

ROSE GREEN



Rose Green stood on the south side of Battle Hill, an area now occupied by the Glengorse development.

A painting of the house shows it to have been in early Georgian style, perhaps with a touch of the seventeenth century. It was of two storeys, containing 16 rooms and six cellars (each devoted to its particular purpose) and it had been built in or shortly after 1761 on land acquired as freehold from the Abbey estate by George Worge, part of a family owning extensive lands in eastern Sussex.¹ (The conveyance is dated 6 June 1761.²) The family made a brief but notable contribution to British military life of the mid-eighteenth century, when there were few times of peace,³ and there were still Worges in Battle up to the middle of the next century. George married a daughter of John Collier of Hastings, thereby becoming closely related to General the Hon John Murray of Beauport Park, and when Collier died he left him £2000.



Rose Green would certainly have been a comfortable and extensive property. Worge was a solicitor at Battle and steward to the Battle Abbey estate, which is presumably how he persuaded the then baronet to part with the freehold. But he did not live long to enjoy his new house. Parish records list his burial at St Mary's on 19 July 1765. There he is described as an attorney at law. He was 'buried in linen under the pew on the left hand going into the great chancel'. **Rose Green, by S H Grimm, about 1790**

It can be seen there today. On 17 October his widow Elizabeth (Collier) followed him into the same grave. His extraordinarily long and complicated will, proved on 19 August 1765, gave precise details for his burial and for that of his wife when her time would come. It bequeathed his Battle property to his nephew Thomas Jenner, on condition that he changed his name to Worge.

Rose Green was clearly a desirable property. For some years after 1787 it was leased back by the fourth Webster baronet as a house for himself and his new, fifteen-year-old, wife while his aunt, widow of the second baronet, kept them out of the Abbey itself.⁴ At this point the house was described as having a best parlour, a common parlour, blue chamber, best chamber, maid's chamber, kitchen, store room/pantry, brewhouse, small beer cellar, strong beer cellar, wine cellar, little cellar, milk cellar and pickling cellar in addition to bedrooms. The rent charged was £113 19s p a. From 1791 the pair spent much time abroad, during which she committed the adultery that led to their divorce. Webster shot himself in London in 1800 after two unsuccessful attempts to kill himself with laudanum.

Thomas Worge, formerly Jenner, died at Battle in 1801, leaving his property to a nephew George Worge, who lived at Turnham Green in Middlesex then at Lambeth in Surrey. Then or later it was subject to various conditions, notably but not only the payment of annuities to George's wife Hannah from whom he was separated before his death in 1816. By then, in 1813 the fifth Webster baronet had bought it back, only to renege on the conditions and to be faced with a Chancery action resulting in his surrender of the property to the Worge family trustees in 1822.⁵ In the meantime tenancies continued: a Miss Jenner was there at the beginning of the century, probably Thomas's unmarried sister Jane; and from some point in or after 1807 General Robert Prescott (1725-1815). Prescott had joined the army in 1745 and served throughout the seven years' war (1756-63), including the capture of Montreal (which also involved Murray and when Prescott was aide-de-camp to General Amherst), and the American rebellion of 1775-83. He was later governor of Martinique when it was a British possession (the revolutionary French spared his life when they took the island back), then Governor-in-Chief of Canada. He retired to Battle and is buried at Winchelsea.⁶ He was a friend and collaborator of William Markwick the naturalist. In 1816 his son Lt Col Serjeantson Prescott (1784-1816), commander of the fifth Dragoon Guards since 1813, was killed at Rose Green by a cricket ball.⁷

By at least 1826 Rose Green was occupied by Wastel Briscoe, Esq.,⁸ who was living at Summerfields, Bohemia, by 1833. This area of Bohemia had been owned by John Collier of Hastings and then by General the Hon James Murray. The Briscoe family held it until 1920, and the house was demolished in 1972.⁹ Briscoe sold the lease for Rose Green and much of the land to Thomas Flood of Fairlight in 1835. The property was described in an advertisement of 1835 for letting as a

Respectable FAMILY HOUSE, called Rose Green, a Mansion, with good Stabling, Coach-houses, and a large enclosed Walled Garden, most eligibly situated...¹⁰

The sale particulars¹¹ describe it as 'very desirable and improveable ...fit for any Family of the First Respectability'.

It is unclear who occupied the house in the 1840s, when it was at last, if briefly, back in the hands of the Websters. In 1850 the Cresy Report noted that it was the only house in the town with running water, which it obtained by way of a pipe from the Loose Farm area, and that it was the residence of the ex-sovereign of Portugal [*see Miguel article*]. By the autumn of 1851 he had left to get married in Bavaria, and our ignorance again descends on its occupants. The land formed part of the Telham Court estate that went to Samuel Carter in 1855 and he was living at Rose Green in that year,¹² presumably while his big house at Telham Court was being built. One can understand why Rose Green was pulled down. Perhaps it was in disrepair; certainly it was surplus to requirements.

See also E2.1: The Cresy Report of 1850

K1.1: William Markwick : ornithologist, marine biologist, botanist and phenologist
1739-1813

J2.1: The Hon James Murray

X1.3: Don Miguel, sometime King of Portugal

¹ John Farrant: *Sussex depicted: views and descriptions 1600-1800* (Sussex Record Society, 2001).

² East Sussex Record Office: BAT/401, 402

³ See George Duke: *The life of Major General Worge* (Bacon, Lewes, 1844).

⁴ Roy Price: *Battle Abbey and the Websters* (himself, 2005)

⁵ Documents at the East Sussex Records Office (BAT 446, 447).

⁶ http://www.anatpro.com/index_files/James_Eversfield.htm

⁷ Tim Dudgeon: *Bats, baronets and Battle* (Authorhouse, 2013).

⁸ Mogg's *Pocket Itinerary of the direct and cross roads of England and Wales, 1826.*

⁹ *History of Bohemia House and Summerfields*, at <http://www.1066.net/summerfields/history-of-summerfields.htm>

¹⁰ *Sussex Advertiser*, 29 June 1835.

¹¹ East Sussex Record Office: BAT 1235.

¹² Minutes of the Local Board of Health (ESRO)