

## Sarah Maria Palmer nee, Morris and Samuel Palmer

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Sarah Maria Palmer, nee Morris was the daughter of Edward Morris and born in 1826 at St Neots, Huntingdonshire. In 1841 Sarah began work as a live in housemaid at the nearby Stately Home of Kimbolton Castle. Kimbolton was the family seat of the Montagu family. In 1849 she conceived a child fathered by William Drogo Montagu, then Earl Montagu, later 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Manchester. In March 1850, being seven months pregnant, Sarah married Samuel Palmer. The Child, named William after his father, lived with Sarah and Samuel in his infancy later residing at Kimbolton School a fee paying (paid for by his natural father) public boarding school located in part of Kimbolton Castle. In 1853 she and Samuel had a son, Joseph who married Emily and gave Sarah six grandchildren before dying of liver Cirrhosis at the age of forty.

Samuel Palmer was born in 1826 at Willington in Bedfordshire though subsequent census returns state that he was born at Wilden, Beds, in 1828 and at Kempson, Beds, in 1832. His occupation was a carpenter, a skilled trade. In 1850 he married Sarah Morris, a maid at the local Stately Home. At the time she was seven months pregnant. The 1851 Census shows that, following his marriage to Sarah, he had acquired a house in the hamlet of Staploe, together with a house servant. As an 18 to 20 year old carpenter (see birth dates) this level of comparative wealth for the time would have been beyond his means. The sudden rise in his good fortune could only have come as a 'reward' from the Montagu family for giving Sarah's first child a name and to provide the child and his mother with a secure living. (see later Lineage section Palmer page 5.) They lived most of their lives at Monument Street, Peterborough.



## William Edward Palmer and Emma Palmer nee Prentice

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William Edward as a young man, born 10<sup>th</sup> May 1850. He was educated by his natural father, William Drago Montagu at Kimbolton Boarding School, situated in part of his fathers ancestral home Kimbolton Castle.

He acquired a Farm and Nursery in Peterborough living in some style. In the manner of his time he tended to be autocratic towards his offspring leading to a falling out with his eldest son, Tom, which led to a Court Case, which Tom won. Tom moved out of the Peterborough family property and leased land at West Haddon, where he set up a Nursery Business.

William then fell out with his daughters Alice and Lydia. He objected to Lydia's marriage in spite of the fact that her husband to be was a respected politician and businessman. Alice opted to emigrate to New Zealand where she married James George Towersley. His third daughter Julia, stayed at home and never married. William left her the house at 37 Scotney Street, Peterborough, in his Will.

Emma, photographed in her later years. Emma Palmer, nee Prentice. Born 28 Jan 1845 to William Prentice and Eliza Day. Her family had a Drapers business in High Street, Harrold in Bedfordshire. She married William Edward in 1873 at the Parish Church of Harrold, Bedford. It is recorded that her family has been traced, by Parish Records, (Ron Stretton) back to 1526 with the birth of William Prentice and his marriage to Elizabeth Johnson, both born at Cardington, Beds. After three hundred years the family was still living in Bedfordshire. By all accounts Emma was a formidable woman. She had a large house to run and in the course of her marriage gave birth to eight children, Tom, Frank, Rubin, Julia, Samuel, John, Alice and Lydia. Her cousin William Prentice emigrated to Australia circa 1862 founding a large family in Victoria.





### William Edward Palmer, Circa 1866

William Edward, far right at Kimbolton School, Hunts/Cambs, England  
Kimbolton is a fee paying boarding school situated in Kimbolton Castle  
the ancestral seat of the Montagu Family, Earls & Dukes of Manchester



William Edward Palmer (872) son of Sarah Palmer ( nee Morris) & William Drago Montagu, Earl & 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Manchester of Kimbolton Castle.  
Born – 10<sup>th</sup> May 1850 at Kimbolton, Huntingdonshire, England.  
Mother – Sarah Maria Morris, Housekeeper at Kimbolton Castle, Hunts,  
Conceived - a child in Oct 1849 by William Drago Montagu, Earl & 6<sup>th</sup> Duke of Manchester of Kimbolton Castle. To legitimise the child Sarah Maria married Samuel Palmer on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 1850 when seven months pregnant.

Educated – 1857-1868 at Kimbolton School. A fee paying boarding Public School attached to Kimbolton Castle and still operating as a Public School.  
Source: letters Great Cousin Joan Walters nee Mansfield, his granddaughter.  
A Nurseryman at Peterborough, his was a well off family with several servants, source: letters Amanda Martin Palmer Nee Ashley and Mrs Winifred Noble. The Nurseries were still in existence during WW11.  
Died - 31 Jan 1933 at 37 Scotney Street, Peterborough. Willed to Julia Palmer  
In his Will he left a considerable amount of money to his sons and also to his sons oldest sons. Source: letter Joan Walters, Nee Mansfield.



# Nurseries



## Palmer & Sons Nurseries, Peterborough – Proprietor: W.E. Palmer

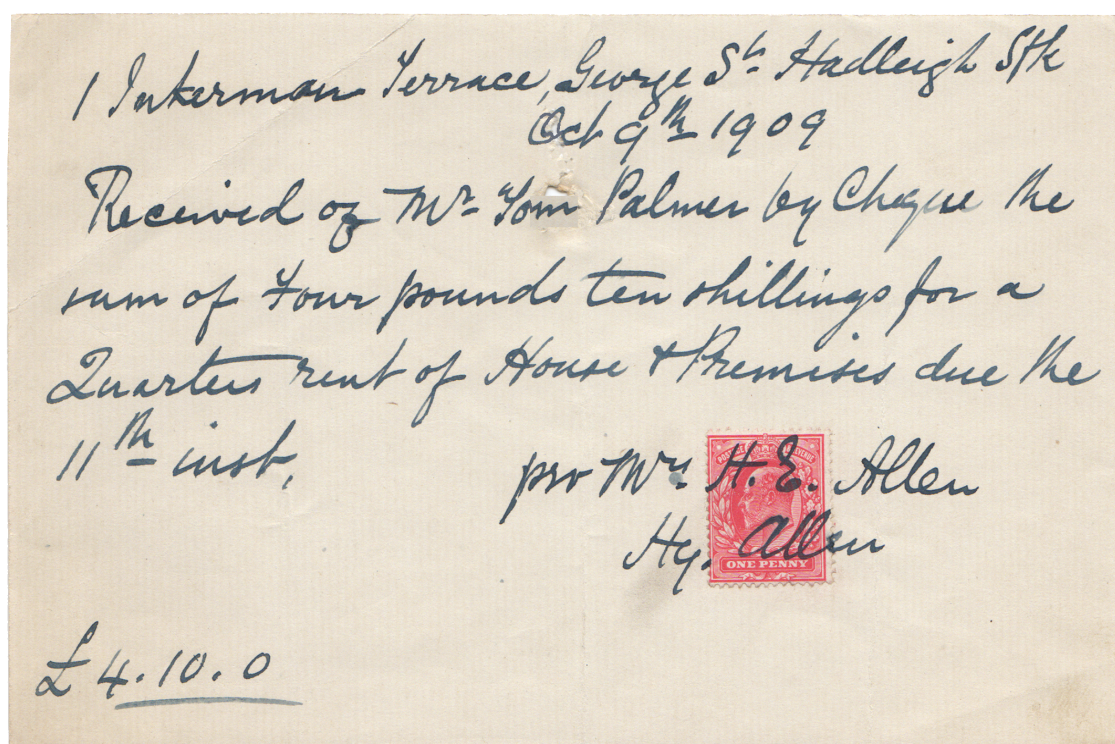
William Edward Palmer, as we have seen, had a privileged upbringing, with his mum and stepdad comfortably installed in order to bring up Sir Drago's little moment of weakness. He became a nurseryman and pig breeder (New England Nurseries, Peterborough.) and, as many of you have probably already realised, a rather unpleasant snob. – seriously falling out with four of his eight children. His eldest son – our grandfather Tom – was apparently only paid “food and board” on the promise that “One day son, all this will be yours” Obviously, Tom wanted to get wed and have children, so he successfully sued his dad for his inheritance. (Quite amazing really, when no-win/no-fee lawyers would not exist for another 120 years.) Cousins will remember his redoubtable wife (Grace Alice aka Nan) and will probably suspect her hand in all this.



Tom, got married, took himself off to West Haddon and rented a house and land - setting up his own nursery and starting his own dynasty. (Four of his children were born there.)

The rift between father and son lasted for many years until, in the early thirties, (probably at the instigation of Tom's sister, Julia) they finally made up..... See the two letters from William Edward to Tom on pages (f) to (i). When William Edward died, he left substantial sums to Tom and to Tom's eldest son William. The New England Nurseries traded until the Second World War.

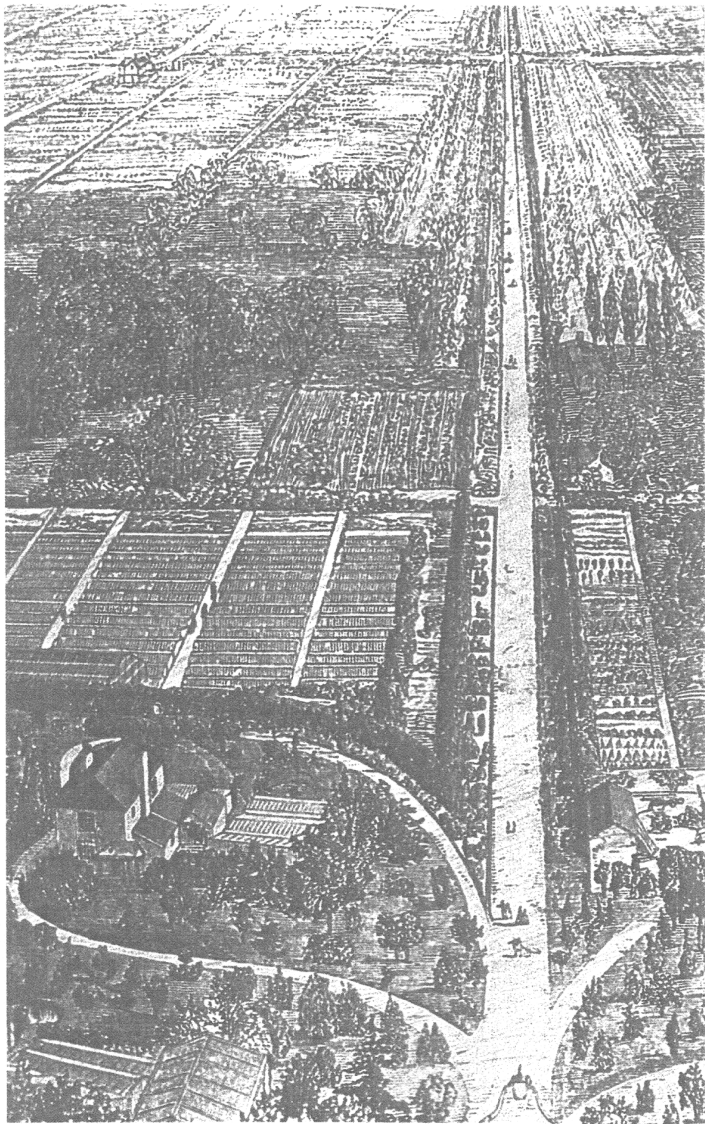
It's rumoured that Tom tried to buy the West Haddon land but, when that fell through, moved to Worcester.....



A receipt for part of the rental at West Haddon

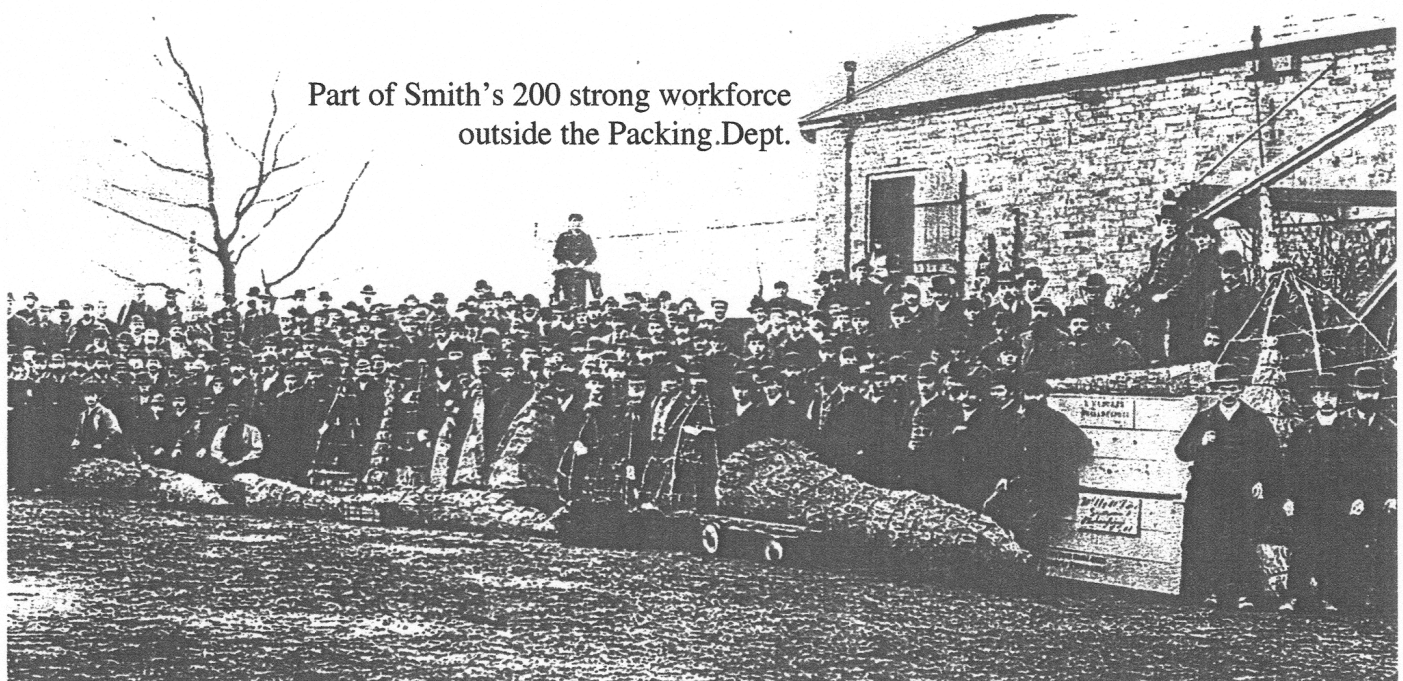


## St. Johns Nurseries, Worcester – Proprietor: Richard Smith



In the 19th century, virtually the whole of St. John's seemed to have been given over to growing fruit trees and other nursery products. The land of St. John's was particularly suitable, due to the fact that it is located on the upper/middle terraces of the Severn, composed almost entirely of river sands and gravels. The great nurseryman of the 1800's was Richard Smith, son of nurseryman Thomas Smith of Lower Wick.

Established in 1804, by the 1820's Richard Smith & Co. had become one of the largest nursery businesses in the world. In its heyday, St. John's Nurseries covered 157 acres, stretching from Bransford Road, to the village of Lower Wick. It had 18 miles of walkways between its rows and displays, the tree-lined central drive was almost 2 miles long and there were two and a half acres of glasshouses - manned by a labour force of 200. In October 1829 alone, they sold 10,000 fruit trees! His son Richard succeeded him in the business and it was Richard 'the second' who in 1874 introduced the world-famous Worcester Permain. Found in a Swanpool market-garden in 1872, Smith offered £10 for the exclusive right to take grafts. At the end of the 19th century, Richard 'the third' took over, but business declined and, in 1910, the core of the nursery was sold to Tom Palmer.....



Part of Smith's 200 strong workforce  
outside the Packing Dept.



## St. Johns Nurseries, Worcester – Proprietor: Tom Palmer

*(Edited by John Michael Palmer - partly sourced from Grace Constance Palmer's contribution to 'Memories Of St. Johns')*

Tom Palmer relinquished his nursery at West Haddon and in 1910, purchased the core part of St Johns Nurseries, Worcester. Because of its past renown, Tom decided to keep the trading name of Richard Smith and Co. He converted the old offices into a home, enlarging it for his growing family.

The volatile early years of the 20th century caused several setbacks for Tom and Grace. The First World War took away many of the work force. Originally they owned about 8 acres of land, from Bransford Road to Hanbury Park Road, with another 10 acres rented above that, at Boughton Park.

The General Strike during the Great Depression made things even worse. A large part of the nursery's business was mail order and, with no trains running, orders could not be fulfilled, so customers had to be reimbursed. Tom fell ill and was advised not to do heavy work and a decision was made to sell up and move to Malvern. Two plots of land, north of Nursery Walk, were sold to Hickman's and Fulcher's, but they couldn't sell the main house, so the whole plan fell through - with, not only the loss of land, but a great deal of money.

Tom's wife, Grace, (Nan) as my cousins will attest, was a formidable woman. Family gatherings were by Royal Command. No son, daughter, grandchild or in-law could avoid a "do" at the Nursery, unless they were in jail. Having said that, I have happy memories of their parties, parlour games - sing-songs at the piano - (with Grandpa Tom's piece de résistance, "When Father Papered The Parlour") Although they were strict Edwardian parents, a tennis court and swimming pool were built on the nursery for their family - and in the "Pack", (the old packing building) their children were allowed to do up one of the top rooms and have a grand piano and phonograph installed for their own 1920's soirees. (I played among the debris 25 years later.)

One odd feature of the tennis court was a large portable tin bath. On hot days it was filled by a hosepipe and, after a hectic game of tennis, both host and guest would strip and leap into the bath to cool off; bit racy for those days!

The huge Weeping Beech was also a firm favourite with family and visitors alike. (see next page) Several generations have climbed to the top, just to lie back on the thick bed of leaves.

Grace Alice Palmer was also a good businesswoman and it is possible that the fortunes of the nursery would have been much worse without her input. The two elder sons went into business together, while the youngest son, Claude joined his father. (Being an enthusiastic gardener from a very early age.) Grace Alice Palmer also opened a shop in Lowesmoor (Worcester) with Claude, called G.A.Palmer & Son - a Florists, Fruiterers and Tea Rooms. The shop went on to trade well into the 1970's, with Claude's wife, Queenie working there and their daughter, Joy running it.

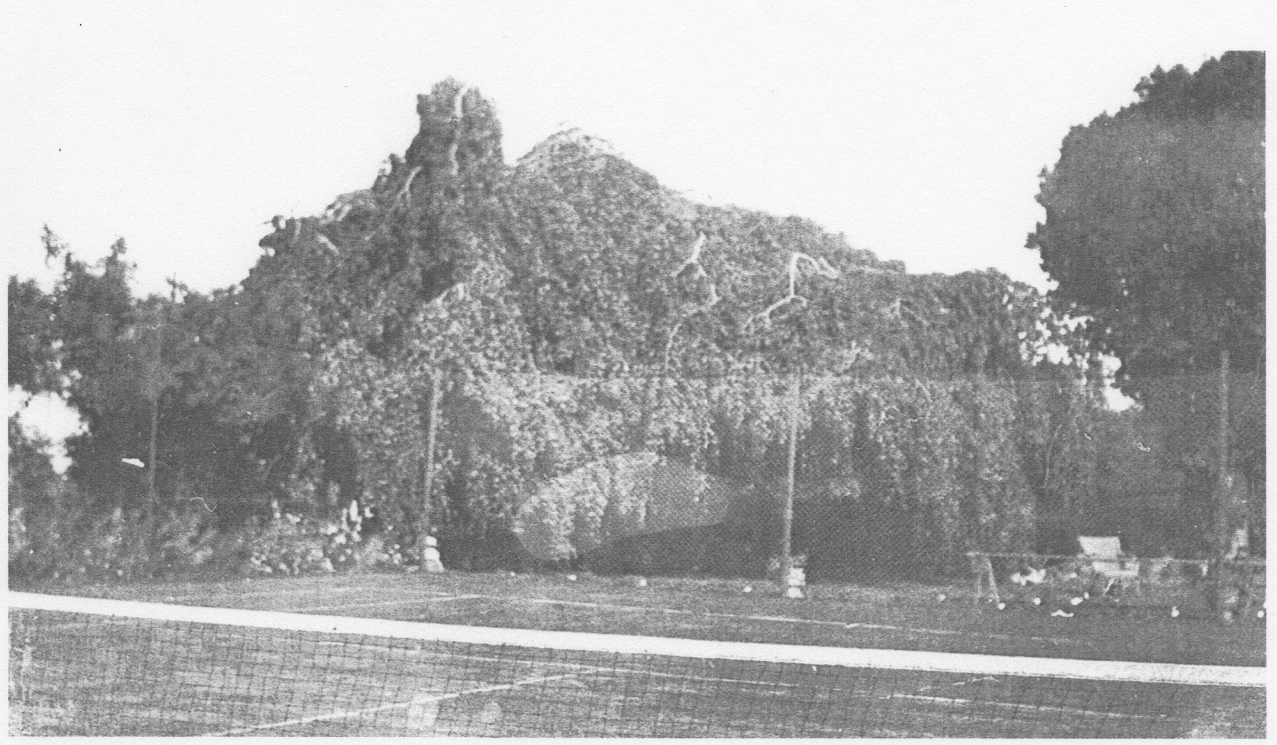
Claude had slowly taken over the running of the nursery and, by the Second World War, (with the nursery re-jigged toward food production) he was classified as being in a protected occupation and so became a Special Constable for the duration. In 1946, he moved into a house in Avenue Road, which adjoined onto the nursery and, on Tom's death in 1953, became the proprietor. (Grace Alice died in 1960)

St. Johns Nurseries, continued quietly, but successfully trading until 1984, when Claude died. His daughter Joy continued to run the business, until death duties and the dreadful recession of the 1990's made it unviable. So, with many tears, it was sold for housing in 1994.

If you visit it today, you will see two pleasant cul-de-sacs - Smiths Avenue and Palmers Green - and the wonderful Weeping Beech.

What you won't see, of course, are the very happy memories of four generations of your kin.

## St. Johns Nurseries, Worcester – Recreation



**Above:** The Weeping Beech with the Tennis Court in foreground. In the summer months, house parties were common, with relatives and friends staying for the weekend and for summer holidays.



**Left:** The infamous tin bath by the tennis court.

Grace Palmer, her brother Edward in the bath, Nelson Battell her brother-in-law and her brother William at the other end of the bath.

The Pateman Brothers on holiday at St. Johns Nurseries. William shows off his new car with a drive around the nursery.

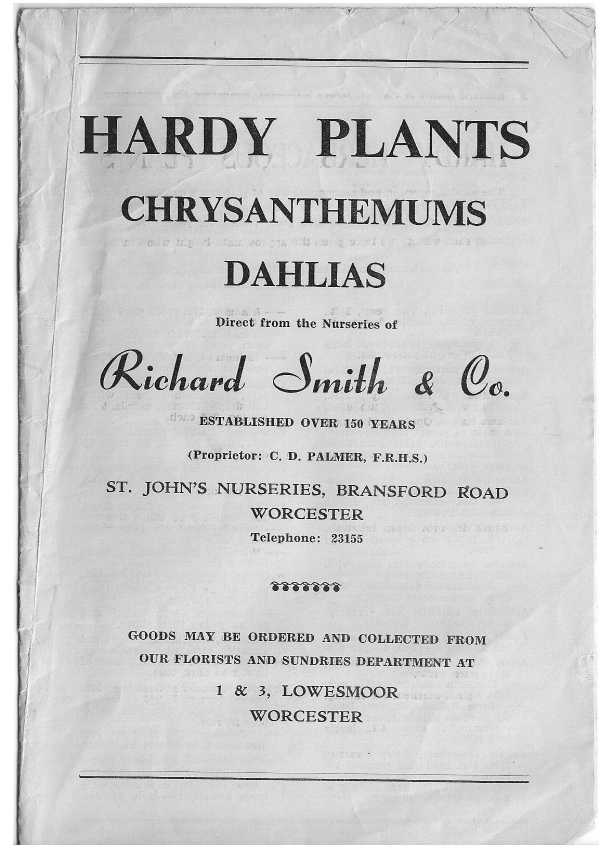
In the driving seat: William - Next to him: Nelson Battell (brother in law)  
Back seat: Grace & Tom and Edward Pateman - Popping her head over the back door: young daughter Grace.

In the background are some of the greenhouses and the "Pack" (the old packing building.)

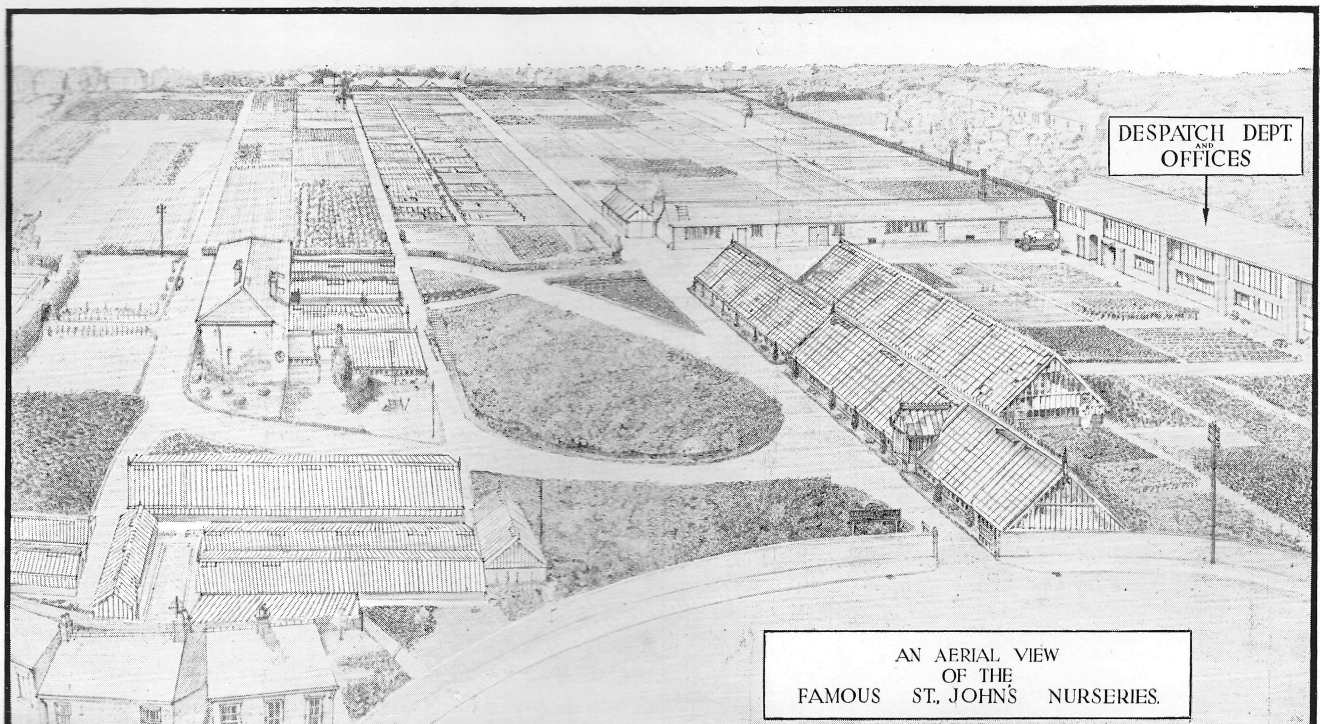




## St. Johns Nurseries, Worcester – Catalogues



**Above left:** Smith's Seed Catalogue from 1898. (The main catalogue was like a horticultural "War & Peace" and had, I seem to recall, a picture of the Californian Redwood that had been tunnelled out, to allow cars to drive through it.) **Above right:** A plant brochure from the early 1960's. **Below:** From a catalogue of the 1930's, a sketch of the nurseries. (Done by Grace Constance Palmer's boyfriend.)



# RICHARD SMITH & CO.,

(TOM PALMER, PROPRIETOR).

Office Hours :  
8-30 to 5.

## St. John's Nurseries, WORCESTER.

'Phone : Worcester  
1155.

IAS. BROADLEY LTD., ACCRINGTON AND LONDON.

(e)



MEMO. from

Telegrams:—"Palmer, Nurseries, Peterborough."

**PALMER & SONS,**

Seedsman, Nurserymen,

and Bulb Importers, . .

**NEW ENGLAND NURSERIES, PETERBORO'.**

*11 Dear Tom & Grace*

*March 10<sup>th</sup> 1931*

*How are you getting on this  
this dreadful weather, raining every day all  
winter now frost & snow. (fue!) is very buisy every  
morning sweeping snow away so as she can feed  
the fowl. we have only one Pig left now and that  
we brought into the house out of the cold. I gave  
it a dose or two of salt & althow it doesnt eat  
any thing it is improving every day. I shall be  
glad when I can get on the garden again to do  
something. I am tired being in house doing nothing  
only reading papers untill I get as cold as a frog.  
we have heard nothing from New Zealand since  
the earthquake if they are a live. I fear they  
over*



are in a dreadful state as their home  
is in that part where the earthquake was and  
what with land slides & earthquakes in some  
countries I think there is no better place than  
Old England and I often think Peterborough  
is a favoured spot. we don't get such severe  
storms & deluges as some towns do. I am writing  
this at fuel's request as she says she has got so  
much to do and I am got nothing. I must now  
conclude with love to you and all the

Family From Your Affectionate  
Father  
W E Palmer

P.S. you remember Tom Church

he died Christmas day  
they had a wonderful funeral Motor Horse and  
seven Motor Coaches & flowers. I never saw the  
like. it was a marvel where they all came from.  
Fuel says I haven't sent her love W E P.  
so here it is



22.12.31

37 Scotney St  
Peterborough

Dear Tom & Grace

Just a little Christmas Greeting wishing you & all the family the Compliments of the season. well I must tell you your Sister & I went to the Mayor making. it was wonderful to hear what nice things they said about Jack from both sides of the Council. you will see by the enclosed Newspaper slip that we went to the Civic Reception. I did not think much of it at first but we got on alright shaking hands & talking with the people. there was a fair percentage who knew me so of course we had a good chat about Pig as well as Municipal affairs. we stayed to the end & then with a select party we had Tea with the Mayor & Mayoress in the Mayor's parlour. the Mayor's car took us to the guild hall & brought us home on both occasions so I think we finished well. I went to the fat stock show. it was the largest show I have seen in Peterborough. they talk about Agricultural depression but it did not



look much like it to look at the fine  
 fed Cattle. the classes were well filled in all  
 compartments. W. Jebbs won the Champion Cup  
 for best beast in the show given by the Mayor.  
 the Pig classes were well filled. there was 21  
 sows in the Sow Class. I showed two Pigs  
 and won two prizes in a class with  
 22 entries.

Hoping you are all well with  
 plenty of Trade. Julia joins with me in

Love to you all

Wishing you all a  
 Merry Christmas  
 From your Affectionate  
 Father

W. E. Palmer

## CIVIC AT-HOME at Peterborough.

### Citizens Call on Mayor and Mayoress

THURSDAY.

The Mayor and Mayoress of Peterborough (Coun. and Mrs. J. Mansfield), held an At Home at the Guildhall, Peterborough, to-day, when a large number of citizens called to offer their felicitations.

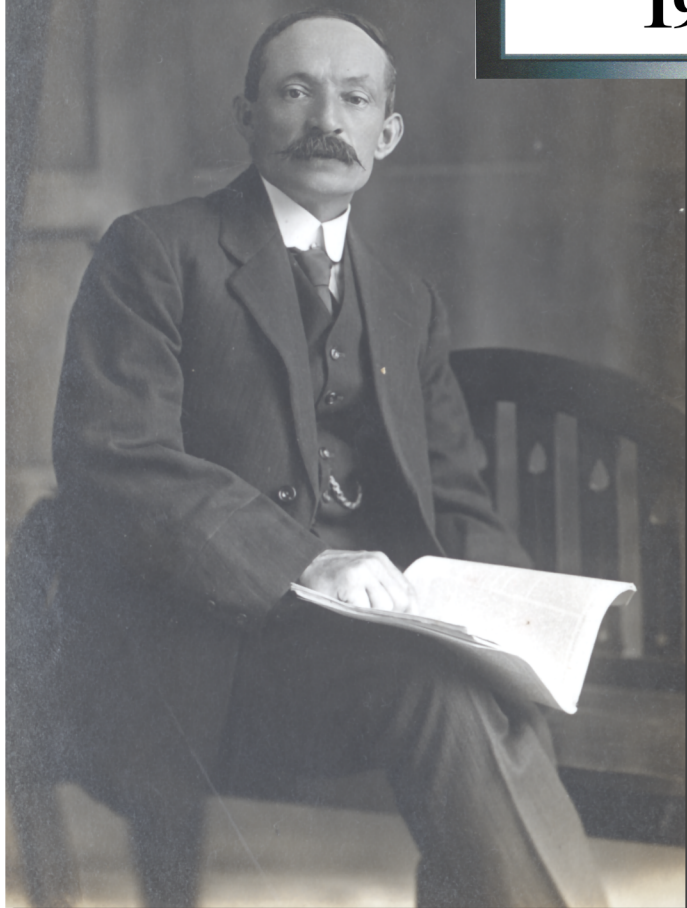
The callers were received in the Mayor's Parlour, which, with the Council Chamber, was gaily adorned with chrysanthemums and plants from the Park. The City Beadle (Mr. David Noble) announced the guests, and the Mayor and Mayoress were assisted in receiving them by the Deputy Mayor and Mayoress (Coun. and Mrs. J. Benstead), and the Mayoress' sister, Miss J. Palmer. Also present were: Mr. W. E. Palmer, the Mayoress' father, Mr. Leonard G. Mansfield, Streatham, the Mayor's brother, and Master Jack Mansfield and Miss Joan Mansfield. The Mayoress wore a delightful dress of beige georgette and lace. Afternoon tea was served by the Peterborough Co-operative Society, and music was dispensed by Mr. Black's Orchestra.

It's interesting that W.E. can write about the mayor's do, without any sense of irony.....

William Edward forbade his daughter Lydia from marrying John Mansfield, even though he was already a bigwig in the city. He refused to go to the wedding (His wife, Emma provided for it.) As daughter Alice had already left home and got married without his permission, he cut both of them from his will.



**Tom**  
"Gramps"



**Tom Palmer's  
family  
1914**

**Grace**  
"Nan"



**Will**



**Gladys**





Pearl



Cyril



Claude



Grace





## Tom Palmer and Grace Alice Palmer, nee, Pateman

Family occasion 1950, the Golden Wedding Anniversary of Tom & Grace Palmer held at Worcester. They were married at Bermondsey on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 1900.



**Photograph Standing:**

Cecilia Palmer, nee Baylis, wife of Cyril Palmer, Grace Palmer, Claude Palmer, Lillian(Queenie) Palmer, nee Sprague, wife of Claude Palmer, Cyril (Phil) Palmer, Gladys Townsend nee Palmer, Graham Townsend, Diana Palmer, Pearl Harrison, nee Palmer, Reginald Harrison,.

**Seated:**

William (Bill) Palmer, Christine Townsend, 'Gramps' Tom Palmer, 'Nan' Grace Palmer, nee Pateman, Sylvia Townsend, Cecil Townsend.



# Origins of the Palmer name

Added by: John Michael Palmer

While the Palmer name has been linked to the Crusader Knights, it is also a common name amongst, well erm, common folk. Step-great-great-grandfather Samuel Palmer was a carpenter, roped in to save the blushes of the Montagu family - i.e. Drago's wicked way with housemaids - and he seems to have had no genetic connection with the Selbourne-Palmers and Templars. For that reason, I prefer this simpler (but no less fascinating) etymology:

When April with his showers sweet with fruit  
The drought of March has pierced unto the root.  
Then do folk long to go on pilgrimage, And  
palmers to go seeking out strange strands, To  
distant shrines well known in sundry lands.

opening lines of Chaucer 's Canterbury Tales

The "palmers" were pilgrims who, for centuries, visited sacred Christian sites in the Holy Land, especially in Jerusalem. As evidence of their pilgrimage to Jerusalem, they always wore a small cross, made of palm leaves (or a palm-branch attached to their staff), so they became known as palmers. Many of them professed poverty and supported their wanderings and charities through alms. So the name became synonymous with pilgrims.

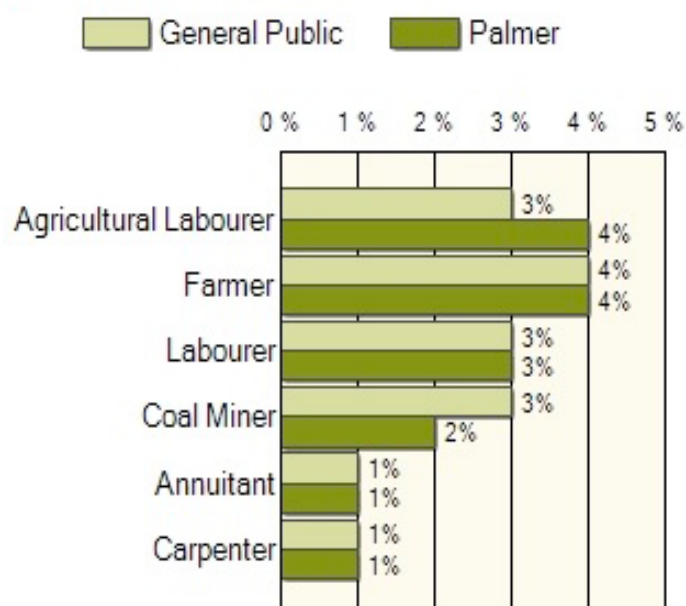
Their charities included hospitals for the poor and alms houses, such as one at Nottingham (which was made possible by a land grant around 1160, confirmed by King Henry II and given recognition by the Pope). Thus were the "palmers" involved in Christian social action almost a thousand years ago.

Because the pilgrims generally brought back a palm branch as proof that they had actually made the journey to the Holy Land - and such is human nature - there was a vigorous trade in false souvenirs, so the term also came to be applied to a cleric who sold indulgences. (a sort of Get-Out-Of-Jail-Free cards for the afterlife)

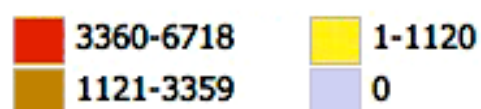
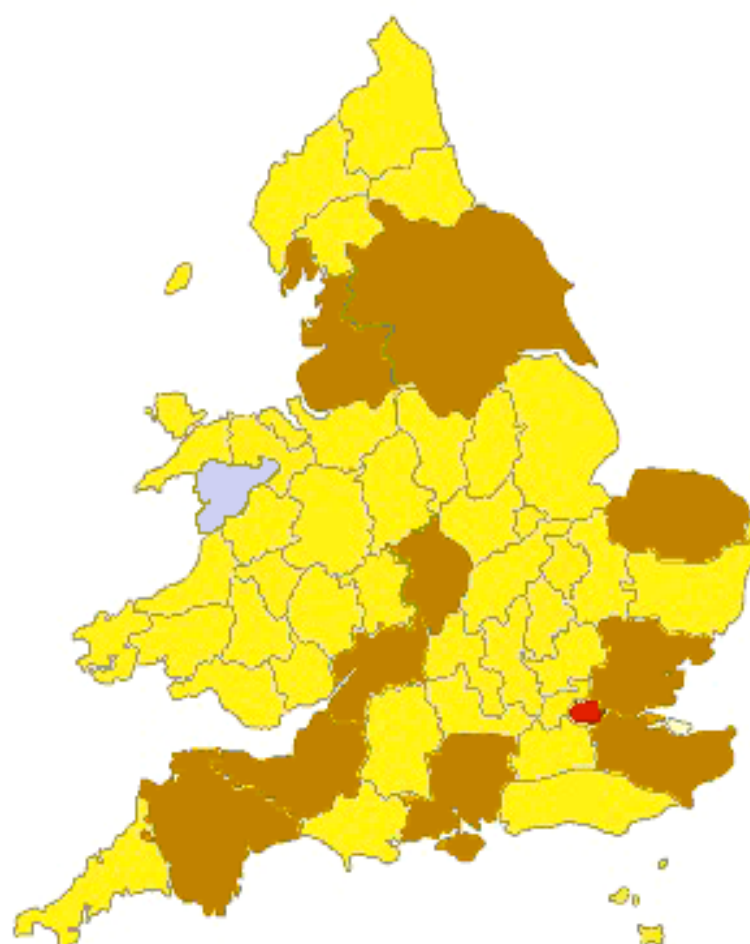
In The Middle Ages, surnames simply reflected your trade, your village or who your dad was. Later, as peasants were finally allowed to migrate from their hams and villages, they retained their appendages whether they were appropriate or not - and eventually these were inherited.



### Top occupations for the Palmer name in 1881



### Distribution of the Palmer Name - England & Wales in 1891





**WILLIAM DROGO MONTAGU**, Baron Montagu of Kimbolton, Viscount Mandeville, Earl of Manchester and 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Manchester. Born in 1823, Capt Grenadier Guards, Colonel of the Huntingdon Militia. M.P for Bewley 1847-52, M.P. for Huntingdon 1852-55. Having, prior to his marriage, an illegitimate son, **WILLIAM EDWARD PALMER**, born 1850, by **SARAH MARIA PALMER** nee Morris. The son was educated at Kimbolton School



1852, Countess Louise Fredericke Auguste, daughter of Count Von Alten of Hanover married 7<sup>th</sup> Duke, William Drogo. Duchess Louise, a noted beauty, was very ambitious, extracting from the Tory P.M. Lord Derby, "over a glass of champagne", a promise that he would make her Mistress of the Robes, the highest position at Court, establishing her as a leading figure in Victorian society. After the death of her husband, Louise married her lover of thirty years, the Duke of Devonshire, thereafter being called the 'Double Duchess'



The portrait by Louis Desanges, R.A., shows the 7<sup>th</sup> Duke William Drogo Montagu in 1866, resplendent in the uniform of Colonel of the Duke of Manchester's Light Horse.





## **William Drogo Montagu, 7th Duke of Manchester (1823-1890)**

Army officer and politician  
Lord of the Bedchamber to Prince Albert  
MP for Bewdley and later Huntingdonshire

The original Drogo Montagu was one of the knights that fought with William the Conqueror in 1066

Kimbolton Castle was the home of Catherine of Aragon





## Trustees of Kimbolton Estate. Notes 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, & 13<sup>th</sup> Dukes

1. Our Great, Great Grandfather William Drogo Montagu the 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Manchester was a responsible person by the standards of the time. His successors were less so.
2. His Son, George, the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke and Grandson, Kim, the 9<sup>th</sup> Duke both married American Heiresses and quickly spent their wife's fortunes (excepting the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke, see later) who only spent his own, and were notorious for their womanising.
3. They were succeeded by Alexander Drogo Montagu, the 10<sup>th</sup> Duke, an altogether more sensible fellow. Two factors weighed upon his mind, first the way his predecessors squandered their wealth and second the state of taxation raised by the Labour Government after World War 11. Taxation at the higher levels reached 98 % and huge death duties were eliminating the landed gentry (Government policy).

To overcome these problems he sold Kimbolton Castle and most of the Estate assets and placed them in the hands of the Kimbolton Estate Trustees with the instructions that the Capital be preserved and the Rents/Profits used (at the Trustees discretion) to provide an income for the future Dukes of Manchester. I understand that the Trustees retain a position in both the Castle (The State Rooms) and in the Public School.

At that time, the British Government had appropriated vast areas of Kikuyu tribal land in Kenya, which they hoped to develop to rival the meat trade of Argentina and also provide agricultural produce (Ground Nuts). This Kenyan land was to be sold off to United Kingdom buyers, at rock bottom prices, for the aforementioned purpose.

For the British Aristocracy this presented a unique opportunity, their Trustees held huge amounts of money and by moving to Kenya they avoided U.K. Income Tax and Death Duties. This, the 10<sup>th</sup> Duke proceeded to do. There was a resultant exodus of the British Aristocracy to Kenya where they were known as the 'Happy Valley Set'.

4. The 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup> Dukes succeeded and were faced with the problem that the Estates assets were held by the Trustees and the Annual Allowances they received from the Trustees, while generous by the standards of the day, were insufficient to fund the lifestyles they embarked upon.

This led each of them to involvement in criminal activities involving attempts to defraud Banks and Financial Institutions in Australia and the United States for which they were imprisoned and then deported.

5. The second set of Trustees, to benefit the Montagu family, was set up by the family of the wife of the 8<sup>th</sup> Duke, George Drogo Montagu, The 8<sup>th</sup> Duchess was Consuelo Yzaga del Valle the daughter of Don Antonio Yzaga del Valle, a Spanish Grandee, the owner of vast plantations in Cuba. Don Antonio set up the Trusteeship to the benefit of the offspring of his daughter. These Trustees can, at their discretion, distribute the Income from the Trust's Assets while maintaining the Capital Assets.

6. The current heir to the Dukedom, Alexander Montagu, Viscount Mandeville, is due to receive substantial sums from this Trusteeship. (see Newspaper Article herewith).



## **Fraudsters, Drug Addicts and Jailbirds**

You may think that having a noble ancestor is something to put on your CV, but the Dukes of Manchester have shamed the aristocracy for generations.

Alexander Charles David Drogo Montagu, the 13th Duke of Manchester, doesn't preside over an enviable stately home or thousands of rolling ancestral acres — the accomplishments of his forebears have seen to that.

Successive generations of Montagu men have accrued CVs that would not disgrace career criminals.

Now 48, 'Lord Alex' — as he sometimes likes to be called — has twice been imprisoned, deported from Canada and messily divorced from two wives, with the end of a third marriage seemingly imminent.

Remarkably, he has just achieved the near-impossible and further tarnished his sullied reputation: this week, at the High Court in London, the shameful story of the Dukes of Manchester was once again thrust into the spotlight when he was exposed as a bigamist.

Successive Dukes before Alexander have experienced similar public disgrace. Their only discernible talents have been engaging in futile litigation, profligate spending, and disposing of property and heirlooms at a fraction of their value. Their recreational interests included gambling, alcohol and sex — not to mention fraud.

Alex's father, Angus, the 12th Duke, stood in the dock at the Old Bailey in 1985 charged with attempting to defraud the NatWest Bank — side by side with his closest female friend, who ran an escort agency in London.

That case was in progress when Angus's brother died, and he inherited his title. 'Fraud trial man becomes a Duke!' ran one headline. Although on that occasion he was acquitted, he was described by the judge as 'absurdly stupid' — a description that could apply equally to his elder son, Alex.

So how is it that the most recent Duke has failed so spectacularly to shake off the legacy of his criminal ancestors?

A fascinating insight was provided this week by Wendy Buford, the hapless American who became Alex's second wife.

When she met the then dashing young aristocrat in California in 1992, she was completely unaware of his ignominious family history. With a father who worked in the construction industry and a waitress mother, her knowledge of British high society was understandably limited.

'All the things Alex talked about were just completely unreal to me,' she told me. 'When he said he was Lord Alex or whatever, there were puzzled looks on people's faces. Americans think of "Lord" as Jesus. They thought he was crazy.'

And, in many respects, he was. But Alex, who was good looking, charming and robustly built, solicited Wendy's sympathy by lamenting his difficult relationship with his parents, and the death of his mother.

The two began a relationship and, despite her misgivings about Alex's mood swings — ardent protestations of love were followed by bouts of intense anger — before long Wendy was pregnant.



They married in May 1993 and their first child, Alexander Jnr, was born six days later. Six years on, Wendy gave birth to their daughter, Ashley.

But Alex drew an impenetrable veil over his past.

He failed to tell Wendy about his first conviction, for fraud in Australia in 1985 (for which he served nine months in prison for obtaining money by deception); or, indeed, about his second one (in Brisbane in 1991, for hiring a rental car in one state, then selling it in another).

His selective memory also caused him to omit any mention of his deportation from Canada (for entering the country illegally), where he had formed an attachment to retired stripper Katie Lynch, while falsely claiming to be 52nd in line to the throne and a second cousin of the Princess of Wales.

Though Wendy might have dreamed of becoming a lady of the manor, there was no question of the couple living in England. Thanks to Alex's feckless relations, Kimbolton Castle, the Montagu's splendid, but war-damaged ancestral seat in Cambridgeshire, had been sold in 1951 for just £12,500 (a little over £1 million today).

Nor was there any other family bolthole: Alex's uncle Kim, the 11th Duke, had been involved in a protracted and ruinous legal battle with his stepmother and had sold the remaining properties on the family estate in the mid-Seventies.

So the couple stayed in California, living in rented properties.

Family trust funds — though greatly dented by the legal costs of successive Montagu indiscretions — provided Alex with an income. Very occasionally, this was supplemented by a pay cheque.

'I think in the time we were living together he might have had five or six jobs, never [for] longer than three months,' recalls Wendy.

These included a stint in security work — an ironic choice given his difficulties with the law.

'He got fired,' remembers Wendy, who has worked in the administration department of a legal firm since 1987.

The lack of an income didn't inhibit Alex's zest for spending, however. He was fond of luxuries, such as extravagant writing paper embossed with the Montagu coat of arms in gold, and televisions — one of which, noted a visitor, was 'the size of a small car'.

Unfortunately, Alex's willingness to pay rent was more limited.

'He would just stop making the payments,' explains Wendy, who hoped they had put their unstable days behind them when they got a mortgage and bought a property.

But then disaster struck. 'One day, I opened our front door and there was a notice of foreclosure and auction. He'd stopped making payments.'

By then, she knew what Alex was capable of. Not long after giving birth to Alexander, she woke at night to find her husband on the phone to Australia. He was talking to his mother — whom he had claimed was dead. Alex offered a glib self-defence: 'He explained it away by saying he and his mother had never had a good relationship. I was disgusted.'

Despite this, Wendy continued with the marriage for some years.

'I just always hoped a lightbulb would go off in his brain and he'd be normal. that if I showed him loyalty, that would be enough. It never was,' she said.

Meanwhile, Alex, although more or less teetotal — unprecedented for a Montagu — was taking prescription drugs. He took 'sleeping pills, which made



him like a zombie, and Vicodin [a potent painkiller]. He used to pop them like candy,' recalls Wendy.

By then, he had succeeded to the Dukedom. His father, Angus, who was finally jailed in the U.S. in 1996 following his involvement in another botched financial fraud, died in July 2002.

Though by now a Duchess, Wendy remained ignorant of much of the Montagu family's lurid history. And it was quite a story.

Alex's great-great-grandfather, George, the 8th Duke, and his son, Kim, the 9th Duke, matched one another in profligacy and fecklessness.

Both had married American heiresses, though that hadn't prevented George from being bankrupt at 36. He spent most of his married life with a music hall singer, leaving the staff at Kimbolton Castle unpaid for months at a time, and died at 39.

Kim — Alex's great-grandfather — fared no better. Serially unfaithful (on one occasion he was found in bed at Kimbolton with four women, among them the bisexual actress Tallulah Bankhead), he spent outrageous amounts of his father-in-law's fortune, went bankrupt, illegally pawned the family jewels (which were held in trust) and was sent to Wormwood Scrubs.

Other members of the family were equally wayward. Alex's great aunt, Lady Mary Montagu, was drug-addled and distressingly overweight.

Another great aunt, Lady Louise, was extremely attractive but very highly sexed, and seduced a roll call of men in a London flat.

Alex's great uncle, Lord Edward, was variously a Hollywood bit-part actor, hot-dog seller and (fleeting) a foreign legionnaire. Married five times, he was jailed in at least three countries — including a stint in the Scrubs, just like his father, though for forging cheques rather than pawning the family jewels — and was a suspect in one of America's most notorious unsolved murder cases, before dying in the Mexican jungle aged 48 in 1954.

Even if she did not know about this extraordinary catalogue of scandal, Wendy says she saw in Alex the same stubborn, self-destructive streak that ran through so many in the family. His jealousy and instability, she claims, had become intolerable. 'All through our marriage I was accused of having affairs. It was constant,' she says.

If his title was not enough to convince her to stay, neither was his inheritance from family jewels worth hundreds of thousands of pounds — a windfall which, she says, he appears to have blown in a series of mysterious online payments. When Alex filed for divorce, she willingly concurred. But this simply inspired Alex to vengeance.

In a court custody battle in 2007, she heard her life described as a kaleidoscope of men, drugs binges and partying.

'I had to have hair cut off my head [for drug testing] because he was accusing me of being on cocaine,' she says with a shudder. 'It was horrible. He tried to say I chased after him with a knife.'

It was nine months before she secured custody of their children — then aged 15 and nine — in August 2007.

Soon afterwards, Alex married another American, Laura Smith.

Then he revealed something which topped everything that had come before — he told Wendy he had already been married at the time of their wedding, making their children, Alexander Jnr and Ashley, illegitimate.



To her horror, Wendy learned her former husband was, for once, telling the truth — or part of it, at least.

In 1984, he had married an Australian model called Marion Stoner, who, like Wendy, had been seduced by his charm and rugged physique.

He had, Marion later reflected, seemed 'a real gentleman'. But this veneer was shattered just two months after their wedding, when Alex fired a speargun at her. Unsurprisingly, she left him.

Although they were separated, they were still not divorced by the time Alex married the unwitting Wendy in 1993.

After making his shattering declaration, Alex ceased all child support payments. 'As of March 1, 2011, he owed about £32,000 in child support and alimony,' says Wendy.

This week's case at the High Court finally brought relief. Although Alexander Jnr, now 18, and Ashley, 12, are technically illegitimate, their claim on support from their father is recognised in law, meaning the family trustees will pay them an allowance.

The ruling seems certain to infuriate the 13th Duke. Since giving up the children to Wendy, he has made a solitary £300 payment and has urged that his son be sent into the Armed Forces — 'so he won't need an allowance'.

It is a warning other women might care to heed, given this very brazen aristocrat — who still lives in America — appears to have other targets in his sights.

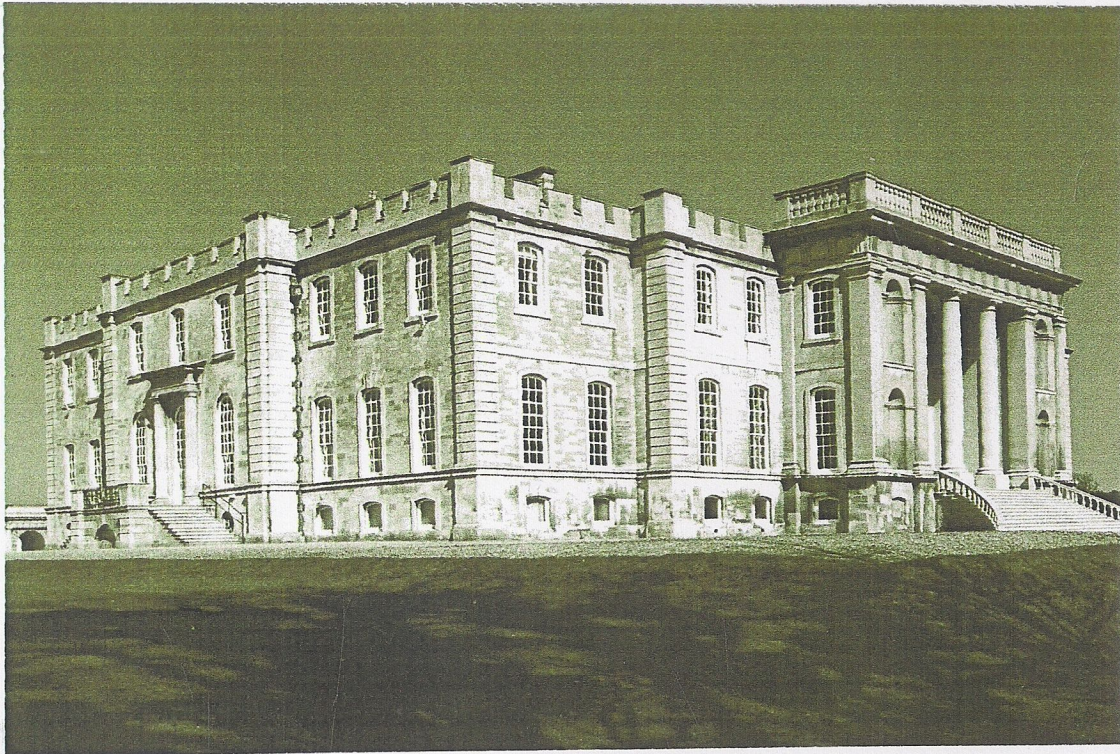
Recently, he posted his details on a dating website. Under the online name '1montymont', he announces that he is looking for 'a long-term relationship' — which may come as a disagreeable surprise to his current wife, Laura.

Perhaps Wendy could disabuse her of any misplaced notions she may have about her errant husband.



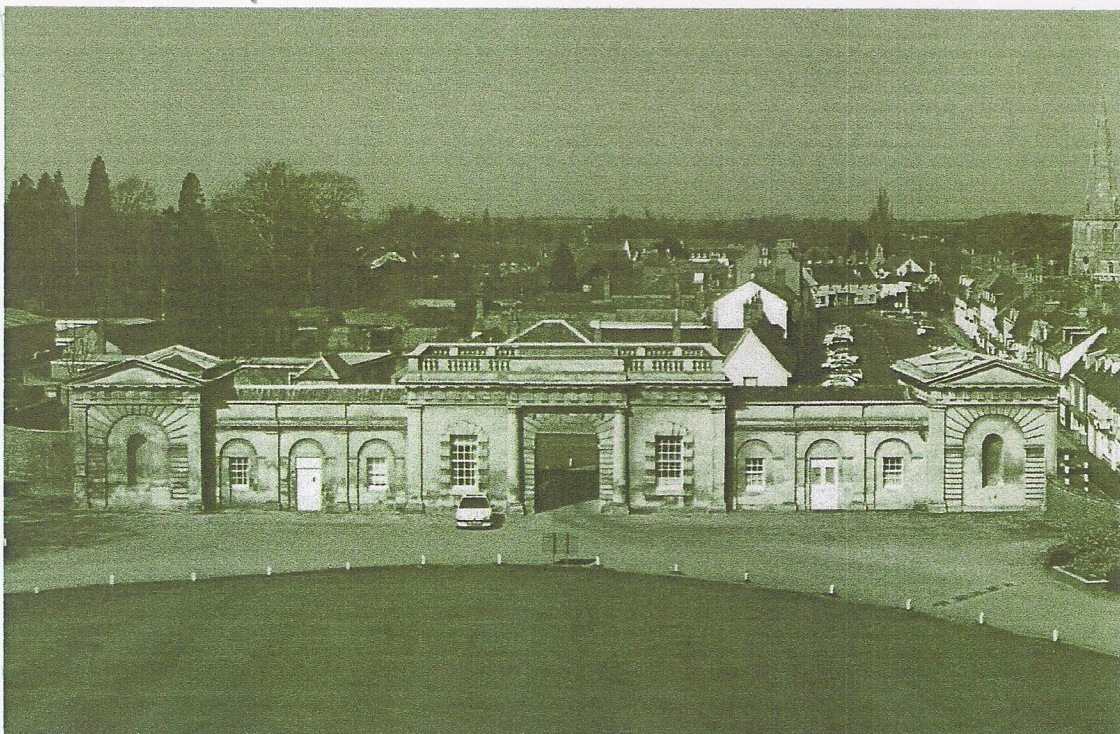
## KIMBOLTON CASTLE. SEAT of the DUKES OF MANCHESTER

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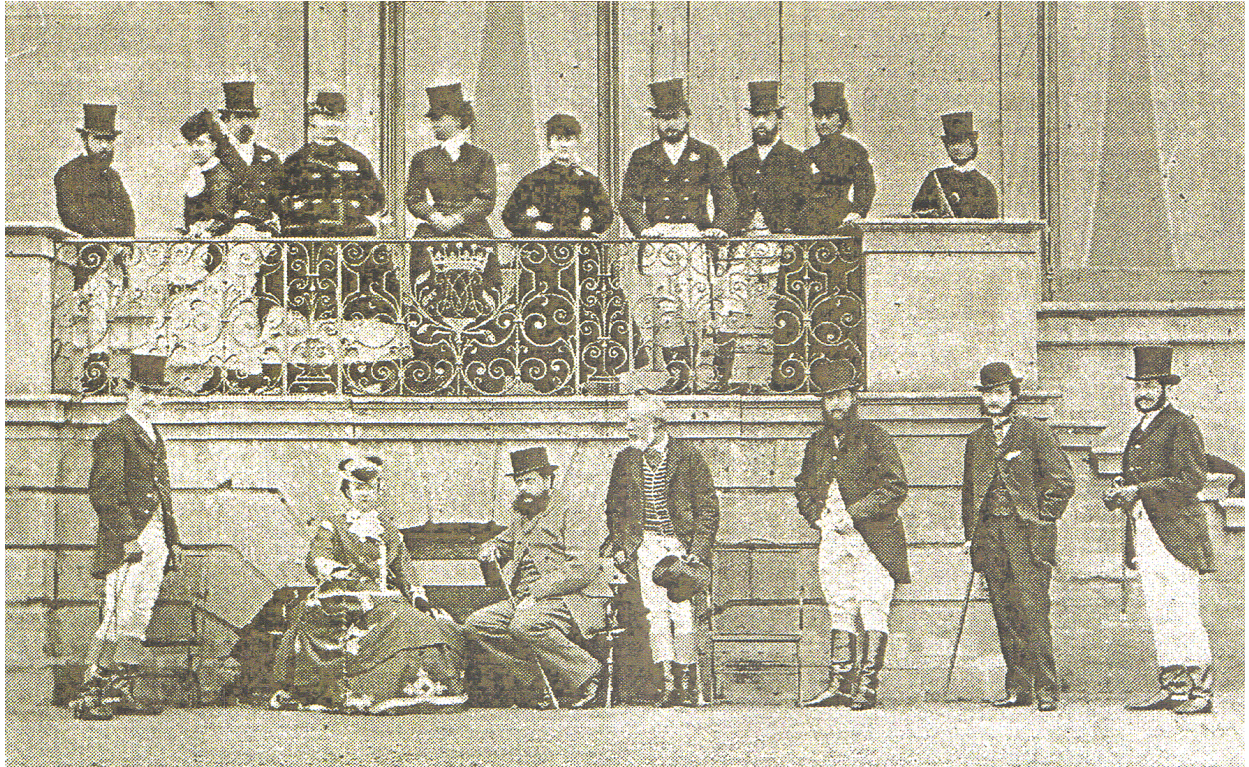


Kimbolton Castle is a late Stuart house (1690-1720) an adaption of a fortified manor house of 1200. The stone exterior, the Salon and South range are by Vanbrugh, the brick Courtyard and Great Hall by Henry Bell.

Kimbolton Castle was the seat of the Montagu family, Earls and Dukes of Manchester. In history, Kimbolton Castle is chiefly famous as the place where Queen Catherine of Aragon spent her last years. She died in the Queens Room where her Ghost is said to wander the old mediaeval corridors of her Manor House.







**Above :** A visit to the Castle by the Prince & Princess of Wales, circa 1864.

Seated: The Princess of Wales (Princess Alexander of Denmark), The Prince of Wales (later Edward VII,) To the right of the Prince is the 6th Duke and then our ancestor, William Drogo Montagu (Viscount Mandeville, later to be the 7th Duke of Montagu.)

**Below:** Descendants of the 7th Duke.

John Townsend, Tom Hicks, David Palmer, Grace Hicks, Clive Harrison, Margaret & Joyce Townsend, Margaret Faulkner, Sylvia Tainton, Joy Smallman, Judy Halford, Nicola Albrecht & Lewis Albrecht (infant)





## Epilogue

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And so, the last chapter, though for those generations to come, the first chapter. It is hoped that this stroll through family events will encourage you to add family photographs, enhance the written pages and to source the details of the families of the many spouses shown herein.

When I started out to edit and compile this family tree I envisaged a list of births, marriages and deaths, however as the details stacked up and research unveiled more information it became apparent that 'The Tree' had to have some leaves on it.

Hence we have gone from Kings to Commoners, Knights to Knaves, The drama of Sarah Palmer's life. Cecil Townsend in the Camel Corps, retracing the steps of the Palmer Crusaders in the Holy Land. 'Mr Cool', John Palmer rocking the second half of the Twentieth Century. The sporting achievements of the Harrisons. Alice Palmer's (Towersey) emigration to New Zealand. Henry Pateman, surviving in the water for twenty four hours before being picked up after his ship HMS Pembroke was torpedoed (mined) at the Dardenelles.

There must be many tales to tell, type them up, put them in a plastic wallet and place them in the file. You will note that I have kept our current generations skeletons firmly locked away in the cupboard, to stay there for future generations to uncover.

I am tempted to leave you with the family Motto 'Palma Virtuti', **The Palm is for Virtue**, however that may be beyond some of us and so I will opt for a 'Vulcan Phrase', **'Live long and Prosper'**.



David Thomas Michael Palmer

Christine Beatrice Mary Palmer

*David Palmer* Love & Regards to you all

*Christine Palmer*



*I have used a quote from your letter in my round Robin*

David & Christine Palmer  
Charlfont House  
158 Ombersley Road  
Worcester, WR3 7HA

Tel/Fax: 01905 756 746

Dear

*John*

*Many thanks for your Family Information, I am finding the information I have received to date most fascinating and it will be of great interest to future generations.*

*I cannot do better than to quote from the letter I received from John Palmer.*

It is a good point you make about the danger of future generations knowing less about their 20-21 century forefathers than their 19<sup>th</sup> century counterparts.

Computer technology makes it so much easier to glean the minutiae of our ancestors' lives, but also makes it harder for future generations to sift through ours.

Bundles of faded letters or albums of sepia photographs, secreted in drawers and lumber rooms, are no longer there for the future generations to discover.

Who writes one of those things now?. The vast majority of emails written today will be tossed out when the family computer reaches its obsolescence – and, although there are many more photographs taken today, courtesy of the digital camera and cell phone, I suspect they will go the way of the email, when a P.C. needs updating. Few are committed to photo paper.

*I was making good progress on the, prior to, Samuel Palmer / Sarah Morris, Ancestors, having collected a quantity of information and being engaged in editing the material into some sort of chronological order when Gordon Brown did his blitz on the Tax Havens speech at the G.20 conference.*

*Since then I have had to break off the research to rewrite my overseas accounts for the last 23 years. Forewarned is forearmed.*

*Christine and I are going on a vacation to Crete in mid May and when I return I will get stuck into the update of the current Family Tree. Please note, that in the cause of brevity, I will need to edit some of the mass of information received. With luck I will complete and send you copies of all the matters under consideration by the end of June.*

Thank you for your invaluable assistance. Your affectionate Cousin

*David*



## John Palmer

5 Munster Road - London - Sw6 4er - UK  
Phone: +44 20 7731-0481 • Mobile: +44 77 6666-4243

*17<sup>th</sup> September 2010*

Charlfont House, 158. Ombersley Road  
Worcester WR3 7HA

Dave:

Thanks for the letter. Glad that you're happy with my wee noodlings. I take your point about painting Drogo as a Sir Jasper villain, although it does seem that the nurturing of illegitimate offspring was quite common amongst the nobs of the 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

A few months ago I saw an article in the Daily Mail about the eccentricities of the aristocracy, in which the Montagu family were mentioned. In the thirties, the then current Duke, having spent most of his life in the Far East, was famous for hanging out in London's East End pubs and taking money from the locals. Being extremely corpulent and liking a drink or three, he would drunkenly bet fellow drinkers that he could do twenty press-ups – one-handed. After a mad betting rush, he would do just that. Fortunately, he was also a rather good wrestler and pugilist. His sister was also renowned – but for attending grand dinner parties and taking her kit off.

Have you got an e-mail address? If you have, send a mail to [john.palmer@me.com](mailto:john.palmer@me.com), so I can send you links to any stuff I put up for downloading.

Unfortunately, I will miss Maurice & Christine's do, as I will be on holiday. – a shame as I always enjoy having a natter with all the cousins.

Talk Soon