

Rose Hill, Hampton

On 27th May 1762, Lacey Primatt surrendered to David Garrick, the actor, 3 acres of land in Hampton known then as White Post Close. Garrick had moved to Hampton House – now Garrick's Villa – in January 1754, first renting and then, in August, buying the property from Primatt. He also bought several other houses nearby.



White Post Close was described as:

"being situated abutting eastward to Mr Freeman's acre, northward to Old Field Lane, westward to Mr Lawrence's one acre and a half in Westfield afores'd and southward to the King's Highway leading to Staines"

Garrick then sold the land to John Beard, a friend and colleague, in February 1768 and on 28th April 1774, Beard acquired the acre of land belonging to John and Susanna Cope Freeman which joined his land to the east. It is not clear whether there was already a house on either piece of land, but the present 8-bedroomed house was built sometime in the last quarter of the 18th century.

John Beard (c1717-1791) was the celebrated tenor vocalist who sang tenor parts at Covent Garden which were specially composed for him by Handel. Beard was married twice, first, in 1738/9, to Lady Henrietta Herbert, who was the only daughter of James, 1st Earl of Waldegrave and widow of Lord Edward Herbert and died in 1753. In 1759, Beard married Charlotte whose father was John Rich, the manager of Covent Garden Theatre and producer of Gay's **The Beggar's Opera** in which Beard played the part of Captain MacHeath. Beard retired from the stage in 1767 when he began to lose his hearing and probably moved to Hampton sometime after that.

He died in the house on 5th February 1791 and was buried in a vault in Hampton Church on 22nd February. In his will, dated 14th June 1786, Beard left -

"my house and premises in Hampton to my beloved nephew William Beard and to my worthy and much esteemed friends Mr Richard Hewetson and Mr John Bellamy, but that my said dear wife Charlotte Beard to reside in and occupy the said dwelling house and premises during her life".

Charlotte died in 1818 aged 92 and as the three trustees named in Beard's will had also died, the entire estate passed to his great-nephew John. In October of the same year, John

sold the property to Edward Strettell for £3570. Strettell died in October 1821 and his will stated that

"I bequeath unto my dear wife Elizabeth Strettell ... to and for her own use all my copyhold dwelling house ... and the lands in my occupation now and containing 4 acres more or less and now called by me Rose Hill and situate lying and being in the Manor of Hampton Court".

On Elizabeth's death in April 1823, the property was left in trust to her 3 daughters – Mary, Caroline and Henrietta. The Strettell sisters are shown as living at Rosehill in the rate books for 1826-1830. An advertisement for Rosehill appeared in **The Morning Chronicle** in 1835. It seems as if there was a court case in April 1838 as the Court Rolls give details of a Bill in the High Court of Chancery with Dashwood Strettell v. the three trustees - R.M. Raikes, Sir Charles Coutts-Trotter (deceased) and J.D. Alexander. Strettell won the case and he was admitted to the property. There is a gap in the rate books until 1840 when William Ewart (1798-1869) is listed as tenant with Strettell as the owner.

Ewart was the parliamentary reformer who played a part in the repeal of the Corn Laws and was responsible for the 1837 Act which abolished capital punishment for horse, cattle and sheep stealing, letter stealing and stealing in a house worth less than £5. In 1850 he carried a bill for establishing free public libraries supported by public rates. He had married his cousin, Mary Anne, in 1829 and it is possible that, after her death in 1837, he moved to Hampton with his four small daughters. Sadly two of them died at Rosehill – on 2nd March and 7th May 1842.

The owners were still the Strettells between 1846 and 1853 when a Mrs. Muskett became the tenant. Dashwood Strettell died in August 1858 and the property passed to his wife, Mary. In October 1858 she surrendered the property to Sir Richard Harington of Christ Church College, Oxford, in trust for Francis Offley Martin for £2700. What connection Harington had with Rosehill is unclear, but subsequent Court Rolls record his name each time there was a change of tenant up to 1895. Martin was certainly living there in 1861 as he and his family appear on that year's census. He was a former barrister who became an Inspector of Charities and was a member of the Vestry. In 1865 he proposed that Hampton should adopt the Local Government Act of 1858 and establish a Local Board. A poll was held in April and the result was – For the motion 128, Against 254. The Act would not be adopted until 1892.

Walter Moresby Chinnery was living there in 1879 with Martin still the owner. In the same year, Chinnery had accepted the office of President of the United Bicycle Club and was also chairman of the Endowed Schools. He was a local benefactor who, after the death of his wife in 1880, gave an annual donation of £100 "to be distributed, at the discretion of the vicar and churchwardens, in small weekly allowances among the deserving poor of Hampton, the occupants of the almshouses to have priority of consideration."

The house appears to have been empty in 1885 but was occupied by 1887, this time by the Rev. R.H.E. Wix who was there until at least 1891 as he is shown on the census. There is no record of another owner or tenant until Major Percy F. Lambart in 1895. In the issue of 23rd March 1901, the **Surrey Comet** recorded that Rosehill was to be sold by Major

Lambart. His decision would lead to arguments within the Hampton Urban District Council which had come into being in 1895.

At a meeting of the council on 6th August 1901, it was stated that an offer of £3000 had been proposed for the purchase of Rosehill, but that the owner would be more likely to sell the estate for £3300. A special meeting was convened on 19th August when it was proposed that "the council accepts the offer of the owners of Rosehill to sell the property to them for £3300." Only the chairman, George Sanders, voted against the motion. At another special meeting on 29th August a contract between the council and the owners for the purchase of Rosehill on the terms already agreed – again, only the chairman voted against.

The **Surrey Comet** for 31st August had the following comment from the chairman "the purchase of Rosehill was the most mischievous thing ever proposed for Hampton and he was still vigorously opposed to it." There was also a letter from Mr. Henry Ripley modifying his views about Rosehill, [a previous letter had favoured Mr Walton's house for the Council offices] but stating that "workmen's cottages should not be built in a place where they might be overlooked by Council officials". The next edition of the paper invited parishioners to sign a petition against the purchase and the following week, it was announced that the Hampton Housing Association approved of the council's decision to purchase Rosehill and build workmen's houses there.

The 12th October edition of the paper carried a report of the public meeting held at the Victoria Hall to discuss the proposed purchase of Rosehill –

"The meeting was convened by Mr Sanders [the chairman] and 350-400 were present. A formal motion that Rosehill was unsuitable for use as Council offices was proposed by Mr Singleton, seconded by Mr Sherwood and supported by Sir Hector Hay who said he thought that houses for working men ought to be provided by their employers and not by the Council (shouts of 'Sit down'). A counter motion was proposed by Mr Cadmore and seconded by Mr H. March, who said he could not think of no better site for the U.D.C. offices. [he had offered £3,100 for the property]. Finally Mr Sanders spoke at length against the motion. The counter motion was carried by a majority to tumultuous cheering by supporters of the scheme".

More letters followed protesting against the purchase, including one from Mr W.L. Milne who said that "Councillors should not curry favour with working men by offering to build houses for them".

The middle of November saw the Local Government Board's inquiry into the proposed purchase when Mr Sanders addressed the Inspector in disapproval of the scheme. But at another special Council meeting on 3rd December, it was announced that the Local Government Board had agreed to the council borrowing the money for the purchase of Rosehill on the following terms -

£1590 for the provision of offices. Repayable within 30 years of the date of borrowing
£550 for purchase of land for the purposes of a depot. Repayable within 35 years.
£1160 for the purchase of land for the erection of workmen's dwellings. Repayable within 55 years.

Mr Sanders resigned from the chairmanship of Hampton UDC on 4th December in protest at the purchase of Rosehill. Captain Christie and Mr. Evans were both proposed in his place, but refused. Finally, Mr N.D. Allbless was elected to the chair who then invited Mr. Sanders to join any committee he wished, but he declined the offer with thanks. The council also decided to ask the Local Government Board to agree to the setting aside of part of Rosehill for a free library.

The Hampton Local Board had first met in August 1890 and, in 1894, moved into offices in Park House – a private house south of Beveree in the High Street. In November 1900 they had adopted the 1892 Public Libraries Act and resolved, in February 1901, to adapt the then council chamber into a Free Public Library and Reading Room on a 12-month trial and if it was successful, to extend the provision to Hampton Hill. The opening hours were 9am-10pm every weekday except Tuesday 10am-2pm. A sum of £60 was to cover the librarian and caretaker's salary. The Council also accepted Walter Jerrold's offer to donate 50 miscellaneous volumes. The monthly reports showed that attendance was steady and that, during the summer, readers were allowed to sit on the lawn and smoke! By November 1901, it was obvious that the library was a great success and so it was decided to ask Mrs Fitzwygram if she would let the room in Windmill Road known as the Band Room be used as a library for Hampton Hill.

On Monday 24th February 1902, the Council offices were moved from Park House to Rosehill where the first Hampton Urban District Council meeting was held the next day. The Library and Reading Room had also been transferred. The building was described by the **Surrey Comet** thus –

"On entering, the visitor finds a capital lobby with alcoves which suggest statuary hereafter to be provided. On the left is the Surveyor's office and a door therefrom leads to the ante-room to the Council Chamber, which is furnished with a horse-shoe table. The door from the Council Chamber leads into a passage which forms the entrance to the Reading Room. On the first floor are the offices of the Clerk and the Inspector of Nuisances. On the second floor are the Record room and the drawing office. The rooms of the caretaker are extensive and are shut off from the main building. An office will shortly be set aside for the rate collector."

On 13th June 1903, there was a foundation stone laying ceremony for 56 workmen's dwellings in Oldfield Road. By June 1904, all had been finished and let.



Rosehill continued to be used as Council Offices until Hampton was joined with Twickenham and Teddington in 1937. Then the Offices moved out, but the library remained and the former Council Chamber, Surveyor's room and ante-room were all converted to library use. The house was refurbished in 1981 and the library was extended into the old stables and onto the site of the former mortuary, so making responsible use of the listed building. The work enabled 18 study places and an improved children's library to be provided whilst retaining period fireplaces and much of the décor.

Census returns for Rosehill

Date	Occupier
1841	William Ewart, daughters aged 6, 8, 9, 10, son aged 4, 10 servants
1851	Henrietta Muskett, son aged 34, visitor, 3 servants
1861	Francis Offley Martin, wife, daughters aged 13, 15, son aged 9, 8 servants
1871	Francis Offley Martin, wife, daughters aged 23, 25, 7 servants
1881	Walter Moresby Chinnery, daughter aged 7, sons aged 6, 5, nieces aged 18, 19, 7 servants
1891	Rev. Richard H. E. Wix, wife, son aged 28, daughters aged 22, 20, 5 servants

Further Reading

Beard, John and Howe, Ken **Hampton and Teddington past**. 1995

Pearce, B.L. **Free for all: the public library movement in Twickenham**. (Borough of Twickenham Local History Society Paper no. 55). 1985

More information on Rose Hill, Hampton and other buildings and places in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames is available from the Local Studies Collection.