



## Gaskyns, the Home of “Squire Barker” including Masque of Empire, 1909

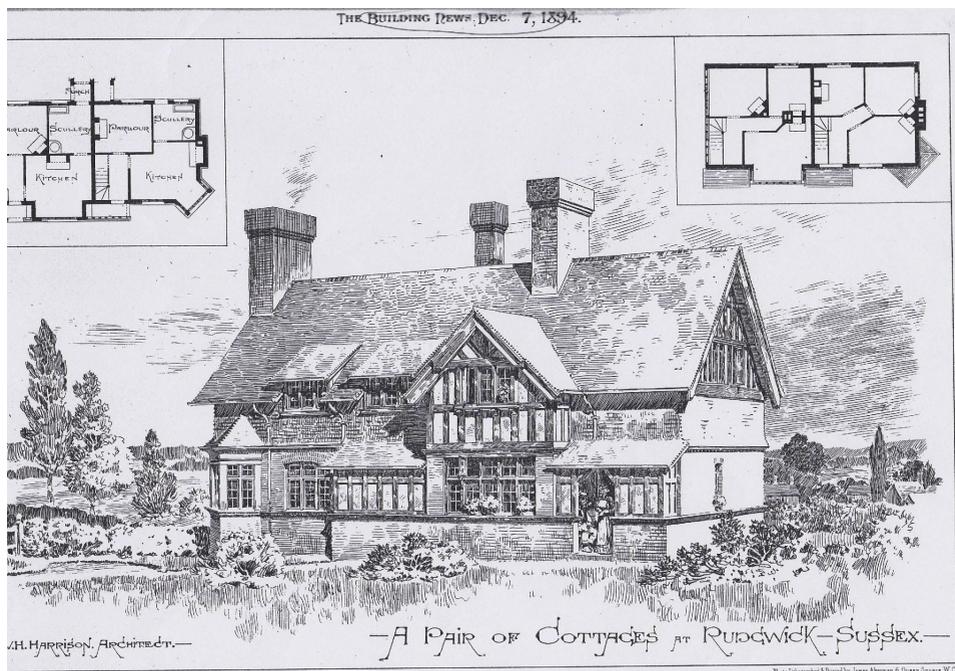
How often have you driven past Pennthorpe School and wondered how the large house came to be in this prominent village site? The RPS Stan Smith Archive has been given a copy of the Gaskyns estate sale catalogue of its sale by auction 18<sup>th</sup> June 1930. Some years ago Alan Siney wrote about the history of Gaskyns in detail.

Gaskyns (the ‘y’ was an Edwardian affectation), a timber-framed farmhouse stood for centuries where the car park is, forward of its replacement main house, and with the farm buildings where the Motoward business is now, and was thought of as in Bucks Green rather than Rudgwick. The last farmers of “Gaskyns and Hatches” to live there were the Stanfords, in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, followed by the Jenners, when it was part of the estate of the Bunny family (whose surname was later changed to St John) of Slinfold. The Bunny/St John family are descendents of the Naldretts, through the Piggott line, an old Rudgwick family, who had owned this farm for centuries.

*Pennthorpe School, Gaskyns, in c1955*



By the late 1880s, Gaskins' new owner was Frederick Barker, a wealthy soon-to-be widower from Leeds, where they had lived in style in Headingley (though born in S London), a retired iron master's agent. It was Frederick who had the new 12 bedroom house built (completed 1892), perhaps an investment as well as pleasure, as his family had all gone off to make their own way in the world. But by 1894, his wife Mary, much younger than him, died. In 1901 he lived there with a footman and five servants. He created gardens extending to 18 acres, with lodges, stables, and laundry (all still standing). The house is little altered despite its years as a school. However, Gaskyns Close and Orchard Hill are now built on much of the grounds, and the school has of necessity increasingly encroached on the remainder. The wide southern aspect Horsham stone terrace remains. The lodge by the Orchard Hill school entrance we now know to have been designed by WH Harrison, architect, in c1894, in very similar style to the main house. Might Harrison be the architect of Gaskyns? William Henry Harrison was in practice in London, having qualified in 1889, so this was one of his first commissions. He died in 1925.



*Gaskyns Lodge, 1894*

The house was inherited in 1906 by the younger son Geoffrey Claude and his wife Dorothy, daughter of Maj-Gen WW Lynch, CB. Claude, as he was known, was educated at Magdalen College, Oxford. In the 1911 census they had 6 children. Cecil was born in 1910 (*see photo below, in which Dorothy and son Alan are absent*) and eight servants.

Staying with them were Kenneth and Louise Teasdale from Peaslake, near Shere. Kenneth was the chorus in the Masque (below) and a fellow alumni of Magdalen. The house had become very much the centre of life in Rudgwick. Flower Shows were held here as early as 1903. Barker was described as the squire of Rudgwick. Not only did many locals work there (his bailiff was Richard Dewdney) or on their land, the cricket field and football field was on what is now the school playing field. Stoolball and athletics (an annual event

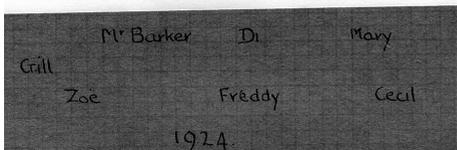
by 1912 to coincide with the Flower Show) took place there too. There were entertainments for the village including an Empire Day masque in 1909.



There was even a veterans parade in 1912. 80 veterans of various wars and campaigns were invited, inspected by Col Whitehead of Woodfalls, marched onto the cricket field by the Rudgwick Band, and inspected again by Lt-Gen Sir Edward Hutton KCMG, CB (newly retired, recently commander of the Australian army and veteran of the Boer War) accompanied by his ADC, Capt EJ St John, of the family who had once owned the property. followed by a march to the Queen’s Head for entertainment, provided by the Barkers, including a “salute from the anvils”.

As Alan Siney wrote, “Gaskyns was synonymous with the established order of parish activity and participation on a level which will never be repeated.”

*Left, G Claude Barker with six of their seven children. Alan, and wife, Dorothy, are inexplicably absent – perhaps one of them was the photographer; c1920*



In June 1929, daughter Di (middle back in photo) was married in Rudgwick in a big

‘society’ wedding to the delightfully named Lt Cedric Oswald Henry de Lacy-Bacon, surely a character in PG Wodehouse’s Blandings. It proved to be one of the last Barker social engagements in Rudgwick. Her sister Zoë had married the previous year. Cecil, the eldest, never married, became a Quaker, and died in Berkshire in 1994, aged 93, having spent her career as a probation officer. Mary married in 1937 in Herefordshire

In the same year, Freddy (front in photo) mysteriously was gazetted for changing his name to Frederick Lynch Egremont-Lee-Barker, before he married Nora Henderson in London, the name under which he served in the King’s Shropshire Light Infantry during

the Second World War, and died in Essex in 1980. Her brother Alan went up to his father's college in Oxford, became a lawyer in Salisbury, and registrar of the cathedral, and died in 1996.

### Masque of Empire

The Masque of Empire took place on 24 May, 1909. The Barkers were respectively Hon Secretary and Dame President of the Rudgwick and Slinfold Habitation of the Primrose League under whose auspices the event took place. The writer of the masque was Mrs Amy Strachey, wife of John St Loe Strachey who had written an article in the Spectator, of which he was editor, entitled "Wake up, England". Strachey, who lived in Albury, Surrey (where the production was first staged), and was from a long line of well-known figures, and a left-wing intellectual (Liberal Conservative, a Free Trader), who was described as "an uncompromising journalist and campaigner". Both were alert to the possibility of war in Europe. Their daughter Annabel took the role of Britannia.



*John St Loe Strachey*

"Amy Strachey wrote *A Masque of Empire* in 1908, an instructive drama in indifferent blank verse with music, patriotic songs, and recitations, which was performed not only in Surrey but in London (for the Victoria League annual meetings) and later by Victoria Leagues both in Britain and overseas. Given this enthusiasm to imbue the young with imperialism, and to equip them with invasion-thwarting skills, it is not surprising that the recruitment of children as members of the Victoria League originated with the Newlands Corner branch [run by Amy Strachey]". (*Imperialist Women in Edwardian Britain, Reidi, PhD Thesis, 1998*)

" Its author's desire was to convey the facts of Empire and the lessons of a sane Imperialism through the medium of poetic drama. In the Masque Britannia calls before her first her sailors and soldiers, on whom the duty of maintaining the Empire rests ; next the daughter- nations, including Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Newfound- land, and South Africa; then India and the rest of our Crown Colonies and dependencies ; and, lastly, the coaling-stations. The self-governing Colonies and India are presented by women, and the smaller' dependencies and scattered islands of the Empire by children. The more important characters speak. The children for the most part only dance. To Chorus are entrusted duties combining those of the Chorus of the Elizabethan and of the Greek stage. There are recitations from Campbell, Tennyson, and Kipling. In the course of the play occur songs and incidental music, including a "Song of the Flag" set to the tune of the "Old Hundredth." The following speeches of Australia and New Zealand addressed to Britannia may be given as a sample of the Masque :— " Trumpet-eaU. The two voices call, • Advance Australia! ' The Orchestra plays appropriate music, and AUSTRALIA enters on the left. She is dressed in a semi-classical robe, and wears a crown of stars, representing the Southern Cross, on her head. She carries a basket heaped with apples and trimmed with mimosa. She advances to the throne and is kissed by Barrazims, after which she speaks her lines: AUSTRALIA. Lo, with a daughter's duteous kiss and smile The

Island Continent greets her Mother Isle. Gamy vast seaboard sparkle cities fair, The ocean laps me, for thy soul is there. Up country, through the Bush, I gallop free, My horse, scarce broken, bred and reared by me. Deep in the earth my cherished wealth I hold, With patient toil my miners seek for gold.” (*Spectator archive*)

Mr Kenneth Teasdale (artist friend of the Barkers) was the Chorus, and educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, hence performing in his gown and hood. Claude Barker played violin in the orchestra led by Mr R Harris, heralds were Harold Tate (Clarks) and Edward Page (Station), Canada was Miss Gladys Boxall (Church Hill), Newfoundland: Miss Cecil Barker (Gaskyns), Australia: Miss Dorothy Bradbourne, New Zealand: Miss Anne Butcher (Eames House), South Africa: Miss Marian Woods (Rudgwick School), sailor lads represented Gibraltar and Malta: Gervase Whitehead Woodfalls) and Hugh Stewart Ringer (Kilburn), India Miss Mary Whitehead (Woodfalls). At tea, the Rudgwick Brass Band played.

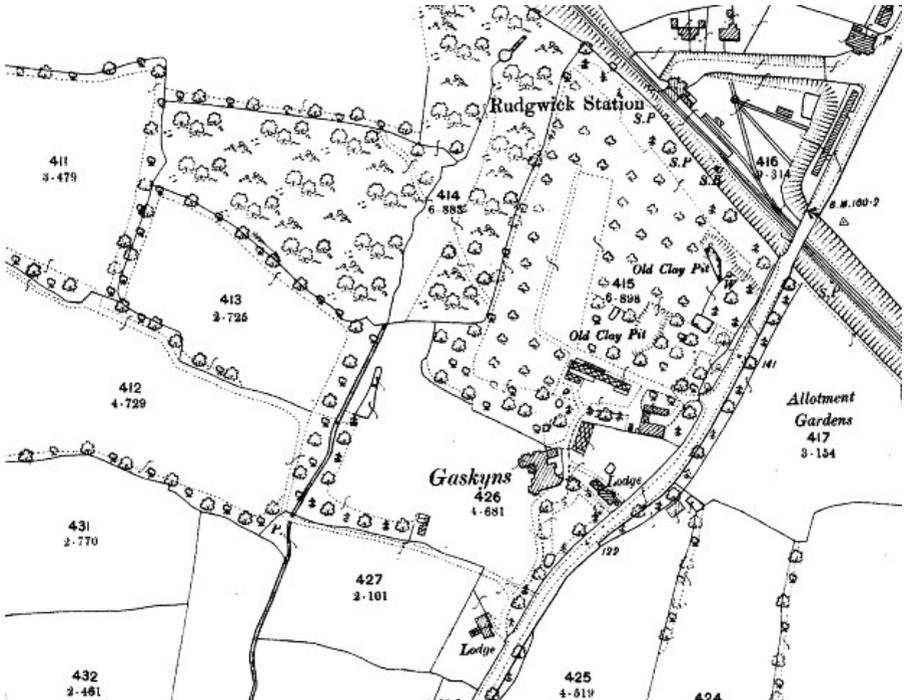


### **Gaskyns in 1930**

The Gaskyns estate sold in 1930 at The Queen’s Head in Bucks Green, comprised 207 acres which stretched across the Arun to include the still working Wanford Mill occupied by Mr Brown, and Warhams, across to Lynwick Street, the fields where the ‘Royals’ estate is now, and all the properties including Snoxalls and Burnalls on the north of Guildford Road in Bucks Green except the Queens Head and the old stores. The area between Church Street and Hatches on Lynwick Street had become parkland. The house was described as having dining room, morning room, drawing room, billiards room, six principal bedrooms, 2 dressing rooms, 2 bathrooms and 4 servants’ bedrooms, double lodge, stables and garage, squash court, walled kitchen garden, 2 tennis courts, ornamental lake, electric light from an oil engine, central heating water from the Hurtwood Water Co,

drainage installed by The Sanitary Engineering Co, laundry (and drying ground opposite on Church Street), and telephone Rudgwick 4. The village allotments (seen on maps below) were on land formerly part of Gaskins Farm. It seems likely they were sold separately earlier than 1930, but to who? The fields are now built on.

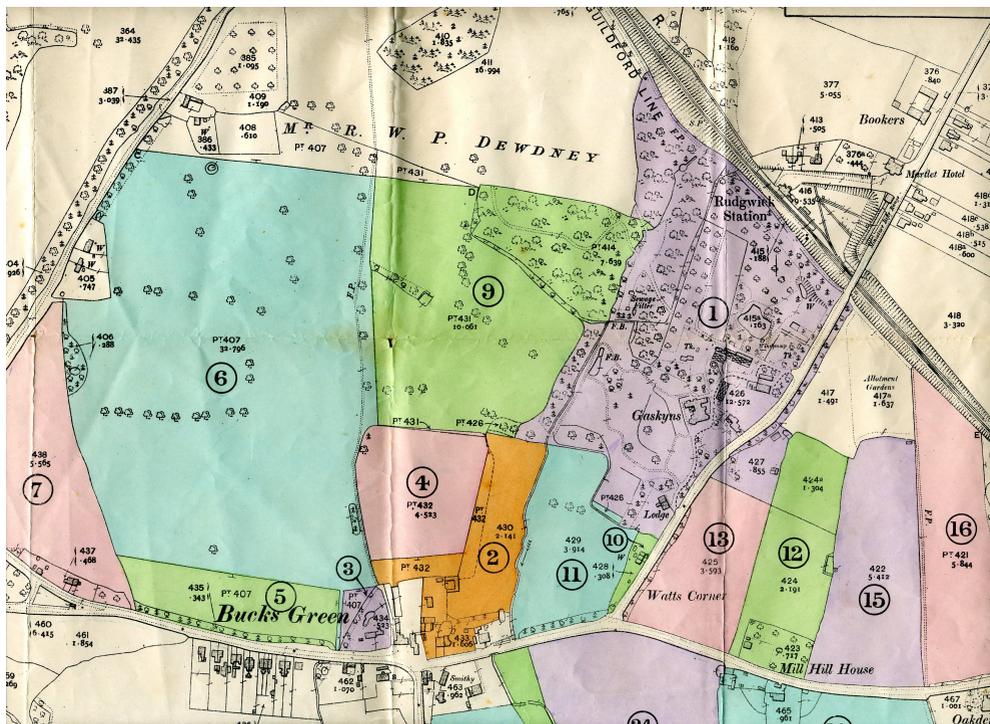
*The map below is from 1898. It shows that clay was dug on site to build the house. The larger clay pit became an ornamental lake, and part of it still exist at the entrance to Gaskyns Close. It is clear that some of the landscaping was unfinished in 1898. the glasshouses, a kitchen garden (rectangular)stabling, laundry and lodges were in place.*



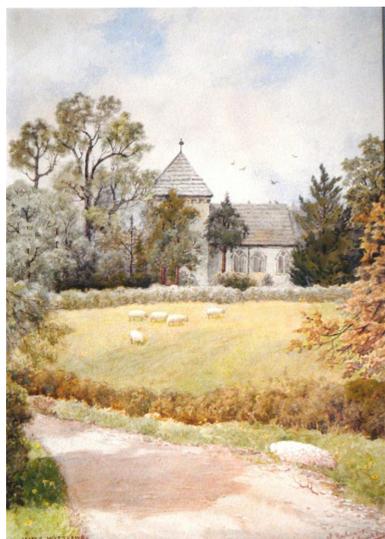
In 1930, the family moved to 333 acre Dulas Court in the lovely Golden Valley, Herefordshire, where he became lord of the manor and magistrate. It has been speculated that the Rudgwick estate sale was due to the stock market crash the preceding year. What is certain is that property values had also plummeted by 1930, enabling the Barkers to retreat to cheaper remote Herefordshire, where they bought the 24 bedroom manor house, now a nursing home, and its superb county-listed landscaped gardens. Both lived long lives, Claude until he was 91. Gaskyns was never again a lively place (except as a school!). The new owner David Jamilly, a London film dealer, left it empty whilst living at 1, The Lodge. The officers of The Royal Horse Artillery occupied the house during the war, and then Pennthorpe School moved in from its temporary home at Gibbons Mill in 1947. The northern part of the grounds were retained by Mr Jamilly, and sold for development in 1963, hence the origin of Gaskyns Close. David's son, Victor, was the

owner of an amazing London army surplus shop at Camden Lock frequented by film, theatre and celebrity types (think, Sgt Pepper) wanting clothing or items for their work or just to wear – it closed on his death in 2007.

*Below, Dulas Court*



*The northern part of the Gaskins Estate, at sale 1930 with Lot numbers. Lot 1 was the “ornamental grounds”, subsequently divided between Pennthorpe and Mr Jamilly in 1947. The land owned by RWP Dewdney was Hatches, already sold to Mr Dewdney, bailiff to the Barkers. Residents of Rudgwick will be quick to note Lot 5 as the current Bucks Green Pig Farm, a blot on the landscape. Lot 9 was the village cricket and football ground from 1900. The base map is the 1912 Ordnance Survey map.*



Claude and Dorothy Barker's departure warranted many inches in the local paper. He was a JP, church warden, choirmaster, President of Rudgwick band, Parish Councillor, Chairman of Horsham Rural District Council, member of West Sussex County Council and of its Education Committee, Chairman of the local Conservative Association, provider of the village cricket (captain at one time) and football grounds. Dorothy had supported the Mothers Union and had also been on the county Education Committee. On their departure, the vicar, Rev. Wynn, presented them with two water colours of the church, painted by James Matthews, the water colourist, who lived in Rudgwick at the time, *one illustrated left*. Claude Barker, 1858-1966, died at The Mill House, Wimborne St Giles, Dorset. Dorothy had died the previous year in Herefordshire.

*Below, aerial view of Gaskyngs and Rudgwick, thought to be about 1930*

