

From **THE EVERSFIELDS OF DENNE HOUSE – PART II**

by Susan C. Djabri

Olive Eversfield and the Markwicks

With the death of Sir Charles Eversfield in 1784, the male line of Eversfields came to an end, and the estates descended thereafter through the female line, with the proviso that subsequent heirs changed their names to Eversfield. Denne House and the Eversfield estates first passed to Sir Charles' only surviving sister, Olive Eversfield, and she held them quietly for nearly twenty years, until her death at the age of 90 in 1803. During that time, she redeemed the mortgage on the manor of Charlton, with the help of her nephew, William Markwick, in 1795.¹ He was the only son of her eldest sister Mary who had married James Markwick, a barrister of the Inner Temple, in 1735....

Although Olive Eversfield was recorded as living in Southampton or Guildford, at various times, she appears to have restored the Eversfield estates to financial stability, possibly with some help from William Markwick, who knew that he would inherit them after her death, in line with the entail laid down in Sir Charles Eversfield's will of 1736. Sir Charles had left the estates divided equally between his four sisters, and then to their heirs, but William was the only heir of the next generation and could therefore expect to inherit all the Eversfield estates.² He married Mary Date of Southampton in 1789, rather late in life, at the age of fifty, and had two sons to carry on the line....

By her will, made on 10 July 1795, Olive duly devised her estates to her nephew, William Markwick, until his eldest son should attain his majority, when one half of the property would remain with William, and the other would go to his eldest son Charles and his heirs, on condition that the said William and his descendants should take the surname and arms of Eversfield.³ It was not until 1807 that William took the name Eversfield by Royal licence, and he does not appear to have lived much at Denne. In fact, Denne House and Park were advertised for rent in *The Times* of 10 June 1805, and the advertisement suggests that they were at that time in very good order;

“MANSION-HOUSE and PARK, with immediate possession. – To be LET, either for a term, or by the year, all that MANSION-HOUSE, called Denn, with the Offices, Gardens and Park of Denn, near Horsham, in the County of Sussex, containing about 176 acres, and likewise 3 Paddocks, which are about 60 acres, all within the park paling. There is an extensive manor belonging thereto, abounding with game. The mansion-house and offices may be taken with or without the park and paddocks, which latter are in a high state of cultivation. The situation is truly delightful, standing on an eminence, and appears to embrace every object that is desirable. The turnpike road passing close under the park paling; distance 36 miles from London, 20 from Brighton and 17 miles from Worthing. Apply to Mr. Chasemore, at Horsham, who will shew the premises; or Mr. Marshall, Attorney at Law, Steyning”.

William Markwick (Eversfield) was a distinguished naturalist who corresponded with the Rev. Gilbert White and contributed some of his observations to *The Natural History of Selborne*. He was elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society in 1792. He was a country gentleman of scholarly pursuits, who had been to Cambridge and the Inns of Court, although he never took a degree or practised law. He had a fine library of 750 books, relating to natural history, botany, law, husbandry, theology, poems, plays and travels, in his home at Catsfield, the Old Church House. He sold The Grove in Hollington in 1804, and resettled the estates, but when he died in 1813, he was buried at Catsfield.

William Markwick's eldest son Charles, who was a Lieutenant in the 10th Hussars before he succeeded to the Eversfield estates on his father's death, barred the entail in 1816 and then remortgaged the manor of Charlton, which he finally sold to Charles Goring for £29,475.10s.⁴ He made a will in 1818, leaving the remainder of the estates to his brother James and his sister Sophia, who married Edward Bligh of Brittas, Ireland, in Horsham in 1820. Charles died young, in 1818, and his brother James, then living at Catsfield, sold the Old Church House in 1823 and moved to Denne. He died only a few years later in 1826, leaving the Denne and Hollington estates to his only son, Charles Gilbert Eversfield, who was then only four years old. In 1827, James' widow, Mary, married Henry Tredcroft of the Manor House in the

Causeway, who built Warnham Court in that same year.⁵ Charles Gilbert grew up at Warnham Court, which lay outside the town and was surrounded by a fine deer park, with his mother and stepfather, two sisters, and two younger step-brothers, Edward and George Tredcroft, before going to Eton and Oxford.

During this period, Denne Park was a favourite place for Horsham townspeople to take a walk – in 1836 Howard Dudley described the view from the edge of the park as follows; *“On a lofty eminence denominated Denne hill, the visitor may obtain a very beautiful view of the town of Horsham, with its adjacent hills behind, the interesting church appears by far the most conspicuous object in the wide extended landscape, while the small and winding branch of the river Arun, which takes its rise in the adjacent forest of St. Leonard, contributes not a little to heighten the beauty, and diversify the scene of this truly delightful and extensive prospect. At a short distance from the spot where this romantic view may be obtained, the ivied tower, and venerable battlements of Denne house, proudly rise upon the sight. The spot upon which this edifice stands is particularly interesting, being generally supposed by antiquarians to be the site of a Danish encampment, during a conflict with the Picts, who made a choice of an opposite eminence, still retaining the name of Pict’s hill, while the one we have just described preserves the appellation of Denne (undoubtedly derived from Dane) hill”.*⁶ (This last sentence is, of course, a fairy tale – the Picts lived in Scotland and never fought here, and an alternative spelling for Pict’s Hill is “Pyx”, while the name “Denne” has nothing to do with the Danes, but means a woodland pasture. But Dudley would not have known that, and was merely repeating the myths of his time).

Charles Gilbert Eversfield – religious convert and philanthropist

During the period of his minority, the trustees of Charles Gilbert Eversfield, Charles Wardroper of Seacocks Heath in Etchingham, Esq., and the Rev. John Godfrey Thomas of Bodiam, actually did much to improve the fortunes of the Eversfield family by applying for a private Act of Parliament in 1827, to sell building leases on part of Gensing Farm in Hollington to the developers of the new resort of St. Leonards, near Hastings. This was followed by another similar Act in 1837.⁷ The Hollington estates amounted to about 1600 acres in all, and furnished a

large part of the land for St. Leonards, so their rental income now became very significant. Much of this income appears to have been ploughed back into the Eversfield estates in Horsham, as well as at St. Leonards. At this time, the Horsham estates amounted to about 1,200 acres – they can be studied in detail on the 1844 Tithe Map and Apportionment.⁸

Charles Gilbert's coming of age in 1843, was described by Henry Burstow in his autobiography, *Reminiscences of Horsham*, and celebrated by Horsham townspeople with great enthusiasm.

“Another event that was celebrated on a large scale at Horsham was the coming-of-age, on Saturday, the 7th October, 1843, of C. G. Eversfield, Esq., of Denne Park. The whole parish was then one scene of rejoicing; a large white flag was fixed at the top of the Church steeple early in the morning, which was ushered in by a merry peal on the Old Church bells. The day was beautifully fine and not cold. At 12 o'clock the band paraded the town, and then marched to the Vicarage, where 750 children were waiting; all joined in singing the ‘*Old Hundredth*’, accompanied by the band, and then marched to Denne Park. Every person in the parish had an invitation to be present, and over 3000 people accepted it. All sorts of sports and amusements were provided, one of which was that of racing by boys after Dutch cheeses down the big hill. On Monday evening there was a grand display of fireworks on the Gaol Green, including a large set piece on a frame, ‘CHARLES GILBERT EVERSFIELD’, and a dinner to tradesmen at the Richmond Arms Hotel, presided over by Mr. William S. Stedman, solicitor. Young Mr. Eversfield was absent from these festivities, though at home on Monday and Tuesday, the 8th and 9th January, 1844, when two fancy-dress balls were given, one in a large room temporarily built close to the mansion, the other at the Richmond Arms Hotel. Jullien's celebrated Orchestra, from London, provided the music at both, which were attended by large numbers of the nobility and gentry, who came in their pair-horse and four-horse carriages from all round the neighbourhood”.

Charles Gilbert seems to have been well known to Jullien's orchestra as a young man in society who attended balls because the well-known piece, the Post Horn Gallop, “*as performed at The Court Balls, The Nobility's Soirees, and the Promenade Concerts*”, was dedicated to

Charles Gilbert Eversfield when published by Jullien as piano music.⁹ While still a rather sporty and pleasure-seeking young man, Charles Gilbert became paralysed at the age of twenty-three (in 1845) after jarring his back when jumping over a ditch. After three years' misery and depression, during which he learned how to turn wood as a diversion, his cousin Theo (Theodosia Sophia Bligh, who later married his step-brother, Edward Tredcroft) prayed with him in his workshop and he underwent a religious conversion. A small booklet, entitled "*Give Me the Light*", was written about this incident by A. Hume, and published by the Gospel Tract Society, which begins; "*Mr. E---- was as a young man, one of those whom the world deems fortunate. Born to wealth and position, endowed with good abilities, and with a handsome and striking personality, many would have thought – as he himself thought at that time – that there was nothing lacking to make his life happy and successful. Doubtless many envied him his life of gaiety and 'pleasure', so called, and his powerful athletic frame excited admiration ... As he expressed it; 'I was, until the age of twenty-three, in the world and OF it. I delighted to exceed all my boon companions, and to dare what they would not dare...thus I ran riot, seldom opening my lips without an oath, serving Satan well'". After telling the story of his accident and its aftermath, he described his efforts to repeat a prayer that Theo had given him, exclaiming "O God! I have heard Thy Holy Spirit is a light; give me THE LIGHT! In a moment the room seemed flooded with light. The burden of sin was gone. I was full of joy".¹⁰*

Charles Gilbert's conversion was followed in 1848 by his marriage to Isabella Pigott, who supported and helped him during the rest of his life. She came from a large and close-knit family, and her eldest brother Gillery was a well-known Judge in the Court of the Exchequer. Her younger brother Frederick came to live on the estate and built Bourne Hill House, less than a mile from Denne. Charles and Isabella extended Denne House and redesigned the gardens around it, which at one time employed 14 men to keep them in order. As they had no children of their own, they seem to have encouraged some of their many nephews and nieces to come and make their home with them, or visit them frequently. The 1881 census shows that Charles Gilbert's eldest surviving nephew, Edward Maximilian Bethune, who had served as an army officer in India in the 1860s, was living at Denne House with his

wife, Lucy Barbara Vaughan, one of Isabella's nieces, and their son, Charles Cyril St. Leonards Bethune, was born at Denne House in 1871. It seems to have been a very sensible arrangement – Edward Maximilian, now retired from the army, was on hand to help his uncle run his estates, which would eventually come to him, and was able to bring up his son in Denne House, which had perhaps been extended for that very purpose. His brother, Herbert Bethune, was also living there, and one of Isabella's nieces, Rosalie Piggott, was there as a visitor. There was an indoor staff of 16 servants to look after them. A wonderful series of photographs, taken in about 1883 (from the style of the ladies' dresses), has recently been discovered and put on the Denne House website.¹¹ These photographs give us a window into life at Denne House during this period. They include one of Charles Gilbert in his invalid carriage, another of Edward Maximilian Bethune and his brother Herbert, about to go shooting with some of the estate staff, and two photographs of the young Charles Cyril with a group of ladies, who probably include his great-aunt Isabella Eversfield, and other members of the Bethune and Piggott families. In another photograph, Charles Cyril is shown learning to ride his pony. Other photographs show the house and gardens, with some of the gardeners at work.

In later years, Charles Gilbert became closely associated with the strict religious sect of the Plymouth (or Exclusive or Close) Brethren, founded by an Irish Anglican priest, John Nelson Darby. This may well be connected with the fact that three of his wife's nieces married into the Close family from Dublin. The Close family is known to have had connections with Darby, as he left many of his letters and papers to Farnham Chidley Close, who came to live in Horsham, at 17 The Causeway, and died there in 1901. He is buried in Denne Road cemetery, next to the Eversfield vault.¹² Charles Gilbert built a chapel for the Brethren in Denne Road, but he also gave support to other religious causes. He became a great philanthropist and benefactor in later life, giving land for the building of hospitals and churches in St. Leonards and playing an active part in setting up public utilities like the St. Leonard's Waterworks. At Charles Gilbert's death he was sincerely mourned and honoured by the townspeople of Horsham and St. Leonards, as the reports of his death and funeral show, but his grave is now sadly overgrown and neglected.¹³



Charles Gilbert Eversfield in his invalid chair with one of his servants



Edward Maximilian Bethune (later Eversfield) with his brother Herbert and members and Denne House staff

Horsham Advertiser, 23 January 1886**Editorial**

“On Tuesday last a large concourse of people – of all grades of society and of all religious persuasions – assembled in the Horsham Cemetery to take a long farewell of one who, by his many acts of charity and kindness had endeared himself to them all. The name of CHARLES GILBERT EVERSFIELD will be a household word in many a home in Sussex for years to come, and his good deeds to many a family will often be recounted and handed down to future generations. Whether at Horsham or at St. Leonards his thoughts were always with the poor and afflicted, and his great delight was in alleviating their sufferings. He spent a great deal of his time in visiting them – sharing in their joys and sorrows – and endeavouring to instil into their minds those deep religious principles, which actuated all his movements and were the guiding stars of his life. For some years his illness has, - in a great measure – precluded his visiting the sick and needy: but he has found a sympathetic substitute in MRS. EVERSFIELD, and would frequently accompany her on her journeys, although he was unable to leave the carriage, and his familiar face will be greatly missed in Horsham and the surrounding villages. He never seemed to be weary of well doing, and any deserving object which came under his notice was almost sure to gain his hearty support. By religion he was a member of the Plymouth Brethren, and many are the ways in which he helped on that body. The Chapel in Denne Road – at which he was a constant attendant while in Horsham – and the Chapel at St. Leonards – where he worshipped during his winter residence at that place – owe their existence to him and are living monuments to his memory. But while holding the views of the Plymouth Brethren, like all true Christians he was not narrow minded, and appreciated the efforts of all who were working for the same ends as himself. St. Mary Magdalen Church, St. Leonards – the ground on which it stands being given by him – is an example of this. He also gave the land on which St. Leonards Infirmary is built at White Rock, and offered another site at the west end of the town when the Governors contemplated erecting a fresh hospital. As will be seen in another part of this paper, one of his latest acts has been to give some ground to DR. G.....R¹⁴ for the purpose of erecting a Home for the treatment of diseases of the throat and chest. It is such noble deeds as these that have gained for him the love and esteem of all who have

heard his name. He has indeed left *'footprints on the sands of time'*; footprints, it is to be hoped, which will inspire others with admiration and regard, and a determination to *'go and do likewise'*.

Reports

The funeral of Charles Gilbert Eversfield, Esq., of Denne Park, Horsham, took place on Tuesday afternoon amid many tokens of esteem and regret. The deceased gentleman died quite suddenly at Warrior Square Terrace, St. Leonards, on Saturday, the 9th inst., and his body was brought to Horsham last week. At mid-day on Tuesday a service was held in the hall of Denne House, at which a large number of people were present, the number being estimated at about 200. The coffin, made of polished oak with brass fittings, was deposited in the hall, the floor of which was occupied by the mourners, servants of the house and others, while the gallery (extending around the upper part of the hall) was crowded with people. There were about fifty members of the Plymouth Brethren present, of which body the deceased was a prominent member. Hymns were sung and an address given by Mr. Burton, of Seven Oaks.

Upon the conclusion of the service, the coffin was lifted on to a bier by workmen on the estate, who – 26 in number – were attired in white round frocks, black trousers and gloves, and high hats. A procession was then formed, and proceeded to the cemetery. First came the coffin, in charge of the workmen mentioned above; then came the following mourners: Major Bethune, Mr. E. M. Bethune, Mr. Cyril Bethune, Mr. Herbert Bethune, Mr. Archibald Bethune, Colonel Pigott, Major Morshead, Captain Vaughan, Rev. E. B. Pigott, Rev. H. B. Ottley, and Messrs. E. Tredcroft, F. W. Pigott, R. H. Ainsworth, R. Close, W. Close, C. A. Pigott, E. Pigott, and C. R. Scrace-Dickins. The household servants (both male and female) were next in order, followed by a large number of tradesmen and others who had witnessed the ceremony in the house. As the procession proceeded, it was joined by a large number of gentlemen.. A large number of persons were awaiting the procession in the Cemetery and Denne Road, the latter place being quite lined with people. Viewed from the distance the procession was both striking and impressive, the white frocks of the men, being mingled with the black of the mourners behind, making the occasion one that will be long

remembered by all who were present. The sorrowful cortège slowly wended its way into the cemetery, the grave being at the north-east corner of the ground. Arrived close to the spot, the coffin was borne across the grass on the shoulders of the men, and now the procession was completely broken up, each in the crowd trying to get as near as possible to the grave. The remains of the deceased gentleman having been lowered into the grave, a hymn was sung and a chapter from the Corinthians read by Mr. Turpin, of Tunbridge Wells, who then delivered an address, referring to the sudden death of the deceased. He was (he said) as ready for sudden death as he was for a protracted illness. Almost in a moment – *‘in the twinkling of an eye’* – he was gone. But gone where? Gone to be with the Lord – the Lord Jesus Christ, who washed away the sins of the world on the Cross of Calvary. That suggested the question to everyone [sic] of them standing there that day – were they ready? That was the question. That readiness was this – no other readiness, no other fitness, on no other ground should they have to stand before God but the precious blood of Christ. Might each one put to himself the question – *‘Am I ready?’* Hymn *‘Forever with the Lord’* was sung, after which Mr Vinall, Burgess Hill, delivered a short address from the 22nd chapter of St. Matthew, *‘What think ye of Christ?’* The service was then brought to a conclusion, and the crowd pressed forward to look at the coffin. It had no wreaths whatever upon it, and the plate could thus be seen by all. It bore this inscription: “*CHARLES GILBERT EVERSFIELD of Denne, Horsham, Born October 7th, 1822, Died January 9th 1886. ‘Absent from the body, present with the Lord.’*” Cards bearing the following and other inscriptions were freely distributed on the ground: “*He found him in a desert land, and in the waste, howling wilderness: He led him – He brought him to the banquetting [sic] house and his banner over him was Love,*” Deut. xxxii, 10, and Song of Solomon, ii, 4. A farewell glance having been taken of the coffin, the crowd dispersed, the poor feeling that they had lost a true friend, whose place it would be difficult for anyone to fill.....”.



Denne House in the 1880s - young Charles Cyril Bethune (later Eversfield) with his great aunt Isabella (above) and a group of ladies (below)





The north front of Denne House with a gardener at work



Charles Gilbert Eversfield's neglected grave in Denne Park cemetery

Endnotes

¹ WSRO Wiston MSS 2455. The mortgage on the manor of Charlton was endorsed with reconveyance, 20, 21 Oct. 1795, to Olive Eversfield of Denne Place, spinster (only surviving sister of said Sir Charles Eversfield, dec'd.) and William Markwick of Catsfield (only son and heir at law of Mary Markwick, late of Catsfield, widow, dec'd., who was another sister of said Sir Charles Eversfield).

² TNA Prob 11/1125, will of Sir Charles Eversfield, dated 4 August 1736.

³ WSRO Wiston MSS 2456.

⁴ WSRO Wiston MSS 2462-2469.

⁵ *Horsham Heritage*, Issue No.7, Autumn 2002, article on the Tredcrofts of the Manor House and Warnham Court by Susan C. Djabri.

⁶ Howard Dudley, *The History and Antiquities of Horsham*, published by himself in 1836 and now available in facsimile.

⁷ Private Acts 7 & 8 Geo. IV, c.22, (1827) and 7 William IV & I Victoria I, c. 35 (1837).

⁸ *The 1844 Tithe Map of Horsham – parts 3, 4 and 5, covering the southern part of the parish*, redrawn by Alan Siney, and *The 1844 Tithe Map Apportionment – parts 3, 4 and 5*, transcribed by Tom White, published by Horsham Museum Society in 2002.

⁹ Horsham Museum has just bought a copy of the piano music, published by Jullien in about 1850, with its dedication to Charles Gilbert Eversfield. It is probably better known now as a cornet solo, as performed by the cornet and violin virtuoso, H. Koenig, who made it the popular piece that we know today.

¹⁰ Jeremy Knight, *Horsham's History, Vol. 2 1790-1880*, p. 172.

¹¹ See <http://www.denneparkhouse.co.uk/>

¹² The Darby papers are now at John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester.

¹³ *Horsham Advertiser*, 23rd January 1886, (transcribed by Claire Wickens).

¹⁴ Name obliterated, but named below as Dr Gambler.