

The Mount, Basingstoke

It appears that The Mount was built between 1861 and 1867 for Frederick Blunden. The Mount does not appear in the 1861 census, when Frederick Blunden was living above the *George* in the Market Place. Frederick Blunden did not live long to enjoy his new home. He died at The Mount on 15 November 1867.¹

Frederick Blunden had been a wine and spirit merchant and landlord of the *George* since at least 1832.² He was Mayor of Basingstoke in 1861-62.³ After he bought The Mount, it appears that he left the day-to-day running of the business to his son, also named Frederick.⁴ Young Frederick continued to live above the *George*, and the next resident at The Mount was Thomas Burberry, the founder of the now internationally renowned quality goods company.

Thomas Burberry was living at The Mount in 1871. In the 1871 census he was described as a draper and manufacturer, employing 80 hands.⁵ Burberry invented Gabardine, a weatherproof cloth that would withstand wind and rain and yet permit ventilation through a porous texture. He registered Gabardine as a trade mark in 1879 and patented it in 1900.⁶

In 1891 Burberry opened his flagship store in London's Haymarket.⁷ He later opened branches in New York, Buenos Aires, Paris and Montevideo.⁸

In 1882, Burberry moved from The Mount to Sheldon's Farm in Hook. The advertisement seeking a new tenant described The Mount as follows:

A detached Family Residence standing in its own grounds, about two acres of lawn, Kitchen and Flower Gardens, Orchard and Meadow. The house which is conveniently arranged, contains Dining, Drawing and Breakfast Rooms, with Conservatory, Six Bedrooms, Two Drawing Rooms, and W.C., Kitchen, Pantry, Good Cellars, and convenient Out-Buildings, stabling for Five Horses, double Coach house and Harness-room, Cow Stalls, Piggeries and Fowl-house.⁹

The next resident was William Henry Blatch (known as Harry), the Head Brewer at May's Brewery, and his wife, Harriot Stanton Blatch, the American suffragist. Harry Blatch was the son of William Henry Blatch, the Managing Director of May's Brewery and Mayor of Basingstoke in 1880-81.

Harriot's mother, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, made several extended visits to The Mount during the 20 years the Blatches lived in Basingstoke. Elizabeth Cady Stanton had been an anti-slavery activist and was a leading figure in the early American

¹ *Reading Mercury*, November 23, 1867.

² Advertisement in *Reading Mercury*, December 17, 1859.

³ Baigent and Millard, *History of Basingstoke*, 1889, p.484.

⁴ Kelly's *Dir. Hants*, 1867.

⁵ *Census*, 1871.

⁶ Burberry's Ltd (1987), *Burberry's of London: an Elementary History of a Great Tradition*.

⁷ Burberry's Ltd (1987).

⁸ *Reading Evening Post*, July 23, 1975.

⁹ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, November 11, 1882.

women's rights movement. She organised the women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York in July 1848, where she presented the Declaration of Sentiments, demanding social and political equality for all women, including the right to vote. In 1854 she addressed the New York Legislature on "The Rights of Married Women." She was President of the National Woman Suffrage Association and its successor, the National Woman Suffrage Society; she edited the radical women's rights newspaper, *The Revolution* and co-wrote with Susan B Anthony the *History of Woman Suffrage*. She was also a temperance campaigner and President of the Women's New York State Temperance Society, which must have led to some interesting discussions with her son-in-law.¹⁰

Before arriving in England, Harriot had already written the final chapter (60,000 words) of volume two of her mother's *History of Woman Suffrage*.¹¹ While she was living at The Mount she became an active member of the Women's Local Government Society.¹² She was one of the most influential women in the Fabian Society and was elected to the Executive Committee.¹³ She was also an early member of the Executive Committee of the Women's Franchise League.¹⁴ She organised and spoke at a women's suffrage meeting at the Town Hall in Basingstoke in 1884,¹⁵ and then spoke at many meetings throughout the country.¹⁶

As a result of her social activism, she attracted a number of prominent visitors to The Mount. These included George Bernard Shaw¹⁷ and Sidney and Beatrice Webb.¹⁸ Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters, Sylvia and Christabel, also made several visits to The Mount.¹⁹

The Blatches moved to America in 1902. Harriot sought to reinvigorate the women's suffrage movement in America using the organising techniques she had developed in London. Convinced that organising working women was crucial to achieving votes for women, in 1907 she founded the Equality League of Self-Supporting Women.²⁰ She achieved additional publicity for the cause by organising a hugely successful speaking tour of America by Emmeline Pankhurst in 1909.²¹ She organised and led the 1910 New York Suffrage Parade.²² She helped to form the National Woman's

¹⁰ *American National Biography Online*; *New York Times*, October 27, 1902.

¹¹ E.C. DuBois (1997) *Harriot Stanton Blatch and the Winning of Woman Suffrage*, p.50.

¹² E.C. DuBois (1997) p.65.

¹³ E.C. DuBois (1997) p.78.

¹⁴ E.C. DuBois (1997) p.70.

¹⁵ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, May 10, 1884.

¹⁶ E.g. *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, May 24, 1890; *Daily News*, February 20, 1891; *Yorkshire Herald*, March 3, 1894; *Pall Mall Gazette*, May 15, 1899.

¹⁷ *Spanning Two Centuries: The Autobiography of Nora Stanton Barney*, *History Workshop*, Autumn 1986, p.139.

¹⁸ E.C. DuBois (1997) p.75.

¹⁹ E. Sylvia Pankhurst (1931) *The Suffragette Movement*, p.105.

²⁰ E.C. DuBois (1997) p.94.

²¹ E.C. DuBois (1997) pps.113-5.

²² E.C. DuBois (1997) p.112.

Party in 1916.²³ After the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, Harriot joined the Socialist Party.²⁴

Harry Blatch was killed in 1915 by the current of a broken wire from an electric light. The wire had fallen across the entrance to the lawn at the home of Channing Pollack, the playwright, at Shoreham, Long Island. Harry was returning a book Pollack had lent him. It is thought that he saw the wire and sought to move it out of the way. The wire was carrying 110 volts, killing him instantly.²⁵

Harry and Harriot's daughter, Nora, born at The Mount in 1883, became the first woman in the United States to obtain a degree in Civil Engineering (1905). She was heavily involved in the women's suffrage movement in New York and became President of the Women's Political Union in 1915.²⁶

It appears that Nora was not the only person of note who was born at The Mount. The official story is that Freya Stark, the explorer and travel writer, was born in Paris and her parents were Flora and Robert Stark. However, Flora, an artist, was staying at The Mount at the same time as an American guest named Obidiah Dyer. A romance struck up between Flora and Odidiah, and Freya was the result. A Dr Coupland came down from London and delivered the baby at The Mount. After the delivery he had to hurry back to London, but told Harry to be sure to register the birth, but Harriot and Flora persuaded him not to. When Robert returned, he believed the baby was his. Robert and Flora with baby Freya then left for the continent without registering the birth in Basingstoke.²⁷

Edwin Charles White was the next resident.²⁸ He had run the timber merchant's business that bore his name on the Basingstoke Canal Wharf ever since the death of his uncle, Edward White, in 1874. He became a magistrate on the town bench, and at the time of his death in 1924, he had been the senior magistrate for several years.²⁹

He let the grounds of The Mount to be used for charitable events, such as the pastoral play advertised below. Judging from the programme, it seems fortunate that the performance was taking place in August. At least people could make the excuse for not attending by pretending that they were going away on their holidays.

²³ E.C. DuBois (1997) p.4.

²⁴ E.C. DuBois (1997) p.224.

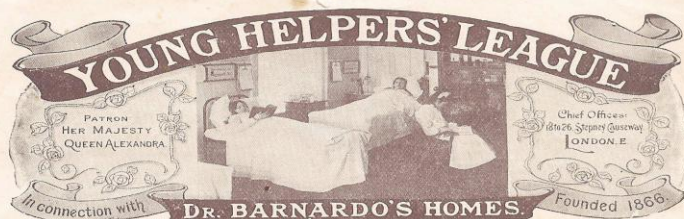
²⁵ *New York Times*, August 3, 1915.

²⁶ Encyclopaedia Britannica online.

²⁷ *Spanning Two Centuries*, pps 139 - 141.

²⁸ Kelly's *Dir. Hants*, 1903.

²⁹ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, March 15, 1924.



A PASTORAL PLAY
ENTITLED:—
“To-morrow,”

In Aid of the BASINGSTOKE COT,

IN

The Grounds of “The Mount”

(By kind permission of Mr. E. C. WHITE), on

Thursday, August 2nd, 1923

AT 5.30 P.M.,

ENTRANCE OPPOSITE ASHLEY LODGE.

Pedlars' Parade. Refreshments.

Admission : 1/-. Children Half-price.

Tickets may be obtained from Young Helpers
and from Mr. GROVER, Winton Square.

IF WET, IN ST. JOHN'S SCHOOLS.

PROGRAMME.

To-morrow	-	-	Miss E. JEFFREYS
Dick	-	-	JOYCE BARTLETT
To-night	-	-	CECILY BALLARD
St. Swithin	-	-	Mrs. MILLER
Wet Day	-	-	VERA PIPER
Fine Day	-	-	PHYLLIS BALLARD
May Day	-	-	RUBY PHILPOTT
Valentine's Day	-	-	AUDREY KING
New Year's Day	-	-	MURIEL MERCER
Shrove Tuesday	-	-	DORIS NEWMAN
Ash Wednesday	-	-	GWYNNETH CARTER
Christmas Day	-	-	Miss A. TEW
Michaelmas Day	-	-	Miss E. GOLDUP
April Fool's Day	-	-	STEWART THATCHER
1st of March	-	-	MAURICE DALLIMORE
Dawn	-	-	Miss D. RENDELL
To-day	-	-	Miss H. ROGERS
Year	-	-	CECILY BALLARD
Mothering Sunday	-	-	Mrs. BRYANT
Twelfth Night	-	-	Miss W. AVERY
Lammas Day	-	-	MAURICE DALLIMORE
Hallowe'en	-	-	Miss N. JEFFREYS
Leap Day	-	-	Miss W. PHILPOTT
St. Cecilia's Day	-	-	Miss M. DOMAN
Shortest Day	-	-	OLIVE HIGGS
Longest Day	-	-	Miss A. DIXON

Night Hours : K. BUSTIN, V. BUTLER, D. WHITE,
G. STEVENS, B. JUKES, E. GROVER, M. FIELD,
S. WHITE, P. PRICE, E. BARNES, B. KING.

Day Hours : D. NEWMAN, N. MELVILLE, M. ODY,
B. GROVES, J. MELVILLE, G. NOAKES, V. BANKS,
P. RAYNBIRD, P. NOAKES, O. HIGGS, F. TAPLIN.

Miss Alice Margaretta Twining, of the Twinings Tea family, moved into The Mount in 1924. Shortly after she moved in she made some alterations and additions to the house, and had a bungalow built in the grounds.³⁰

Before moving to The Mount, she had lived for some time at nearby Greywell. While at The Mount she continued to take a keen interest in the village of Greywell, representing the village as a member of Hartley Wintney District Council. She was also a member of the Guardians' Committee for the Aldershot and Hartley Wintney Area. She was an accomplished needlewoman: examples of her work had been exhibited at Basingstoke Museum. She was a keen gardener, and her gardens at The Mount were said to have been admired.³¹

Miss Twining died on 2 February 1936 at The Mount.³² The contents of The Mount, except Miss Twining's jewellery, were sold in an auction lasting three days from 24 to 26 June 1936. The catalogue described the auction as a "Highly Important Sale of Furniture, Pictures, Prints, Silver, China, Glass, Motor Car, etc." The motor car was a 1933 Humber. There were over 900 lots. It seems amazing that she managed to cram all those items into the house. There was a vast collection of silver, including many 18th and early 19th century items. The library included a first edition of the *Pickwick Papers*, accompanied by a letter signed by Dickens. There was an extensive collection of wines, including around 90 bottles of champagne, some of which were dated 1900, 16 bottles of claret dated 1893, and a bottle of 1887 port.³³ Her jewellery was sold in 36 lots by Sothebys on 9 July 1936. Items included gold bracelets, diamond brooches, gold watches, pearl and diamond drop earrings, a ruby and diamond seven-stone ring.³⁴

Harry Potter was the next resident. He was a well-known local doctor. His original house and surgery was at 2 Church Square, where he was in partnership with Dr Gordon Melville from 1924, and with Dr Leslie Housden from 1926.³⁵ He was later in a larger group practice at 3 New Street.³⁶ He retired in 1964.³⁷

Harry Potter left The Mount between 1955 and 1958, when The Mount became home to two government departments: the Inland Revenue Rating and Valuation Office; and the Ministry of Transport (Vehicle Examiner).³⁸

The Mount was demolished in 1966 to make way for the Conservative Club building which was opened in January 1967.³⁹

Bob Clarke

³⁰ HRO, 58M74/BP 1000; 58M74/A/BP26.

³¹ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, February 7, 1936.

³² *The Times*, February 4, 1936.

³³ HRO, 118M82/4 Sale particulars of Furniture at The Mount, Basingstoke.

³⁴ HRO, 118M82/5 Particulars of Jewels and "objects of vertu" to be sold at Sothebys.

³⁵ HRO, 63M83/B30/13 and 16.

³⁶ Kelly's *Dir. Hants*, 1935

³⁷ B.Applin, *Taking the Pulse of Basingstoke*, 2005, p.55.

³⁸ Kelly's *Dir. Basingstoke*, 1955 and 1958.

³⁹ Basingstoke Gazette, May 14, 2004.