

Little Clarendon, Dinton : an introductory guide



Little Clarendon was built in the late 15th century for a family of some local distinction, but its origins and early history remain mysterious. It is not until the seventeenth century that any personality can be positively associated with it. The first is Henry Hayter, a yeoman, formerly of Clarendon Park near Salisbury, who was conveyed this house in Dinton in 1697. Several generations of Hayter lived here over the next hundred years (it then being known as Coombes Land) until they sold the leasehold to John Barnes at the end of the eighteenth century. He died in 1822 and left it to the twenty-six year old William Maslen Barnes.

Barnes was a carpenter and smallholder, who lived here for forty-four years. Forty-five acres of land came with the house, along with the lease of three other cottages in the village, including Lawes Cottage next door. He also held freehold the field immediately opposite Little Clarendon, and the field to its east on which stood a house (now gone), all amounting to twenty acres; William Wyndham of Dinton House (now Philipps House) and Lord Pembroke owned all but three acres of the rest of the parish. Barnes remained unmarried, living here with his housekeeper and, for a time, his brother Thomas; he died in 1866 leaving the house (then known as Hayters) to his twelve year old great-nephew Henry Palmer Alexander, and charitable benefactions to twelve old and deserving poor of Dinton.

In the 1870s, during Alexander's childhood, the house appears to have been briefly let to a farmer, William Allen, who lived here with his housekeeper Maria. However, by 1881 Henry Alexander had moved in and was employing one man and a boy to help him farm the twenty acres; Sarah Crees from Westbury was his housekeeper.

In 1882 Henry Alexander sold the property to Albert King, a forty year old butcher and farmer, for £1000. Albert was the son of

James and Martha King, of an old Dinton family, who farmed nearly three hundred acres in the parish, and were big employers of farm labourers. It may have been King who divided the house into two dwellings with lathe and plaster partitions for sub-letting. However, it was not long before it was again for sale, as Clarendon House [along with 22 acres], this time by auction on 25th August 1885. King's mortgage was assigned to Messrs. Savage and Cox who sold the property in 1896 to Sarah Jane Cuff. She was an elderly shopkeeper, originally from Iwerne Minster in Dorset, who married John Cuff, then a dairyman. Mysteriously, the same day she bought the house it reverted to the vendors. It was not until 1901 that Clarendon House, 22 acres and two cottages, were finally sold by Messrs Savage and Cook to the Reverend George Engleheart for £1,725.

The Englehearts restore Little Clarendon

'Both house and land were in a dreadful state. The house was divided up between two families in a warren of passages and rooms like biscuit tins. The old fireplaces had to be discovered, and the shape of the original rooms; there were little modern grates of atrocious style everywhere; the walls were covered with patterned paper, the ceilings set to hide the old beams, and half the mullioned windows were built up.'

Catherine Engleheart

In February 1901 the Reverend George Engleheart and his wife bought Little Clarendon, several acres and two cottages for £1,725. The Englehearts were antiquarians, with a sympathy and nostalgia for 'the spirit of age'. With Mary Engleheart inside and the Reverend George outside, assisted by Messrs Wooldrige and Green and supervised by Mr Doran Webb their architect, they set about reopening fireplaces, exposing the beamed ceilings, taking down partitions, retiling the roof, and making repairs to walls and chimney stacks. In the yard east of the stables, stone was masoned and lime slaked for mortar. Mary Engleheart watched over the work and 'nipped in the bud many stupidities of architect and builder'. The Englehearts camped in the house during the work, picnicking amongst the dust and rubble; their young daughter Catherine (born 1897) was put to bed in the roof as work continued into the evenings. In every available place in the house, cupboards, wardrobes, and washstands were made and fitted by their joiner; and finally the walls were

whitewashed throughout and the woodwork painted flat-white, for shiny finishes were taboo. In September 1902 the work was complete, and the Englehearts moved in. The house is furnished as it was in their day.



Mary Engleheart (1855-1948) pictured above generously bequeathed Little Clarendon to the National Trust.

The Reverend George Engleheart (c.1851-1936)

'Engleheart has enriched gardens with many lovely flowers with charming names. His Horace was one of the first, and I have heard him say that he would not have believed a prophet who told him that the small bed of his of this variety, which at one time contained the whole stock, could in so short a time have provided the Old and New Worlds with millions of this popular flower.'¹ E.A. Bowles, *Handbook of Narcissus*, 1934.

George Engleheart, gardener and poet, was a native of the Channel Islands. Educated at Elizabeth College, Jersey, and Exeter College, Oxford he became a gifted linguist. In 1878 he married Mary Evans, a devout Quaker, and in the following year they had a son, Paul. Engleheart's first curacy was in a deprived district of Leicester, but in 1880 he accepted the living in Chute Forest, north of Andover where he showed ability as a preacher. It was here that his passion for horticulture was able to develop. His fascination with the genus *Narcissus* grew as a result of an unresolved family conundrum: one of his forebears had claimed to have developed a

new kind of daffodil which botanists of the time had denied, and Engleheart wanted to prove it possible. He repeated the cross between the wild pheasant's eye (*N. poeticus*) and the ordinary trumpet kind that his relation had tried, then waited seven years before his seedlings flowered; he succeeded and caused great stir in horticultural circles.

His seduction by daffodils was now complete, and he was drawn further away from his clerical life. He searched for, and rediscovered, little known species, and he soon obtained from old gardens in Ireland white forms, lost or unknown in Britain. At the Birmingham Flower Show of 1898 his 'Will Scarlett', with its striking orange cup, was a triumph; of the six he exhibited three were sold for the unprecedented sum of £100, and Engleheart kept the remainder for breeding. In 1900 the Royal Horticultural Society awarded him its Victoria Medal of Honours.

In 1902 they moved into Little Clarendon, where Engleheart set up greenhouses, and long numbered beds with broad grass walks between them, for his daffodils. The outbuildings were all fitted out with orderly shelves in readiness for the harvest of apples and bulbs.



The daffodil field at Little Clarendon, c.1920