

BRIGHTWELLS 1795 - 1920

Source: The Farnham Society 'The Area of Opportunity' by Ann Thurston (2001)

“The the east of the cinema site [the old Regal/Odeon], originally a private road leading to Brightwell House. The house, formerly known as Lowlands, was built as a gentleman’s residence in **1795**, and was extended in the **1850**’s.....In **1920**, the Farnham Urban District Council bought the property for £3,750 as more office accommodation was neededThe grounds were to be public Pleasure Gardens. A bowling green was opened in **1925** where vegetable gardens and glasshouses had been, to the south side, near the Gardener’s Cottage. In addition, tennis courts and a putting green were constructed. A new, bigger swimming pool was built in 1931 alongside the 1897 Diamond Jubilee Pool. Both closed in the early 1980s.....There was a bandstand, and military band concerts were very popular before and during the war [**1936-45**], as were open-air dances.”

“In **1967**, Brightwell House was offered as a possible site for a theatre. The Farnham Repertory Company was seeking new premises, as their theatre in Castle Street was very small. Plans were drawn up, and the stable block and courtyard were demolished and the new building was attached to the old house. The Redgrave Theatre opened in **1974** and was enormously successful for some years. Unfortunately in the **1990s** it ran into financial difficulties and closed finally in **1998**. Since then, apart from ‘Winter Watch’ which provides hostel accommodation for homeless people, the building has been unused.”

Brightwell House

Source: Farnham and District Museum Society Journal , ‘Aspects of the History of Brightwell House, Farnham’. Part 1 by John Price

(Page 228) “*Brightwell House, Brightwell Road II*The description of the listing notice, issued on 29 December 1972 of Brightwell House, previously known as *Lowlands*....”

“1. A complete list of owners/occupiers exists, dating back to 1792 the year the foundations were laid.

2. Architecturally the structure is of interest, both externally and internally, and is probably the only one of its type to survive near the town centre. It has associations with at least two 19th century figures of international stature [**Florence Nightingale and Sir Arthur Sullivan**].

The occupants

(Page 230) For over a hundred years the house was associated with a family having strong associations with the law, church, army and navy.....The first tenant, Thomas Greenfield, leased the house from the builder, Thomas Turner, but in 1816 the lease passed to a London barrister, William Loftus Lowndes and a Farnham barrister, Thomas Randall. It appears that a relation of Loftus Lowndes named William Lowndes Stone, of Brightwell Baldwin in Oxfordshire, then became the occupant. Stone had married in 1775 Elizabeth Garth, one of three daughters of Mary and Richard Garth, Lord Mayor of the Manor of

Morden in Surrey. In **1816** William Lowndes Stone wanted to buy the property.....but..... the sale, for £900 was not completed until **1824**. [The property then passed into the Garth family in the 1830s]In **1852** an opportunity arose to purchase adjoining land for £300.The census returns for **1861**show three Richard Garths and a total of sixteen family and retainers..... In the following year the Rev Richard Garth died and arrangements were made...to release the covenant of the 1827will of William Lowndes Stone. This allowed Richard Garth, barrister and his surviving siblings, sister Frances and her husband, Patrick Paget, and sister Elizabeth and husband George to purchase Lowlands for £1500 in 1863.....Col. Paget is recorded at the house...with his death in **1879**. Frances was the mistress of Lowlands until she died in **1912**. The **1881** census shows her with a private governess and six servants and a gardener at 'Garden Cottage....Mrs. Pagetin **1905** decided to change the name of the property from Lowlands to Brightwell House.”

Associations

(Page 235 - 236)

“**Florence Nightingale**.....had visited Farnham as a child and had made periodic visits to Waverley until a rift developed after her rejection of an offer of marriage from Henry, the son of her aunt Anne and rich husband George Nicholson who owned Waverley Abbey House. She developed a friendship with Florence Paget’s parents and the Rev Garth was probably the godfather to the baby Florence. Florence Paget recalled ‘the illustrious lady making frequent visits to her parents at (Lowlands) Brightwell, and the great interest she took in the welfare of the poor in the neighbourhood of Waverley. Another son, Major L. Nicholson was stationed in the Crimea at the time Nightingale was ‘earning her immortal fame’ there. In later years Florence Nightingale took great interest in the building of Farnham’s first purpose-built hospital – Trimmers Cottage Hospital, opened in 1895 in east Street, only a short distance from Lowlands.”

Sir Arthur Sullivan

“The young Arthur Sullivan, on the brink of an illustrious career [of Gilbert and Sullivan fame], visited Brightwell House [then known as Lowlands] in **1865**.

‘Dear Col. Paget,

31 July 1865

I spent last week so pleasantly thanks to you kind hospitality that I have bethought me of putting my acknowledgements into notes, so that whenever you play them, you will be reminded of the pleasure you gave me. I didn’t know quite what to call the piece at first, - I wanted something appropriate – but, having tried “Farnham” a romance for the Violincello”, “Hops, morceau elegant pour Violincello” and other titles of a kindred nature, I gave up in despair and finally hit upon Idyl, which is unfortunate as I am not certain whether it is spelt with one or two “l’s”. If the former, I rely upon your friendship to erase the second “l” in the front page. I have sent you a rough first copy, and shall therefore ask you to let me copy it some day. It doesn’t pretend to any merit beyond being ‘songy’.

I am, dear Col. Paget

Yrs very sincerely

Arthur J Sullivan

.....Why he visited Farnham is not known but his military links and possibly exploring the district in his early youth may provide a clue. His 'Idyll' was first performed publicly at the Redgrave Theatre in March 1978."

(Pages 234 -5) "Times change and in 1919 Florence Paget [see (9)]offered the estate to Farnham Urban District Council. A figure of £3750 was finally agreed. On the 26 September 1919 the minutes of the Council state that '*The question of purchase of this Estate for the purpose of additional public offices, store yard, stabling was considered and it was resolved that the matter be referred to the Finance Committee for their consideration and report*'......A Brightwell Estate Committee was set up and various meetings undertaken. On 13 April 1920 the Committee (Mr. Baigent, Miss Miller, Mssrs. Borelli, Marden and Morell) reported that they had met on 13 March.

'Your Committee beg to report that under notice from the vendors, Mrs. Jupp the tenant should give possession on the 24th June next. Your Committee have considered the general policy to be followed in regard to the future use of Brightwell House, and are of opinion that it should be devoted to providing accommodation for

- (a) Maternity and Child Welfare centre Work*
- (b) Local Pensions Administration*
- (c) Local Food and Coal central Administration*
- (d) Housekeeper*

.....On 14 June it was agreed that Mr. and Mrs. Kemp would have pay, rooms, firing, lighting and 12 rods garden ground as gardener and caretaker....On 29 July it was recommended that 'tenders be invited for tenancy of greenhouses and walled in garden on the west side of Brightwell House.' On 5 December under 'Brightwell Pleasure Ground' it was stated that:

'It appears to your Committee that it is not generally known that the grounds attached to Brightwell House are Public Pleasure Grounds, Gardens, Tennis Courts and Bowling Green have been provided by the Council for public use.'