

Carshalton & District History & Archaeology Society

Local History Note 6



The Culvers: a lost Carshalton mansion

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Engraving of The Culvers in the 1866 Estate sales catalogue.

Notes on the house.

The Peatling Papers in Sutton Archives say that the south and east parts of The Culvers were more modern than the back part. The former was possibly built by Samuel Gurney. The inside decorations were Gothic in character. The back (on the Culvers Avenue side) may have been the only part remaining of the old Mill House. The old kitchen and the older parts of this house are in this portion.

This agrees with the map evidence for the evolution of the house.

Peatling said that there was a spit in the kitchen worked by a fan in the chimney. There was also a bell on the roof, evidently an alarm bell, as the cord ran down to the hall, and it could be rung from any of the landings. The bell was inscribed 'Thomas Bartlet made one for Steven Smith 1623'. The bell was about 12 or 14 inches high.

JCL Stahlschmidt's *Surrey Bells and London Bell-founders* states that Thomas Bartlet took over the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in 1619, died about 1647, and was succeeded by his son Anthony.¹

On each side of the mantle piece of the dining room was a small shield which Peatling illustrates.

Peatling was told by Mr A Durant Watson, formerly a tenant of The Culvers, that Sir Walter Raleigh lived there, which fact he says is mentioned in the deeds of the house.

History.

1590-91. There is an indenture for the sale of Stone Court holdings by John Gainsford to Humphrey Rogers of Beddington. This included a 3½ acre meadow called Culverhall, a name suggestive of a dove house.²

1623. The inscription on the bell mentioned above suggests that the house was occupied by a Steven Smith.

Selby's occupation

1717. Culverhall continued to be part of the Stone Court estate and in 1717 John Cator sold it to Lady Lanesborough. It then included 'All that messuage or tenement called Culverhall and all outhouses, yarges, gardens and other appurtenances thereunto belonging and now or late in the occupation of the said [gap] Selby. All that messuage or Farmhouse with the barnes, stables, outhouses, yarges, gardens and appurtenances thereunto belonging and the meadow thereunto adjoining called Culverhall Mead containing three acres' The meadow was occupied by Edward Killick.³

Jacob Foster Reynolds. (Died 28 Sep 1851.)

1802. J F Reynolds was rated for a dwelling House, offices, garden, pleasure grounds and paddock.

1803. Jacob Foster Reynolds was rated for a house, garden, pleasure ground and land and cottage in the lane.

1808. The estate map of the lands of Thomas and Jacob Foster Reynolds, dated 20th July 1808 shows extensive buildings, most of which must be industrial, immediately south of Culvers Mill. One small building is rectangular and can be seen from successive later maps to be retained as the northwest part of the Culvers Mansion House.⁴

1810. J F Reynolds was rated for a house and buildings, land and cottage in the lane.

1818-19. John Griscom. He went to the house of W F Reynolds' brother, 1½ miles distant from Carshalton House where there was a bleaching establishment.⁵

1841. The Culvers estate was offered for sale by auction. The plan in the particulars shows that the small building of 1808 had been enlarged by an approximately cruciform building attached to the lower half of its east wall. It was described as 'The Elizabethan Cottage'

¹ Published by Elliot Stock, 1884, p. 97.

² Sutton Archives accession 849/1/1.

³ Sutton Archives accession 849/34/1.

⁴ Sutton Archives 3606/1.

⁵ John Griscom *A year in Europe: A journal of observations in England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Switzerland, the North of Italy and Holland in 1818 and 1819*. 2nd edition. 1823.

The building had a gothic entrance hall and a staircase in the same style 'of solid oak, lighted by a window of ruby-stained glass, the walls stuccoed in imitation of stone'. The seven bedrooms, a library, dining and drawing rooms together with service areas and outbuildings. There were cellars which is surprising as the water table cannot have been far below the surface.⁶

Samuel Gurney, Esq., Owner 1846 – died 1856.

Samuel Gurney was born 18th October 1786 and died 5th June 1856. He was a banker and philanthropist and was a partner in the Overend and Gurney's Bank. (Gurney's bank was founded in 1770 in Norfolk). A Quaker, in 1837 he married Ellen, daughter of William Foster Reynolds.

The 1847 Tithe map showed the 1841 enlarged building now has a rectangular extension against the south wall of the original rectangular building.

Samuel Gurney owned, and occupied himself, house, gardens, stables and pleasure grounds together with The Parks, Alder Pieces, kitchen garden, part of whiting grounds and water and carriage drive.

Mrs Ellen Gurney was at The Culvers in 1856.

Dr. Samuel Gurney, Esq., 1856 – 1866. Died 1882.

Samuel Gurney, Jun., was born in 1816. He was the second son of Samuel Gurney, Esq., of Upton Essex. He married Elizabeth Sheppard of Ham House, Upton, Essex on 7th April 1808. A Quaker, he was a member of the Society of Friends. He chaired the second International Anti-Slavery Convention in 1843. A philanthropist, he worked for improvement of prison discipline and reform of the criminal code. A liberal, he was first elected in 1857 as the member for Penryn and Falmouth. He became magistrate for Surrey. He was a partner in Overend and Gurney's bank which failed in 1866 and necessitated the sale of the Culvers estate in 1866. This was sold in 32 lots, one being The Culvers house with 77 acres of park.

A pair of black swans was purchased in 1851 and bred until the death of the male in 1862. Many broods were produced. In 1859, the *London Illustrated News* had a picture of swans and their young at Culvers, the seat of Samuel Gurney, Esq., MP.

He died on 4th April 1882 at Tunbridge Wells when he was described as late of No 20, Hanover Terrace, Regents Park.

1861. The census lists Samuel Gurney, M.P., High Sheriff of Surrey and Ellen his wife at the Culvers.

1864. Samuel Gurney of 25 Prince's Gate, Hyde Park and Carshalton was a member of the British Meteorological Society.

1866. The Royal Literary Fund. Samuel Gurney Esq., M.P. for Penryn and Falmouth, F.R.G.S., J.P. for Surrey. 25 Prince's Gate, Kensington Road, The Culvers, Carshalton and the Reform Club.

John Peter Gassiot, Esq., J.P. Owner 1866 – died 1899.

1864. John Peter Gassiot Esq., FRS. of 77 Mark Lane, EC., and Clapham Common was a

⁶ Sutton Archives 48/4/8.

member of the British Meteorological Society like Samuel Gurney.

1866. In the autumn of 1866 John Peter Gassiot purchased the house, now called The Culvers, with its 77 acre park, one of 32 lots, for £23,000. The plan in the sales particulars shows the large house on the tithe map with additional single storey extension and glass conservatory on the west wall.

1876-88. Piles Directory lists J P Gassiot, J.P., The Culvers. He died 26th July 1899.

1880. Piles Directory lists W James as gardener at The Culvers.

1881. The census shows J P Gassiot J.P., County Magistrate, aged 60, born 1821 at the The Culvers.

1883. *The Directory of Directors* shows John P Gassiot, J.P., was a director of the Hudson Bay Company.

1891. The census shows John Peter Gassiot, widower, aged 70 at The Culvers.

1901. *The Gardeners' Chronical and New Horticulturist* says that Mr Kendall, late of The Culvers, became Head Gardener to Lord Amherst of Hackney.

1902. Details of John Peter Gassiot's will were published in The Times, on 1st July 1902.

Later occupants. 1900 – 16.

Pile's Directories for 1900-16 show The Culvers was unoccupied from 1900-5 with a caretaker, W Hall, listed in 1902 when the Culvers was put up for sale for £15,000. Durant Watson was there from 1906-12. From 1913-16, it was unoccupied except for D Maggiore in 1915.

Messrs F and G Mizen. c.1916 – c. 1926.

1913. *Pile's Directory* lists F and G Mizen, Market Garden.

1916. Fred Lewis Mizen and Albert George Mizen were summonsed by the CUDC re sewers at The Culvers.⁷

1919. *Pile's Directory* lists A G Mizen.

1925. *The County of London (Morden and Carshalton) Housing Order 1925*. Compulsory Acquisition of Lands. 6.7 acres of land from Alfred George Mizen, The Culvers.

1926. The Culvers was the residence of Alfred George Mizen and his wife Ruth. Hannah Lack, Ruth's mother, died at The Culvers in 1926.

Basque Children. 1940 – 47.

During the Spanish Civil War, Guernica was destroyed by German air attacks following which almost 4,000 Basque children were brought to Britain as refugees aboard the S.S. Habana, arriving at Southampton in May 1937. Most returned in 1939. Many children's colonies were formed including The Oaks which received 22 children. They were moved to The Culvers in 1940 and stayed there until 1947.

Demolition

This took place after the second world war.

⁷ Sutton Archives LG4/5/28.