

MAGICIANS MUMMIES AND
LEECHES

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF
SIMPSON HOUSE

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PREFACE

Some years ago in my capacity as a planning consultant, I received a commission to prepare a planning application for some improvement works at Simpson House, a Grade II listed building in the village of Simpson, in North Buckinghamshire. I asked to look at any historic material relating to the house. Opening the file of old papers and documents, I discovered a document which at first, I could make no sense of. Entitled "*Dawson Papers DAW/4 31/61*" It was handwritten, extended to some 13 pages and had been prepared on old foolscap size lined paper. It was clearly a copy, but with no immediate sign of when it had been prepared or copied; it appeared to be an extract from a longer document, perhaps originally part of a notebook and had been part of a document held by Bucks Archaeological Society. The author's handwriting was difficult to read, and the document was littered with notes and references.

As I began to study it, I realised that it was a closely-researched history of the house, beginning with the construction of the house around 1830 and ending apparently around 1941. The author's name was Warren Dawson and on closer examination of the text it appeared that he and his wife had moved into the house in 1936. In the following years he collated a large amount of information by examining birth and death records and researching local archives. He had also interviewed local residents who were able to give him information about some of the former owners and occupiers of the house.

My curiosity aroused, I returned to the file, where I found a photocopy of his Times obituary, published in 1968. (See Appendix).

Here was laid out the life and work of the author, Frederick Warren Royal Dawson. He had been a noted Egyptologist and had written works on ancient medicine and the history and practice of mummification. Born and resident for many years in London, he had decided, according to the author, "for interests of health" to move to Simpson, at that time a small and fairly run-down village at the northern end of Buckinghamshire. In 1936 he came with his wife Alice to live in Simpson House, where he had continued his research and writings on Egyptology. What was of more immediate interest was that he had researched the history of Simpson and other local villages, local families and houses, as well as preparing notes on the history of Simpson House. He had lived in the house for over 30 years, until his death in 1968.

The notes told a fascinating story, but as I read through them I realised that they had never been brought together into a coherent history; there were gaps and it didn't extend beyond about 1941.

The file contained another document entitled *Charles Warren (1798 - 1872) of Simpson*. Undated and with no author's name, it was a short biography of Charles Warren, who had been the original builder and owner of Simpson House, together with a history of the Warren family. Other correspondence on the file showed that the document had been prepared by Professor Michael Warren, a great grandson of Charles Warren. This was perplexing. Warren Dawson's notes on the history of the house had stated that when Charles Warren died in 1872 he had left all his land and properties, including Simpson House, to two nephews. This would lead one to conclude that he had had no children. Reading Professor Warren's paper, it emerged that Charles had had a son, not by either of his two wives but by a young local lace worker. Why had his son and family received no benefit from his will?

Perhaps by sifting through their work, re-checking their sources and with the huge new potential of the internet for local and family history research, I could complete what they had started, bring it up to date and compile it into a more complete history of the house and its occupants. In addition, perhaps I could solve the mystery of why the house was passed to Charles' nephews and not to his son.

What follows is my attempt to do this. It tells how this handsome Grade II listed house with surrounding gardens came to be built in what at the time was a small, impoverished village. It follows the history of the house and those who lived in it from when it was built, around 1830, up to the present day. It shows how the house, built on the site of a former cottage, was extensively

remodelled and enlarged during the 19th century, then suffered a period of relative neglect by a succession of tenants when it was rented out by a local butcher; how it was later rescued, in the 1930s, by new owners, who renovated it and restored the gardens; how it was vandalised and damaged after being left vacant and then became an office building for the newly established Milton Keynes Development Corporation after the New City of Milton Keynes was designated in 1967; how subsequently the interior was fitted out as offices, the gardens reduced in size, walls demolished and paths and garden features dug up; and finally how when the office use came to an end, it was returned to its original purpose as a family house, renovated and lovingly cared for by its present owner up to the present day.

It tells the stories of those who lived - and in some cases died - in the house. Of the young building surveyor from Cornwall who built the house after marrying a local heiress and became a prosperous gentleman farmer; of the former builder and his wife who both died there on the same day and within hours of each other; of the nephew who inherited the house, lived so extravagantly that he had to mortgage the house and who died after he fell from his horse during a drunken escapade in London; of the rich and seemingly idle young man who rode around the village in an Irish jaunting car and after allegedly getting a local girl with child, committed perjury and disappeared; of the bankrupt businessman who dismantled and sold off parts of the garden; the wine merchant who left after unsuccessfully taking legal action when his son was allegedly assaulted by the notoriously cantankerous local vicar; and of the former insurance broker turned researcher who moved to the house from London and spent the next 30 years there continuing his Egyptological studies and researching local history and the history of the house.

Interwoven with the history of the house is the story of the Warren family, a story that starts with the arrival of Charles Warren in Simpson in the late 1820s; his what might be described as fortuitous marriage to Leonora, illegitimate daughter and heiress of Knight of the Shire Thomas Goodman; and the subsequent construction of Simpson House and its extensive gardens. The story takes an unexpected turn when Charles, in his late 40s and childless from his two marriages, has a child, with a local lace worker 26 years younger than himself. Although recognised as his son, the child is disinherited after Charles' will is mysteriously altered just days before his death. Simpson House is then sold and the whole contents auctioned off, including, in a brutal and vindictive twist, Charles' gold watch and chain, originally intended to go to his son.

The story comes full circle when, almost one hundred years after Charles Warren's death, one of his great grandsons relates how he returns to Simpson, visits his father's grave and then knocks on the door of Simpson House. Invited in by the current owner, he is given a tour of the house and gardens and before he leaves is presented with a photograph of his great grandfather.

1 PRELUDE

The village of Simpson in North Buckinghamshire has existed since the 11th Century, when it appears in the Domesday Book. Its name has changed, from Sevinstone through to Sympson and then Simpson. The settlement seems to have originated alongside the River Ouzel, although this part was later abandoned, and the village grew more towards the west.

Towards the end of the 18th century, Simpson, together with many other villages in England, was the subject of an Enclosure Act, which changed dramatically the landscape of the area, with new hedges, fences, banks and ditches enclosing the previously open fields.



The Simpson Enclosure Map of 1781

One of the principal local landowners in the 18th century was the Goodman family. The Simpson enclosure estate map shows that after the 1781 Enclosure Act John Goodman held a large area of land on what is now Ashland and to the south of the village; Thomas Goodman owned further land to the south of the village; Cambel Goodman owned land on either side of what is now the Grand Union Canal. It seems likely that the Goodmans owned a number of cottages on land in the centre of the village.

At the beginning of the 19th century a further change to the Simpson landscape took place with the building of the Grand Union Canal. In 1793 approval had been given for the construction of

a canal - the Grand Junction Canal - to provide a more direct waterway between London and Birmingham. By 1800 the Canal had reached Fenny Stratford. The canal went in a large loop around the western side of the village and following the construction of the Canal a wharf was built and a small brickyard opened up just adjacent to it.

Even so, by the early 1800s Simpson was still principally an agricultural village, comprising mostly small cottages, many with thatched roofs; and some larger farmhouses, built of brick. Its population was probably less than 300 people, engaged in farming and local trades and businesses.

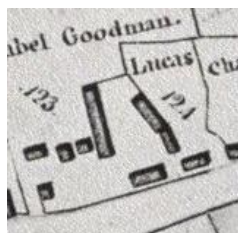
We can get some idea of what appears to have been the miserable surroundings of Simpson Village in the early part of the 19th Century. Sheahan, in his History of Buckinghamshire, published in 1862, wrote of Simpson:

Thirty years ago it was, in appearance, one of the most wretched of many miserable villages in the county. During a great portion of wintertime the main road was generally impassable, without wading through water three feet deep, for a distance of about 200 yards.

The writer was probably referring to flooding from Simpson Brook, a small stream that flows alongside Simpson Road towards the River Ouzel. The Brook was a source of nuisance to local residents because of overflowing and pollution.

The Goodman Family

In the centre of the village, next to Simpson Road, stood the farmhouse belonging to the Goodman family. The date of construction of the house is not known, but the Simpson Enclosure Estate Map of 1781 clearly shows a building on the site of Simpson House, rectangular in shape and set quite close to the edge of the highway.



We cannot know what form this farmhouse took, but it may well have been a thatched cottage, similar to many of the other older dwellings in the village. Other structures, probably barns and stables can be seen on the map, to the rear of the cottage. There is also a building at what is now the western end of the garden, and several other structures, which could have been either sheds or cottages, on what was later to become the garden and kitchen gardens of Simpson House.

The Goodman family had owned the house for over 200 years. Their ancestors are referred to in various documents going back to the first half of the seventeenth century. In 1683 a Richard Goodman was one of the chief constables for the Newport Hundred and in 1696 a John Goodman was the Petty Constable of Simpson. Both Richard and John Goodman were registered for the election of the Knights of the Shire in 1713 and again in 1722.

In 1798 the register of all males aged between 18 and 65 years who were not already in military service listed Thomas Goodman of Simpson as a farmer possessing two horses, one "waggon" and a cart. Thomas was a churchwarden at Simpson Parish Church from 1810 to 1820 and lived in a cottage on the site of Simpson House.

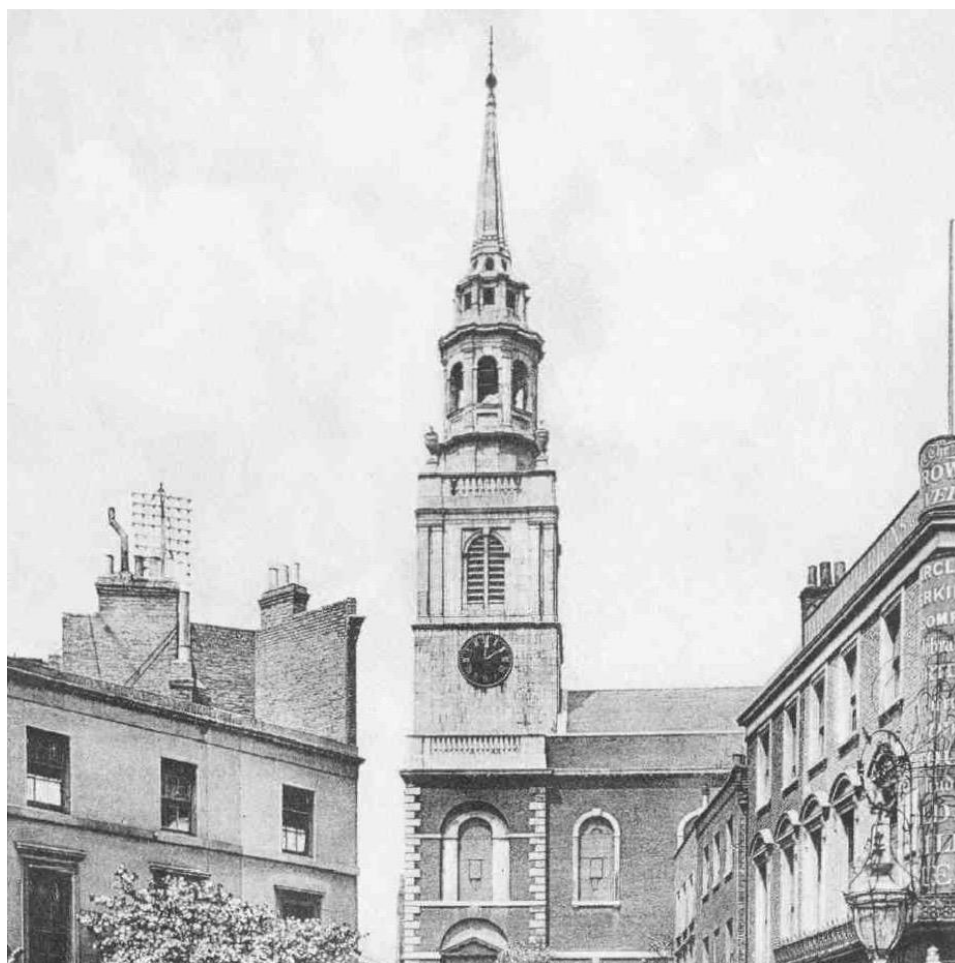
Living with him in the old Goodman farmhouse was his housekeeper, Ann Gibbs. Thomas and Ann were not married but they did have two children: a son, George, born around 1780, and a daughter, Leonora, born in 1787. In 1812 Thomas made a will bequeathing to his "*natural son George Gibbs*" and his heirs all of his "*messages¹, cottages, closes, lands, tenements and hereditaments² and real estate.*" Leonora Gibbs, described as his "*natural daughter*" was to receive a bequest of £500.

Ann Gibbs died in 1820 and Thomas died in 1822. They are both buried in the churchyard of St. Thomas in Simpson, their graves close to the western wall of the church. Unusually, although they were not married, they lie in adjacent graves with a single tombstone commemorating them, which must presumably have been arranged and paid for by George and Leonora.

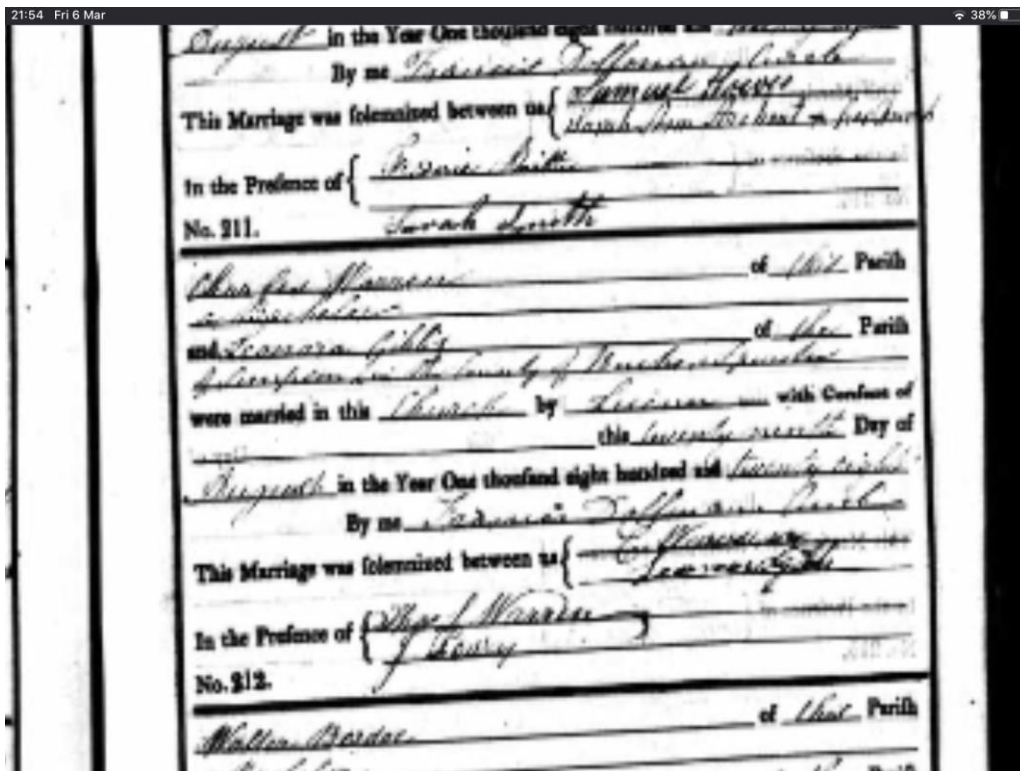
So George Gibbs inherited his father's estate. Sadly, George wasn't going to enjoy his inheritance for very long after the death of his father, because he died just 5 years later. On 1 August 1827 George made his will which he signed with a mark, perhaps because of severe illness or injury, because he died a few days later. He was buried in Simpson churchyard on 8 August 1827.

In his Will, which was proved in October 1827, George, who was unmarried, left all his land, properties and belongings to his sister Leonora. Thus, around the end of 1827, Leonora, then aged 40, unmarried and childless, must have been a woman of considerable means. She had her legacy of £500 - worth over £30,000 today - and she had inherited all her father's land and properties, including the cottage and other buildings on the site of Simpson House, where she was presumably living.

Just 10 months after her brother George's Will had been proved, in August 1828, Leonora got married. Oddly, there is no record of the marriage in the Simpson Church records and neither Warren Dawson or Michael Warren were able to trace it. The reason, I discovered, was because it didn't take place in Simpson. Even though she had been born and had lived all her life in Simpson, Leonora did not marry in her own village, but in London, at St. James, Clerkenwell. There, on 29 August, 1828, by then aged 40, Leonora married someone much younger than herself, and his name was Charles Warren, aged 30.



St. James, Clerkenwell, where Charles Warren married Leonora Gibbs in 1828



Marriage Certificate of Charles Warren and Leonora Gibbs

The marriage record describes Charles as 'a bachelor of this Parish' and Leonora is from the Parish of Simpson in the County of Buckinghamshire. One of the witnesses at the wedding was Charles' brother, Thomas Latham Warren.

How did the young Charles Warren, who was not a local man, come to meet Leonora and marry her - and why did the wedding take place in London rather than Simpson? I hope to shed some light on this in the next chapter.

In the meantime, by the end of 1828, the stage was set for the building of Simpson House.

2 CHARLES AND LEONORA

I have not been able to discover the precise order of events which surrounded the building of Simpson House. Perhaps Leonora commissioned the new house, having inherited the Goodman land and properties; and then met Charles, who designed the house and later married her. Or perhaps she met and married him first and then decided later to build the house.

According to Dawson, '*A long indenture, dated 20 March 1829 was drawn up between Charles and Leonora which dealt with the joint ownership of property in Simpson.* It is worth noting that at this time it was not possible for a wife to own land and property in her own name. Upon marriage, therefore, there would have had to have been an agreement or settlement transferring Leonora's land and properties to Charles and making financial provision for Leonora in the event that Charles died before her. The indenture states: "*marriage has lately been had and solemnized between the said Charles Warren and Leonora, his wife...*" The indenture refers to a James Savage of Essex Street in the Strand, London, Architect. I have not been able to find either the original or a copy of the Indenture, but perhaps Savage was a witness to the agreement or a guarantor for Charles.

Whatever happened, it would appear that Simpson House came to be built sometime after 1828.³

The building of Simpson House

The old Goodman farmhouse stood partly under the present dining room of Simpson House and partly under the side extension which was built on the eastern side of the house after Warren's death. To the west of the old farmhouse there was a well, built of sandstone blocks and some 25 feet deep. The well has been built over and now remains under the dining room of Simpson House. To the rear of the farmhouse was a series of farm buildings, including stables, a large barn, wash-house and other outhouses. Two cottages stood in what is now the garden of Simpson House.

The old farmhouse and two cottages were demolished and in their place was built a magnificent new house. The house is best described as a Regency-style villa, built in the Italianate style. The front and west side are rendered in stucco and the horizontal banding on the stucco is very typical of that period. There are many villas with similar fronts, especially in Park Village East and West, near Regents Park in London, built by John Nash in the early part of the 19th century.

On the ground floor, the original house as built by Warren comprised a central hallway, with a drawing room on the left and a dining room on the right. From the drawing room, a full-length glass door leads out into the garden. There was a kitchen and scullery at the rear. The first floor comprised two bedrooms; and a dressing room over the hall. The house was set well above the road, with two York Stone steps up to the front door; no doubt Charles was aware of the flooding risk from the nearby Simpson Brook.



Simpson House today. View from Simpson Road. The single storey addition to the right was built by Thomas Kench around 1878.

Externally, the house has an imposing central entrance doorway of two three-panelled doors with Roman Doric half-columns. The first floor windows (three at the front and one at the side) have 'marginal glazing', (extra small window panes at the tops and bottoms of the windows), so that they have 24 panes of glass instead of the more usual 16 panes. The ground floor windows on the front also have marginal glazing with red coloured glass in the small top panels. The roof, which is hipped, has wide deep eaves supported on pairs of stone brackets, known as modillions.

The interior of the house contained a number of interesting features. The downstairs rooms have high ceilings with ceiling covings. In the drawing room, both the garden door and front sash window are fitted with retractable wooden window shutters and panelling.

The door leading to the garden is a massive, hinged structure which contains 17 panes of glass. The side panels have red coloured glass. There was a metal canopy on the outside wall, supported on metal pillars set on low brick plinths, although this may have been added later (See photo).



The original garden door with canopy, plinths and tiling. Photo taken in 1967. The canopy and plinths were later removed.



Simpson House: front door with fanlight

In the hallway there is an elaborate fanlight in an inverted loop and fan pattern above the front door. On the first floor, there is another semi-circular fanlight over what the dressing room door was. This has coloured glass, which changes colour depending on which side it is viewed from. The glass is probably infused with gold. Gold reflects more strongly the red end of the spectrum; conversely the blue-green end is more strongly absorbed. When the gold particles are small enough the absorption is not complete, and we see in transmitted light a greenish colour. The coloured glass for the fanlights, the garden door and the windows may have come from Cornwall - Charles Warren's brother Thomas was a glassmaker and guildler.



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Fanlight over the door of the original dressing room

The local villagers must have been quite amazed to see this magnificent villa, with its imposing front door, high windows and stucco front rising from what had probably been an old thatched farmhouse. But it wasn't just the fine new house that would have surprised them. Charles and Leonora had beautiful gardens laid out to the west of the main house, together with several conservatories and a walled vegetable and fruit garden. From the garden door a formal walk ran westward to a pond in the garden with a fountain and statues to end at a gazebo. There was a vinery with ornamental stone and shell-work in front, a large conservatory and several summer-houses, similarly decorated, two of which were still standing in 1940.



Conservatory built by Charles Warren. The structure and the high brick wall behind it, were demolished around 1970. Photo taken in 1967.

A high brick wall was built, running along Simpson Road from the front of the house westwards, enclosing the whole of the garden. A later photograph of Simpson Post Office shows the height and extent of this wall, which had a wooden door at its western end.



A view along Simpson Road showing the high brick wall which formerly enclosed the gardens

At the western end of the gardens was a gazebo or summerhouse. In *A Guide to the Historic Buildings of Milton Keynes* it is described as: “half-octagon in plan, the walls covered with vitrified kiln waste probably from the local brick kilns, into which are inserted conch shells. Three sides have doors with architraves and a timber entablature. A seat is placed against the rear wall, and the interior has a plaster ceiling and cornice. The building, which is Grade II listed, is no longer within the garden, having been cut off when the garden was shortened in the 1970s.

To the east of the house, along what is now Warren Bank, there was an entrance way from Simpson Road which gave access to the large barns, carriage house, stables and outbuildings at the rear of the house.

We can get some idea of how the new house and grounds appeared from Sheahan, writing in 1861, who refers to it as a handsome villa residence, with “*tastefully laid out pleasure grounds, summer-houses, grottoes, rock-work, fountain, fish-pond etc (which) sets the place off to great advantage.*”⁴

Simpson House and the Gazebo are both listed as Grade II historic buildings. The house was first listed in 1975 and the listing details describe it as follows:

Circa 1830-1850 former villa. 2 storeys stucco faced brick with low pitch hipped slate roof, deep flat eaves on paired modillion brackets. The entrance front has light horizontal grooving to the ground floor with flat banding. 3 widely spaced windows, recessed sashes with glazing bars intact. Broad central entrance with door of 6 moulded panels and elliptical fanlight with inverted loop fan and circle glazing pattern - inst flanking reeded columns. 2 windows to west side one full length with marginal glazing and delicate tracery. One window lean-to addition to east side with sloping fretted board to eaves.

It seems fairly clear that Charles Warren was the builder and first owner of Simpson House, but who designed the house? It could have been Charles himself, who was a Surveyor. If not Charles, then another possibility, in my opinion, would seem to be James Savage: his name appears in the 1828 indenture between Leonora and Charles Warren; and as we will see later, Charles did work for Savage as a Surveyor and Clerk of Works. Unfortunately no evidence in the form of drawings or contemporary accounts links Savage directly with Simpson House. Nor do biographies of Savage refer to him designing any houses; his specialism seems to have been church building and restoration projects. So all one can say is that there is a strong probability that he was involved in the design of the house.

The Search for Charles

I knew that Simpson House was built by Charles and Leonora Warren around 1830 and we have some idea of the appearance of the gardens. But who was Charles Warren, and how did he come to meet and marry Leonora Gibbs and build this Regency-style villa in a small and by all accounts rather run-down village at the northern end of Buckinghamshire?

Professor Warren, a great grandson of Charles Warren, had carried out some research on the Warren family and managed to establish that Charles was the second son of Thomas and Dorothy Warren. Charles was not a local man and was neither born nor brought up in Buckinghamshire. He was born on 21 March 1798 in Petersfield, Hampshire and baptised on 1 August 1798 in Alverstoke, Hampshire. It seems likely the Warren family moved to Falmouth in Cornwall because Charles was baptised there again about 1805. Professor Warren also managed to trace some of the siblings, nieces and nephews of Charles. Charles had a sister, Mary Ann, who probably died in infancy. He had an elder brother, Thomas, who was born in 1796 in Plymouth, Devon; and he had four younger sisters: Mary Ann; Martha; Elizabeth; and Charlotte. Charles also had four nieces: Charlotte, Jane, Leonora and Elizabeth, and a nephew, Thomas Goodman Warren, all of them the children of his elder brother Thomas. He had another nephew and a niece, William Charles and Mary Ann Panter, children of his sister Mary Ann and Panter (first name unknown); and a further nephew, William Bond, who was the son of his sister Martha and William Bond.

Thomas Latham Warren appears to have been living in Lambeth in 1841; by 1851 he is recorded as being a looking glass manufacturer, living in Lower Eaton Street, London.

So I knew a lot about the Warren family. But what of Charles himself? I have been unable to find out where he lived between 1806 - when the family appeared to be living in Falmouth - and 1828, when his marriage certificate states that he was living in Clerkenwell, London. Where did he go to school and what sort of education did he have? About his early life, I could find no information and Professor Warren knew nothing about Charles' parents.

With the assistance of Devon Family History Society, I managed to trace some information about Charles Warren's parents, Thomas and Dorothy Warren. Thomas was born in Devon, probably in the village of Bradninch, around 1771. His marriage certificate shows that he married Dorothy (nee Ford) in 1790 in Plymouth, Devon. Their first son, Thomas, was born in Plymouth in 1792 but by 1798 they must have moved to Alverstoke, Hampshire because Charles was born and baptised there. By 1804 they had moved again, this time to Falmouth, Cornwall, where their daughters Elizabeth and Charlotte were both born. After that the trail went cold. After a lot more searching I found them again, with the aid of the 1841 Census. By then, Thomas and Dorothy were living with their daughter Mary Ann Panter and her children in Boscastle, Cornwall. By this time Thomas Warren was 70 years old and the Census entry revealed his occupation as 'Schoolmaster'. My guess is that this may explain why the family moved around so much: from Devon to Hampshire and then on to Cornwall as Thomas changed jobs. In the 1851 Census, Thomas, now aged 82, is listed as a 'Pauper Schoolmaster'. Pauper schoolmasters were employed in the 18th and early 19th Century to teach children in workhouses. Here, I thought, was a further clue: perhaps Thomas had had posts at different workhouse schools in the various counties he lived in.

All this was very interesting background, but it didn't tell me why Charles had been living in Clerkenwell in 1828 nor the nature of his occupation. I reviewed all the information I had and realised that at no time had either Warren Dawson or Professor Warren thought to find out when and why Charles Warren had come to North Buckinghamshire. What took him to the Simpson area and how did he become involved in the building of Simpson House?

A possible clue lay in the indenture or marriage settlement entered into between Charles and Leonora in 1829, which refers to a James Savage. I have not been able to read the indenture, but Savage, I discovered, was a well-known London Architect, Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He specialised in building new churches and church improvement works.

There is an incredible database on the Internet: *The Incorporated Church Building Society*. (ICBS). It contains the digitised records of church building projects from all over the country, extending back into the early 19th century. It includes copies of plans and lists of people involved in the design of church extensions, renovations and new building works projects and those responsible for the supervision of the building works. And here, on this database, I finally

discovered why Charles Warren may have come to Buckinghamshire. What it revealed was that from 1828 to 1830 Charles had been employed on a building project at St. Peter and St. Paul Church, Newport Pagnell. The work involved the rebuilding of the south aisle of the church and adding pinnacles and battlements to the tower. The file revealed that the Architect for the project was James Savage, and the Surveyor was Charles Warren, of Simpson, Buckinghamshire. Warren was the Superintendent of the works.

James Savage, who was also Architect to the Middle Temple, had an office at 31 Essex Street, off The Strand, not so far from Clerkenwell, where Charles was living around 1828, when he married Leonora.

So it seems likely that Charles was employed in the office of James Savage and it was probably his work for him that brought him to the Simpson area. I don't know how and where he met Leonora. What is clear however is that quite soon after he arrived in the area, he made the very judicious marriage which saw him acquire the site of Simpson House together with surrounding land and buildings.

It would seem that Charles established himself quite rapidly in the local Simpson community. In 1830 he was already one of the feoffees, or trustees, of the Pigott Charity. (This is a local charity which gives out small sums for the relief of poor and needy local people.) From 1832 to 1839 he was a churchwarden at St. Thomas Church, Simpson. The Churchwardens Accounts for April 1839 recorded that he made a contribution of £1 for the establishment of a Sunday School in the Parish.

Charles seems to have continued working for James Savage at All Saints Church, Bow Brickhill, (a village some 2 miles from Simpson), between 1834 to 1835. He is listed on the ICBS files as Surveyor and Clerk of Works. The work included the enlargement of the Church and addition of a gallery and there are a number of drawings on the database apparently prepared by him. Savage himself, according to the files, did no work at Bow Brickhill.

There is no record of Charles carrying out any further building projects for Savage after the work at Bow Brickhill Church. Instead he turned his efforts to becoming a contractor.

During the 1830s the railway building mania reached Buckinghamshire. An Act of Parliament giving approval to the building of the London to Birmingham Railway had been approved in 1833. The route of the railway ran from Leighton Buzzard northwards to Bletchley and on to Wolverton and at its closest point it passed just over a mile from Simpson. It involved massive construction works, including major earthmoving works, in the Bletchley area including a one-mile-long embankment to the south of Bletchley, the building of a bridge to carry the railway over Watling Street at Denbigh Hall and a deep cutting to the north of the bridge.

During the building of the railway, large numbers of "navvies" arrived in the area and there was a big labour camp at Denbigh Hall, just a mile or so from Simpson. This was also the site of a temporary station, where passengers travelling from London to Birmingham had to change on to stagecoaches to be transferred to Rugby. It seems that Denbigh Hall Station was for the time being very important and the station hotel very inadequate. Booths, tents, and hutments were run up. The area resembled a racecourse or a fair, where booths took the place of shops and crude timber structures or tents took the place of houses. Denbigh Hall Station closed in September 1838 when the whole line from London to Birmingham was officially opened.

Charles, it seems, was working as a contractor for the London and Birmingham Railway Company for the construction of earthworks in the Bletchley area because in November 1840 there was a report in the Bucks Herald that "*Mr. Charles Warren, of Simpson, a contractor on the London and Birmingham railway*" was summoned to court by William Fox and John Golding on the part of a group of eight or ten other labourers claiming non-payment of wages due for the carrying out of works on the railway cuttings and embankments to the east of the Bletchley Station.⁵

The labourers had been promised payment of two shillings and sixpence a day until the job was done, when the work was to be measured. The labourers had received £104.9s.6d but after the work was done there was a dispute about the measurement of the work; the labourers claimed that Charles had given them an estimate of 7,000 yards but the final measurement was much

lower. Warren claimed only £2.17s.10d was due and had offered to pay it; they had refused it. As a result, the magistrates dismissed the case.

This would fit with the entry for Simpson House in the 1841 Census, where Charles Warren's occupation is recorded as a 'contractor.'

The death of Leonora

On the afternoon of 5 April 1841 the Warren family was struck by a tragedy. Leonora Warren, now aged 54, was suddenly taken ill while having tea in Simpson House. The cause of her sudden illness and the precise circumstances are not known, but what is known is that she died later that day, probably in the house. The events were so unusual that an Inquest was called for. The Coroner, J W Cowley, concluded that Leonora had died "by the visitation of God. Leonora was buried in Simpson Churchyard to the right of the entrance door, next to her brother George Gibbs.



Leonora's grave, outside the entrance to the Parish Church. The graves of her brother, George Gibbs, and Charles Warren, are nearby.

Charles had a memorial tablet installed inside the Church, on the north wall. It reads:

*This Tablet is erected to the Memory of
Leonora, the beloved Wife of Charles Warren, Gent.
And Daughter of Thomas Goodman, Gent.
Who Departed this Life April 5th, 1841
Aged 54 years*

Leonora remains a rather shadowy figure in this history. She is largely ignored in Dawson's papers, apart from a mention that she was 'the natural Daughter of Thomas Goodman.' Professor Warren does give a little more information about her parentage and family. Other than that, we know that her mother was Ann Gibbs and her father Thomas Goodman, but little else. We know nothing of her life in Simpson House. All the attention is focused on Charles, but it seems to me that Leonora's role in the history of the house has largely been ignored. It was after

all Leonora's inheritance that must have paid for the construction of the house, the laying out of the extensive gardens and building all the walls and conservatories. As I showed above, Charles was at the time of its construction a young building surveyor and I think it is unlikely that he would have had the capital required to pay for it.

The only record I have found of Leonora's life seems to indicate that she was a somewhat fiery character with a strong temper and inclined to be very protective of her husband. Leonora appeared in court in November 1840 accused of assaulting a local Constable. Constable Cave had called at Simpson House to deliver a summons for Charles to appear in court over the case, mentioned above, involving his alleged non-payment of wages to some local labourers. Leonora was accused of assaulting the Constable and using foul and abusive language. The case was reported in a local newspaper:

ASSAULT BY A LADY - Leonora Warren, wife of Charles Warren, the defendant in the former case of summons for wages, appeared to answer the charge of Richard Cave, constable of Simpson, for assaulting him.

Cave stated that he had a summons against Mr Warren for not paying his men, and as he knew he was not at home, he went to Denbigh Hall, where he heard he was, for the purpose of serving it. When he came back Mrs Warren came to his house and asked him what business he had to go to Denbigh Hall for her husband. She thus abused him, and used the coarsest and most filthy language towards him, and ultimately collared him and gave him a slap in the face.

Mrs Warren did not deny that she hit Cave, but said that he abused her first, and used the language towards her which he had said she used. The bench, after consulting together, convicted her in the penalty of 5s and 17s.6d costs.

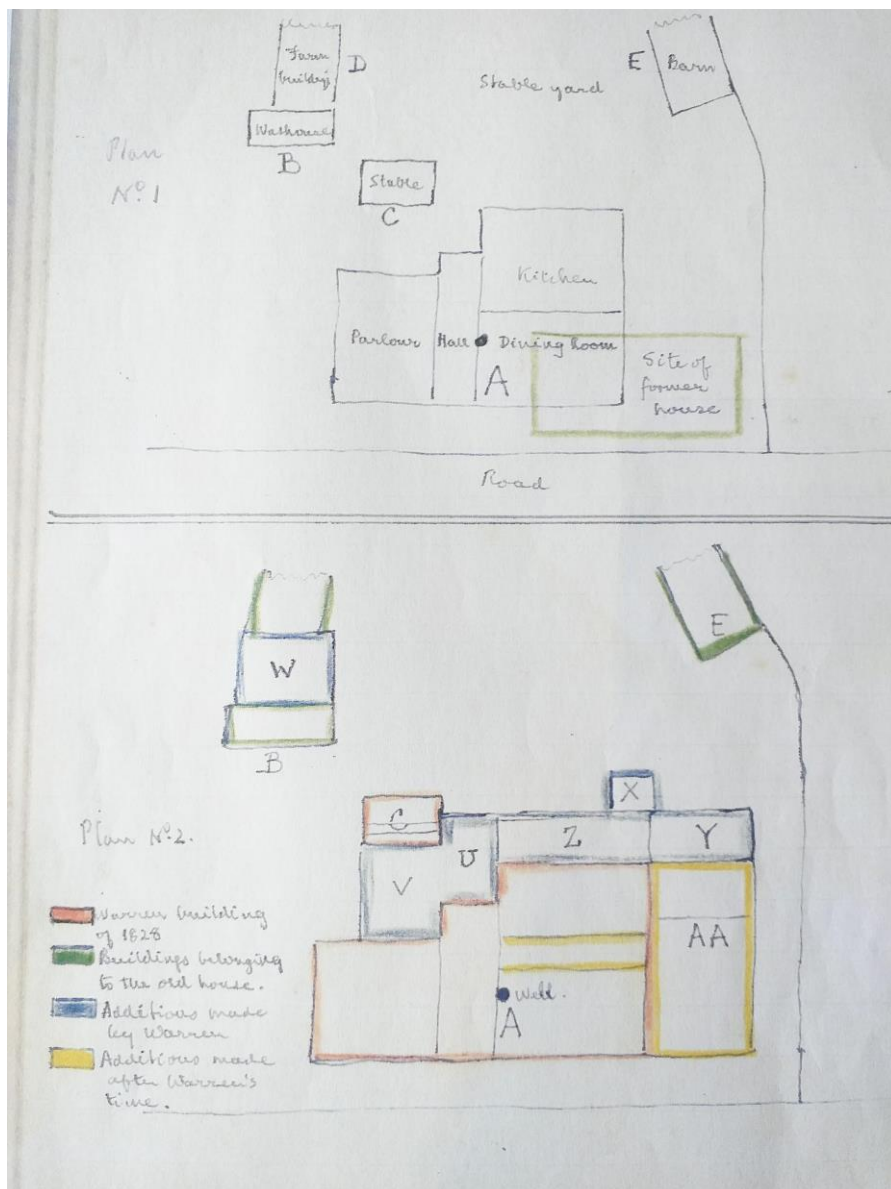
The upshot of all this was that both Charles and Leonora appeared at Court the same day, to answer their respective summonses!

In the 1841 Census, taken in June of that year, three relatives of Charles Warren are recorded as being present in Simpson House: his sister Martha, her husband William Bond and his niece, Charlotte Warren, daughter of his brother Thomas. Perhaps they had come to stay with Charles after the death of Leonora just a few months earlier.

Four months after Leonora's death, Charles, now aged 43, married again. His second wife was Sophia Gee and they married at Emberton Parish Church on 17 August 1841. Sophia, a widow, was the daughter of William Page, an innkeeper. Although she was married to Charles for over 30 years there is little else known about her, except that she was born in 1806, had no children and came from Emberton, a village near Newport Pagnell. One of the witnesses at their wedding was James Page, perhaps a brother of Sophia.

From the 1840s onwards Charles seems to have prospered as a farmer and he now begins to appear in a number of Buckinghamshire directories under the listing of 'Clergymen and Gentry.'

During his time at Simpson House Charles Warren carried out major building works to extend the original building.



Plans prepared by Warren Dawson to show the additions made to the original house Plan No. 1 shows the original building on the site of the old Goodman farmhouse. plan No. 2 shows the various additions made in the mid 1800's.

According to Dawson's notes:

Warren enlarged the house by incorporating in it a stable at the rear and enlarging the original kitchen. The space between the house and the stable was filled in, a small room being added together with an extension of the hall. The lower floor of the stable was converted into a store-room or lamp-room with a passage giving access to the garden, and a row of coal cellars. The loft above the stable was made into a bedroom.

A little courtyard was incorporated in the house. The lower room was lined with shells and formed a kind of grotto (afterwards known as the "museum") access to it being had by a door with a glass panel from the parlour. Above these new rooms was made a bathroom and W.C. the water being supplied by gravity through a pipe from the canal to a storage tank in the back bedroom.

There were a number of other changes which enlarged the original house.

A back staircase was made from the rear part of the hall to the floor above. The north wall of the kitchen was taken down and the wall of the bedroom above supported on a

beam. A larder was built out on the north side, and the scullery or back kitchen on the east. In the scullery there was a pump for raising water into a tank on the roof of the larder from a well which is still under the floor of the present dining-room.

There would have also been changes to other parts of the house. Upstairs, new doorways would have been needed to connect the new rear additions to the original front part of the house. The original second bedroom was divided into two, with a new lobby. Perhaps these changes took place at a later date, after Charles Warren's death.

Charles and Mary

We have seen that four months after the death of Leonora in 1841, Charles remarried. There is no record of any children from either of Warren's two marriages; Leonora, after all, had been 41 years old at the time of her marriage to Charles; and Sophia, his second wife, was already 40 years old at the time of their marriage.

Just three years after he married Sophia, in the summer of 1844, Charles received some surprising news which was to have a dramatic impact on his second wife and on the rest of the Warren family and perhaps became the subject of much speculation and local gossip.

At the age of 47, Charles was to become a father. The news was surprising because the mother of his child was not his wife Sophia but a young local woman, Mary Anne Clarke, aged just 20.

Born in Woolstone, a small village just two miles from Simpson, Mary was the eldest of three daughters of William Clarke, a millwright, and Mary (née Yates). Both the Clarke and Yates family had lived in Bow Brickhill for many years.

Mary Clarke was a lace worker, a common occupation for young women around the Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire border at that time. Young children went to lace schools from the age of five upwards and by the time they were twelve they were expected to earn their keep. It has been estimated that about a fifth of the lacemakers in these villages recorded in the 1851 Census were under the age of 15 years.



A group of Buckinghamshire 'pillow' lacemakers

How and where Charles and Mary met is not known; nor whether it was a brief affair or a longer-term relationship. Charles did work in Bow Brickhill in 1834-1835 on a church rebuilding project; perhaps he met Mary or her family at that time? What seems clear is that Charles did not dispute that he was the father and after the child was born, in January 1845, he was happy to recognise him as his son. Sophia, on the other hand, must surely have been hugely embarrassed by what must have become a local scandal. Apart from the great age differences between them, Charles was by then a well-known and prosperous member of the local community: he had been a Church Warden at St. Thomas Church, was a Trustee of a local charity and had business interests in farming, building and contracting.

After William was born Mary Clarke lived with her mother and grandmother in Bow Brickhill and – it seems reasonable to suppose – was supported financially by Charles. Professor Warren claimed that from 1851 Charles paid for his son to attend a school in Wendover, Bucks as a 'parlour boarder'. (A parlour boarder was a special category of boarder, normally the son of wealthy or deceased parents, who was put in the care of the headmaster or headmistress of the school,

often living with the family, taking meals with them as well as having the use of a personal sitting-room.) I found no details of the school in Wendover, but it presumably required a considerable amount of work to find the school, enrol William, pay the fees, arrange for transport of baggage and for William to travel there and back.

Whether Mary Clarke ever married or had other children is not known, nor whether she continued any sort of relationship with Charles Warren. Her own mother died in 1851 and she doesn't appear in the later Censuses for Bow Brickhill. Mary's son was registered as William John Clarke, but his name was later changed to William Clarke Warren.

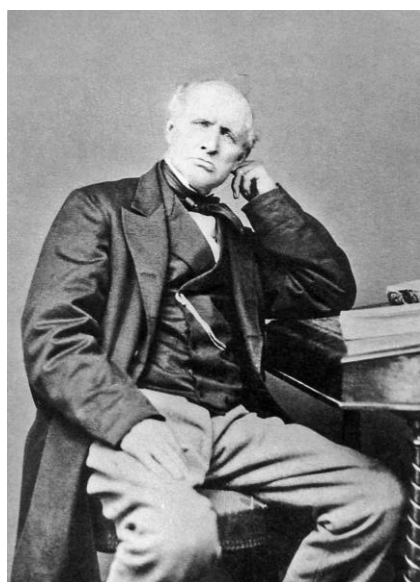
We could speculate that the birth of an illegitimate child to Charles, some four years after his second marriage took place, would not have found a great deal of favour with Sophia, and as we shall see later, she may have got her revenge many years later when Charles was close to death.

We can catch up with Charles Warren again in 1851, when he appears in the Census and is recorded as a farmer of 52 acres.⁸ Also in the house was Ann Bradbury, aged 18, a servant. In the 1850s Charles was one of the Board of Guardians of Newport Pagnell Workhouse. In Sheahan's History of Bucks 1862 he is mentioned as one of the principal landowners. Amongst his other activities, he was a member of the Royal Bucks Agricultural Association.⁹

Sometime between 1851 and 1861 Charles must have acquired a further 140 acres of land because in the 1861 Census his fortunes had grown to the extent that he had become a 'landed proprietor' owning various cottages and 191 acres, employing 5 men and 2 boys. Also living in Simpson House were his wife Sophia and Eliza Matley, aged 21, a servant. By this time his son William, aged 16, appears in the Census as Scholar, aged 16, living in the Bedford Arms Hotel in George Street, Woburn. It would seem likely that William's accommodation there was being paid for by his father.

In August 1863 Charles was back in Court, where he sued Job Bolton, a livestock dealer from Newport Pagnell, for the death of a cow which he had bought from Bolton. Charles was claiming £7 from Bolton for the loss of the cow. It seems that the evidence was somewhat contradictory, but the Judge considered that the issue was "*whether a warranty had been given.*" It took just 20 minutes for the jury to conclude that a warranty had not been proved and Charles lost the case.

By the mid-1860s Charles was obviously considered to be a man of some standing in the village; the Buckinghamshire Post Office Directory of 1864 lists him as 'Gentry'.



Charles Warren, in his later years. Probably a studio photograph taken around 1860-1870. A copy of the photograph was given by Warren Dawson to Professor Warren who later passed it to the present owner.

Although I have discovered much new information about Charles Warren during his time in Simpson House, there is one aspect of his life which remains uncertain. Was he, as well as being a Surveyor, railway contractor and farmer, also an Architect and builder? Was he responsible for designing and/or building several other large houses in the Simpson and Fenny Stratford area? Several local historians claim that he was, but I have been unable to confirm this. Appendix 2 explores this in more detail.

In the 1871 Census, Charles, then aged 74, is recorded as a farmer and landowner. Oddly, his birthplace is now given as Falmouth, Cornwall. (In previous censuses it had been given as Petersfield, Hampshire's). Also living in the house with his second wife, Sophia, was Eliza Smith, a servant, aged 18.

3 THE MYSTERY OF THE SECOND CODICIL

Some six years before his death, Charles had made a will. In the will, dated 28th October 1868 he requested that he *'be buried in Simpson Churchyard in a brick grave adjoining the grave of his first wife, and that a neat tombstone be placed over both graves.'* In addition he asked that a memorial tablet be placed on the wall of the church opposite the end of his pew, similar to the tablet placed to the memory of Leonora.

In his will he bequeathed to ***"William Clarke Warren, the son of Mary Anne Clarke late of Bow Brickhill in the said county my gold watch and chain and my other articles of jewellery"***. All the rest of his property, goods and effects he left to his wife Sophia until her death. After Sophia's death his estate was to be divided equally between his two nephews: Thomas Goodman Warren (son of Thomas Latham Warren) and William Bond (son of Martha Bond, nee Warren); his natural son William Clarke Warren; and his friend Charles William Powell. His son William was also to inherit the whole of Charles' silver plate and a third of his personal goods and possessions, after the death of Sophia. There were bequests of £100 to his brother Thomas and of £150 each to each of the four daughters of Thomas and to his sister Mary Ann Panter and on her decease to her son William.

Charles appointed four executors and trustees: his two nephews Thomas Goodman Warren and William Bond, his son William Clarke Warren and his friend and solicitor Charles William Powell.

It seems to me that Charles was being scrupulously fair and honourable in preparing this Will and disposing of his estate. He was leaving a number of personal items, which would have had huge sentimental value, to his only child. His estate was to be divided equally between his only son, two nephews, and a long-standing personal friend. He was making bequests to other close relatives, including his brother, sister and four nieces. The Will also provide for his wife Sophia to live in Simpson House until her death.

We now come to the great mystery of the final days of Charles Warren and the events surrounding the disposal of his estate in 1874 and 1875.

The story starts on 11th April 1872, 9 days before his death. Charles' solicitor is summoned to Simpson House because Charles wished to revise his will. On that day, he signs a codicil to his will.

The codicil was quite short; here it is in full:

This is a further codicil to the will of me Charles Warren of Simpson in the County of Buckinghamshire Gentleman and which Will bears the date on or about 28th day of October 1868 I revoke all the devises and bequests in my said Will made to or in favour of William Clarke Warren in my said Will named and I revoke the appointment of the said William Clarke Warren as a Trustee and Executor of my said Will. I give to Charlotte Warren Jane Warren Leonora Warren and Elizabeth Warren the daughters of my brother Thomas Latham Warren legacy or sum of One hundred pounds apiece in substitution and in lieu of the legacies of one hundred and fifty pounds given to them by my said Will. I give to my sister Mary Ann Panter the legacy or sum of two hundred pounds I revoke the bequest in my said Will of my residuary estate and I direct the Trustees or Trustee for the time being of my Will to stand possessed of such residuary Estate upon trust to my nephews William Bond and Thomas Warren in equal shares absolutely. In all other respects I confirm my said Will and former codicil In Witness thereof I have hereunto set my hand this Eleventh day of April One thousand eight hundred and seventy two.

Nine days later, on 19th April 1872, Charles died, aged 75, in Simpson House. His death certificate, issued on 25th April records the cause of death as 'organic disease of the liver'. The informant is shown as Elizabeth Saunders.

The result of this mysterious and belated codicil was that his son William was completely disinherited. In the original will of 1868 William was to receive some of Charles' personal effects, including his gold watch and chain; as well as one quarter of the estate, after the various other bequests had been made. As a result of the codicil, he and his family received nothing. Instead, Charles' estate, Simpson House, was left entirely to his two nephews: William Bond and Thomas Goodman Warren.

The reasons for these 'deathbed' changes are difficult to understand. Why would Charles wish to alter his will so drastically, when he had previously been careful to ensure that his 'natural son' received an inheritance? There is no evidence of a dispute between father and son. As we have seen, Charles recognised William as his son and paid for his education at boarding school. In his original will of 1868 he had intended to leave William one quarter of his estate together with some of his personal possessions, including his gold watch and chain, other articles of jewellery and silver.

Was Charles already seriously ill, perhaps physically weak and mentally confused and in such a poor physical and mental state that he didn't really understand what he was being asked to do? Was the codicil drafted out, turned into legal language by the solicitor and signed by Charles without him realising the significance of the document? If so, who was behind these changes to the Will?

Could it have been Sophia, Charles' second wife? Was she resentful of the attention paid by Charles to his son William, still embarrassed by the scandal of her husband's affair with a young working woman and the birth of an illegitimate child? If so, it was a particularly vengeful act, because she didn't stand to gain from the changed Will and Charles had been careful to ensure that she could continue to live in Simpson House until her death.

If not Sophia, perhaps the two nephews, Thomas Goodman Warren and William Bond? They clearly stood to gain from the changed Will. They each received half of the estate instead of one quarter, together with half of the proceeds from the sale of the contents of Simpson House and their uncle's personal possessions.



Thomas Latham Warren, one of the nephews of Charles Warren, who inherited Simpson House after the death of Charles. Thomas married Isabella Scales in Ontario after emigrating in 1871.

However I discovered a problem with this scenario. One of the nephews, Thomas, had already left England by 1872. He had emigrated to Ontario, Canada in 1870 and was not present when Charles Warren's Will was Proved in July 1872. So that leaves just one other person: William Bond, the son of Martha Bond, one of Charles' sisters. He would have realised the potential financial gain to him if the Will could be changed; and perhaps he was jealous of what he might have thought were the special favours received by his cousin.

Warren Dawson reported that '*local gossip claimed that one of Charles' nephews, probably William Bond, put pressure on his uncle, perhaps backed by Sophia who had never accepted William as a member of the family, to cut his only son out of his Will*'. The whole affair remains something of a mystery. Neither Warren Dawson's or Professor Warren's papers offer any other clues.

I tried to find out more about William Bond and discovered that he had been born in Boscastle, Cornwall in 1840. In the 1851 Census he was living with his parents Martha and William Bond in Woodbridge Street, St. James, Clerkenwell - not so far, as it happens, from St. James Church,

where Charles had married Leonora. Both his parents were listed as Carpenters. He was living in Lambeth in 1871 and was listed as a Commercial Clerk, married to Jenny, with 3 children. He continued living in Lambeth and by 1881 had 8 children. Then he seems to have fallen on less prosperous times, because by 1891 he was a Dock Labourer. In the 1901 Census he was living with his son, also William, in Leytonstone and he probably died before 1911. With so many children in the Bond family there are no doubt many descendants; perhaps there are clues to the events surrounding the mysterious Will buried in the Bond family history.

As for Sophia, her friends or relatives may have known something about the whole affair, but she had no direct descendants who might have been told of the events surrounding Charles' death.

There is no evidence that William ever contested the Will but according to Professor Warren he did record in his Family Bible: *"I lost my parental inheritance through the mysterious Codicil to my father's Will"*.



William Clarke Warren, son of Charles Warren and Mary Anne Clarke

By 1868 William had married 'Bessie' Taylor and moved away from the Simpson area; their first child, Kate, was born in Cowes, Isle of Wight in 1869, followed by Dora in 1870. Then, in 1872, just before his father died, William had a son, a grandson for Charles, who they also called Charles.



Charles, grandson of Charles Warren

It seems hard to imagine why Charles Warren would wish to leave nothing to his son and three grandchildren if he had been in his right mind. William and Bessie went on to have a total of 9 children and many grandchildren, so there were many descendants of Charles Warren and Mary Anne Clarke. William Clarke Warren spent his life in the textile industry and died in 1931.

4 ENTER OCTAVIUS, STAGE LEFT

Charles Warren died in Simpson House on 20 April 1872, aged 75.¹¹ He was buried according to his wishes in Simpson churchyard. His coffin was made from oak boards which he had had the foresight to buy and store in one of his barns for many years prior to his death. His memorial tablet was put up on the north wall of the church beside that of the memorial to Leonora. It reads as follows:

This tablet is erected to the Memory of

CHARLES WARREN, Gent.

Husband of Leonora Warren.

Who Departed this Life April 19th, 1872,

Aged 74 Years

The graves of Charles Warren and Leonora Warren can be found just outside the main entrance door to the Church.

Sophia Warren continued to live in Simpson House for another two years or so after the death of Charles. She died at Simpson House on 19 September 1874. In her will, made just a month after Charles' death in 1872, she divided her estate up amongst her own relatives, mostly nieces and nephews - nothing of her property and none of her money was bequeathed to any member of the Warren family. Despite having lived in Simpson for over 30 years, she chose not to be buried there but in Olney churchyard, near her first husband.

After Sophia's death, the executors moved very quickly to dispose of Charles' possessions, and of Simpson House and the rest of the estate. Just three weeks after she died, on 12 and 13 October 1874, an auction was held in the house.

Further Particulars of the Auctioneer, Chesham.

By Mr. J. P. GOODWIN.

SIMPSON, near BLETCHLEY.

THE handsome Drawing, Dining, and Bed Room FURNITURE, Valuable OIL PAINTINGS and ENGRAVINGS, upwards of 150 OUNCES of SILVER, Gold Lever Watch, Two Gold Watch Guards, with Gold Seals, and Gold Scarf Pin : Old China, Patent Fire-proof Safe; Pony, Four-wheel Chaise, Harness, and Effects,

WILL BE SOLD BY AUCTION, BY
J. P. GOODWIN,
On MONDAY and TUESDAY, the 12th and 13th of OCTOBER, 1874,
ON THE PREMISES, and by order of the Executors of the late Mr. Charles Warren, Simpson, Bucks, deceased.

N.B.—On View Saturday, the 10th of October.

Catalogues will be prepared, and may be had at the Place of Sale; the principal Inns in the neighbourhood; and of the Auctioneers, Newport Pagnell.

Sale to commence at Eleven o'Clock.

S I M P S O N, B U C K S.

J. P. GOODWIN
Has received Instructions from the Trustees of the Will of the late Mr. Charles Warren,
TO SELL BY AUCTION,
At the SWAN INN, FENNY STRATFORD,
On TUESDAY, the 13th Day of OCTOBER Next, at 5 for 6 o'Clock in the Evening punctually,
A VERY DESIRABLE FREEHOLD ESTATE,
COMPRISING a CAPITAL MESSUAGE or DWELLING-HOUSE, with excellent Pleasure and Kitchen Gardens, Stables, large Yard, and Out-buildings; and an excellent CLOSE of PASTURE GROUND at the back, situate in the centre of the Village of SIMPSON.
Also several excellent CLOSES of ARABLE and PASTURE LAND, situate at SIMPSON, containing together 50 Acres, or thereabouts; and also some COTTAGES adjoining the Churchyard, in the same Village.

The above will be divided into Six Lots, and further Particulars and Conditions of Sale may be obtained of Messrs. Powell, Newman, and Powell, Solicitors, and of the Auctioneers, Newport Pagnell.

By Messrs. JAMES & LISTER LEA.

Auction Notice for the sale of Charles Warren's possessions and property, October 1874; and for the auction of the house, (which may never have taken place)

The Notice describes some of Charles' possessions:

The handsome Drawing, Dining and Bedroom Furniture, valuable oil paintings and engravings, upwards of 150 ounces of silver, Gold Lever Watch, two Gold Watch Guards, with Gold seals, and Gold Scarf Pin; old china, patent fireproof safe; pony, four-wheel Chaise, harness and effects will be sold 'on the premises' on 12 and 13 October 1874.

Here then, to be sold to the highest bidder, were Charles' gold watch and chain, other jewellery and the silver plate which would have gone to his son William under the terms of his original will.

On 13 October 1874, and **on the same day** as the furniture auction, there was to be another auction, of Charles Warren's land and properties. The Auction Notice (see above) refers to 'A Valuable Freehold Property' to be sold by Auction on Tuesday Oct.13 1874 at the Swan Inn, Fenny Stratford. The Auction Particulars listed six lots:

Lot 1 was Simpson House. The house is described as containing Entrance Hall, Dining and Drawing Room, Back Room, Kitchen, Scullery and China Closet, with 'good cellarage'. There were 4 bedrooms, Dressing Room and WC, with good stabling, Farm Yard and Farm Buildings. Adjoining the house was a paddock or Orchard, well stocked with fruit trees and containing 2 hovels. The gardens, which are tastefully laid out, comprise a large Flower Garden with Greenhouse, Summer Houses and a Kitchen garden.

Lot 2 was a close of pastureland called The Spot.

Lot 3 was a 5-acre meadow, near Simpson Church.

Lot 4 was 3 freehold cottages, with gardens, near the Church.

Lot 5 another piece of pasture land, called Booby's close, extending to about 6 acres.

Lot 6 was a collection of six pieces of land: Cooks Field, Brickyard Field, First Field, Middle Field, Far Field and Meadow, totalling around 37 acres.

Some details of the auction have survived. Lot 4, consisting of 3 freehold cottages, was bought by Wyndham Edward Hanmer for the price of £100. However, I found no record of Simpson House itself being sold. According to Warren Dawson's notes, '*the nephews took possession of it, the conveyance of it being made by indenture dated 25th May 1875*'. Curiously, he makes no reference to an auction on 13 October 1874. He claims that later in 1875 the nephews sold the house to Octavius Burrell and the day after Burrell bought the house, he mortgaged it for £650 to William Pritzler Newton (probably a misspelling of Newland) and Charles William Powell of Newport Pagnell. Burrell supposedly lived in the house but then in November 1876 he sold it to Thomas Kench who paid off the mortgage.

The second part of the puzzle relates to Octavius Burrell, who supposedly bought the house from the nephews in 1875. Dawson showed no interest in him, but who was Burrell and how did he come to buy the house, then mortgage it and quickly sell it on?

Octavius Burrell

I discovered that Octavius Burrell was born in Westley, Suffolk in 1849. His father, Walton Burrell was a wealthy landowner and farmer in Suffolk; and Octavius, as his name suggested, was indeed his eighth child.

In the 1871 Census Burrell was resident in Grays Inn Lane, St. Pancras and didn't seem to have any connection with Simpson. My Further research uncovered the fact that on 11 September 1872, aged 22, he married Elizabeth Warren in the Registry Office at St Pancras. On examining their marriage certificate, it became clear that Elizabeth Warren was one of the daughters of Thomas Latham Warren and therefore a niece of Charles Warren.¹³ So here we have Octavius marrying Elizabeth, Charles Warren's niece just a few months after Charles' death in April 1872. Presumably, Octavius would have been aware of the death of Charles and the considerable estate he was leaving, since Elizabeth was a beneficiary of the will. Did this have anything to do with the marriage?

There are several other oddities around the sale of Simpson House. As we have seen, one of Charles' nephews, Thomas Goodman Warren, had left the country in 1871 and emigrated to Ontario, Canada. He later married Isabella Scales and they had 9 children. Did he receive any of the proceeds from his uncle's estate? Perhaps it was William Bond, Charles' nephew, who actually took possession of the house? These small mysteries surrounding the will of Charles Warren and the second codicil remain to be solved.

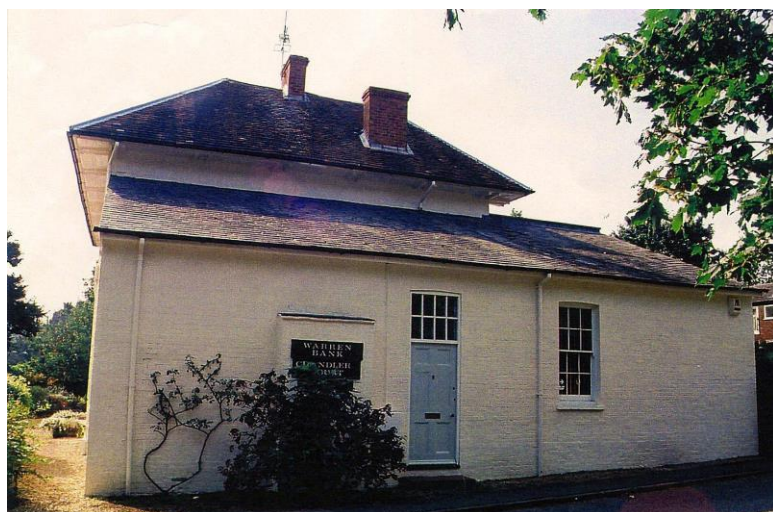
Octavius lived for most of his life in and around Hanover Square, London. His Census entries record his Occupation as 'other means'. His wife Elizabeth died in 1889, aged 54. There were no children from the marriage. Intriguingly, in his later years, Octavius moved to Aspley Guise, a village in Bedfordshire just a few miles from Simpson. He died in 1927, aged 78.

5 FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

We have seen that Octavius Burrell sold Simpson House to Thomas Kench in November 1876. So, over four years after Charles Warren's death in 1872, Simpson House had a new owner, Thomas Kench, who moved there with his wife, Ann Maria. Kench took out a mortgage on 4 November 1876 for £600 from Owen Lewis of 5 Mornington Crescent, Hampstead, a Surveyor and Builder. Kench himself was a former builder, who came originally from Harrow on the Hill. He had retired in 1875, to Ware in Hertfordshire, prior to buying the house from Octavius Burrell. Thomas and Ann Maria had no children.

According to Dawson, it was Thomas Kench who added the large side extension onto the east side of the original house.

“Kench made a further addition to the house in about 1878, by the construction of a large dining room and pantry on the east side of the old dining room. To give access to this, part of the south side of the kitchen was cut off to make a passage from the hall. This also necessitated the removal of the kitchen fireplace, formerly in the SE corner of the room (now converted into a cupboard) and the erection of a new one on the NW wall of the kitchen.”



The large extension built by Thomas Kench onto the original house. Probably intended as a dining room, it later became Warren Dawson's library and study.

Kench paid off the mortgage with Owen Lewis on 15 April 1880 and Lewis reconveyed the property to him. In 1882, Kench bought the cottage adjoining the west side of Simpson House. He later tiled the roof of the big barn to the north of the house, which had been thatched in Warren's time.

Kench and his wife lived at the house for around 12 years, until 1889, and during that time, it seems that he made several unsuccessful attempts to sell or let the house. They must have wanted to move from the house by 1884 because in June of that year he put the house up for auction, by then naming it Simpson House.

The Auction Notice described it as *“a handsome detached residence standing in its own grounds occupying 3 acres, together with tastefully designed flower gardens, unique summer houses, ornamental fish pond, fountains, statuary and conservatory; extensive kitchen gardens, well stocked with fruit trees; convenient courtyards, stabling and coach houses, and buildings well adapted for loose boxes; a rich grass paddock to the rear, and cottage, adjoining, for groom and gardener.”*

The 'Auction Particulars' accompanying the Auction Notice provide a complete description of Simpson House and its adjacent buildings after the additions that had been made by Charles

Warren before the 1870s and by Thomas Kench around 1880. The house has a carriage entrance. On the ground floor is a spacious entrance hall, Drawing Room, a 'lofty' dining room, a morning room, Smoking Room, large storeroom, a kitchen - measuring 22ft by 13ft - with larder, scullery, lavatory and Beer cellar. On the first floor are three 'principal' bedrooms, Dressing Room, smaller bedroom, bathroom with hot and cold water supply, two w.c's, and principal and secondary staircases to the ground floor.

They describe 'The Grounds' with tastefully laid out flower gardens, shady walks, arbours, shrubberies, ornamental fishpond, fountain, statuary, conservatory, four summer houses, two walled kitchen gardens, well stocked with fruit trees, vinery, forcing house, potting shed, and large paddock.

The Outbuildings comprise a two-stall stable and coach house, a large barn 74 ft. Long by 18ft. Which 'would form capital Loose Boxes for hunters'.

They also list a 'Range of Buildings' comprising poultry houses, tool houses, cow shed, piggeries, open shed, coal house, wood house, a brick-and-tiled wash house, with sink and copper, walled courtyard, used as a drying ground, and three w.c's. There is a brick and thatched cottage for a gardener, and the whole estate extends to some 3 acres.

The Auction Notice states that the house is being sold "*by direction of the proprietor, who is leaving the County*".

The auction was held on 12 June 1884 at the Swan Hotel in Fenny Stratford. It was reported that the auction was well attended, and bidding started at £1,500. "*Mr G. Wigley offered in an enticing descriptive manner, to a large and influential company, in the commodious market room at the Swan Hotel, a beautifully well laid out and picturesque residence, situated at Simpson, called Simpson House.*" However, it seems that either there were no further bids or the bidding did not reach a high enough figure because the house was finally 'bought in' at £2,000. Mr and Mrs Kench continued to live in the house.

Having failed to sell the house, Kench tried to rent it out later in 1884 and an advertisement for this purpose was placed in the Bucks Herald. Described as a 'Small Detached Hunting Box' It was to be let unfurnished and with immediate possession, at a rent of £70 per month. It seems this also proved unsuccessful because Kench and his wife again continued living in the house.



Advertisement placed by Thomas Kench for the lease of Simpson House in 1884. The agents clearly thought the house had the possibility of being used for a "hunting box" or lodge "being situated in a thorough Hunting District" near "several celebrated Meets".

Four years later, in 1888 there was a second auction. The Buckinghamshire Record Office has a Notice of the Auction, dated 24 August 1888 and to be held at The Mart, Tokenhouse Yard,

London E.C.

This auction advertised the house, now re-named as *Sympson House* as a 'Charming Residential Property'. I have found no reports of the auction so cannot be sure that it actually took place. Holding the auction in London was perhaps because Kench thought he was more likely to find a buyer if he held it there. However he seems to have been unsuccessful again because the Kenchs continued to live in the house until the following year.

If you had been out walking in Simpson Village on the morning of 18 May, 1889, you might have been surprised to hear the tolling of a single bell of St. Thomas Church. If you had walked down the Simpson Road from the Church towards The Plough public house, passing by Simpson House you would have seen all the bedroom curtains in the house drawn, an unusual thing for the late morning of a Spring day. Passers-by would surely have wondered why the current owners of the house were still in their beds, or whether perhaps there was a more serious reason for the closed curtains.

They were soon to discover there was indeed a more serious reason. Both Thomas Kench and his wife Maria had, sometime previously, fallen ill. On this tragic day in May 1889 they both died, reportedly within hours of each other. Maria Kench, it seems, had been suffering from bronchitis; while the cause of Thomas' death is unknown.

Apart from being a tragedy for their wider family, this double death created a problem when it came to the disposal of the estate. Since they were childless, Thomas had arranged for his wife to be the sole executor and inheritor if he should die before her. So if he died first, the estate would pass to her and then to her heirs. If, on the other hand, she died before him, then the estate would remain with Thomas and subsequently pass to his heirs. But with both of them now dead, who was to bear witness as to who had died first? Fortunately, their servant was able to testify as to the times of their deaths, since she had been present that night and in the morning. The lawyers prepared an affidavit, which she signed, with the declaration that Mrs Kench had been the first to pass away, followed by Mr Kench just a couple of hours later. As a result, the estate passed to Mr Kench's family.

The events of this day were recorded, somewhat cryptically, in a local man's diary, the Diary of Elijah Cook, 1867- 1934:

"Mrs Kench died, Simpson. Mr. Kench died, Simpson. Both lay dead in the house at one time. Mrs Kench died 12.40 a.m. Mr Kench died the same morning, just two hours between each. The Bell rang out for them."

Following the death of Thomas Kench and his wife, Simpson House passed to Robert Kench Perry, who was Thomas' great-nephew. Kench Perry was born in Middlesex in 1861 and married his wife, Emily, in October 1880. They had 4 children: Ada, Ernest, Robert and Frank and had previously been living in Acton. They moved to the house early in 1890. According to Dawson:

"He kept horses and it is said by those who remember him, lived extravagantly. Fanny Hill, of Webbs End, Simpson, who is my informant, was maidservant during all his residence at Simpson and accompanied the family to London afterwards."

There may be some truth in the claim that Kench Perry lived beyond his means. Certainly, the 1891 census for Simpson House shows that there were three servants in the house: a Cook, Ada Freeman; a Domestic servant, Frances Hill; and a Groom and Gardener, Arthur Inwood. Kench himself appears to have had no means of employment because he describes himself as 'Gentleman'.

Although his stay in Simpson House was relatively brief, Kench Perry does seem to have been active in local affairs. In March 1890 he attended a meeting of the Wolverton Liberal Association, where his name was mentioned in the press report. He was a member of the Board of Guardians of Newport Pagnell Workhouse and of the Simpson School Board. He played cricket for Fenny Stratford and is recorded in the match between Fenny Stratford and Aston Clinton in July 1890. He was perhaps a keen gardener, because In August 1890, he participated in the Annual Flower Show of the Fenny Stratford Horticultural Society, where he fought off intense competition to win 2nd prize for Peas.

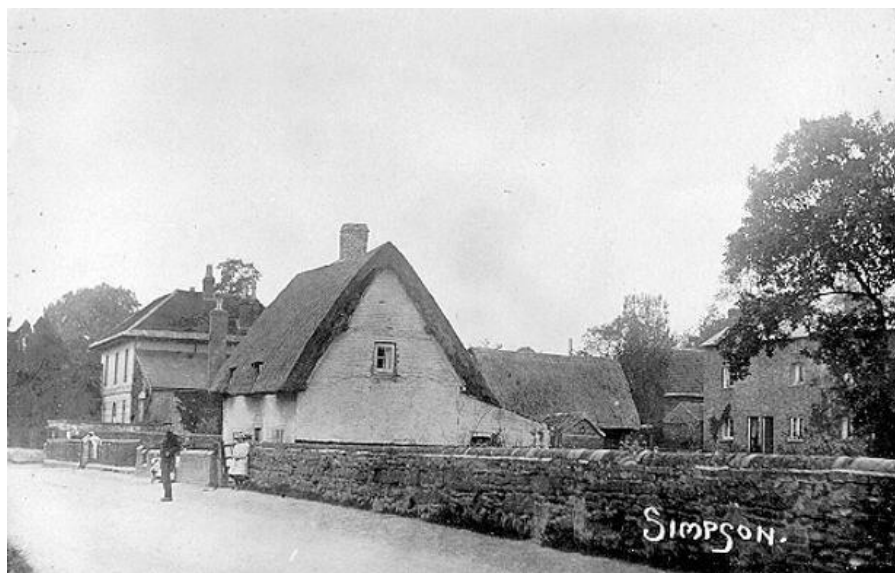
It doesn't seem as though Kench Perry had any sort of occupation when he lived in Simpson House. If indeed he did live extravagantly perhaps this is what led him to mortgage the house for £500 on 16 January 1891, just one year after he moved in. He left the house with his family and moved back to London, where he carried on business as a fruiterer, living at 178, Seven Sisters Road, Holloway.

He came to an unfortunate death the following year, which was reported at an Inquest held in September 1892. It appears that Kench and a friend, Frederick Nasielski, had been out one afternoon riding on their carts and drinking at various pubs across North London. They started home afterwards. Kench Perry decided to engage in a race with his friend. What followed was described:

"The deceased was desirous of racing. He went at a furious pace for which in Russell Road a policeman took Mr Perry's name and address. Arriving at home, Perry gave his horse and trap to his man to put away, and bestrode a newly-bought black mare".

The two friends then rode on to Winchmore Hill, Nasielski on his cart and Perry on the black mare and engaged in another race. At some point, Nasielski looked back and saw Perry lying on the ground, next to his horse. The doctor who attended the scene concluded that Perry had died *"from epileptic convulsions whilst.....suffering from concussion of the brain, doubtless from the fall."*

A verdict of Accidental Death was returned by the jury. Robert Kench-Perry was just 31 years old. I haven't been able to find out what happened to his widow and children after his death.



A view of Simpson House, probably late 1900s. The extensive barns and outbuildings behind the house can be seen, as well as the large side extension built by Thomas Kench.

6 TALES OF FIVE TENANTS

After the Kench family had moved out in 1891, the house was again put up for auction, at The Swan Inn in Fenny Stratford, on October 3, 1891. The auction notice, by William Brown and Company, gave it the following description:

Detached Freehold Residence known as Simpson House, standing in 2 acres. Gardeners cottage, stabling, poultry yard and orchard. Extensive outbuildings.

It seems again that either there were no bids or they didn't reach the reserve price because according to a local newspaper report the house was 'bought in' at £2,000 and sold later by private treaty to Alfred Benford. The agents for the sale were Sherrin and Coltman. On 15 December 1891 Benford paid off the mortgage and became the new owner.



Alfred Benford, Butcher, who bought Simpson House in 1891, outside his shop in Fenny Stratford

Neither Alfred Benford, a butcher who had a shop in Simpson Road, Fenny Stratford, nor any members of the Benford family ever lived in Simpson House. Indeed, it is unclear why he would wish to purchase the property, which with its accompanying barns, outbuildings and land was much better suited to someone with an interest in farming, horses or horticulture.

In any event, the purchase of Simpson House by Alfred Benford ushered in a new chapter in the life of the house. For the next 28 years, until 1919, the house remained in the ownership of the Benford family. Unlikely landlords, they rented it out to a number of different tenants and this forms the subject of the next chapter in this history.

Assault and Battery

According to Dawson's account, Albert Benford's first tenant was '*Charles Ennals, a wine merchant, who lived in the house from midsummer 1892 until 1894 with his wife, a daughter and a son who was physically and mentally defective*'. He went on to say that he (Charles Ennals) brought an action against the local vicar, the Rev. William Rice, Rector of Simpson, for an alleged assault on his son. It is well-documented that Rev. Rice was an extremely difficult and cantankerous character, who during his tenure was charged with a number of offences regarding

alleged assaults on Simpson parishioners and other matters.

I was able to find a report of the Court hearing in a local newspaper, The Bucks Advertiser. This revealed that the son's name was Albert Truby Ennals. But when I traced Albert Truby through Census returns I discovered that his father was not Charles Ennals but Albert Harry Ennals, a retired wine merchant, who I believe lived in the house from 1892 until 1895 with his wife, Mary Jane, (nee Truby), a daughter, Alice; and his son, Albert Truby. Mrs Ennals was very active in the local Methodist Chapel. After looking up various Census returns I discovered, that Charles Ennals was the older brother of Albert Ennals, but he didn't ever live in Simpson House because in 1891 Charles was living in Louth, Lincolnshire with his wife and three daughters and was a General Practitioner, also Member of the Royal College of Surgeons. He was still there in 1901. The family came originally from the St. Neots area in Cambridgeshire.

My further research on Albert Harry Ennals revealed that he had a somewhat colourful past, having been arrested and accused of embezzlement of his employers' funds when he was a wine salesman. He appeared in Court at Bicester in xxxx to face four charges. He was found not guilty and discharged but my guess is that his brother Charles stepped in to rent Simpson House in his own name in order to avoid embarrassing revelations about Albert's somewhat shady past.

The case came to Court on 27 June 1895 and there was a cross-summons by the Rev. Rice against Ennals for assault. The case seems to have evoked considerable local interest, because the newspaper report (Bucks Advertiser, 29 June 1895) recorded that "*the public present in the Court included a large number of the Simpson people, who took a keen, and at times lively interest in the Case.*"

The events that led to the Court case took place on 22 June 1895. Albert Truby, it seems, was taking tea with a Mr Hoskins at his home, Rectory Farm, in Simpson, when Rev. Rice visited the farm and discovered some printed verses attached to the back door. For reasons not explained he started to rub them off when Mr Hoskins came out. There was an altercation and Rev. Rice shouted to Hoskins: "*You be off, you are a lunatic.*" Albert appeared and Rev. Rice then shouted at him: "*you be off home; you have no right here*". At some point Rice then struck Albert on the shoulder with his stick. The hearing seems to have degenerated into a comic farce when Rice claimed that he would have received a couple of black eyes from Albert if he hadn't used his stick. There was laughter from the Simpson residents when Rice, asked "*if he was serious in suggesting that Ennals, who is a man of weak physique*" could cause him harm, replied in the affirmative.

Surprisingly, although the case against Rev. Rice seemed quite clear, the Magistrates dismissed both the summons and the cross-summons and ordered both parties to pay their own costs. There are certainly some odd aspects to the case. It seems clear that Rev. Rice did strike Ennals, described variously as 'a weak man' and 'a cripple', twice with his stick; and the counter nsummons against Ennals seems somewhat absurd. The report of the case stated that "*the Bench held a short consultation in private*" ; and two of the four magistrates, including the Chairman, took no part in the proceedings. It was left to Colonel Burnley, a Major Finlay and a Mr Fountain to adjudicate: they dismissed the case after deliberating for just 20 minutes. The Reverend Rice achieved fame later in his life when he was dismissed from his position by an Ecclesiastical Court.

After the case, probably sometime later in 1895, Albert Harry Ennals and his family left Simpson House, moved to Moreton-in-the-Marsh in Gloucestershire and later to Shipston on Stour. The unfortunate Albert Truby lived on until 1949, when he died, aged 77, in North Cotswold, Gloucestershire.

The trials of Anthony Fitt

Alfred Benford's second tenant was Mrs Ann Maria Fitt, a widow, who lived in the house after the Ennals family left from 1896 until 1901, with her two daughters Beatrice Mary and Ann, together with her youngest child, Arthur Anthony Kersley. Mrs Fitt was the widow of James Nevill Fitt and she had previously lived in the Manor House, Hockliffe, Beds. She had by all accounts had a somewhat troubled life. She had had nine children: two had sadly died before the age of 2, another at the age of 6 and another at the age of 34. It is not known what occupation her husband had followed, but he was the author of two books on hunting and steeple-chasing and was listed as 'Author' in the 1891 Census.

Anthony, described by Dawson as ‘a gentleman dandy of diminutive size,’ kept horses and was in the habit of riding around the neighbourhood in his Irish jaunting car, a light two wheeled carriage drawn by a single horse. Anthony became the source of another local scandal, this time a Victorian drama involving a so-called Gentleman and a local servant girl. It began in the summer of 1898, when Anthony, by then aged 30 and unmarried, was seen riding around the district with a young woman, Ada Maud White. Warren Dawson recounts that Anthony seduced the girl, who brought an action against him for paternity. In the course of the case, Fitt committed perjury and a warrant was issued for his arrest. Dawson noted that “*He absconded and has not been heard of since.*”

I was curious to discover more about the case and what did happen to Anthony. I found records of the case in a local newspaper. Taken to Court by Ada in 1899 in the paternity suit, Anthony swore in Court that he had to his knowledge never seen Ada before he entered the Court. As a result, the case was adjourned for lack of corroborative evidence.

The case went back to Court in February 1902. This time various witnesses, including Alfred Phillips, Harry Souter and John Thorne claimed to have seen Anthony and Ada together. The local Constable, Sergeant Govier, gave evidence that he had seen Anthony and Ada on the jaunting cart on various occasions.

Unfortunately by then the child Anthony had allegedly fathered with Ada had died. Ada was again pregnant, but this child had nothing to do with Anthony so there was no longer any paternity suit to contest. Instead she was seeking birth and burial costs and other expenses. This time Anthony was nowhere to be found; he had, his lawyer said, done his patriotic duty, signed up in the Imperial Yeomanry as a Trooper and gone to South Africa to fight in the Boer War. He was, according to his lawyer, in London, taking up a Commission in the Yeomanry. The magistrates did decide that Anthony should pay for the birth and burial costs of the child and he had £7.13s.9d in costs awarded against him. They also gave permission for a warrant to be issued on the perjury charge.

But what happened to Anthony after the trial; and was the perjury charge ever pursued? I checked the 1901 Census record for Simpson House which showed that while the Fitt family was still in residence, Anthony was absent. (The Census revealed that Susannah Blanche Saunders, age 36, was also living in the house.) It may be by then Anthony had enlisted, because I found a record for him in the Anglo-Boer War Records. He had served as Trooper 6448, in the 121 (Younghusband's Horse) Company 26 Battalion of the Imperial Yeomanry and his name was recorded in the Royal Hospital Pensioner service records; although there was no record of him receiving a Commission.

I then searched the British Birth Marriage and Death records and had some success. I found that an Arthur Anthony Kersley Fitt married in February 1902 - around the same time as the second Court hearing - at All Saints Church, Marylebone, London. His bride was Susannah Blanche Saunders. After that the trail went cold. There were no records of Deaths for either Anthony Fitt or Susannah Blanche Fitt. I found a very extensive genealogical website for the Fitt family. There was Ann Maria Fitt and all her children, including her youngest son, Anthony. But it gave only his date of birth; there was no date of death for Anthony and no record of any marriage or children.

It then occurred to me that Anthony, newly married, may have thought it expeditious, in the light of a possible perjury charge, to leave England. But where would he go? Why not South Africa, familiar to him because of his military service there? A search of South African records proved more fruitful. From the Transvaal Province Estate Death Notice Index I learned that one Susannah Blanche Kersley Fitt died there in 1926; and Arthur Anthony Kershey(sic) Fitt died there in July 1944, at the age of 77. His Death Notice records that they had no children and that Anthony had been the owner of a riding school in Honeydew, Roodepoort, now a suburb of Johannesburg. I found no more about his life in South Africa but it does seem that he retained his interest in horses throughout his life.

It appears that Anthony's mother had been so upset and embarrassed by the disgrace of the case that she left Simpson House with her two daughters in 1901 and never returned to it. After she moved out, the house remained unoccupied until her tenancy expired. However it seems she left some belongings there, because I came across a Notice of an Auction Sale sale¹⁶ to be held in the house on 4 March 1902. Amongst the items to be sold was ‘a rustic cart, a large

quantity of saddlery, stable requisites, outdoor effects, a 'useful bay mare' and an Irish Jaunting Car. These must surely have been the former property of Anthony Fitt, including presumably the horse and Jaunting Car which played a role in the activities which led to the paternity suit against him and led to such dramatic changes in his life. His mother, Maria Fitt, moved away from Simpson and died on 29 June 1905.

Alfred Benford had died On 22nd December 1902 and Simpson House became the property of his widow, Eliza Jane Benford. She continued to let out the house.

Wedgwood, Sheraton and Chippendale

The third tenant was Mrs Jane Emma Cox, of Woburn Sands. Mrs Cox was the widow of Cornelius Cox, a stockbroker, a member of the London Stock Exchange and a collector of Wedgwood. They had seven children: Jane Wells, who became a painter; Henry Oscar, who became a commercial clerk at a lithographic printer; Ernest F., who became a clerk at a cartridge maker; and Albert J. who became clerk for a fire insurance office; and 3 younger daughters. Later they lived at 50 Fellowes Road Hampstead and in Woburn Sands, where Cornelius died in 1889.

Cox had achieved some notoriety during his lifetime: he bought two albums of documents, letters and paper cuttings about the artist James Whistler from a second hand bookshop for fourteen pounds. Charles Augustus Howell had compiled these albums and Cox purchased them some time after his death. He showed them to his son-in-law, the printer and lithographer Thomas Robert Way, and agreed to exchange them for some sketches of Venice by Whistler. In a letter written by Whistler to Howell in 1887, he declared that he wanted nothing removed from the albums. However, Joseph Pennell, who wrote *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, claimed that Cox removed some drawings before he showed the albums to Howell.

Cox had a library which was sold after his death by Christie's, London on 10-13 December 1889. His collection of Wedgwood was so extensive it took four days to complete the auction. The auction catalogue extended to some 50 pages and the auction was spread over four days, from 10th to 13th March, 1890.

Jane Cox moved to Simpson House from Woburn Sands and lived in the house with her son Albert Joseph Cox. According to Dawson: "*Mrs Cox is kindly remembered by those who knew her. She was an ardent supporter of the Methodist Chapel in Simpson.*"

Jane Cox died at Simpson House on 1 April 1909, aged 79. She seems to have lived in some splendour in Simpson House, surrounded by her late husband's remaining collections of ceramics, artists proof etchings, water colour drawings and magnificent Early English Furniture.

Following her death, an auction sale took place in Simpson House on Monday 17 May, 1909, comprising a '*Collection of Old Wedgwood, formed by the late Cornelius Cox, including many fine specimens of Vases, Plaques, Medallions, Candelabra, decorative items and several Old Wedgwood Services.*'

There was a striking collection of Signed Artist's Proof Etchings and a number of valuable Watercolor Drawings.

As well as all these collectible items, the whole contents of the house including "*A Sheraton Secretaire Bookcase, Chippendale Chairs and Tables, Queen Anne Chairs, Mirrors and Chests of Drawers, Charles II and James II Chairs, an Early English Marquetry Table and a Pair of Louis XVI Fauteuils.*"¹⁷

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NGHAM.

Fenny Stratford.

SIMPSON HOUSE, BUCKS.

2½ miles from Bletchley Junction, and 1 mile from Fenny Stratford Station.

Messrs. GEO. WIGLEY & SONS

Are instructed by the Executors, to Sell by Auction on the Premises, commencing at eleven o'clock EXACT TIME.

ON MONDAY, MAY 17TH, 1909.

The residue of the Noted and Valuable

Collection of Old Wedgwood,

Formed by the late Cornelius Cox, Esq., including many fine Specimens of Vases, Plaques, Medallions, Candelabra, and decorative items, several Old Wedgwood Services. Also a striking collection of

Signed Artist's Proof Etchings

By R. W. Macbeth, Herkomer, Waltner, Vion, and others after paintings by Meissonier, Corot, Jules Breton, Bouguereau, Burnes Jones, Fred Walker, and G. Mason. A number of valuable

Water Color Drawings

By Fred Taylor, G. G. Kilburne, T. B. Hardy, E. Thorne Waite, John Sherrin, David Law, John Steeple, C. F. Wainwright, J. Robertson, and many others. Together with the whole of the

Contents of the Residence,

Including some fine examples of

Early English Furniture,

A magnificent Sheraton Secretaire Bookcase, Sheraton Sideboard and Side Tables, a very fine Sheraton Linen Press, Chippendale Chairs and Tables, Louis XV. Parquetry Commode, Queen Anne Chairs, Mirrors and Chests of Drawers, Charles II. and James II. Chairs, Early English Marquetry Table, Pair of Louis XVI. Fauteuils; and the whole of the **BEDROOM FURNITURE**, Contents of the Domestic Offices and Outdoor Effects.

On view Saturday, May 15th, (or by special order, on Friday, May 14th), between the hours of 10 and 4, by Catalogue only, which may be obtained price 6d., of the Auctioneers, Winslow, Fenny Stratford, Stony Stratford, and 9, Regent Street, Waterloo Place, S.W.; or at the "Swan Hotels," Fenny Stratford, and Newport Pagnell.

good home. — E.D., Bucks.

WANTED, 2 SITTING-ROOMS or longer, front out board; state lowest price. — Apply to BELL & BURNETT, 137, High Street, London.

WANTED FOR positions and Domestic situations in Manitoba, visit of member of firm reliable advice, lowest fees charged. — Apply to BELL & BURNETT, 137, High Street, London.

WANTED FOR to farm work, reduced passages, £6, and is returned on arrival. — Apply to BELL & BURNETT, 137, High Street, London.

SITTING EGGS, includes winners ham, 1st Brighton, etc. excellent layers; unfertilized. — DOLMAN, Sussex.

FOR SALE, a few POTATOES, 1/6 per bushel. — Apply M. W. MEECHAM, 137, High Street, London.

LADY'S FREE VEST, 45/- or nearest. — Apply M. W. MEECHAM, 137, High Street, London.

JUST the SHIRT. Our famous "Post Free, are a sample. State size. — Apply to BELL & BURNETT, 137 and 139, High Street, London.

FOR SALE, 7 good horses. — Apply to W. LUCK, 137, High Street, London.

FOR SALE, a quantity of STRAW. — Apply to BELL & BURNETT, 137, High Street, London.

FOR SALE, quantities of BUTTS, all sizes. Also half Barrels of straw. — Apply to BELL & BURNETT, 137, High Street, London.

BLACK WYANDOTT STRAIN. Have a

The sale was by all accounts a hugely popular event, with local newspapers reporting that connoisseurs and art dealers from all parts of the country, including Edinburgh, Nottingham, Leicester, Leeds, Cambridge, Northampton, Oxford and a large number from London, making their way to Simpson and crowding into the house. It was reported in one local newspaper that "remarkable prices" were realised.

Mrs Cox's son Albert moved out of Simpson House but continued to live in Simpson after the

death of his mother, but not for long. As reported in a local newspaper,

*“Mr Cox was the son of the late Cornelius Cox, who’s widow and deceased mother, died just four months ago at the White House, Simpson, whither some years previously she had removed from Woburn Sands to take up residence in her native village. Mr Cox continued to reside at Sympson after his mother’s death, and last Saturday bathed as usual in the river (Ouzel), later riding over to Bedford on his bicycle. On the following day, Sunday, he was taken suddenly ill and though every medical attention was given to him, he died on Monday”.*¹⁸

The Cavalry Colonel and Tea in the Barn

After Jane Cox died, the fourth tenant in Simpson House was Colonel Edward Nathaniel Henriques, late of the Indian Army, who moved to the house in 1910. Colonel Henriques was born in London in March 1852. His father, Amos Henriques, was a prominent surgeon with a practice in Upper Berkeley Street, London. Henriques was a career soldier: he was appointed a Gentleman Cadet in February 1870 and commissioned as a Lieutenant in the Royal Artillery in September 1872. Posted to the Malay Straits in late 1875, he served with a Royal Artillery Detachment in Sungai Ujong, commanding 10 artillerymen and a 17-pounder steel gun. He became Captain in October 1881 and Major in 1889. During this latter period he served in Malta and in India, but finished his career with the Garrison Artillery, Southern Division at Staff H.Q. in Portsmouth. He was promoted to Colonel in February 1902.

Henriques had previously lived at Mursley Hall. In 1907 he was listed as a breeder of polo ponies and horses and was a prominent member of the Shire Horse Society: at their Annual Meeting in 2006 he responded to the toast to “the Imperial Forces”. He was a bachelor and lived in Simpson House with a housekeeper, Amy Eathe, a widow; and a Servant, Alice Taylor.

Henriques was interested in farming and according to Dawson while at Simpson House ‘*he kept horses and two Jersey cows, for which he fitted up the cow-byre at the north end of the barn.*’ He brought with him a groom named Thomas Clayton, a widower. Thomas lived in the village as a boarder with Amy Pheasant and her son Reginald. Henriques also brought with him a stockman called Walter Tibbetts, who had been with him at Sandhurst and at Mursley. Tibbetts is listed in the 1911 Census as a Gardener and stockman who lived in the village with his wife Ann and two young sons, Henry and Thomas.

On Thursday 22 June, 1911, the Coronation of George V took place at Westminster Abbey. Throughout the country, cities, towns and villages arranged their own festivities: parades, processions, bonfires and parties. At Simpson House, Colonel Henriques hosted a ‘village tea’ which was held in the big barn at the rear of the house.

Henriques became ill in 1912 and was moved to the Colosseum nursing home in Regents Park, London, where he died in 1913. After his death, the contents of Simpson House were sold at an auction held at the house on 2 April 1913. The auctioneers were Hamlet and Dulake, of Cornmarket Place, Oxford. For the convenience of intending purchasers, they had ‘*arranged for conveyances to meet the principal trains arriving at Bletchley station on the morning of the sale.*’

The auctioneers produced a 12 page auction catalogue, listing over 420 lots, which has survived intact. It is a fascinating document, because it enables one to ‘reconstruct’ the furnishings in the whole of the house, including pictures, ornaments and kitchen equipment.

The catalogue is set out room by room. So, for example, we know that the dining room was furnished with a ‘*bordered red and brown ground Indian carpet.*’ The dining table was ‘*an antique inlaid mahogany table with oval shaped ends and extra leaves extending it to 9 ft.*’ There were ‘*6 antique mahogany dining chairs with dome shaped backs and a pair of mahogany carving chairs.*’ Other furnishings included a ‘*6ft. Sheraton inlaid mahogany sideboard with bow front; a 3ft. 3in. Antique oak oval top gate-legged table with folding flaps and drawer; an Early English 4ft.2in. Inlaid oak buffet sideboard with cupboards and long drawer over, surmounted by dental frieze and fitted brass pear drop handles; and a 7ft. Carved solid oak 3-tier dinner wagon.*’

All of Colonel Henriques’s possessions: furniture, china, glass, ornaments, farming equipment as

well as the contents of his stables were included in the sale. His library reflected his interests in agriculture and horse breeding. There were volumes of Stud Books, (books containing the pedigrees of horses), other books on horse breeding, agriculture and even a book on Cavalry Tactics. Also for sale were the contents of his Dairy, riding equipment, harnesses, "*an excellent high Dog Cart, painted green and picked out in yellow, with cushions, lamps etc*", a Spring Milk Float in nearly new condition and "an upstanding Chestnut Shire Mare". Lot 445 was a Painted Wood Portable Fowl House, with nesting boxes, on wheels.

Colonel Henriques was buried at Hoop Lane Jewish Cemetery in Golders Green. His Will was Proved in March 1913 in the sum of £9,028.

Spanish Flu

The last tenants of Simpson House while the Benford family owned it, were Captain James Leggat Kilpatrick and his wife, Teresa Emily. Captain Kilpatrick had been born in Newington, Edinburgh in 1874; Teresa was born in Buckinghamshire also in 1874. They married in 1903 in Buckingham Parish Church. The couple had lived previously in Staffordshire; in 1911 they were living at 9 Lichfield Road, Stafford and James was recorded as an Engineering Manager. The Census does not record any children. They had a servant living with them at that time, Annie Walker, aged 25, but whether she went with them to Simpson is not known. I have not discovered any other information about the Kilpatricks, what brought them to Simpson and why they would wish to rent such a large property with all its extensive grounds and agricultural buildings. Dawson notes only that James '*kept a horse and was a very popular man locally.*'

James died in Simpson House in October 1918, aged just 44, after a short illness, of pneumonia. I think it is possible that he may have been a victim of the influenza pandemic which was at its height in the autumn of 1918. Pneumonia was a common complication of the disease. He was buried in Simpson Churchyard on 23 October 1918. Teresa Kilpatrick left the house in 1918 and died in Oxfordshire in 1951, aged 78.

The Kilpatricks were the last tenants to occupy Simpson House while the Benford family owned it, because the following year, in 1919, after the death of her husband, Mrs Benford sold the house. Thus ended this stage in the life of Simpson House, a period when a succession of interesting and somewhat colourful characters lived in the house and must have given rise to a lot of gossip amongst the local population.

The house was then to pass back into private ownership, for the next 48 years.

7 DECLINE AND FALL 1919 - 1936

Mrs Benford sold Simpson House in 1919 for £1,050 to Herbert Edward Wells from Kew, Surrey. This was £450 less than the price that Thomas Kench had paid when he bought the house from Octavius Burrell some 40 years earlier. This may have been because, according to Dawson, during the whole period of the Benford's ownership *"the upkeep and repairs were much neglected and the property was in a very sorry and dilapidated condition when Benford's widow sold it in 1919."*

The Sound of Breaking Glass

Herbert Wells was born in 1870 in Dover and had a wife, Caroline and 5 children: Marie, Winifred, Herbert John, Harry and Amy. He was a printer, associated in business with Walter Webster of the Walnuts. (The Walnuts is a large detached Victorian house almost directly opposite Simpson House on the other side of Simpson Road.)

According to Dawson the children *"were very destructive and did much damage to the garden, breaking the statues and coloured glass windows of the summerhouses"*. When the family moved into the house in 1919 both Marie and Winifred were already adults so if Dawson is correct it would have been Herbert John, Harry and Amy who caused the damage.

Dawson also describes how, during Wells' occupancy, the tiles were taken off the roof of the house on the side facing Simpson Road and slates substituted. The house was also wired for electric light, the power being obtained from the plant at The Walnuts opposite. Wells *"carried out no other structural repairs or renovations of any importance and left the house in the same, or a worse, condition than when he entered it."*

The Wells family lived in Simpson House for just over five years until it was sold to John Jessiman, from Weymouth in Dorset around 1925. Jessiman paid £1,800 for the house, which was £750 more than Wells had paid for it.

Summerhouse For Sale

John Murray Jessiman was born in 1887 in Fife, Scotland. He married Ceridwen Jones in 1916 in Chelsea and they had 2 young children, Elisabeth and John William. His family were in the timber trade and in the 1911 Census he was listed as a Wood Brokers Clerk. Later he seems to have become involved in the textile trade because in 1925 he was a flax merchant, trading from Fenchurch Street in London.

According to Dawson, Jessiman spent a considerable sum on repairs and renovations. The back staircase was removed and the bathroom enlarged and provided with a new bath while four washstand basins with hot and cold water were fixed in the bedrooms. The room under the bathroom, called "the museum", was stripped and lined with match boarding, the stable and washhouse were converted into a four-roomed cottage, and the barn was shortened by 16 feet. The exterior of the house was also repaired and painted. The supply of electric power from Webster's house, The Walnuts, ceased, and Jessiman had to put in a generator of his own. An oil-engine, dynamo and batteries were installed in the first of the five loose boxes adjoining the garage. (for some time called the engine house).

Jessiman's fortunes seemed to have varied considerably from time to time. His Partnership as Flax Merchant was dissolved in October 1925. He perhaps became pressed for money because in 1928, he raised a mortgage on the house of £1,200 with interest at 5.5 per cent.

It seems that Jessiman, again according to Dawson, had little regard for the gardens: he dismantled and sold one of Charles Warren's summerhouses, a little building with classic

pillars, which stood at the end of the principal lawn. He also sold the iron gate that Warren set up at the main entrance, replacing it with a wooden one. During the last few years of his occupancy, Jessiman and his family were frequently away from Simpson, and the house was often closed up for long periods. During the last years of his ownership, he let the house to a Mrs. Davis, a mysterious woman who got heavily into debt and finally flitted at night without payment of rent and other debts. I have not been able to trace any information about her. Brokers were sent in to take possession. Jessiman then repaid the mortgage on the house, and sold it to Philip Johnson for £1,650. The date of that sale has not been recorded.

Chickens, Pigs and Paying Guests

Philip Heber Johnson was a civil engineer who during his professional career had risen to be the Chief Inspector of Permanent Way Materials and Superintendent of Creosote Works with the Railways Inspectorate. Born in Preston, Lancashire in 1869 he had formerly lived in Derby with his wife and 3 children. Johnson lived in Simpson House with his wife, Constance Mildred and daughter Mary Joan until May 1936. Dawson records that during his occupation the house, gardens and outbuildings were again allowed to fall into a poor state of repair. The Johnsons, he claimed, were short of money, and tried to supplement their income by keeping poultry and pigs, and by taking paying guests. Main electric power was connected in January 1935, and the engine installed by Jessiman was dismantled and sold.

The Johnson family moved out in 1936 and Philip Johnson died in 1937, in St. Albans, Herts. According to Dawson, he became insane, although I have not been able to check their whereabouts after the family left the house.

In May 1936 the house was sold to Mrs Warren Dawson for the sum of £1,150. It is perhaps an indication of the poor state of the house that this was £500 less than Johnson had paid for it and only £100 more than it had been sold for back in 1919, some 18 years previously, when Herbert Wells bought the house from Mrs Benford.

8 MAGICIANS MUMMIES AND LEECHES

Mr and Mrs Dawson took possession of Simpson House on 11 May 1936. The house and grounds were extensively repaired and renovated, probably for the first time since Charles Warren had lived in it. Dawson describes in his notes the work that he and his wife carried out:

It was repaired and redecorated throughout, both inside and out, many improvements being made. The work was carried out by Hutton and Co. Ltd, builders of Woburn Sands, whose men were on the premises several months, the total cost being over £800. (Some £60,000 today). The garden and outbuildings were also put into thorough order, and the boundary walls repaired; the paths and drives were re-gravelled throughout, the kitchen garden enlarged, and the orchard newly fenced.

Simpson House was to be the Dawsons' home for the next 30 years.

Frederick Warren Royal Dawson OBE was born in Ealing on 13 October 1888, the youngest son of Charles R Dawson, a coffee planter from India; and Edith Rosalie Smith. Dawson had two elder brothers: Vernon Douglas and Oswald Sidney; and three sisters: Agnes, Ida and Edith.

There are few details available about Dawson's early life, but it is possible his childhood was somewhat disrupted. When I researched the life of his mother, Edith, I discovered to my surprise that she was not a typical Victorian upper middle-class lady. Instead, she had her own career as an elocutionist, reciter and musician. Recitations and dramatic monologues were a popular form of light entertainment in late Victorian times, and from 1893 onwards, right through the 1890s and up to her husband's death in 1903, Edith was the principal performer in 'Dramatic and Musical Concerts' held in London and around the country. There are reviews of her concerts at a number of venues in London such as Queens Hall, Westminster Town Hall and Ealing and she travelled the country visiting such places as Sheffield, Brighton, Swaffham and Kings Lynn. She also placed advertisements in local newspapers advertising herself as a teacher of elocution. At some of these events Dawson's brother Vernon also appeared as a vocalist but her remaining children, including Dawson and his sisters Edith and Ida were presumably left in the care of servants or nurses during this period.



Edith Rosalie Royal Dawson, the mother of Warren Dawson. She became a well known elocutionist and performer at musical evenings, sometimes accompanied by Dawson's

brother Vernon and sister Agnes

Dawson, like his brothers Vernon and Oswald, attended St Paul's School, Hammersmith. St. Paul's School was a long-established Public School for boys. According to the School records, Dawson entered the School in 1900. I have not been able to discover any information in the St. Paul's School Archives, about his school academic record or activities; unlike his two elder brothers, who both had distinguished academic achievements and won Scholarships to Oxford.

In July 1903, while he was at St Paul's, Dawson's father died. Apart from the grief of losing his father, this meant further disruption for Dawson. According to The Times obituary, the death of his father led to him leaving the School. I think however that the story may be more complicated than that. His mother, Edith, accompanied by her three daughters, had left England quite soon after her husband's death and by the end of 1903 was back in Ootamacund. The Madras Times in June of that year described a concert given there by his mother in late 1903.

She had also received a considerable inheritance on the death of her husband. Probate on his Will showed a figure of £3113, corresponding to nearly £250,000 at today's value. I found that on the death of his father in 1903, Dawson did not immediately leave school; he stayed on at St. Paul's School for another two years, until 1905. In the memoir of him published by the Egypt Exploration Society after his death the author claims that *it was his father's intention that he should follow his two older brothers to Oxford University*. However, according to his obituary in The Times *'he was prevented by the death of his father from going to University'*.

After leaving school Dawson had several years working outside London in various jobs and returned to London to take up an appointment in the Royal Insurance Company. In 1911, at the age of 22, he was living in an apartment at 31 Mark Mansions, Westville Road, Hammersmith. He married Alice Helen Wood in Kensington, London, on 9 September 1912. Then in 1913 he went to Lloyds as an employee of the firm Bray, Gibb and Co. Ltd. He remained there until 1918, having been rejected for military service by the army on medical grounds, the details of which are not known. In 1918 he became a deputy underwriter for Messrs. E.R.R.Starr and Co., and in 1922 he was able to form his own underwriting agency. According to the Times obituary, he 'retained his connexion with it' for the rest of his life.

His entry in Who Was Who 1961-1970 gives a list of his honours and his principal publications, which include many works on maritime history, biographies of scientists, and a wide range of works on Egyptology.

Although the Times obituary refers to him 'retiring' to the country in 1936, he was still aged under 50 when he arrived in Simpson. Much of his important work had been completed before he moved to Simpson. However he carried on his researches and while he was living in Simpson House he published *The Life of Sir Grafton Elliott Smith* in 1938. This was followed by *The Huxley Papers* in 1946 and *Who Was Who in Egyptology* in 1951. His last book appears to have been *The Banks Letters*, published in 1958, with supplements in 1962 and 1965.

Warren Dawson was a prodigious writer and researcher. In addition to his books on Ancient Egypt, he was a copious letter writer. The Natural History Museum in London holds over 2,000 letters written by him to a huge number of people on a variety of scientific subjects. His books were meticulously, even exhaustively researched. As an example, the small volume of *'The Bridle of Pegasus'*, (1930), which ran to only about 170 pages, contained a Bibliography of over 400 works.

Perhaps his most remarkable research effort was to track down and catalogue around 7,000 letters written by Sir Joseph Banks. Banks was an English naturalist, botanist and patron of the natural sciences, President of the Royal Society from 1778 until 1820. It is reported that Dawson searched the libraries or archives of around 100 institutions or organisations to track down all the letters. The resulting book: *The Banks Letters*, published in 1958, ran to just under 1,000 pages.

During his time living in Simpson, Dawson also carried out extensive research into local history, not only of Simpson but of many other parishes. In particular, he researched the history of Simpson House and the life of Charles Warren and collected much information on the previous occupants of the house. In 1961 he gave his local history notes to the Bucks Archaeological Society. Amongst the papers were 13 bound MSS books covering families in North Bucks, including Warren and Goodman. The Dawson Papers include transcripts of the Wills of Charles Warren and Sophia Warren.

There seems to me to be something of a mystery surrounding his occupation of Simpson House. It is difficult to see why he should want to move from London, where much of his bibliographical, historical and Egyptology sources would have been, in institutions such as The British Museum, the Natural History Society and the Linnean Society, to a small and rather scruffy village in the remoteness of North Buckinghamshire. One possible clue is to be found in his Times Obituary of 14 May 1968, the author of which thought that he retired to Simpson “*for reasons of health*”. I have no more information than that about the reasons for his moving to Simpson, but nowhere in any of the documents or recollections of Warren Dawson is there any reference to him being in poor health until the very last years of his life or to any disability. He also lived to the age of 79. Simpson House seems a strange choice: it was a large house with extensive gardens and a collection of outbuildings including stables, storerooms and a huge barn but as far as I can discover Dawson had no interest in horticulture or farming.

There are conflicting views of the character and demeanour of Warren Dawson. One view is that he was somewhat reclusive and unsociable. “*By all accounts Warren Dawson was a rather reclusive character who guarded his privacy with a high wall in front of his house and he didn't always get on well with fellow villagers*”.²⁰ On the other hand, the Times Obituary comments that: “*by nature a man who enjoyed the society of those who shared his interests, he found life in the country, to which he retired for reasons of health in 1936, rather lonely and frustrating, but he resigned himself to its privations and made the most of its advantages.*” and goes on to claim that “*those who visited him were richly rewarded both by his warm hospitality and by his stimulating conversation.*” When Professor Warren and his wife visited Dawson in 1967 he reported that he was shown warm hospitality and he and his wife were invited to stay for tea.

A memoir of him published on behalf of the Egypt Exploration Society claimed that he had “*a disdain for social activities and sporting pastimes*” but that visitors were ever welcome, especially if they could tell him about Egypt.

The memoir also described his life and habits while living in Simpson House. He had a long-established habit of rising early. “*His own study became a retreat, in which he could compile his works, filling scores of notebooks with notes and extracts written in an admirably strong hand which remained firm and legible until his last days. His study became his world, a place where he could do all he wished. He was proud of his insular nature and boasted of the fact that he had never been abroad.*”

At the outbreak of war in 1939 it seems that Dawson took the initiative in organising the Civil Defence arrangements for Simpson village. He established a Civil Defence room in one of the barns and appointed himself in charge. The rector, Reverend Wynter was chief warden and George Bowler his deputy.

“Warren Dawson published rosters setting out the wardens' duties but his style of leadership was not to everyone's taste. Bill Bowler recalls a notice that read: People who throw down litter in the street for other people to pick up are not going their bit and should enrol in a pigs' battalion.”

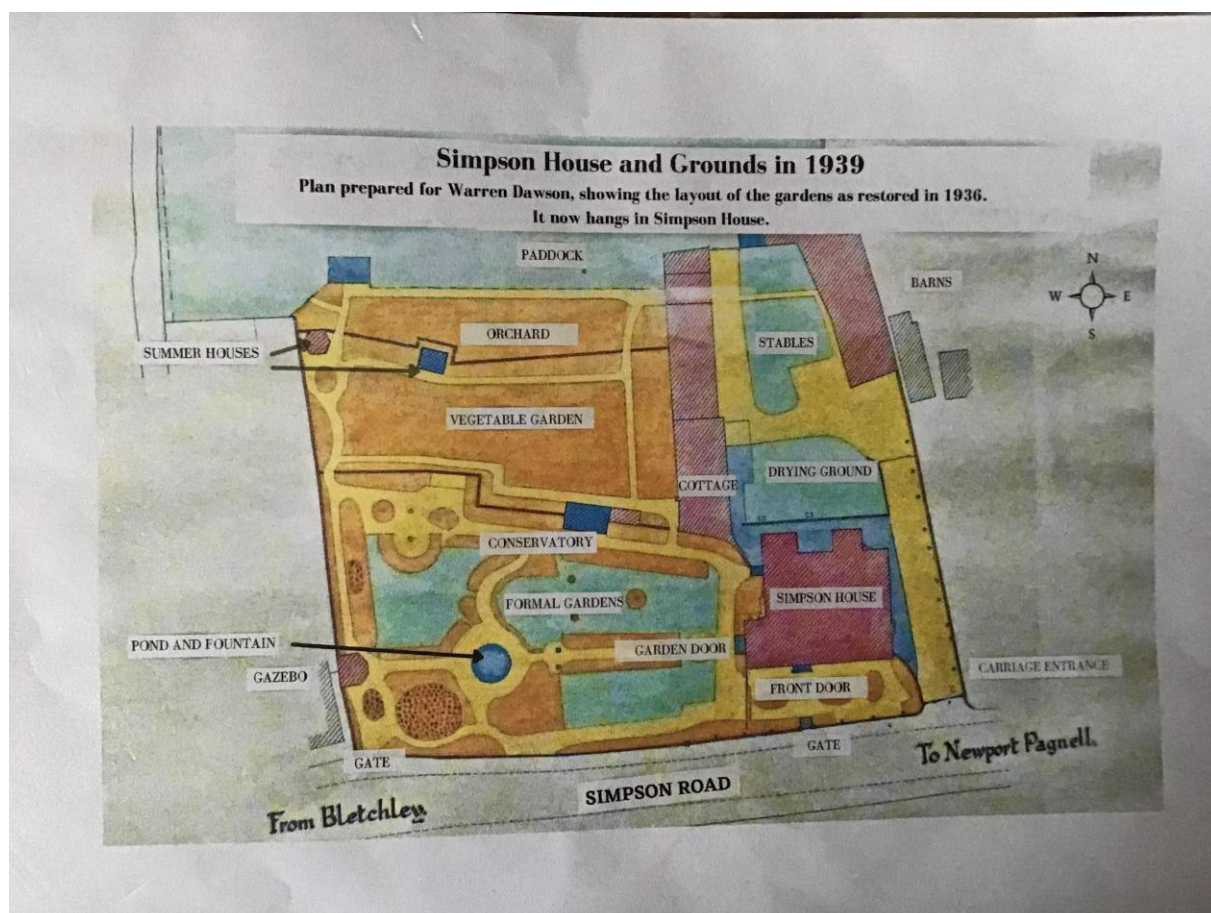
It then seems that over a weekend there was a revolution and the headquarters were transferred to the dining room at the Rectory, much to Dawson's annoyance.²¹

I think it is likely that Dawson was more comfortable with and hospitable to people with similar interests to himself or to academics. He was perhaps less comfortable with the local residents, who comprised mostly agricultural or other workers; there were few large houses in the village and perhaps a dearth of company. There is also no evidence that either he or his wife played any sort of role in the local community, other than authoring a small booklet on the history of

Simpson Church. Simpson House, with its grand frontage and the high walls enclosing it must have made its inhabitants appear rather reclusive, although it must be said that the walls were already in existence when the Dawsons moved into the house in 1936.

Of Dawson's wife, Alice, I found out very little. She was born Alice Helen Wood in 1891 and married Dawson in 1912 in London. For some of the time during their occupation of Simpson House her mother, Caroline Wood and her sister, Daisy Wood, lived in Simpson House and Daisy worked in a local hairdresser in Fenny Stratford. There are no records of Alice being involved in village life. In the 1939 Register she is described somewhat unkindly as 'unpaid domestic servant'. It is possible she lived a rather lonely existence for most of her marriage in her large house, with her husband either entombed in his study or visiting libraries and institutions around the country as part of his researches.

Dawson describes how the grounds of the house were renovated after he and his wife moved in during 1936. We have a good idea of how the gardens looked in the 1930s because he had a detailed survey carried out in March 1939 by a Chartered Surveyor.



Plan of Simpson House and Grounds prepared for Warren Dawson in March 1939

The plan, entitled *SIMPSON HOUSE, SIMPSON, the property of R. WARREN DAWSON* at a scale of 20 feet to the inch, shows in great detail the layout of all the gardens, grounds and buildings. The front wall built by Charles Warren, running along the whole frontage to Simpson Road; and a second wall, between the main garden and the vegetable garden, are still in existence. A formal path runs westwards from the sitting room window and leads to a circular pond. The path continues around the pond to end at a summerhouse built against the westernmost wall. On either side of the path are flower beds and lawns. Another path runs from the north west corner of the house all the way to the end of the garden. Halfway along this path is a large conservatory, built into another wall running parallel to the footpath.

Behind this wall the plan shows a further garden, perhaps a kitchen garden, with a path running around its perimeter. At the front of the house there was a paved or gravelled area, with 3 flower

beds. A series of large sheds or barns extends northwards, fronting on to further lawns. Yet more barns existed on the line of what is now Warren Bank. To the north, running up to the Grand Union Canal, was a field or paddock. The Plan is now hanging in Simpson House.

In 1938, the lower floor of the cottage was fitted out as a First Aid Post, and on the outbreak of War it was taken over, rent free, by the local A.R.P. service. Other outbuildings were used as Company Quartermaster's stores for the Home Guard.

In 1939 Dawson was awarded an OBE.

Dawson's notes on the house contain no more information after 1941, so although he and his wife lived in the house until 1969, we know little of any details of events in Simpson House beyond that date.

We do know that during the war he volunteered to store some of the archives of the Linnaean Society, which needed a new temporary home away from the bombing of London. It seems that he sometimes received requests for access to parts of the archives, because the Society's account of the history of the archives reported this response to one enquiry:

I have no time now, nor am I likely to have for some time to come, to undertake the removal of many cases, the hunt for the particular box in which the [manuscript] lies, and the restacking & moving back of all the displaced cases. I cannot think it reasonable on the part of Dr. [] to expect access to evacuated material in war-time and he should realise that others may have less leisure than he has.[13]

One wonders quite why, tucked away in a small village in Buckinghamshire during the war, he appeared to have been so busy. In another response to a request for documents, he claimed that much of his time was taken up with 'military duties'.

Dawson's publishing activities must have been constrained during the war years. Many libraries and archives were moved away from London to safe storage elsewhere, transport would have been difficult and finding paper for printing became a problem. He published nothing between 1938 and the end of the war. His next major work was *The Huxley Papers* in 1945, followed by *Who Was Who in Egyptology* in 1951. After that, a lot of his time was spent compiling *The Banks Letters*.

In 1959 he received yet another award, when he became an Associate of the Linnaean Society. Around 1964 and 1965 it appears that Dawson's health had begun to deteriorate. In a letter to him from Lindsay Fleming, he says he is 'sorry about WD's disability.'

In April 1967 the Dawsons were visited by Professor Michael Warren, a great grandson of Charles Warren, the original owner. Professor Warren took some photographs of the garden which enable us to know something of the state of the house at this time. The photos show well-laid out gardens with lawns, flower beds, rose gardens and gravelled areas with statuary. A high wall ran westwards along the garden and included a large conservatory set against the wall. Another wall ran all the way along Simpson Road. The grounds extended to no. 157 Simpson Road and included a grotto.

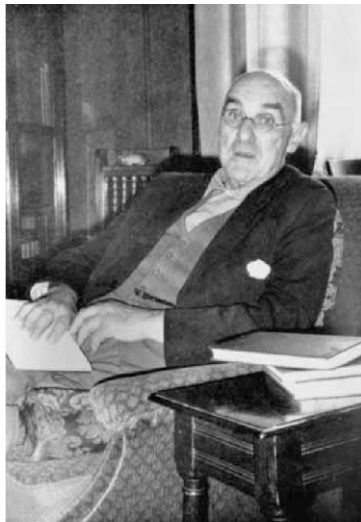


Fig. 4.11: Warren Dawson

Warren Dawson at home in his study in Simpson House. “His study became his world, where he could do all that he wished.”

Warren Dawson died in hospital in Bletchley in 1968 at the age of 79. All his manuscripts “save and except diaries, private and family letters and papers” were bequeathed to the Trustees of the British Museum. The British Museum catalogue records the bequest by him of:

a large quantity of manuscript material, including transcripts of Egyptian texts, collections of transcripts of letters and papers on Dawson’s biographical and bibliographical work and his personal correspondence with scholars, the whole arranged and catalogued by himself.

He requested that they should not be made accessible to students “until the expiration of ten years from the date of my decease”.

Dawson also expressed the earnest hope, intention and desire that the manuscripts “on the collecting compiling writing and arrangements whereof I have bestowed much pains” should be kept together as one entire collection. If any manuscripts were not accepted by the British Museum they should be “destroyed forthwith”.

A later codicil to his Will revised the instruction to destroy material that the BM wouldn’t accept. Instead he requested that such material should be offered to an appropriate Society or Institution.

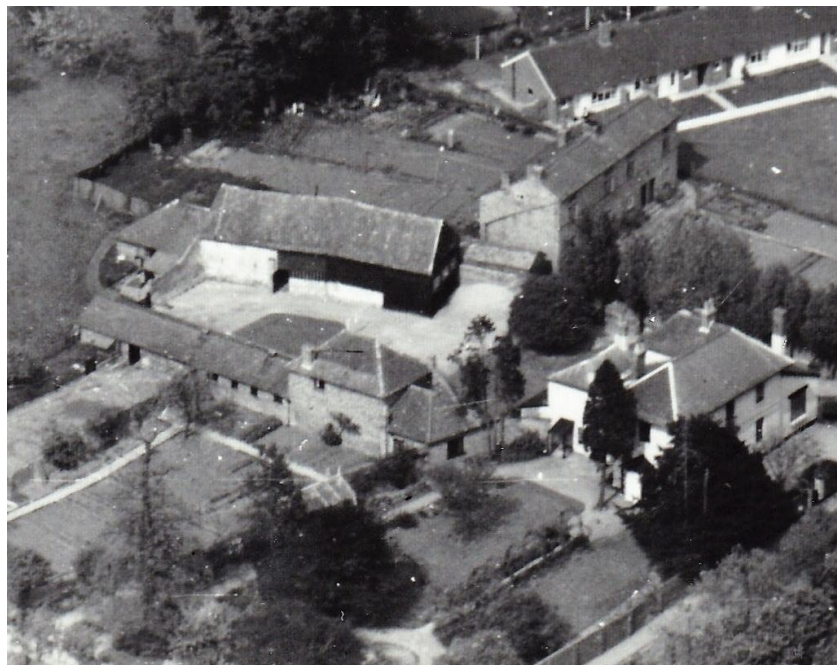
Warren Dawson’s Will also contained the following slightly curious request:

“It is my most earnest hope and desire and I hereby direct that my body shall be cremated and the ashes thereof scattered and that my funeral be conducted in the most simple and private manner and that no mourning shall be used on the occasion of my decease and that no tomb or monument shall be erected to my memory but if my decease shall occur in such places or in such circumstances as shall render the cremation of my body impracticable then I direct that before my body shall be interred or otherwise be disposed of my Executrix shall use all necessary steps to be taken and for this purpose to employ a surgeon to sever a main artery or vein in my body in order to ascertain that I am in fact dead notwithstanding that the cause of death may be apparent and that such measure may be deemed needless.”

Dawson died in hospital in Bletchley; so I think it highly unlikely that this rather grisly instruction was carried out. I don’t know whether Mrs Dawson and her sister continued to live in the house immediately after Warren Dawson’s death. In any event, it was not for long, because on 25 March 1969 Mrs Dawson sold the house to Milton Keynes Development Corporation.

9 THE LOST GARDENS OF SIMPSON HOUSE

In the previous chapter I described how Mr and Mrs Dawson renovated the house and restored the gardens that Charles Warren had created back in the 1830s. It is clear from an aerial photograph taken in the 1960s; and the photographs taken by Professor Michael Warren when he visited the house in 1967 that most of the original garden features laid out by Charles Warren when the house was built - the high brick walls, pathways, lawns, conservatories - were still in existence. The huge barn and other farm buildings - stables, workshops and storage buildings - were still there, probably largely unchanged since the house was built in 1830.



Aerial photograph of Simpson House in the 1960s. All the farm buildings behind the house together with the three old cottages were all demolished after MKDC acquired the house.

All this was to change within just a short time. The purchase of Simpson House - and its extensive grounds which at that time extended up to the Grand Union Canal - gave the Development Corporation the opportunity to start building new housing without the need for expensive new infrastructure. A scheme was developed to construct some 34 new flats known as Warren Bank and around 14 new houses, known as Chandlers Court, on the land north of the house. All the farm buildings behind the house - barns, stables and other structures - were demolished, together with three nearby cottages. The vegetable and fruit gardens were all cleared. A new access road, Warren Bank, was built off Simpson Road. The high front wall - which used to run all the way along the Simpson Road frontage from the corner of what is now Warren Bank to the western end of the garden - was demolished. All the other garden walls were also demolished, as was the large conservatory built into the wall. All the formal features in the gardens - the pathway from the side door, gravelled areas, the rose arches and fountain - were all removed and grassed over. The western end of the garden was shortened to provide a footpath connection between Simpson Road (which at that time had a local shop and sub- post office) and the new housing in Warren Bank, cutting off the little hexagonal gazebo from the rest of the garden. Later, A tarmaced car park was constructed at the rear of Simpson House to provide staff and visitor parking, with a new access from Warren Bank.

When it came to Simpson House itself, the Development Corporation seemed to have little idea what to do with it. Immediately after Mrs Dawson moved out, it was left vacant for some considerable time. Various schemes were prepared for its use as flats and bedsitters, but none proved acceptable. It was offered to the Open University for additional accommodation, but the offer was not accepted. Local residents became so concerned about the future of the house that the Corporation had repeatedly to reassure the villagers that it would not be demolished and the

site redeveloped. (It is worth remembering that the house was not Listed until 1975). There was concern that the fabric of the house was deteriorating and there were a number of break-ins.

A solution to its future use was eventually found when the Corporation realised that it was running out of office space for its rapidly-growing staff numbers. In 1972 it decided to use the house for offices for around 30 staff. Around £22,000 was approved for a scheme, carried out by Newcombe Beard Ltd. to repair the house and convert it to office space. When the finance was approved, it was noted that the cost of the works had increased from earlier estimates because there had been further deterioration and some vandalism. I found no information about the damage suffered by the house, although it is clear that the metal cupola and two pillars outside the garden door were removed²², as were most of the original fireplaces; other internal architectural features may also have been damaged or removed, although since no survey was undertaken it is not possible to establish the precise extent of the damage.

The house was greatly altered by being converted to offices. Drawings prepared in September and October 1972 by the Development Corporation show that structural changes were required including the insertion of steel beams to support the upper floors. Any remaining fireplaces were removed. Concrete floors were laid on the ground floor and a new electrical system installed, together with a heating system with electric storage radiators. Ceiling lights were removed and replaced with fluorescent light fittings. A new office telephone system was installed, which included 35 telephone extensions. The upstairs bathroom was converted into mens toilets. A wooden internal 'porch' was built in the hallway behind the front door with double doors (these were later removed and used to construct a walk-in cupboard in the upstairs bathroom.) From 1972 to 1981 the offices were used by a variety of personnel, including the Quantity Surveyors section of the Development Corporation and later Anglian Water Authority.

In 1981 The Development Corporation terminated the use of the house as offices and returned it to being a private residence. The house was offered for sale by tender. The successful bidders completed the purchase and moved into the house in December 1982. Since that time the house has been used as a private residence, with the exception of the large extension built by Thomas Kench which has had a variety of office uses and is currently a clinic.

10 MODERN TIMES

When the Development Corporation sold the house to Mr and Mrs Bentley in 1982 some 150 years had elapsed since the house was built by Charles Warren around 1830. During that time there had been 11 different owners and 5 sets of tenants. Seven of them had died in the house: Charles Warren, the original builder and owner; his first wife Leonora; his second wife Sophia; Mr and Mrs Kench - both on the same day - Maria Cox; and Captain Kilpatrick. Oddly, not a single child has ever been born in the house and for much of the time, from the 1830s to the 1890s and from the 1930s to the 1980s there were no children living in it.

The original house built by Charles Warren had undergone major changes : it had been substantially extended both to the side and the rear and is now over twice the size of the original building. Many original features remain inside the building although others such as fireplaces have been removed.

The grounds of the house, which once extended as far as the Grand Union Canal and included a walled vegetable garden, orchard and paddock, have been reduced to a formal garden area. All the outbuildings, including a huge barn, stables and store rooms, had all been demolished to make way for new housing developments and a car park had been constructed at the rear of the house during its time as an office building. Only one small remnant of the original garden walls has survived.



Last surviving remnant of the extensive walls which originally surrounded the house and gardens

When the new owners, Mr and Mrs Bentley, moved into Simpson House in December 1982, they were faced with a mammoth task to restore it and convert it into a comfortable family home. Here is how Mrs Bentley recounted some of the tasks that confronted them:

Structurally the house was in a sound condition, but it lacked a kitchen, had several toilets with urinals but no bathroom and the industrial type electric heating system, which had been disconnected, was unsuitable for domestic use. Major renovation work had to be undertaken on the entire roof which was in poor condition but also visually a mess. The oldest part had originally been tiled but had been repaired on the lower edges with slate - a rather unattractive combination. The need for repairs presented an opportunity to rearrange the mixture of tile and slate and install tiles on the three most visible sides while using the slate at the back, thus achieving a much neater result whilst reusing existing materials.

Sadly all the original fire surrounds had been removed and the fireplaces boarded with only one exception, a grey marble one in the side extension. This looked like a more recent style, probably early 19th century, than the ones that had been removed. This however seemed

like a minor issue compared to the immediate need for heating the house. The few storage heaters left in it did not work and had to be removed, to be replaced with whatever we could lay our hands on and kind friends were willing to lend them.

A particular difficulty was that the move took place in December into such a large space, which had been uninhabited for a considerable time.

It proved extremely difficult to locate a room we could heat adequately. Commissioning a central heating system was a priority but then so was installing a bathroom so that a hot bath could be enjoyed. And of course a kitchen, the heart of any family home. On the latter there was considerable doubt and confusion about where to create such an important part of the house where habitually our family would congregate and share meals daily.

The initial choice of the room which looked into the garden gradually proved not a good decision and thankfully before too much work had taken place it was moved to what has since become an open plan kitchen and TV room and remains the favourite space in the house to this day.

Then there were all the floors which had been left covered with a thin dark green office carpet. It was glued directly on to the cement screed of the downstairs floors, the stairs of the otherwise beautiful staircase and all of the upstairs wood floors. It had to be cut into narrow strips before it could be peeled off and removed.

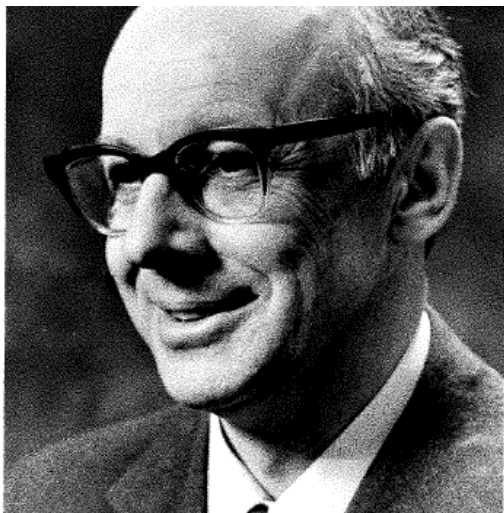
Other tasks included:

- repainting all the dark murky brown paintwork in both the main house and the annex,
- removing a wooden porch which had been installed immediately behind the main front door. It was reused as a perfect fit to create a linen store in what became the family bathroom.
- Taking down all the the fluorescent strip lights fitted everywhere
- disposing of all the redundant chunky telephones in 70s grey and brown

Finally there was the large tarmaced parking area, so institutional and grim; and the equally boring garden which had been planted as a public space and continued to be used as such by many of our neighbours who for a long time didn't realise that it had been changed into a private garden. The garden was enclosed with hedges of yew, cypress and laurel around all the boundaries and the car park covered with gravel to make it less intrusive. In later years the gardens were re-landscaped and two small houses were built on part of the car park.

11 POSTSCRIPT

On 14th April 1967, Michael Warren, (a great-grandson of Charles Warren) and his wife Joan visited Simpson and inspected the graves of Charles and Leonora Warren and their memorial tablets inside St. Thomas Church.



Professor Michael Warren, great grandson of Charles Warren and Mary Anne Clarke

They then walked along Simpson Road until they arrived at Simpson House. Professor Warren described their subsequent meeting:

After some hesitation Michael knocked on the front door. The door was opened by Warren Dawson, who after a short pause, greeted them as undoubtedly descendants of Charles Warren, one of whom he had always felt sure would visit him. Warren Dawson showed Michael and Joan round the house, explaining what alterations had been made since Charles's time. He pointed out a special fanlight of Cornish glass which is orange on one side and green on the other, almost certainly made by Thomas, the brother of Charles; and a small round table which Charles used to have near his chair. Warren Dawson had bought the table from an elderly local resident who had purchased it when Charles' furniture was sold after the death of his second wife Sophia. Michael and Joan were then shown the garden which Dawson had restored to the original layout, including the vine, fruit trees, two summer houses, one decorated with shells, and statuettes of Shakespeare and Milton.

Warren Dawson and his wife Alys insisted that Michael and Joan should stay for tea, at which they were given jam made from the fruit of one of the old plum trees. They were told intriguing tales about Charles that Dawson had heard from old inhabitants in the village. Charles was reputedly meticulous, something of a martinet and was regarded as a grand man in the village. He had been a church warden and a feoffee (a special kind of trustee) of the local Piggott Charity, which provided money for repairs of property for the poor and food and clothing to the sick and needy. He brewed his own beer and selected and kept the wood to be used in making his own coffin. Warren Dawson believed that Charles had designed and built a number of houses in the district, including Bracknell House, Aylesbury Road, Fenny Stratford, and Dr. Carter's house in Watling Street, both of which followed the Italianate style introduced in the late 18th century by John Nash.

On departing Warren Dawson gave Michael and Joan a framed photograph of Charles Warren, which he had had copied from a small photo borrowed from an old resident in the 1930s.

If you look carefully at the photograph, here is Charles, a rather portly and very serious-looking Victorian gentleman, sitting at a desk, wearing a long top coat, beneath which is a waistcoat. Look carefully: What appears to be a gold chain runs from the top of the pocket into a fob pocket. Could this be a fob chain, attached to Charles' gold watch.?

If it is, perhaps this was the gold watch and chain which Charles had wanted his son to have, until, that is, it was taken away from him by the mysterious Second Codicil and sold off together with all his other personal possessions at that auction sale back in October 1874.

SIMPSON HOUSE - TIMELINE

- 1827 Leonora Gibbs, daughter of Thomas Goodman and Ann Gibbs inherits her father's estate, including the cottage on the site of Simpson House
1828. Charles Warren, architectural surveyor, arrives in Newport Pagnell to work on a building project at St.Peter and St.Paul Church, Newport Pagnell
1828. Charles marries Leonora by licence in St. James Church, Clerkenwell, London
1829. Leonora and Charles sign an indenture transferring her land and properties to Charles
1829. The Goodman cottage is demolished and building starts on Simpson House
1834. Charles is working on a Church building project in Bow Brickhill
- 1840 Charles is a contractor constructing embankments on the London-Birmingham railway
- 1840 - 1860 Charles enlarges the house and extends it to take in other buildings to the rear of the main house
1841. Leonora dies suddenly in Simpson House, age 54.
1841. Charles marries Sophia Gee
1845. Charles' son, William Clarke, is born. His mother is Mary Clarke, a laceworker from Woolstone
1868. Charles makes his Will, leaving his estate to be shared between his son, William Clarke Warren and two nephews
1872. Charles signs a codicil to his Will, disinheriting his son William. He dies 9 days later in April 1872.
1874. Sophia Warren dies in Simpson House
1874. Two nephews of Charles Warren inherit the house and estate. The contents of Simpson House and the land and properties of Charles Warren are put up for auction.
1875. Octavius Burrell, husband of Warren's niece Catherine, buys Simpson House
1876. Burrell sells the house to Thomas Kench, former builder, who moves in with his wife
1880. Kench builds a large extension on to the east side of Simpson House
- 1884 Kench puts the house up for auction. It does not sell.
- 1888 Kench again tries to sell the house at auction.
1889. Thomas Kench and his wife Ann Maria both die in Simpson House on the same day
- 1890 The house is inherited by Robert Kench-Perry, great-nephew of Thomas Kench. He moves in with his family and several servants.
- 1891 Robert Kench-Perry takes out a mortgage on the house and moves out. The house is put up for auction but fails to sell.
1891. Simpson House is bought by Alfred Benford, a butcher from Fenny Stratford
- 1892 Simpson House is rented out to Albert Harry Ennals and family
- 1895 Court case in Fenny Stratford involving an alleged assault on Albert Truby Ennals, son of Albert Harry Ennals, by Rev.William Rice
- 1895 Ennals family leave Simpson House.
- 1896 Mrs Ann Maria Fitt moves in with her two daughters and son, Anthony
- 1901 Mrs Fitt moves out of Simpson House
- 1902 Anthony Fitt taken to court on a paternity suit. After committing perjury, he leaves England to fight in the Boer War
- 1902 Mrs Jane Emma Cox moves into Simpson House with her son Albert.
- 1909 Mrs Cox dies in Simpson House. An auction of her Wedgwood, paintings and early English furniture is held in the house. Albert moves out, dies later that year.
- 1910 Retired Colonel Edward Henriques moves into the house.
1911. Henriques holds a village tea in the large barn for the Coronation of George V

- 1912 Henriques becomes ill, moves to a London nursing home.
- 1913 Henriques dies. A sale of all his furniture and possessions is held in the house.
- 1914 James Kilpatrick moves into the house with his wife Teresa.
- 1918 Kilpatrick dies in the house of pneumonia.
- 1919 Mrs Benford sells the house to Herbert Wells, printer, who moves in with his family.
- 1925 Wells sells the house to John Jessiman, timber importer.
- 1930 Jessiman sells the house to Philip Johnson, Civil Engineer
- 1936. Johnson sells the house to Mrs Alice Dawson, wife of Warren Dawson
- 1936 The Dawsons move in to the house, carry out major refurbishment to the house and restore the gardens
- 1968. Warren Dawson dies in hospital in Bletchley, age 79
- 1969. Alice Dawson sells the house to Milton Keynes Development Corporation
- 1970 The house is left vacant, suffers vandalism and damage.
- 1971 Most of the garden walls, all the summerhouses and farm buildings are demolished to make way for new housing.
- 1972. Simpson House is converted to office accommodation by the Development Corporation and a staff car park built to the rear of the house.
- 1981. MKDC sells the house by private tender, and it is converted back to a private house
- 2005 Two small houses are built on part of the rear car park.

Charles Warren, Architect?

During the compilation of this history of Simpson House, I discovered much new information about Charles Warren: why he came to the Simpson area; his work as a Surveyor on local Church building projects, in association with the notable Architect James Savage; his marriage to Leonora Gibbs in Clerkenwell, London in 1828. I was able to fill in many more details of his life during the 30 years or so that he lived in Simpson; and of the events following his death.

There didn't seem to be much doubt that he, together with Leonora, was responsible for building Simpson House and laying out its gardens. But did he also design and/or build a number of other houses in the Simpson and Fenny Stratford areas?

I found no documentary evidence linking Warren to other buildings in the Simpson area but several local historians seemed to think Warren designed and built them. The story seems to have started with Warren Dawson, who, in the 1940s, wrote a series of articles on local history for the Bletchley Gazette. In one of these, published in 1947, he made the following comments regarding The Red House, a Villa on Watling Street, Fenny Stratford:

*It followed the Italianate style introduced in the late 18th century by John Nash. I cannot find out definitely who the builder was, but I very much suspect that it was Charles Warren, of Simpson, **who was an architect and builder**, and built Simpson House in 1828.*

Perhaps this was the source for the statement by local historian Edward Legg, who went further and in 2003 wrote, in *Simpson through the Centuries*, that:

*Mr Warren **became quite a noted local architect** and was probably responsible for such houses as Bracknell House, the Red House and The Willows at Fenny Stratford.*

John Taylor, in *The Way We Were* series, also claimed that Charles Warren was an architect. I suspect his information however came from Warren Dawson's notes or Edward Legg.

None of these authors, however, could point to any documentary or historical evidence linking Charles Warren to the other houses. Another intriguing fact is that Warren never described himself as an Architect, Builder or Surveyor. In the Censuses from 1841 to 1871 he identified himself as either a Contractor, Farmer, Landowner or Landed Proprietor.

I decided to take a closer look at the houses in Fenny Stratford attributed to Charles Warren: Bracknell House, in Aylesbury Street; The Willows, at the end of Queensway; and the Red House, in Watling Street. All of them date back to the mid-1800s, when Warren was living in Simpson.

Both Bracknell House, in Aylesbury Street and The Willows, at the end of Queensway, do have a number of design features similar to Simpson House: they are all three bay villas, have deeply overhanging eaves, marginal glazing on some of the windows; and shallow hipped roofs. (See photos below).



Bracknell House, Aylesbury St., Fenny Stratford. Originally a private house, then a school and now a Registrars Office.



The Willows, Queensway, Fenny Stratford, originally a Doctor's House and surgery, now a funeral parlour

The Red House, in Watling Street, does not have so many similarities to Simpson House. The windows are completely different, as is the layout of the front door and portico, apart from some similarity in the design of the fanlight. On the other hand, the roof does have a deep overhang and appears similar to Simpson House. The front portion of the house has been dated to c1816, but I haven't found any evidence that Charles Warren was in the area until around 1828; he would have been just 28 years old in 1816.

So there is no doubt that there are enough similarities between all these houses and Simpson House to suggest Charles Warren might have designed all these houses. Equally likely is that there was someone else in the Fenny Stratford area practising as an Architect during the period in which they were built. What is lacking is any documentary evidence: original plans or drawings, contracts, accounts or bills. Perhaps other researchers will unearth new evidence to answer the questions posed in this Appendix.

APPENDIX

Warren Dawson Obituary: The Times 14th of May 1968

MR WARREN DAWSON:

Businessman and Scholar

Mr W R Dawson OBE FRSE FSA, who died at the age of 79 on May 5 was a man of very wide knowledge and immense industry to many fields of learning ranging from the history of marine underwriting to Egyptology. Prevented by the death of his father from going to university, he entered the City on leaving Saint Paul's School, eventually forming his own underwriting agency and retaining his connection with it for the rest of his life. He was not however by inclination a business man; his real interest lay in scholarly pursuits which occupied all his leisure.

From 1927 to 1948 he held the honorary position of librarian to the Corporation of Lloyds and devoted much time to the Nelson relics belonging to the Corporation which he published in 1923. Early in his business career he met Sir E A Wallis Budge, who encouraged him to develop his Egyptological interests and gave him many opportunities to study out of hours at the British Museum. One of the fruits of this association was Dawson's exhaustive study of the methods involved in mummification, a branch of Egyptology in which he became the leading authority of his time. Apart from several articles on the subject in scientific journals, he published in 1924 with the late Sir Grafton Elliot Smith the standard work on the history and practice of mummification. His last book, which he wrote with Dr. P H K Gray, was a *Catalogue of the mummies and other human remains in the British Museum*, an advance copy of which he was able to see only a few days before his death. Closely related to his studies in mummification were his wider investigations into ancient medicine and prophylactic magic, the results of which were embodied in a small, but informative volume entitled *Magician and Leech*.

If Warren Dawson's original contributions to scholarship with the more sombre aspects of Egyptology his interests were certainly far less specialised. He will indeed be remembered no less for his many biographical studies and in particular for his *Who Was Who in Egyptology*, an indispensable work of reference which embodies much material from unpublished sources such as letters and diaries. He placed at the disposal of scholars a calendar of the correspondence of the Naturalist Sir Joseph Banks, summarising more than 7,000 letters, which The Times correspondent described as "the least worked major quarry of miscellaneous information for the period from about 1765 to 1820." Natural history and particularly botany, had always been one of his many sidelines, his *Catalogue of the Linnaean Society Manuscripts* being perhaps his most important work in this field.

By nature a man who enjoyed the society of those who shared his interests, he found life in the country, to which he had retired for interests of health in 1936, rather lonely and frustrating, but he resigned himself to its privations and made the most of its advantages. Those who visited him were richly rewarded both by his warm hospitality and by his stimulating conversation. His deep fund of knowledge was always at the disposal of scholars, very many of whom turned to him for help. The Royal Society of Edinburgh recognised his contributions to science by electing him to a Fellowship, and in 1939 he received the OBE.

A Note on Sources

The writing of the story of Simpson House and its many occupants would not have been possible without the work of Warren Dawson, who, as owner of the house had access to the Title Deeds and was able to collect information from local residents about previous owners and tenants who had lived in the house before he and Mrs Dawson moved into it in 1936. Dawson was a meticulous researcher who left copious notes on the house, wrote articles and transcribed the Wills of Charles Warren and his second wife, Sophia. His papers are now in the Bucks Archaeological Society records in Aylesbury.

I am also indebted to Professor Michael Warren, a great-grandson of Charles Warren, who researched the Warren family history and took the fascinating photographs of the gardens when he visited Warren Dawson in 1967, the only known photographic record of them before they were demolished in the 1970s. He also passed on to the present owner the detailed plan of the grounds commissioned by Warren Dawson in 1939, which now hangs in Simpson House.

Using the resources of the Internet, which were not available to Warren Dawson and Professor Warren, I was able to solve the mysteries of where and when Charles Warren married Leonora Gibbs and why Charles came to the Simpson area in the late 1820s. Despite the best efforts of the Cornish Family History Society I was unable to trace the early life of Charles Warren.

Local newspapers were invaluable in providing details of the various auction sales - of both the house and its contents - and of the Court cases involving Charles and Leonora; the Rev. Rice and Albert Truby Ennals; Anthony Fitt and Ada Maud White; as well as the death of Albert Cox; and the death of Robert Kench-Perry in London.

The Warren family website revealed all the descendants of Charles Warren and Mary Anne Clarke. I found information about Thomas Goodman Warren after he emigrated to Canada on the website of the Beaverton, Ontario Family History website.

I traced other individuals, including the Fitt family through various Family History websites, including Ancestry.com, Genes Re-United and Family Search.

Chris King, who has been indexing the Milton Keynes Development Corporation Board minutes, tracked down several reports about Simpson House dealing with its conversion to offices. The minutes are held in the library of MK City Discovery Centre at Bradwell Abbey, Milton Keynes.

Sue Bond, Research Coordinator of the Devon Family History Society, managed to trace information about Thomas Warren and Dorothy Ford, the parents of Charles Warren, including their marriage certificate.

Peter Barnes, who has done much of his own research on Simpson Village and its inhabitants, helped with information and advice, including his own research on the Royal Dawson family.

Peter Howard gave me valuable advice and comments, particularly on the architectural history of the house and Chris Hammond and Richard Ward both gave helpful comments on an earlier draft of the text.

I am most grateful however to my partner and the present owner of Simpson House, Helen Bentley, who has helped with many comments and advice, and given me access to other documents, including Professor Warren's photographs of the gardens; correspondence with him; the sale catalogue of Colonel Henriques estate in 1913; and correspondence by Warren

Dawson and Professor Michael Warren; and to the 1939 Plan of the House and Grounds, prepared for Warren Dawson, which now hangs in Simpson House.

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