny Stratford to c.67m OD at the river, a horizontal distance of only 400m. The underlying geology is Oxford clay.

Prior to development the site, formerly known as *Tan Yard Wharf* (now Millward Drive), was disused and partly overgrown. It extended over an irregular area of c.2.5ha, bordered by the High Street to the south, the canal to the west, the Bletchley-Bedford railway line to the north and the river to the east. The north-west quarter of the site was occupied by the former BPCC paper recycling plant. Much of the central area had been excavated to some depth as a result of decontamination following demolition of Reckitt & Coleman's chemical works. On the west side, adjacent to the

canal, was *Wharf Cottage*, a brick-built detached house constructed in the 1960s. On the south side of the site, adjacent to the canal bridge, was a three-storey detached house of 19th-century date, hereafter referred to as *The Villa*.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Fenny Stratford High Street and the London road follow the line of the Roman Watling Street, which was probably constructed soon after the Conquest along the line of advance taken by the *XIV Gemina* Legion from London to the Midlands and Wales. The original course of Watling Street north-westwards from the Roman settlement of *Magiovinium*, on the east bank of the Ouzel, ran to the north-east of the present straight road alignment, following Belvedere Lane northwards to Belvedere Farm, then turning north-westwards, crossing the river by either a ford or a bridge, and climbing the hill (known locally as 'The Hollow', now Watling Terrace) to re-join the

present alignment at the canal bridge. Although by AD1600 the Roman river crossing had been replaced by a six-arched humpbacked bridge on the site of the present river bridge (Croft & Mynard 1993, 51), the steep alignment up The Hollow remained in use until the Grand Junction Canal was opened to Fenny Stratford in 1800 (Faulkner 1993, 16 & 20). To bridge the canal on the existing road alignment would have created an even steeper slope than already existed, so the river bridge was rebuilt and an embankment with a more gradual incline was constructed north-westwards from it to carry Watling Street across the canal and re-join the High Street. Markham (1973, 319) notes that the cost of these works was £600. The original canal bridge was rebuilt in its present wider form by the County Council in 1927, truncating the front garden of *The Villa*.

Prior to the creation of civil parishes in the mid-19th century, Fenny Stratford fell within the parishes of Bletchley, Water Eaton and Simpson. The Tan Yard Wharf site lay within Simpson: a map

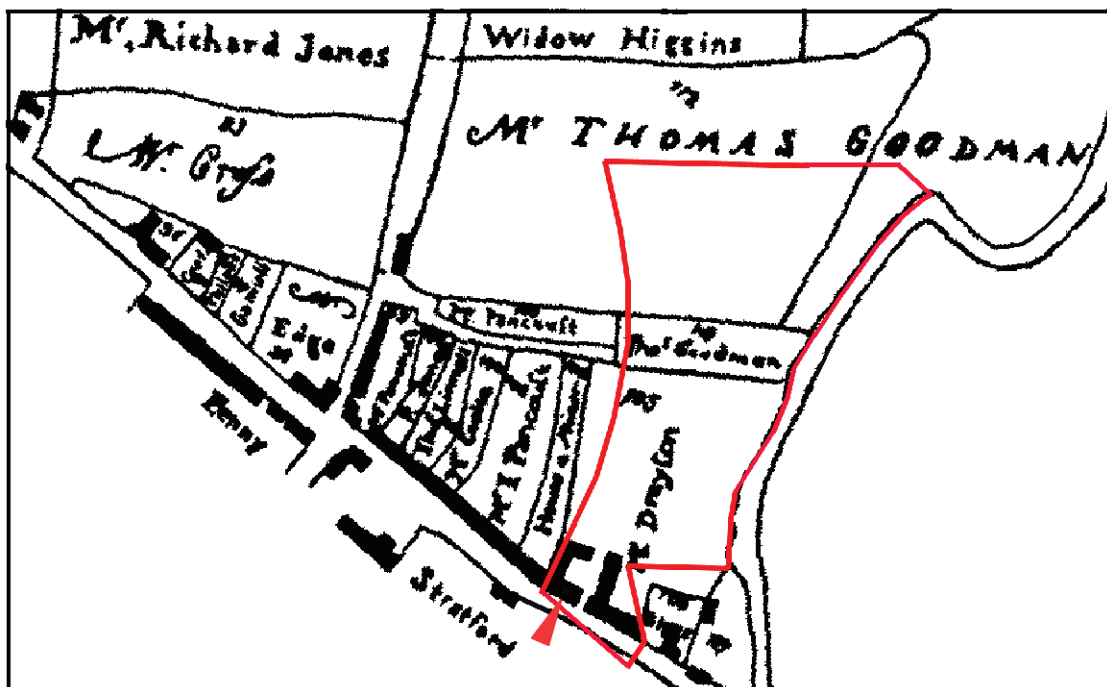


FIGURE 2 Extract from Simpson estate map, 1781 (CBS Ma 261/LT)
Development site boundary in red: site of the Villa is arrowed

of the parish dated 1781 (CBS Ma 261/LT: Fig. 2) shows the southern part of the site belonging to Mr Drayton, while the northern part comprised three fields belonging to Mr Thomas Goodman. The High Street frontage is shown as fully developed: the site of The Villa is occupied by a similar-sized building, with buildings around a square yard to the rear (possibly an inn? *pers. comm.* B. Giggins). This was open to the east, with access from the High Street.

The arrival of the canal in Fenny Stratford and its subsequent continuation northwards did much to promote the expansion of local industries, notably brickmaking, which exploited the abundant deposits of Oxford clay in the area surrounding Bletchley. One local entrepreneur to take advantage of this was Gregory Odell Clarke, who opened a brickworks to the north of The Hollow in 1819 (Markham 1975, 290), and established Tan Yard Wharf on the canalside north of

the High Street, presumably about the same time. In 1869 the brickworks was extended to include the land east of the canal wharf (BCM 1982). Markham (1975, 290) credits Clarke's son, William Edward, with the construction of the 'large house' on the site, presumably meaning The Villa, before 1877. In contrast Woodfield (1986, 39, E39) states that The Villa was built by Gregory Odell Clarke in about 1860.

The origins of the site name, Tan Yard Wharf, remain uncertain. Although it strongly suggests that a tan yard existed in this part of Fenny Stratford, no historical or archaeological evidence has been found for one to date. In his chapter on local industries in the area, Markham (1975, 170) mentions only Sharp & Woollard's tan yard in Church Street, Stony Stratford. With its proximity to Watling Street, along which raw materials could have been brought in and cured hides dispatched, and to abundant supplies of water from the Ouse,

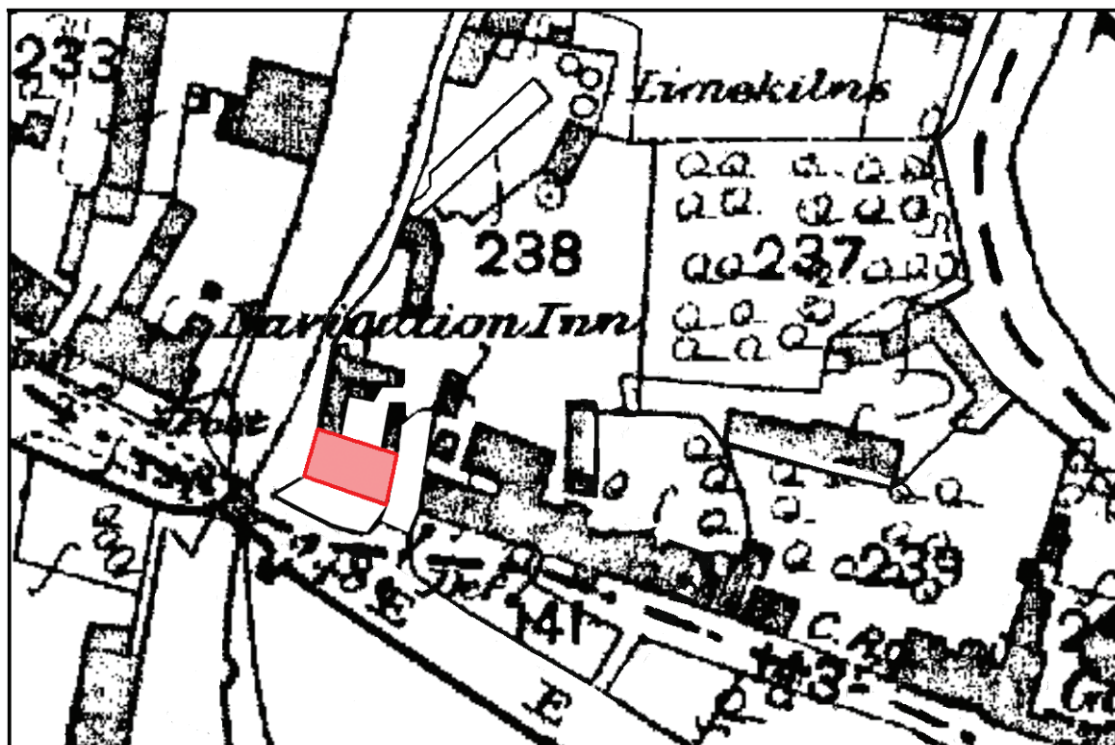


FIGURE 3 Extract from First Edition Ordnance Survey 25'' sheet, 1881 (The Villa shaded red)

the site was suited to such an enterprise. It was also on the edge of the town, where the impact of the distinctive pungent smell produced by the tanning process might be minimised.

On the First Edition Ordnance Survey 25" sheet of 1881 The Villa appears to have been extended westwards to the edge of the canal towpath, and a new building is shown on the east side of the yard, which is now entered at its north-east corner (Fig. 3). The access from the High Street now leads to a larger enclosure to the north, containing a canal dock and lime kilns. The fields to the north of the canal dock remain undeveloped. The canal bridge adjacent to The Villa is a narrow structure, probably hump-backed, typical of all early bridges on the Grand Junction and other canals of the period. A gated access links the embanked line of the High Street with The Hollow. The north end of the site is bounded by an embankment carrying the Bletchley – Bedford railway line, which opened in 1846. The

first Fenny Stratford gasworks, opened in 1877, is located to the east, near the river, possibly on the site of Clarke's 1819 brickworks. The Second Edition OS sheet for 1900 shows the canal dock and limekilns as before, though The Villa has been extended to the rear, and there appears to be a large central porch on its street frontage. The northern part of the site is now a brickworks.

Examination of the available histories of Fenny Stratford and Bletchley (e.g. Bradbrook 1911; Cook 1995) has revealed relatively little information regarding The Villa. Although several collections of old photographs and reminiscences have been published, that part of Fenny Stratford south of the canal seems to have been largely ignored by their authors. However, a photo (Fig. 4a) of the unreconstructed canal bridge, dated to the 1920s, shows the front of The Villa largely obscured by a large shrub or tree in the front garden (Cook 1995, 18). At that time the roof ridge was crowned by an intricate

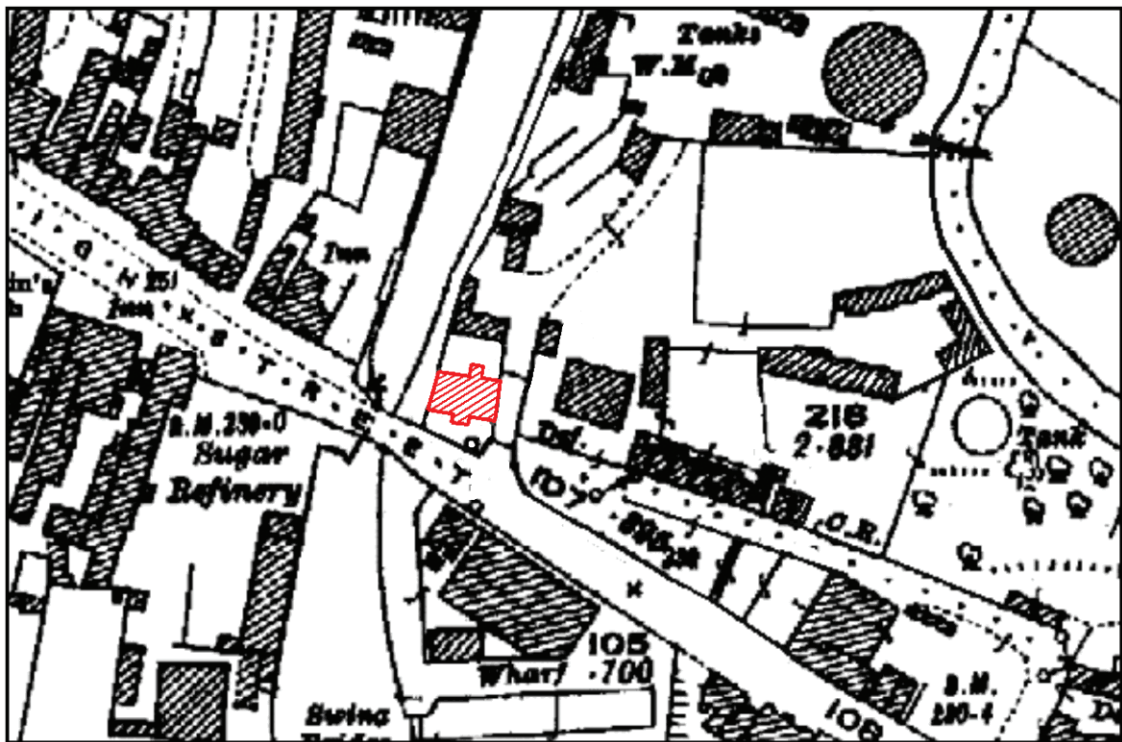


FIGURE 4 Extract from Third Edition Ordnance Survey 25" sheet, 1925 (The Villa shaded red)

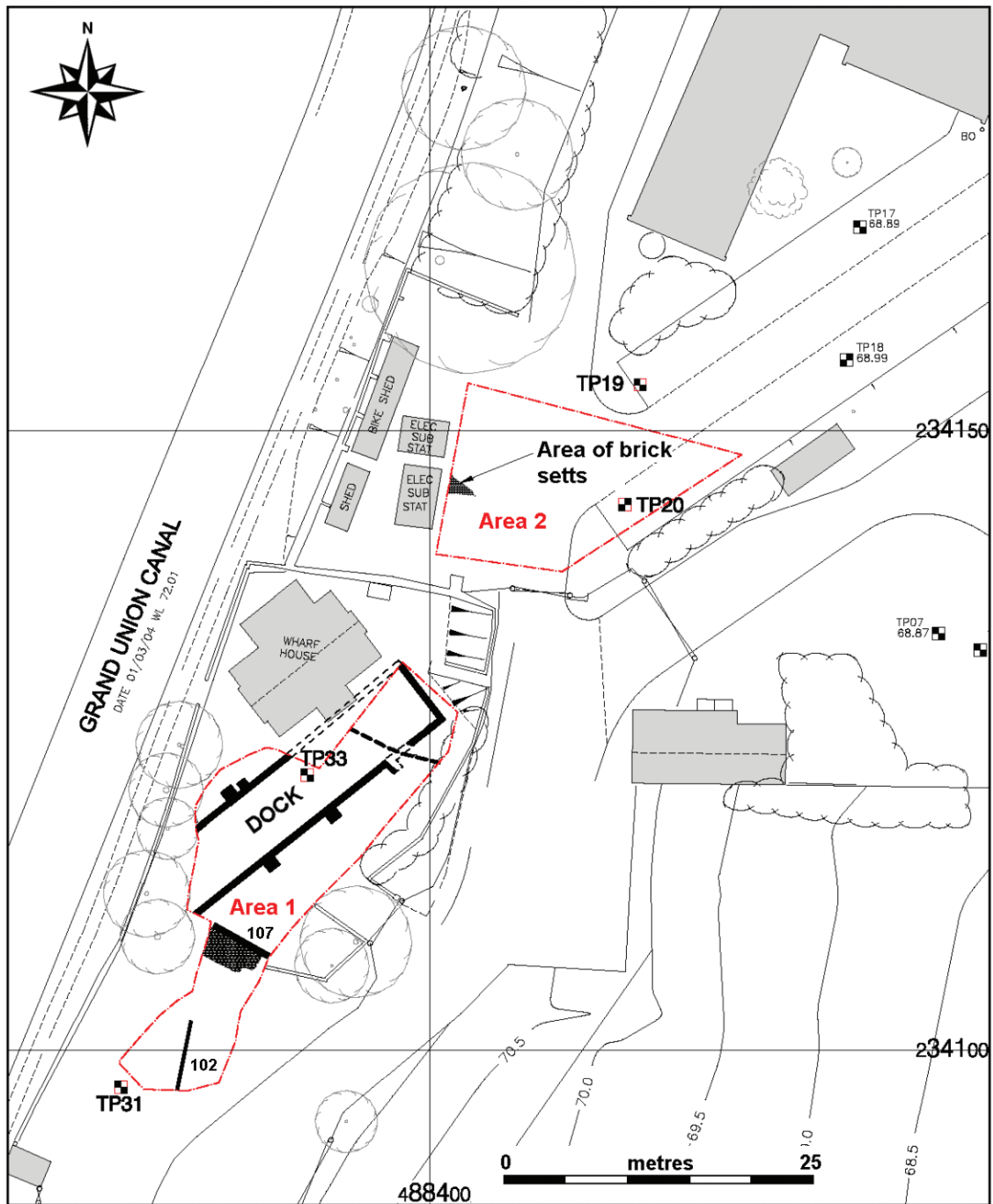


FIGURE 5 Overall plan of excavation

metal finial, and the front garden was separated from the road by a garden wall and railings. The accompanying caption describes the house as then being the offices of the London County Insurance Company. A second photo (*ibid*, 19: Fig. 4b) shows The Villa from the west, viewed from across the rebuilt canal bridge, so the photograph must be post-1926 in date. The west elevation of the house is clear of ivy and is apparently rendered, while a sign on the extension roof proclaims the building to be an antique shop.

By 1925 (Fig. 5) The Villa appears on Ordnance Survey mapping as a detached structure, though the rear yard and a single outbuilding remain. To the north, the canal dock appears to have been filled in, though its walls are still partly shown, and the lime kilns have gone from the site. The brick-works is now a gasworks, with a large gasometer. An air photograph of 1963 held by the MK Historic Environment Record shows Reckitt & Coleman's chemical works and Wharf Cottage for the first time. The Villa then served as Reckitt & Coleman's offices. By 1972 Pulman's Print works had been built on the north-west quarter of the site. The south porch of The Villa and the rear outbuildings had been removed by this date. By 1995 the chemical works had been largely demolished, and Pulman's had been converted to a paper recycling plant, which closed before c.2004. Following the closure of the chemical works The Villa was abandoned and vandalised, becoming increasingly derelict.

THE CLARKE FAMILY

In Fenny Stratford the most prominent brickmaker around 1820–70 was a man of many activities, Gregory Odell Clarke, who set up business as a coal, timber, slate and iron merchant, and brick and tile maker, at Tan Yard Wharf, London Road. He was of course a wharfinger too. Markham (1975, 290).

Gregory Odell Clarke was born in Leighton Buzzard in 1787, the son of James and Elizabeth Clarke. He appears to have come to Fenny Stratford as a young man in his early twenties, marrying Charlotte Ivens on 13 May 1820. Charlotte, then aged 21, was the daughter of Edward Ivens, landlord of the *Swan Inn* in Fenny Stratford High Street. On Edward Ivens' death in 1828 Clarke is named as one of his executors along with John King, surveyor of Winslow (*Northampton Mercury*, 3 May 1828).

Charlotte appears to have died in c.1836: it is possible that her death was related to the birth of their last child, Jeremiah (below). In September 1838, surprisingly soon after Charlotte's death Clarke, then aged 51, married Catherine Read of Aylesbury, then 30 years of age. According to his gravestone in St Martin's churchyard, Clarke died on 23 June 1873, aged 85. Catherine outlived her husband, dying at the family home in Simpson in 1882 (*Leighton Buzzard Observer & Linslade Gazette*, 10 Jan 1882).

The historical record sheds relatively little light on Clarke's character. He was obviously much respected in Fenny Stratford: a newspaper report on his funeral states that 'Every mark of respect was paid to the memory of the deceased gentleman by the inhabitants; the shops were closed and the funeral was witnessed by a large concourse of persons, who evinced the deepest sympathy. The deceased was well known ever to have been a true friend to the widow and orphan.' (*Bedfordshire Times & Independent*). A friend to widows and orphans Clarke may well have been, but he was not forgiving to those who wronged him, as court reports of the period show. Joseph Jones, higgler (peddler), was charged with stealing a sheep from Clarke (*Bucks Gazette*, June 1845). Walter Pool, labourer, and Joseph Stevens, marine-store dealer, were accused of stealing several bushels of wheat and barley from Clarke's warehouse. Unlike the unfortunate Jones, they were acquitted (*Windsor & Eton Express*, 30 Oct 1858).

Gregory and Charlotte produced a large family comprising five sons and four daughters, of whom the latter (Eleanor, Adelaide and two Charlottes) appear to have all died as infants or children. Their first-born son, also Gregory Odell, died in 1846 at the age of 23: a plaque was erected in his memory in the Episcopal Chapel, Fenny Stratford, by the local branch of the Oddfellows Club, 'as their last tribute of affection and esteem' (*Bucks Gazette*, 27 Nov 1847). The next son, James, was born in 1825, and married Elizabeth Siphthorp at St Pancras, London, in 1851. James apparently worked in the family business, as he appears in the Clarke household as 'General Assistant' in the 1851 Census. He died in 1867 (*Croydon Weekly Standard*, 20 June 1867): the death notice incorrectly describes him as the 'eldest son of Mr Gregory Odell Clarke', and gives his age as 40. William Edward, born in 1827, followed his older brother into the family

business, and is described on the 1861 Census as 'Assistant'. He was married at the relatively late age of 40 to 20-year-old Emma Anne Down of Woburn in the parish church at Potsgrove (*Bedfordshire Mercury*, 23 Feb 1867). William Edward appears to have succeeded his father in the family business: in the 1871 Census he is described as 'corn and coal merchant' living in Wavendon, and in 1881 as 'corn and timber merchant', living in Fenny Stratford. Like his father he survived into his eighties: the 1911 Census finds him described as 'retired farmer', living in a boarding house in Truro. The next son, George, was born in 1829. He married Mary Ann Siphthorp (possibly the younger sister of his sister-in-law Elizabeth?) in 1854 at St Clement Danes, Westminster. In 1861 George was living in Simpson with Mary Ann and their four young daughters, Kate, Susan, Mary and Helen. George appears to have had financial problems: a newspaper report describes court proceedings in which Gregory Odell Clarke denies responsibility for George's debt (*Bucks Advertiser*, 25 Feb 1871). In the 1871 Census George appears in Simpson as 'Farm Bailiff' to William Siphthorp, presumably his father-in-law. George's wife and daughters are not then listed. The youngest son, Jeremiah, was born in 1836, and appears to have died in infancy. Clarke's second marriage produced two sons, both called Joseph Henry. The first was born in 1841 and died in infancy. The second was born the following year, and survived at least into childhood: the 1851 Census finds him in a boarding school in South Hackney.

The historical record is somewhat less informative regarding where the Clarke family lived. The 1841 Census lists Gregory Odell, Catherine, Gregory junior, James and four servants as living in Fenny Stratford High Street. It is possible that this could be The Villa. In contrast, the 1851 Census places the family in Simpson. The 1861 entry lists the family in 'Fenny Stratford Road', Simpson parish (probably Simpson Road). In 1871, the Clarke family are still in Simpson Road: as some of their neighbours are railway employees, presumably they were living in the vicinity of the railway station and level crossing. A newspaper report of 1870 describes a court case relating to a property known as 'Ivy House, Simpson Lane', belonging to Clarke (*Leighton Buzzard Observer*, 17 May 1870): it is possible that this was their Simpson Road home. It has not been possible to

locate this property, as the area has been subject to considerable modern development. Catherine Clark is reported as having died at 'Ivy Cottage', so presumably this remained the Clarke family home until that time (*Leighton Buzzard Observer*, 10 Jan 1882).

Following the death of his parents, William Edward Clarke apparently took over his father's business. The 1881 Census lists him, his wife, two children and one servant as living in Fenny Stratford High Street. As the entry is sandwiched between that for the *Navigation Inn* and those for The Hollow, there can be little doubt that it refers to The Villa. Clarke and his family appear to have remained at The Villa until after 1891. By the 1901 Census there are additional entries between the *Navigation* and The Hollow, probably reflecting the level of development in Fenny Stratford at that time, so the entry relating to The Villa is no longer clear. However, an entry at this point in the census relates to a house called *Ivydene*, occupied by Gurney Buxton, described as 'medical practitioner', and his housekeeper. It is tempting to suggest that this relates to The Villa.

The Clarke family's business interests were varied. Gregory Odell Clarke appears in trade directories for 1831–32 and in the 1841 Census as 'merchant'. By 1847 he is described as 'corn, coal, slate, timber merchant, brick maker and maltster'. Slater's Directory (1850) additionally describes him as 'wharfinger', though in the 1851 Census he appears as 'general merchant and farmer'. In 1860 Clarke was appointed one of two surveyors of the highway for Simpson, for the coming year (*Croydon Weekly Standard*, 14 April 1860). In the 1861 Census Clarke appears as a man with considerable business interests, being described as a farmer of 110 acres, employing six men and three boys, and as a wharfinger employing 34 men and fourteen boys. Ten years later he is a farmer with 100 acres, employing four men and three boys. By this time William Edward had taken over part of the family business, being described as 'corn and coal merchant'. Subsequent directory entries indicate that he further expanded the business started by his father. In 1883 he is described as 'coal, timber, slate, salt and iron merchant, colliery agent, corn and cake factor, brick and tile merchant, lime burner, wharfinger and carrier, agent in Bucks for the Phospho-Guano Co Ltd, and for Staffordshire pipes, paving bricks, ridge tiles and chimney

tops etc.’ At this time he had premises at Fenny Stratford, Water Eaton and Simpson. The final directory entry for William Edward, dated 1891, is similar to that of 1883, though the agency for the Phospho-Guano company is not mentioned: that part of the business was probably affected by the prolonged agricultural depression of the late 19th century, and the movement in Buckinghamshire towards pasture farming and dairying. The 1891 Census lists William Edward as ‘coal, timber and brick merchant’. The next available directory (1895) makes no mention of the Clarke family or of any similar business, so presumably William Edward had closed the business and retired by this date.

TAN YARD WHARF

In 2006, excavation was undertaken in advance of redevelopment of the Tan Yard Wharf site. The work focused on the site of the canal dock shown on the 1881 Ordnance Survey sheet, and the lime kilns beyond its north-east end. Owing to a range of modern constraints, excavation was limited to two areas: Area 1, to the south of Wharf House and Area 2, about 10m to the north, just inside the entrance to the former BPCC site (Fig. 5).

Area 1

The Area 1 excavation successfully revealed the truncated remains of the canal dock. This was 4.9m (16’) wide and probably c.27.5m (90’) in length: its floor was c.2.0m (6’ 6”) below the present canal level. The full extent of the dock and its link to the canal could not be examined, though from historic mapping it appears that its south-west wall continued on the same alignment to meet the canal, while the north-west side narrowed to form a channel c.2.5-3.0m wide, spanned by a towpath bridge. From the cartographic evidence it appears likely that this was a fixed, hump-backed bridge. The dock would have accommodated two full-length narrowboats, moored abreast. Opposite the dock entrance the canal is now only c.6.5m wide and there is no trace of a winding hole, making it impossible for boats to enter or leave the dock to the north, so trade must have been primarily to and from the south.

The dock walls (Fig. 6) were constructed with unfrogged orange-red bricks, 213 × 95 × 70mm (8³/₈” × 3³/₄” × 2³/₄”), laid in English bond, two

bricks thick, set in lime mortar. The side walls of the dock were reinforced on their outer faces by regularly-spaced brick buttresses, each c.0.6m (2’) square. On the better-preserved north-western wall, the surviving top course on the dock face was laid in purplish-grey engineering bricks. Above this, the dock wall appears to have been capped with a course of large limestone coping stones, one of which, 1.52m (5’) long and 0.4m (1’ 4”) in section, was found in a service trench cut through the south-eastern wall. The excavation did not examine the dock floor because of the high water table present (the dock apparently still held water), though a geotechnical test pit dug within the dock encountered a brick floor at a depth of 70.21m OD (Hydrock Consultants 2006, TP33), c.2m below the present canal level. The test pit also revealed that the dock contained c.0.2m of water-borne silt, sealed by tipped deposits containing ash, clay, bricks and occasional glass bottles, clay pipes and metal waste, indicating infilling of the basin during the early years of the 20th century.

Towards the south end of the dock, the foundation of a limestone wall (107) was revealed, aligned north-west to south-east. Butted up to the south-west side of this wall was a cobbled surface surviving to a width of just over 2m. The wall and surface followed a similar alignment to part of an L-shaped structure shown at the south end of the dock on the 1881 Ordnance Survey sheet. A length of north-south aligned brick wall (102) encountered 7m south of wall 107 may also have belonged to that building.

Area 2

Area 2 was excavated with the intention of locating the lime kilns known to have been north-east of the canal dock, and any related industrial features. Unfortunately, the limited area available for excavation was characterised by the presence of numerous modern services and deep made ground. Small areas of truncated deposits at the southern limit of the excavation, a truncated patch of brick sett paving and a limestone base to a retaining wall may be remnants of buildings shown on the 1881 Ordnance Survey sheet, though this could not be confirmed. No evidence was revealed of the lime kilns or any of the associated structures known to have existed, suggesting that significant reduction in ground level had occurred in this area.



FIGURE 6 South-east wall of dock under excavation, looking south-west

THE VILLA

The Villa was the subject of a programme of historic building recording in September 2007, prior to demolition and replacement with a modern structure of broadly similar appearance. The house had been empty for some years and had suffered considerable vandalism, leading to it being declared structurally unsound. Fortunately, this did not greatly impede the survey.

The Villa was a brick structure of three storeys, under hipped slate roofs (Fig. 7). It was aligned on the pre-canal course of Watling Street, rather than on the present road. As the building stood alongside the embankment carrying the High Street up to the canal bridge, its lower ground floor was level with the ground surface predating the embankment, and its ground floor was at the same level as the High Street. The main body of the house was $c.11.5 \times 7.6$ m in plan, with a brick-built extension $c.1.5$ m

wide running almost the full length of its west side. A second extension comprising a flat-roofed, timber-framed, weather-boarded structure $c.2.4 \times 1.9$ m in plan, extended from the north side of the building at ground-floor height, its north end supported by iron joists and two iron columns.

Exterior

The exterior of the building was rendered and painted, so it was not easy to ascertain details of its construction. However, recent damage to the south-east corner of the building had removed a section of rendering, exposing the underlying brickwork on the south and east walls. This comprised good quality hand-made dark red facing bricks measuring about $223 \times 113 \times 62$ mm, laid in Flemish bond with tuck pointing. Tuck pointing was developed in the late 18th century, to give the impression of very fine joints in brickwork (Hunt & Suhr 2008, 51). In this



FIGURE 7 The Villa, south elevation

instance it comprised an initial fill of dark brown mortar into which had been set 5mm-wide strips of white lime putty. Considering the skill, time and cost required to undertake tuck pointing, it was evident that this brickwork was meant to be seen, and that the render on the exterior of the house was a later addition. Internally, seconds had been extensively used for constructing internal walls.

The south elevation fronted onto Watling Street, presenting the major public face of the building. The wall was covered with cement render with scribed ashlar blocks, applied vermiculated quoins, a plinth and string course. The projecting eaves were carried on heavy brackets with moulded leaf decoration: window sills were also supported by brackets (Plate 4). The main part of the building consisted of three bays, each with a sash window at first-floor level, breaking through the eaves line. The hipped slate roofs to each bay were also carried on brackets, and the windows had moulded architraves with applied vermiculated keystones. At ground-floor level

was a central doorway with a moulded architrave, flanked by a large sash window beneath an elaborate cornice to the west, and a bay window to the east (Plate 7). The bay was roofed in slate, with a dentillated band at eaves level. Openings to the lower ground floor had all been blocked with modern materials.

The south end of the west extension, set back from the main elevation, had a string course slightly lower than that on the main part of the building, a skylight above a blocked secondary entrance at ground-floor level, and a sash window with a moulded architrave above. Applied quoins were present only above the string course.

In contrast, the north (rear) elevation of The Villa was painted, not rendered, with plain applied quoins, and projecting eaves with heavy brackets (Fig. 8). Also, it was evident that the openings on this side of the building were located with regard to practicality rather than appearance. It was also apparent that they had undergone addition and alteration. The dominant feature was a tall arched Venetian sash window (Plate 13) at first-floor



FIGURE 8 The Villa, north elevation

level. It had been almost totally destroyed prior to the survey: originally it had margin glazing with red and blue flashed glass (Woodfield 1986, E39), suggesting an Arts and Crafts influence. Below this window was the shed-like timber-built 'flying' extension described above.

Like the south elevation, the east-facing wall was rendered, with scribed ashlar blocks, a string course and a plinth about one metre lower than that on the south elevation. The applied quoins to the south were vermiculated, while those to the north were plain. The projecting eaves and heavy brackets were also present on this elevation. The only opening was a single sash window at upper ground floor level.

At the time of the survey the west elevation was covered by a dense growth of ivy, so detailed recording was not possible. The eaves were devoid of the elaborate decoration present elsewhere on the house, though in-situ brackets on the original west end of the building suggest that external detail was present in this area prior to the construction of the west extension.

Interior

The lower ground floor was entered from the rear of the building, the central door opening into a lobby (C1) with a quarry-tiled floor, by which the other rooms on this floor were accessed, and from which stairs rose to the floor above (Fig. 9). This part of the building appeared to have been most recently used for storage, with an office in C2, and no diagnostic original features remained, but it seems likely that most of the domestic offices (kitchen, scullery etc.) were originally located on this floor. Two rooms, C2 and C7, had hearths: of these, it is likely that C2 was the kitchen, and C7 may have been the servants' parlour. C3, beneath the western extension, had its own external doorway, and may have served as a fuel store. The blocked windows and doorways on this floor all contained modern materials, and were probably bricked up after 1927, when the bridge and its approaches were widened, and the house was no longer in residential use.

The ground floor plan comprised a three-pile layout, with a central north-south aligned lobby and stairwell (G1), flanked to east and west by rooms (Fig. 9). The open string, dogleg stairs rose

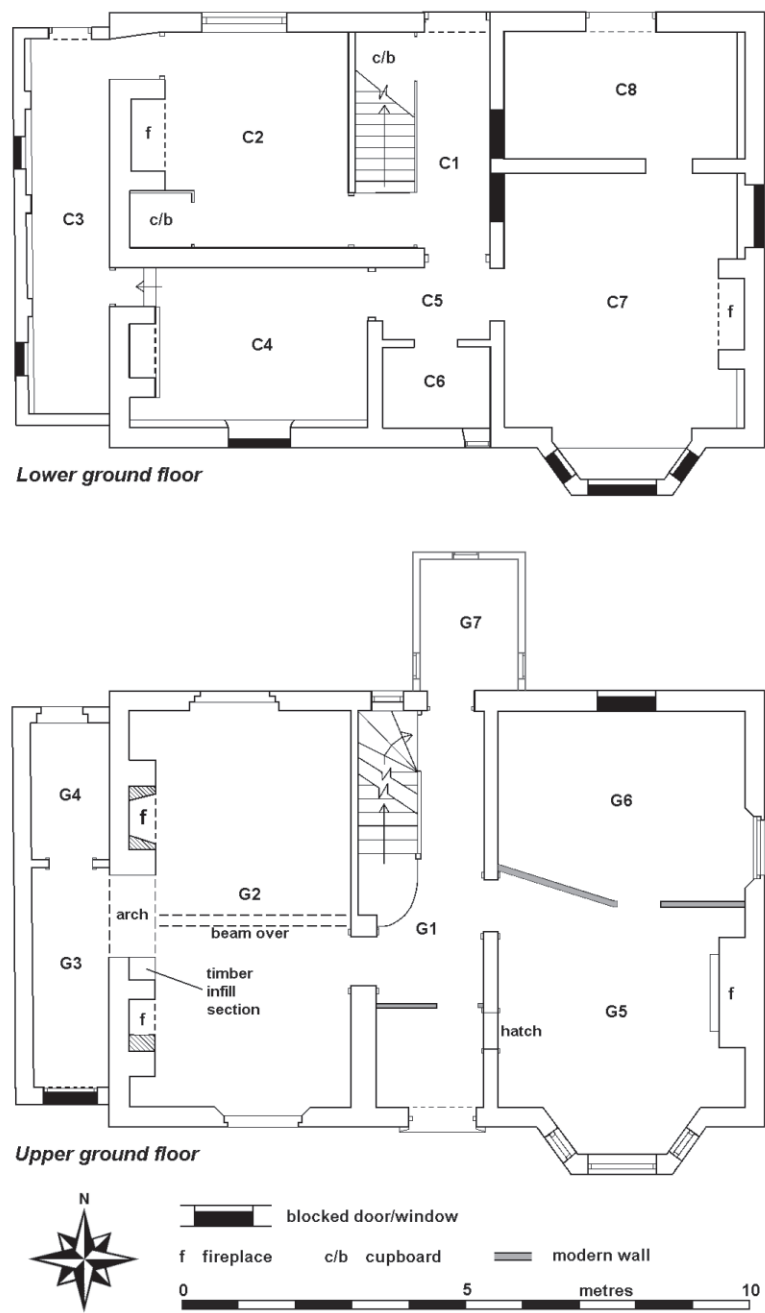


FIGURE 9 Floor plans, lower and upper ground floors



FIGURE 10 Detail of internal door and surround

northwards in the north-west corner, with a large curved step at the bottom and a winder leading to a half-landing. Each tread supported two tall, thin turned baluster spindles, each projecting below the tread and ending in 'bun' terminals. These are typically late 19th-century in date (Hall 2005, 107). The elaborate timber handrail was of inverted 'T' section, and ran continuously from the bottom of the stairs to the top.

To the west of the lobby were originally two rooms: these were evidently combined (G2) when the western extension was built, the dividing wall being removed, and an arch being inserted in the original north wall. Evidence for only one door

from the hall was found, suggesting that the two rooms originally had a connecting door. On the west wall were two projecting chimney breasts with fireplaces that had both been reduced in size at some time: to the north and south were tapered reveals for sash windows, possibly fitted with shutters. The extension comprised two rooms, a lobby (G3) and a WC (G4), the latter with modern fittings. The street door in G3 had been bricked up, apart from the fanlight.

To the east of G1 there had originally been a single room, with a broad fireplace towards the south-east corner, a segmental bay with three sash windows to the south, a single sash window to the

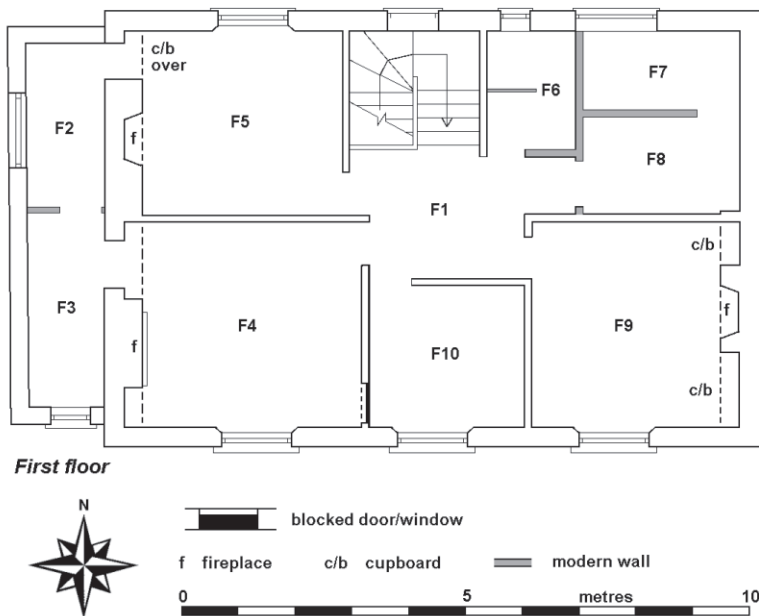


FIGURE 11 First floor plan

east and a blocked window reveal to the north. The use of large panes of glass in the surviving sash frames of the bay suggested a late 19th-century date, following the abolition of duty on window glass in 1857 (Osband 2001, 71). This room had been subsequently subdivided (G5, G6) by a modern block partition, with a central doorway. A hatch into the hallway near the south-west corner was evidently a latter insertion.

Surviving fixtures and fittings on the ground floor were all of mid to late Victorian date (Osband 2001; Calloway 2005). Skirtings were tall, stepped, with moulded top edges. Dado rails were present in all but the west extension, as were deep moulded cornices, with picture rails. The cornice in G1 was the most elaborate, with ‘rose and bracket’ moulding. Architraves over the principal internal doors (G2 & G5) were comprised of uprights and lintels with moulded edges, lap jointed at the upper corners of the frame, with decorative horizontal and vertical projections from their upper corners (Fig. 10). The doors within them were four-panelled, with diagonal grooves in the panels forming a chevron pattern. Doors and architraves both exhibited an Arts and Crafts influence. The arch between G2 and G3 was panelled, with

added embellishment in the form of ornamental moulded plaster brackets supporting the upper part of the arch. Fittings for gas lights survived above both fireplaces in G2.

Access to the timber rear extension was by a door inserted in the north wall at the rear of G1. Its single room (G7) was equipped as a kitchen: fixtures indicated that it was probably of late Victorian or Edwardian date, though the kitchen unit was modern.

The first floor plan comprised a central landing, originally encompassed by five rooms and the stairwell, lit by the Italianate window in the north wall (Fig. 11). The room to the north-east had been subdivided to provide toilet facilities (F6-F8) when the building became offices in the mid-20th century. The other three main bedrooms (F4, F5, F9) each had fireplaces: the smallest (F10) may have served as a nursery, or dressing room to F4, to which it had originally been linked. With the construction of the western extension a panelled arched doorway had been opened to it from F4 and the extension appears to have originally comprised a single room, of unknown function. This had been subdivided in the 20th century by a timber partition with a doorway, and a second doorway from the



FIGURE 12 'Rose and bracket' cornice in hall, stairwell and landing

main building had been cut through a former cupboard in F5.

Surviving fixtures and fittings appear to have been of mid to late Victorian date, as on the ground floor (Osband 2001; Calloway 2005). Skirting boards were tall, topped with 'torus' mouldings; doors were four-panel, in moulded architraves. The moulded dado rail and 'rose and bracket' cornice (Fig. 12) noted in the ground-floor lobby extended to the stairwell and landing.

Although close examination and measurement of the roof structure was not possible for safety reasons, observations were possible through collapsed sections of the ceiling. These showed that the roof structure consisted of kingpost trusses with diagonal braces supporting the ends of the main ridge, with possibly one or two intermediate trusses. Purlins were set at mid height on all four elevations. The two separate chimney breasts at the west end of the building came together to form a single stack within the roof space, which survived above roof level. The single stack at the east end of the building had been truncated below roof level, and slated over.

CONCLUSION

Industrial development on the eastern side of Fenny Stratford followed the opening of the Grand

Junction Canal from the south in 1800. Tan Yard Wharf, alongside the canal north of the High Street, was probably constructed some years later, possibly at the same time as Gregory Odell Clarke was setting up his brickworks to the east. Like many other small private wharves of the period, Tan Yard Wharf comprised a dock to one side of the main line of the canal, where boats could lie for loading and unloading without interrupting traffic. Excavations revealed that the dock was substantially constructed throughout in brick, probably with a short brick-lined cut connecting it to the canal, passing beneath a fixed, hump-backed towpath bridge. The acute angle of the wharf to the canal suggests that most of its trade was southwards: turning a full-length narrowboat northwards out of the dock entrance would have been impossible, as there was no winding hole opposite, though boats (both horse-drawn and motorised) could have been hauled or reversed into the dock.

Tan Yard Wharf appears to have handled a wide range of goods, mostly building materials. Apart from bricks and tiles from Clarke's brickyard, there were a number of lime kilns adjacent to the dock. Other building materials were presumably brought in by canal: timber, slate and iron are mentioned in relation to Gregory Odell Clarke, and in addition William Edward Clarke is associated with lime burning and 'Staffordshire pipes,

paving bricks, ridge tiles and chimney tops etc.’ In addition coal, corn, salt, (cattle) cake, and fertiliser are also mentioned. Gregory Odell is also listed as ‘maltster’, presumably a business elsewhere in Fenny Stratford in which he had an interest. William Edward is described as a carrier, which could suggest that he owned a narrowboat (or acted as agent to one of the canal carrying companies), provided a delivery service from the wharf by horse and cart, or both. By the 1850s Gregory Odell Clarke had also become a farmer with land in Simpson, presumably built up on the success of Tan Yard Wharf and its various enterprises. This transition from manufacturing and trade to farming was normal for successful provincial businessmen in the 19th century, as a means of spreading risk and diversifying assets. It probably also gave them a degree of respectability.

The dock and its associated industries appear to have continued to operate until the 1890s, beyond which they disappear from the historical record. At this time canal carrying was in decline, and presumably the brickworks had exhausted its supply of clay, or was no longer able to compete with the larger modern brickworks in Newton Longville, established in the late 19th century (Markham 1975, chapter 17). William Edward – who would have been 73 in 1900 – appears to have closed the family business in the 1890s, sold off the land and retired to Truro, where the most recent record of him is dated 1911. The site of the wharf and brickworks continued in industrial use until the redevelopment that occasioned this study.

From the survey, the present external form of The Villa and much of its internal detailing, notably the Arts and Crafts influences, date to the latter half of the 19th century. On this basis, Markham and Woodfield suggested that the building was constructed in c.1860–77. However, cartographic evidence shows that the site of The Villa was occupied in 1781 by a similar-sized structure following the original alignment of the High Street, with a group of associated buildings around a courtyard to the rear. It has been suggested that the layout of these 18th-century buildings resembles that of an inn. While it is possible that this 18th-century structure was replaced by The Villa, the fact that the latter was aligned with the earlier road makes this seem unlikely. Furthermore, the presence of tuck pointing shows that the original brick exterior of the building was meant to be seen, and was of probable

late 18th-century date. If this is the case, the façade most likely had a central entrance flanked symmetrically by sash windows, with plain sills and brick lintels. To the rear, the Venetian window is probably original, though the remaining fenestration has probably been significantly altered.

It would seem, therefore, that the building that became The Villa was constructed before Gregory Odell Clarke was born. From the census records it appears that Clarke lived there for only about twenty years, moving to Simpson Road in the 1840s, when he took up farming in addition to his existing business. It has not been possible to locate the site of their house – presumably ‘Ivy Cottage’ – though it is likely to have been in the vicinity of Fenny Stratford Station and level crossing. At this time The Villa was presumably let, though it has not been possible to identify any tenants. Gregory and his second wife Catherine remained in Simpson for the rest of their lives.

By 1881 William Edward Clarke and his family were living at The Villa, having previously (1871) lived in Wavendon. It seems likely that they moved there after Gregory’s death in 1873, when William took over the family business. As much of the external and internal decoration of the later phase of The Villa dates to the latter half of the 19th century, it is likely that William had the house refurbished, remodelled and extended at this time, before returning to live there. From the 1901 Census, it appears that The Villa had a name, ‘Ivydene’. The possible link with ‘Ivy Cottage’ in Simpson Road is self-evident.

William appears to have remained at The Villa until he sold the site in the 1890s. After that time the house had a range of uses: doctor’s surgery, insurance office, antique shop and finally offices for Metalin and for Reckitt & Coleman’s chemical works. Although internal alterations were made for the offices, notably the installation of additional toilet facilities, much of the late 19th-century interior appears to have survived until the building fell into disuse in the 1990s. The building now occupying the site, though undoubtedly more modern and efficient, is an unremarkable pastiche of the original.

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