APPENDIX 2:

Uckfield & District Preservation Society, Hindsight, Volume 6, Summer 2000 – The Streatfeild Family and the Rocks Estate by Simon Wright pages 46-61

THE STREATFEILD FAMILY AND THE ROCKS ESTATE

The Streatfeilds are a Kentish family, descending from Robert Streatfeild of Chiddingstone, who married the daughter of Richard Rivers of Penshurst, and who died in 1559, not long after Elizabeth I came to the throne. For most of the succeeding generations the eldest son was christened Henry and duly inherited the Chiddingstone estates. Cadet branches later established themselves at Otford, Walter's Green and elsewhere.

In Sussex Richard Beard of Challoner's, Rottingdean, and Mary had only one child, a daughter, Elizabeth, who, in 1704, married Henry Streatfeild (b. 1679). She bore him seven children, of whom three died in infancy. The eldest of the three surviving sons, Henry, inherited Chiddingstone. The second, Richard Beard Streatfeild, was born in 1709 and in 1738 married Mary Egles, only child and heiress of John Egles of Copwood, Uckfield, and his wife Mary (née Goring) of Barcombe. When John died in 1750 the Copwood Estate came to R.B. Streatfeild. He and Mary had two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth, but they died (1740 and 1741) in infancy.

Meanwhile Henry had married Anne Sidney, daughter of Jocelin, Earl of Leicester. They had two sons, the elder (Henry) duly inheriting Chiddingstone, and the younger, Richard Thomas Streatfeild (b. 1759) becoming the fortunate inheritor of the Copwood Estate on the death of his uncle, R.B. Streatfeild in 1770, though he seems not to have taken over the full occupancy and administration of the estate until the death of his aunt, Mary, in 1789. Not long afterwards he married Jane Esther Ogle, daughter of Admiral Sir Chaloner Ogle, but she died childless in 1796 aged 26. Five years later Richard Thomas married Anne, daughter of Robert Shuttleworth of Barton Lodge, Lancashire. They had seven children, the eldest son being Richard Shuttleworth Streatfeild (born in 1805), the second Sidney Robert (b. 1808) and the youngest, Thomas Brand, who died in infancy. Richard Shuttleworth in 1833 married Charlotte Anne Brown (b. 1812), the daughter of James Brown of Rossington, Yorkshire, and his wife Charlotte. Thus through advantageous marriages what became the Sussex branch of the Streatfeild family had (by the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign) acquired considerable wealth and property.

It is time now to consider the Uckfield estates, their acquisition and management. About 1700 an estate on the west side of the little country town, known as The Rocks, belonged to Jonathan Brooker, married to Mary Mitchelbourne. They had two daughters, Ann, who remained a spinster, and Susannah, Mrs. Kidd. The Copwood Estate lay adjacent to The Rocks immediately to the west. By 1746 it would appear that R.B. Streatfeild and Mary were living on the Copwood Estate. His name and that of his father-in-law are recorded as overseers for Uckfield Parish Church and on John Egles' death in 1750, R.B. Streatfeild inherited the Copwood Estate. He himself died, as we have seen, in 1770, leaving the property on his wife's death to his nephew, Richard Thomas. In 1784 the latter was in a position to buy The Rocks, both the house and the estate, from Ann Brooker and Susannah Kidd (by then a childless widow). In 1789 Mary (née Egles) died and in her will, having first desired to be buried in her husband's family vault at Chiddingstone, confirmed that 'her lands, being Copwood alias Lusham and others in Uckfield, Isfield and Little Horsted' should pass to her nephew, and bequeathed £1,000 each to Henry, Sophia and Harriet, Richard's elder brother and sisters. Richard Thomas was therefore a wealthy landed gentleman when he married Jane Ogle. Exactly when Copwood House burnt down does not seem to be established. It may be that Richard and Jane, on their marriage, moved at once to The Rocks, a handsome Georgian house as a print of c. 1760 shows.

Almost as soon as Richard Thomas had inherited Copwood there followed a development which has so far not been satisfactorily explained or properly understood. Someone apparently applied to have the road leading from Isfield via Buckham Hill to Uckfield diverted. Originally it had passed close, on the northside, to both Copwood and The Rocks. The new route would take the road a good deal further north so that it skirted the south side of the lake, then known as Uckfield Pond. Richard Thomas owned all the land through which both routes ran and when the application was made at Lewes Quarter Sessions, at Easter 1790, the Justices granted a diversion order, satisfied that Richard Thomas

had given his consent to the diversion. If he himself had instigated the change, why was his consent needed? If someone else had made the application what was his motive? As in murder cases, one needs to pose the question, 'Who stood to gain?' Surely only Richard Thomas by having the public highway at a more convenient distance from his two houses. At all events the long straight stretch of roadway that was then constructed must have been welcomed by carters who had urged their teams of horses hauling heavy wagons up from the wharf at Shortbridge.



The straight road

A further development soon followed with the construction of two driveways through the Streatfeild estate. The first extended almost two miles from Shortbridge Lodge through Butchers Wood and Shermanreed Wood to Budletts Lodge on the Uckfield-Maresfield road. The second branched off it at a point west of Uckfield Pond, passed under the newly created road by a tunnel and curled eastwards to form an attractive approach to The Rocks mansion. Richard Thomas must presumably have employed a surveyor for all this work. It seems likely, too, that he created the big dam at the western end of the pond since otherwise heavy rain would have made the driveway unusable. Whether it was he or his son who deepened and extended the pond until it be came a true lake is not certain, but the evidence (particularly Gideon Mantell's observations) strongly suggests that credit should go to the father. He certainly began the very considerable planting of trees, both native and exotic. The western part, known as Rockwood (part of the Copwood estate) had always been woodland but the eastern part, known as the Warren, was wasteland, poorly drained. At all events Richard Thomas had a path constructed running all round the lake and, to me, it sounds as though he got his workmen tunnelling into the big outcrops of sandstone rock, the one on the south side having steps leading down into a grotto from which one looks across to the picturesque outcrop on the north side through which a straight tunnel was carved out. These features were very much in accordance with the Romantic movement of the period.

Gideon Mantell was a physician and surgeon by profession, and a geologist by inclination. He lived and practised in Lewes until he was almost 50 and his journeys took him all over Sussex. In 1818 he began writing his first important work, 'The Fossils of the South Downs'. In September of that year, often accompanied by his wife Mary Ann (née Woodhouse), he set out to determine the extent of the

unfossiliferous ferruginous sand formation and it was in this connection that he first visited The Rocks (October 18th, 1820) in company with his publisher and brother-in-law, Lupton Relfe:

'Rode with Mr. Relfe to 'The Rocks' near Uckfield; we had a delightful ride: the rocks are most picturesque and romantic; it is the most enchanting spot I ever visited. A beautiful shallop [dinghy] *was moored under a natural archway in the rock; the summits were covered by lichens, mosses and ferns, and surmounted by birches, firs, larches etc: before we quitted this lovely lake, the moon had risen, and the reflection in the water heightened if possible the beauties of the scene'.*

In a footnote to this entry in his journal, written a few days later, he remarks: 'The plants we gathered at The Rocks were very interesting; some of them are rare in Sussex – Osmunda Regalis, Antirrhinum cymb. etc.'



Lakewood

At that stage Mantell was still relatively unknown but his discovery of an iguanadon fossil in Tilgate Forest in 1824 greatly enhanced his reputation. On September 12th, 1825, his journal records:

'Dr. and Mrs. Birkbeck and several of their friends called on us and accompanied us to The Rocks at Uckfield, from thence to Fletching and returned to Castle Place by Chailey. We took tea at the Sheffield Arms at Fletching (visited Gibbon's tomb), coffee at my house, and the Dr. and friends left us at ten for Brighton' [Two years later Dr. Birkbeck became the founder of University College, London].

A brief entry for June 5th, 1826, records, *'A grand fete at The Rocks at Uckfield – spent two hours in the evening there'.*

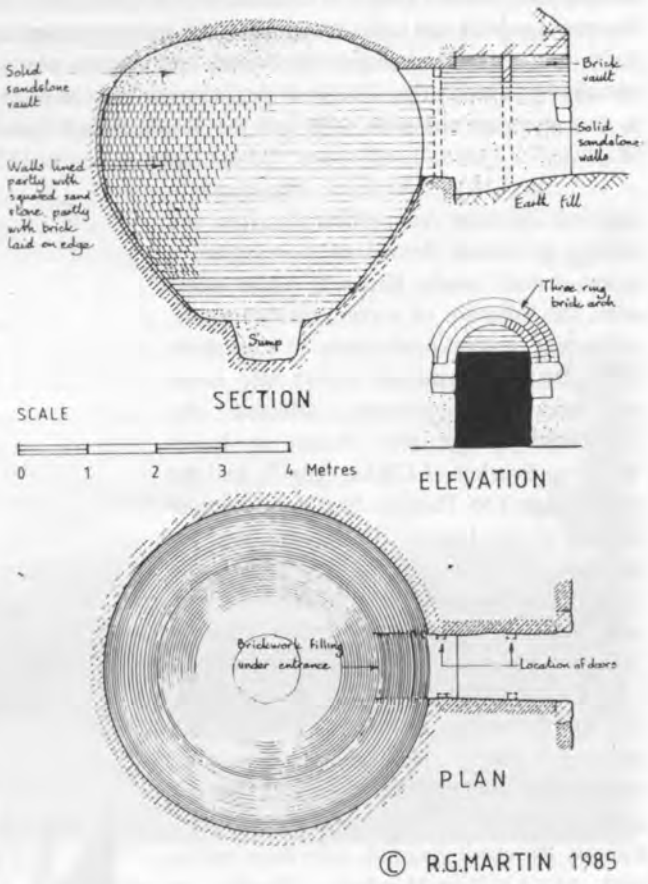
A few years later Dr. Mantell decided that his son, Walter, should board at the little Academy in Church Street, Uckfield, run by the Reverend John Underwood. The entry for August 10th, 1831 reads:

'Drove to Uckfield via Isfield with Mrs. Mantell and Walter to leave the latter at the School of Mr. Underwood. After a delightful drive we called on Mr. W., and then strolled to the rocks; we approached them by the public footway, and as there was no notice to interdict our approach we considered ourselves not intruding; when we reached the borders of the lake a dandy-looking young man who was fishing in a boat on the other side of the water hailed us in an insolent tone and ordered us to quit the premises; I looked on the selfish puppy with the contempt he deserved and would not deign to quarrel with him, but after he had exhausted his fury in hallooing and rowing towards us, we

returned the way we came. The scene was most enchanting; the lake was like a mirror reflecting the rocks and trees which overhung it, not a ripple, not a breath of air to disturb the silent beauty of its bosom. How provoking to be deprived of the enjoyment of such a scene by a selfish upstart boy!"

There was a practical side to these aesthetic effects, too, the lake being the main provider of the supplies of ice needed for the Ice House. Ron Martin, whose drawing it is, cannot date the structure with any accuracy but feels that it is of an early design and therefore more likely to have been intended for use in the 18th century house than its 19th century replacement.

Clearly there was no shortage of money, Richard Thomas acquiring a further number of properties on the west side of Uckfield in the early years of the 19th century. He and Anne, however, were to enjoy only twelve years of marriage, so that Richard Shuttleworth was only eight when his father died (1813) and the youngest child, Gertrude Harriet, was actually born in 1814. Their mother, however, remarried in 1815, her second husband being Richard Prime, a lawyer, of Walberton near Arundel. There are so many accounts of step-fathers manoeuvring young heirs out of their inheritance, or of influencing the mother against her own children that it is refreshing to read of the efforts Richard Prime made on his stepson's behalf.



The Ice house at The Rocks

Whether the Primes divided their time between Walberton and The Rocks we can't be sure but it does appear that Anne herself was responsible for all the Uckfield estate accounts for thirteen years i.e. until Richard Shuttleworth attained his majority. During that time she bore Mr. Prime three children.

Little or nothing seems to be known of Richard's boyhood. At 26 (in 1831) he can hardly have been the 'upstart boy' mentioned by Dr. Mantell. As a young man he is described as being 'gay and handsome, but a little inconsequent as regards money affairs'. He certainly spent a great deal – as did many young heirs – during the course of his Grand Tour, but from the time he attained his majority he clearly began to take his responsibilities seriously. The occasion itself was marked by a Fête Champetre to which not only relations and friends but many of the local people were invited.

He invited the well-known Lewes surveyor, William Figg, to survey and map his entire estate. This task Figg had completed by 1829, the result to be seen at ESRO (ADA 229) in seventeen beautifully delineated maps. These estate plans were no mere ornaments but an essential tool in the running of a large estate. Nine of them depict the Streatfeild holdings in the parishes of Uckfield itself, Maresfield, Isfield and Little Horsted, almost all the property lying to the west of the main road from Lewes through Uckfield to East Grinstead. The scale is given in chains (varying from map to map),

each plot of land is numbered and the numbers correspond to the reference on each map which describes its use and gives its size in acres, rods and perches. Reference no.1 on Map 1 states 'Mansion, Gardens, Yards etc. 1 acre 0 rods 17 perches, and the immediate surroundings, described as 'The Lawn', amount to 43 acres. Map 2 is devoted to Downland Farm, No.5 to part of the Copwood estate including Shortbridge Mill and Lake Wood and No.6 to the remainder of Copwood and Buckham Farm. Not only is the use of the land shown but, where appropriate, previous owners are indicated together with later transfers of ownership. This is of particular interest in Map 7 where Bridge Farm is shown sliced neatly in two by a curved pink strip and the words added 'Sold to the London Brighton and South Coast [Railway]'. That sale, of course, did not take place until 1858.

In 1833 Richard Shuttleworth married Charlotte Ann, eldest daughter and heiress of James Brown of Rossington, a union which made Richard, some years later, the inheritor of a considerable estate, containing several coal mines, in Yorkshire. Charlotte's two younger sisters also made marriages that closely affected the Streatfeild family, one (Anne) to James Williams Scarlett of Gigha, Argyll, and the other (Mary) to Thomas Shiffner (younger brother of Sir Henry, 2nd Baronet, and Sir George, 3rd Bt.). In 1836 Richard and Charlotte's first child, also Charlotte Anne, was born. She was later to marry Charles William O'Hara of Annaghmore and to bear him fourteen children. The second child, Marian Gertrude, arrived in 1840. She married John Blakiston-Houston of Orangefield in Ulster and one of their ten children, Dora, married her distant cousin, Francis Rowland Scarlett, who rose to the rank of Air-Vice-Marshal. Finally, in 1844, there was born the longed-for son and heir, Richard James.

Even before he married it seems that Richard Shuttleworth, not content with the modest Georgian mansion on his estate was thinking of replacing it with something in a grander style.



Anne Shuttleworth Streatfeild (1777 – 1848)

An architect, Sydney Smirke, brother of the more famous Robert Smirke, was engaged to draw up plans. The major difficulty was that the existing house stood on the ideal site for the new mansion. How would the household survive for the minimum of two years in which the old house would be demolished and the new one built?

Fortunately, soon after the birth of the eldest child a solution presented itself: to purchase a nearby property from Richard Hart, known as Downland House, and to live there until the new home was ready for occupation. Richard wrote to tell his mother (now Anne Prime) and received the following reply (November 7th, 1836):

"I will tell you in a few words what Prime, of whose sense and acuteness I know you have a high opinion, thinks of the matter, and then I must urge you to take steps at once to reap the full benefit

of your luck. When I told him on his return home that you had (as I believed) bought the estate for £800 more than its value, he said never mind, it is worth that sacrifice, but when I went on to say I had proposed your moving instantly into Hart's house and leaving (?) the old house standing (you know his way of slapping (?) his knee when he is greatly delighted) he exclaimed, "What a fortunate fellow he is, the purchase will then become absolutely an immense bargain; pray entreat him not to lose a week in moving. He will at once cut down his establishment so I will answer for it he will save £60 a month, and this economy will not have the air of being done from poverty, for if Rothschild himself was the owner of The Rocks he would do no other than inhabit a small house of his own on the spot where he is building".



The Rocks

We must presume that the Streatfeild household did move, only quarter of a mile, to the newly acquired property by the end of 1836 and that the whole of the following year and much of the one after were taken up in the construction of the new mansion. Sydney Smirke, the architect, the youngest of four gifted brothers, never achieved the fame he merited. Everyone knows that it was Robert who planned the British Museum, few remember that it was Sydney who designed the great circular domed Reading Room (1857). And of the thousands who visit the Imperial War Museum every year, how many know it was built as the Royal Bethlehem Hospital for the insane (Bedlam) or that its giant Ionic Portico and Dome were also the work of Sydney Smirke? In addition he reconstructed the Pantheon in Oxford Street (1834), restored the Temple Church, completely rebuilt the Carlton Club (where polished granite columns were first introduced to England) and constructed the fine range of exhibition galleries for Burlington House. Among country houses his best known were probably Thornham Hall and Oakley Park in Suffolk and one of the two houses that replaced the original Gunnersbury Park at Brentford. Of the latter Pevsner comments that 'Smirke's detail is still classical'. Perhaps his weakness was that he adapted too easily to the style his client required. Of The Rocks Pevsner brusqely remarks, 'Red brick, Tudor, with shaped gables. Of no great merit'.

One must form one's own opinion of the merits of Sydney Smirke's designs. It is a substantial building, some 70 feet in length and 55 feet in depth. The ground floor is largely occupied by three reception rooms, with the drawing room (30'x25') the most impressive, together with the study, three

smaller rooms and two staircases, while on the first ('Chamber') floor there are four principal bedrooms. So it is not gigantic but it is certainly imposing. It was completed in 1838 and for almost a hundred years it was the home of the Streatfeilds. It is interesting to compare The Rocks with Walberton House, the home of Richard and Anne Prime, designed by Sydney's elder brother, Sir Robert, of which Pevsner approvingly writes, 'White stucco, plain south front of seven bays with a svelte Doric loggia along the whole length'. Like his father, Richard Shuttleworth was extremely interested in gardens and landscaping. His mother, in 1840, urged him to consult William Sawrey Gilpin, one of the best known landscape gardeners of the day, though then approaching 80. Richard Shuttleworth possessed a copy of 'Practical Hints upon Landscape Gardening', together with 'Some Remarks upon Domestic Architecture as connected with Scenery' (Edinburgh 1835) by W.S. Gilpin, but he did not write any comments of his own on its pages, so we are uncertain to what extent he followed Gilpin's advice. Nevertheless he created and laid out a water garden in Lake Wood and he continued his father's policy of planting a mixture of native and imported trees. The finest of them all to survive, however, a Wellingtonia, could not have arrived before 1853. It stands today in the grounds of Rocks Park Primary School and is claimed as one of the biggest trees in Britain (The Sussex Tree Book: Owen Johnson 1998).

Letters from his step-father to Richard during this period have survived. In one (October 10th, 1839), written while Mr. Prime was staying at the New Steine Hotel in Brighton, he refers to his wife's convalescence:

'My dear Streatfeild

Our Patient goes on well, indeed I might say very well. She is just up, sitting in an easy chair in the opposite Bedroom, but is tired with the exertion of dressing and feels still bilious. However I trust we are on a good high road to Recovery and have only to be quiet, and not try galloping'.

After congratulating himself on the decision to change doctors he goes on:

'But now comes a part of my News which is untoward. Sidney [Richard's younger brother by three years] *and wife unluckily arrived yesterday. He had the precaution to stop at the Gloster Hotel and send me a note concealing his name etc. and Emily* [his younger daughter] *and I have been to them. But as Mama certainly should not be flurried by seeing them till her strength is much more re-established and as they will be eager to see her as soon as maybe, I am greatly afraid of the Interview taking place too soon for her nerves and force. And I must say I think there is a fatality at present attending all Sidney's decisions. If he would only have supplied us with his changes of address from time to time we could have written daily – and the Railroads convey letters to Lancashire in 36 hours only. He has certainly consented not to think of seeing her this week but I should have much preferred his not seeing her till she is really and fully herself again. Even if he had come alone it would not have mattered for he might have gone back again – but with this Burthen* [did he mean Sidney's wife?] *on his shoulders this is expensive.*

'His wife is as plain and ordinary looking a girl as I ever beheld – she is not ugly but she has a total absence of good looks – and to a Woman I should say more than to a Man for when you take her to pieces there is not one single feature (except teeth) that can be pronounced right – her nose is a little queer turned-up bit of stuff – her complexion red tho' her neck fair – and the general expression so very commonplace... Old Cookson is a lucky fellow to get such a Daughter married at 18 – I cannot yet comprehend with what conjuror's secret he has learned to bring it about. And that too with only £10,000 dower. From 20 to 30 I should not consider one penny too much to induce a Man to take her.

¼ to 1 Todd has just been and is very well satisfied with his patient. Says too that her pain since dressing is only a little flatulence and that he will not give her any medicine at present – tho' perhaps he may tonight.

Yours very sincerely. R.P.'

Sidney, one understands, was a worry to all the family and seems to have been constantly in debt. 'Luckily for him he married a very rich wife'.

In a letter next year (September 13th 1840) Richard Prime talks chiefly about horses:

"About Boniface I hope you will allow him a pretty long Repose after the Leman's Essence – for in spite of the doctrine often maintained that you may work a horse while applying it I am convinced that it is better to rest him, not only while applying it, but also for 2 or 3 weeks after the swelling is quite gone down.

We ride and drive daily in the most enviable manner. Mama drives her new Pony and Phaeton while I ride Arthur's chestnut with Gertrude on Isabelle and Emily on Castanette. Arthur's chestnut still whistles, but is greatly improved in flesh, and is a charming Hack, even if he does not make a good hunter.

Mostly truly yours R.P."

A year later the letter (September 13th, 1841), again written from the New Steine Hotel, begins with news of Brutus' treatment by Mr. Sewell, the vet, but then goes on to farming news:

"Pray when you write to Walberton tell us particularly of your harvest. That about Brighton (South side of Hills) is completely finished, Barley, Oats and every thing included. Oats at Walberton the same – that is to say Drewitt finished on Saturday, Collins and Jn. Halsted today, Will Halsted will tomorrow if fine – and Coote has only a little Barley which will want 2 or 3 days more, on account of the mass of clover.

This is winding up gloriously after so nervous and even alarming an appearance as harvest matters had when we came to Brighton a fortnight and 2 days past – when Collins had carried only 1 field and Jr. Halsted had not even reaped half his wheat. But in haste adieu.

Yours very affectly. R.P."

A letter written from Walberton (February 11th, 1842) is entirely taken up with medical advice and shows once more Richard Prime's concern for his stepson:

"My dear Streatfeild

I am very anxious to prevail upon you to get into your chariot and post over to Brighton to take Lawrence's opinion about your knee. Not that I doubt Corey's skill but it is a rule with me whenever a medical man has had a case long under him and does not make a decided impression upon it, to take a fresh opinion. The new person has the advantage of knowing what treatment has failed and therefore endeavours to strike out something different. Whereas the man who had the Case long before him, probably preserves in nearly the same system which he has tried all along, and which the length of time proves not to be very successful.

An injury to the knee is sometimes a very serious affair and to you and me, who like activity and outdoor employment, weeks on the sofa are real miseries, not to mention that they are so adverse to our habits and natures that they disturb the general health.

In a word the value of one's leg and one's outdoors employment is too great for any trouble or expense to weigh against preserving the former as sound and good as possible and enjoying the latter as quickly – and if you stay 4 or 5 days or a week at some Brighton Hotel, while he [Dr. Lawrence] *tries the effect of his measures it is 10 or 20 pounds well spent.*

This is advice given by one who is quite aware that you, like himself, must look twice before you spend any money, since Jonathan [?] *has behaved so dishonestly. But life and limb must be preserved before money. Now, having given some good and wholesome advice, I will add, do not hastily reject it, but pause upon it over your pillow.*

Mostly sincerely yours, R. Prime

Richard Prime wrote (July 26th, 1842) from Wiesbaden, addressing the letter to 'Herr von Streatfeild, Theater Thor No.25, Aachen", where it sounds as though Charlotte had been convalescing:

"We are anxious to hear that Charlotte has taken up her bed and walked. And, if so, you will soon be joining us here, a most charming, healthy and strengthening place. Remember to prefer the Cologne Company to the Dusseldorf Company as to Rhine Steamers. And the 3 Swiss Hotel to the Giant at Coblenz. At this place the 4 Seasons is near us, and good enough, tho' the Rose is perhaps better – now in haste adieu.

Yours most sincerely, R.P."

A letter a few days later is chiefly taken up with possible arrangements for meeting Arthur, *"but as all this is doubtful, just give an eye on Saturday and Sunday to all Englishmen with mustachios"*. Almost at the end of the letter he writes:

"Charles's debts amount to £600 and really it ruins me now that American stocks and even Yorkshire...(?).. Dist. Both fail me. What a lucky fellow you are to have no son. Bless your stars and acknowledge your good fortune. I wish you would take Wiesbaden on your road forwards – it cannot possibly be much out of it. The Water is effecting me prodigious good if I mistake not. Within the last few days I think I perceive great symptoms of it. Anne and G send their very best love to both of you.

Yours very affectionately, R. Prime."

Family news, health bulletins, farming, horses, the countryside, these were the topics of most middle class letters from the Middle Ages up to the First World War. These are unusual, perhaps, only in the affectionate tone used by a step-father to his stepson. Then in 1848 Anne Prime died aged 68 in London, and was buried at Kensal Green Cemetery. She had cared for two husbands, brought up ten children, had been a capable administrator of her first husband's estate and from the evidence we have (books of cooking recipes and remedies for most infant and animal ailments in her own hand) a first-rate manager of household affairs. In addition she was a talented artist with a gift for still lifes and for miniatures of relations and friends. When it is added that she 'adored entertaining neighbours and friends' we have a picture of a woman who was cheerful, efficient and kind.

The following year (1849-50) Richard Shuttleworth served as High Sheriff of Sussex. At the age of 45 he might have looked forward to further honours but on February 1st, 1851, he suffered a fatal accident. In the words of the Sussex Express: 'Mr. Streatfeild had spent the day shooting on his estates with Lord Sheffield, Sir Thomas Wilson Bt. [of Searles] and Sir Henry Shiffner [Thomas's eldest brother]. After shooting, while Mr. Streatfeild was emptying his pocket of game, his gun fell over his shoulder backwards to the ground, upon reaching which it went off and the contents passed completely through the foot from the heel'.

A subsequent report (February 5th) informed readers that when an amputation had been suggested he had said 'No' and had died as a result of tetanus and lockjaw. Not only had he left a widow and three children (the eldest 14) but had failed to make provision for his six-year old son, Richard James. Whether there was a real danger, at that stage, of Sidney Streatfeild inheriting The Rocks estate it is hard to say; certainly a prolonged legal battle could have ruined the family. But for the second time Richard Prime, now a step-grandfather, combined family affection with legal acumen. Not only did Richard James inherit the considerable estates but he had Richard Prime to oversee their administration. The widow, Charlotte, also had the support of her mother, Charlotte Brown, who came to make her home at The Rocks where she died in 1858. We learn this from the census (April 1851) which, after listing Mrs. Streatfeild and her three children and Mrs. Brown goes on to enumerate the full household beginning with the housekeeper, Sarah Rose, a 36 year old widow, the butler, Thomas Burton (48), a governess, Jenny Curchod (27), two footmen, James Thomas and Henry Artis (?), two ladies' maids, Charlotte Cowling and Frances Beynow, an upper housemaid, Sarah Lowe, and an under housemaid, Miss Allchin, a nursemaid, Anne Gillham, a laundry maid, Lucy Pitt, dairy maid, Elizabeth Butcher, a kitchen maid, Elizabeth Pulton, and an undergroom, George Brooker, all except the butler and the two widows unmarried. The absence of a cook is not easily explained, even if only temporary; otherwise it is much the household to be expected for a family of that standing.

A year earlier, as recorded on a parchment contained in a bottle buried under the foundation stone, 'Uckfield Parochial Schools. This stone was laid by Mrs. Richard Shuttleworth Streatfeild, April 23rd, 1850'. In the splendidly solemn report which appeared in the Sussex Express:

'On Tuesday last the interesting ceremony of laying the first stone took place. It was preceded by Divine Service at the parish church... the lord Bishop of the Diocese having arrived from London for the purpose of presiding at the solemnity. A sermon appropriate to the occasion was preached by the incumbent of the parish [a distant cousin, the Rev. John Streatfeild, a widower of 54 who lived at Coombe Bank with his two daughters, Catherine and Ellen, and an unmarried sister, Jane] and at the

close of the service the children of the National School [followed by] the congregation proceeded to the ground. The incumbent having first read the 127th Psalm..., the lady of R.S. Streatfeild, Esq., of The Rocks, who has most liberally contributed £200 to the building fund, performed the customary masonic duties under the direction of Mr. R. Cheale, jun., the architect, with feminine grace and considerable dexterity'.



Uckfield Parochial School

Subsequently the Bishop and 'those [clergy] who had come from the surrounding parishes for the express purpose of being present at the ceremony' made their way to The Rocks where Mr. Streatfeild had ('with genuine English hospitality') 'provided a handsome collation'.

When the railway from Lewes to Uckfield was planned (1857) Mrs. Streatfeild received £2,444 10/- as compensation for the loss of land belonging to Bridge Farm.

The next census (1861) reveals a very different situation at The Rocks. Richard James, deprived of his father at the age of six, lost both his mother and grandmother seven years later. His grandmother died at The Rocks, on February 27th, 1858, and her daughter, at Nice, on April 10th, aged 45. Young Richard, still only 14, was in no position to administer estates in Sussex and Yorkshire amounting to over 5000 acres, the latter including valuable coal-mines, especially in view of the death of Richard Prime in 1866. It was now that the Shiffner family came to the rescue with Thomas Shiffner, aged 64 (in 1861) a J.P. and Deputy Lieutenant of Sussex, and his wife Mary, aged 45, moving into The Rocks with their two daughters, Emily (18) and Anne (15). Richard himself was then the only Streatfeild actually living in the house. Almost the entire domestic staff had changed, too, with only Thomas Burton staying on, or being kept on, as butler. This is scarcely surprising, and certainly not sinister, when we remember that the staff of most great country houses was made up of young unmarried men and women. When the girls got married their chief concern in life was to look after their husbands and children, the husbands themselves (unless offered a senior post on the estate) looking for a better-paid opening in the outside world. One example of the former is provided by William Watson (Estate Carpenter). In 1851 we find him and his wife, daughter and son living at Rocks Warren Cottage. Ten years later the only changes are that the elder daughter (27) has returned home to work as a dressmaker while the younger, Fanny (22) is a housemaid living at The Rocks. William died in 1870,

aged 69, having been 'Head Carpenter on The Rocks Estate for 26 years' (Gravestone inscription). His wife lived another 15 years, while his son, also William, succeeded as Estate Carpenter.

What is not clear is the form Richard James's education took. In 1851 at the time of his father's death there had been a young governess, Jenny Curchod. In the ordinary course of events Richard would have gone as a boarder to prep school at 8 or 9 and to public school four or five years later. The 1861 census shows a 41 year governess, Anna Maria Schmuck, but she may well have come with the Shiffners to teach Emily and Anne. If the census was taken during the Easter holidays Richard could well have been at home anyway. We know very little about the first twenty years of his life, other than the family tragedies already recorded. Somewhere about 1863 he was commissioned into the 5th Dragoon Guards but since it was rare for a young officer to receive permission to get married it seems unlikely that he remained long in the army.

In 1865 (October 24th) Richard married 21 year old Mary Williams Scarlett, the daughter of James Williams Scarlett and his wife, Anne Rhodes Brown, the sister of Richard's mother, Charlotte. Their daughter, and as it proved only child, Annette, was born the following year. Thereafter Richard's concerns and activities were centred on his Uckfield and Yorkshire estates and on his public commitments in Sussex. His military connection, however, he maintained when he took a commission in the Yorkshire Dragoon Yeomanry in the rank of major.

His involvement in Uckfield and Sussex affairs began soon after his marriage. In 1866 he became a member of the Board of Guardians and a J.P. For 60 years (1870-1930) he was an active Governor of Uckfield Grammar School and even at the age of 88 he put up 'a strenuous fight' against its closure. From 1871 (when the Local Government Act was passed) onwards he was increasingly involved in local administration, especially after 1888 when elected county councils took over the administrative duties previously handled by J.P.s.



Richard J Streatfeild

When Uckfield Urban District Council was set up in 1895, Richard was its obvious chairman and a photograph of the Council taken two years later shows R.J. Streatfeild seated in the centre, surrounded by most of the Uckfield notables of the day including S.S. Avis, Benjamin Ware, Robert Thornton, Edwin Kenward, William Dendy and Charles Dawson. Richard remained chairman till 1920.

The census of 1871 once more reveals an almost complete change from that of 1861, Richard himself being the only common factor. He and Mary and their daughter, Annette, head the list. Everyone else was unmarried and all except the housekeeper were under 30. The latter, Charlotte Cowling (63), came from Leeds, the cook, Annie Diarmaid (24) from Wick and Jane Marshall, the Lady's Maid (24) from Nottinghamshire, and only Mercy Muddle (14), Nursery maid, of the servants was Uckfield born. At the various estate cottages, either on the Rocks Estate itself or at Copwood lived

families of employees. William Boniface (Coachman) and Mary, George Fleet (Head Gardener) and Martha, Charles Muddle (Milkman) and Mercy, together with Amos Durrant and Caroline, Thomas Miles and Sarah, both the latter men being farm workers.

A keen sportsman, Richard held the Mastership of the Southdown Hunt for ten years from 1871. He was President of the Uckfield Cricket Club for many years (their ground was in Rocks Park) and of the Horticultural Society, and seeing the need for recreational space for the townsfolk he gave (technically on a 999 year lease) the Victoria Pleasure Ground to the town to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Work needed to be done to make the five-acre field ready for cricket, football, stoolball and other sports and, finally, June 28th, 1899, was the day chosen for the opening. To quote from a report compiled from the local press: 'The proceedings commenced with the formation of a procession at the Maidens Head Hotel at 2.30. The Town Band and the Chailey Industrial School contributed the music and the spectacular element was supplied by the Fire Brigade and the recently formed detachment of Volunteers, and the banners of the various Friendly Societies. The procession proceeded to the band stand [on the Pleasure Ground] and on it were Mr. Streatfeild, Mrs. and Miss Streatfeild, the Misses Scarlett and the Members of the Urban District Council.



Gala Day June 28th 1899

Mr. Streatfeild then addressed the large crowd [saying] they had felt that Uckfield should not be without some lasting record of the sixtieth year of the Queen's reign... Children who had taken part in the first Jubilee procession had reached man's estate, and other children had been born and had reached an age when they might ask... why time after time they called attention to the Queen's long reign. The answer... was that not only was the reign of Queen Victoria the longest on record, but it was the reign of the best Sovereign who had ever sat on the throne of this or any other country (Applause). She had upheld the dignity of the Crown without encroaching by one hairbreadth upon the liberty of her people (Applause). That was the reason... why they could not say too often "God save the Queen". (Applause). It was now his duty to declare the ground open.

At the conclusion of Mr. Streatfeild's speech the Volunteers fired a feu de joie and cheers were heartily given for the Queen.

Richard James Streatfeild deserves to be remembered best as a generous benefactor of his native town. In 1881, at a time when both anaesthetics and antiseptic surgery were still novel concepts

and when the nearest hospital was at Brighton, he gave Uckfield its original Cottage Hospital on the northern outskirts of the Town. The spirit of the enterprise was that of voluntary service, since it was run by a committee all of whom gave their services without payment. Streatfeild himself acted as Treasurer with the solicitor, E.O. Langham, as Secretary, Doctors Lucas and Langdale as Medical Officers and the Rector's daughter, Miss Cardale, as Lady Superintendent. The annual cost was thus kept down to about £250 p.a. (which included £4 p.a., the wages of the sole nurse), a sum met by voluntary contributions, donations and patients' fees, the latter not to exceed 7/6d per week.

When Richard first began serving as a magistrate the court was held in an upper room of the Maiden's Head and he may well have felt that 'the proximity of alcohol detracted somewhat from the solemnity of the proceedings'. At all events he donated land on the west side of the High Street, a public company was formed to raise the necessary capital and in 1877 the Public Hall was built. In it the Magistrates' Court was held weekly for 117 years, the building being used at other times for public meetings, plays and concerts. The Uckfield Institute (the 'Holly Bush'), Christ Church at Ridgewood (in conjunction with the Rev. Edward Cardale) and the Infants' School, also at Ridgewood, also came into existence as a result of Richard Streatfeild's munificence.



Public Hall

Mary Streatfeild died in 1903, aged 59. One suspects that her health had never been robust, as evidence the one child. Ironically her two sisters-in-law, Charlotte Anne, married to Colonel O'Hara, and Marian Gertrude, married to John Blakiston-Houston of Orangefield, Ulster, each had around a dozen children. Even before Mary's death Richard had been in the habit of moving his family and much of his household up to Yorkshire where they occupied his other home, Rossington Hall, near Doncaster, for half of every year. This would presumably not have started before 1881 when he gave up his mastership of the Southdown Hunt. The purpose of this migration was principally the hunting and shooting, which the Yorkshire estate afforded, with the supply of local coal forming a bonus. The 'migration' was achieved entirely by train and from a Brighton and South Coast Railway special traffic notice (May 30th, 1908) it is possible to gauge the scale of the operation which involved nine G.N.R. Co's vacuum-fitted vehicles. There was, in fact, a railway station at Rossington but it appears that the station at Bawtry was the one used. The Streatfeild equipage would have included horses and a vast amount of luggage which Rossington could not have handled. The Great Northern Railway vehicles

apparently made the entire journey from Bawtry to Uckfield but from Battersea Yard B & SCR locomotives hauled the train (via Lewes) to Uckfield. The railway also enabled a wagon-load of Rossington coal to be despatched to The Rocks for the benefit of the household staff who remained there for the winter and the estate workers.

With the outbreak of the First World War this practice came to an end and was probably never resumed (R.J.S. was 74 in 1918). Richard's military background led him to raise and command the Uckfield Company of the National Reserve (forerunner of the Home Guard) and to become chairman of the district emergency committee charged with planning the action to be taken in the event of invasion by German troops. Instructions (unfortunately not dated) were posted stating that:

"The Civil Population, not acting as Special Constables or in helping the Military, should be prepared to move, probably in a north-westerly direction.

1. Each person should take with them food for two days and a blanket.
2. All main roads must be avoided, especially those to London.
3. Owners of spare Vehicles will be expected to assist in the removal of infirm persons and young children.
4. It is very important that the surnames of children should be sewn into their clothing, as in France and Belgium many small children who got separated from their parents have never been identified."

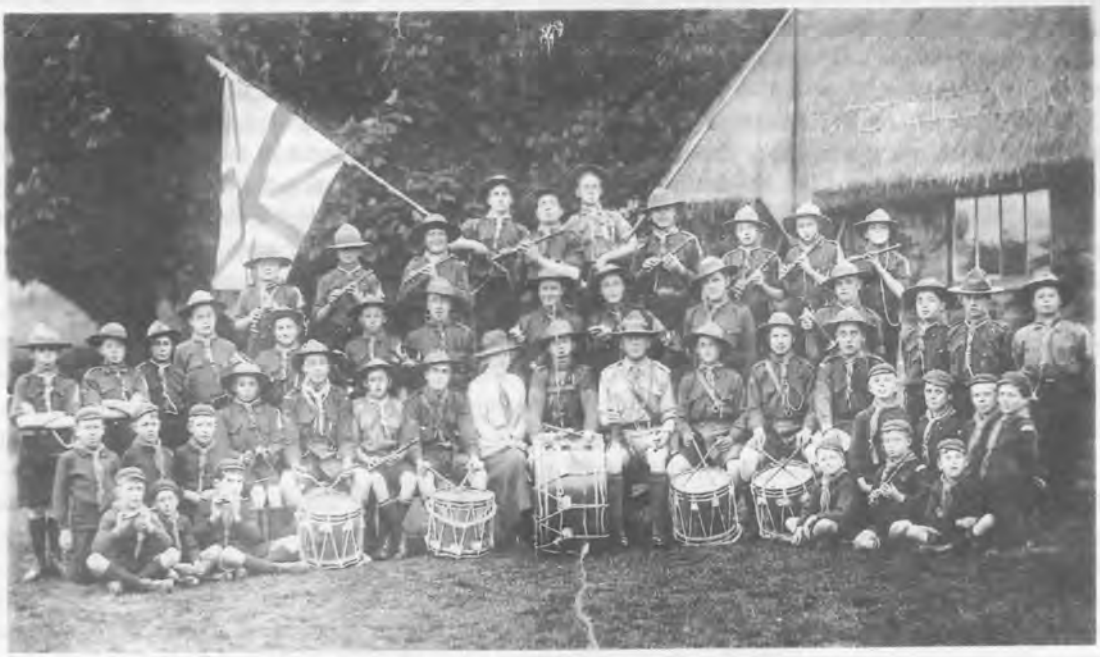
Further instructions covered farming stock, forage and vehicles, the instructions ending: "It must be clearly understood that none of the above steps are to be taken except on the orders of the Military Authorities".

After the war he gave up the chairmanship of Uckfield U.D.C. but continued to serve as a magistrate, as chairman of the Cottage Hospital and as President of the Uckfield British Legion almost up to the time of his death. He died at The Rocks on July 31st, 1931, and from there his coffin was borne on an estate wagon to his funeral at Holy Cross Church.

Annette Streatfeild inherited all her father's estates in Sussex and in Yorkshire. She maintained the tradition of spending time at Rossington each year though her visits were considerably shorter. The Rocks was her real home though even here she seems to have led a rather solitary life. Although looked after by a staff of eight she entertained very little and did not mix in local society. Her sole regular visitor appears to have been her cousin Dora Scarlett, third daughter of John Blakiston-Houston and (after 1934) the widow of Air Vice-Marshal Francis Rowland Scarlett and in spite of the large staff she lived a relatively frugal existence. She did however enjoy the use of the house's only bathroom. Annette, however is (still) best remembered for her leadership of the Wolf Cub Pack. As a photograph of 1919 shows, the 1st Uckfield Group, Boy Scouts and Wolf Cubs, under the leadership of George Wheatley, was a flourishing outfit, rightly proud of its two bands, Fife and Drum, and Bugle. The troop met in the former cricket pavilion in the grounds of The Rocks, when the cricket club moved to the Victoria Pleasure Ground. 1st Uckfield was formed in 1908 and it was Annette herself who started the Wolf Cub pack which she ran for many years. She seems to have gained the greatest satisfaction of a somewhat lonely life from her involvement with the Cubs. By the time of her father's death she was 65 and probably content just to live quietly. She died at The Rocks on April 11th, 1937, aged 70.

Annette left her entire Sussex estate to the second son of her cousin and great friend, Dora. James Rowland Scarlett, like his father, attained the rank of Air Vice-Marshal. He took the additional surname Streatfeild and prepared to put the estate on the market. At that point W.A. Clark of St. John Smith, stepped in. He persuaded a consortium of four local businessmen to buy all 2,115 acres and then, having divided the estate up into 118 small lots they offered it for sale at auction, which was held on November 24th, 1938, at the Public Hall. The sale included 14 dairy and mixed farms and small holdings, business premises and ninety cottages, thus enabling tenant farmers, and many of the towns people, to buy their own properties. The Air Vice-Marshal himself bought The Rocks mansion and a

good deal of land, including Lake Wood, and he installed his mother in the big house. She lived there for a short time but the house was requisitioned by the Army in 1940.



Annette Streatfeild with the 1st Uckfield Group (1919)

In 1942, no longer needed for military purposes, the house and its immediate land were leased to Miss Fairbairn, owner of a school, then at Crawley (where Pamela Mountbatten had been a boarder), called 'Buckswood Grange' and the school took over The Rocks and remained there until 1979, when it was compulsorily purchased by the County Council.

Three days after the Second World War ended A.V.M. James Scarlett-Streatfeild was killed (not in action but on Active Service) while flying to the liberation of Norway. He was 36 and seemed destined for the highest commands. The Rocks and its surviving estate passed to his younger brother, Commander Norman Scarlett-Streatfeild D.S.C. In November 1940 'Blood' Scarlett had flown as observer for Lt. Commander Williamson, C.O. of 815 Squadron, who led the first striking force of torpedo-carrying Fairey Swordfish on the Italian naval base at Taranto, one of the epics of the war at sea. His torpedo struck and sank the battleship 'Conti di Cavour' but the aircraft crashed and both men spent the rest of the war as P.O.W.s.

After the war Cdr. Scarlett-Streatfeild lived at Coombe Banks but after a posting to the West Country he found, on his return and with a growing family, that the house had become too small and he moved to Wiltshire. He continued to take a great interest in Uckfield and in Lake Wood which he still owned, but after the hurricane of October, 1987, the family lacked the money to repair the devastation. Lake Wood was then endowed and given to the Woodland Trust in memory of Pamela Scarlett-Streatfeild. With great sensitivity and considerable expertise and with the help of volunteer working parties, a programme of restoration was undertaken by the Trust. The lake with its beautiful surroundings of trees and rocks can now be enjoyed by the public at all seasons of the year. Meanwhile the County Council, after leaving the big house empty for a year, sold it to Michael Reiser who opened a new school, but under its former name of Buckswood Grange. In January 2000 it became Buckswood School under the headship of Giles Sutton. Thus, after many changes of ownership, the core of the estate created by the Streatfeild family enters a new millennium in full vigour and still able to play a valued part in Uckfield life.



Buckswood Grange

The material for this account has been drawn from a variety of sources. John Eyre was a very great help in giving me information about Richard Prime. For information about Lake Wood I am indebted to the late Pamela Scarlett-Streatfeild and to Martyn Stenning. Ron Martin has most kindly allowed me to reproduce his meticulous drawings of The Rocks ice house. Jeremy Clark told me about the arrangements for the 1938 auction. I made use of the research carried out by Helen Thompson and also of the article by Marjorie Stubbs which appeared in '***HINDSIGHT***' 2. A chance encounter when the owner of Weekes Newsagent was staying in Ireland put me in touch with Sheela Kitchin, a descendant of Charles O'Hara, who has been a great help over the Irish connections. Mrs Sarah Brocklebank most kindly read the article and suggested some alterations. Even so I am conscious of many gaps in my account and of information in our possession I have not been able to use. A great deal of material relating to the Streatfeild family and The Rocks estate has been lodged at E.S.R.O. and awaits research. I hope this article will stimulate an investigator to undertake it.

SIMON WRIGHT

LIFE IN 18TH CENTURY SUSSEX

April 10th, 1797. One day last week a man named Badcock of Isfield, got drunk and beat his wife in a manner which incented the other good wives of the parish to such a degree that they immediately assembled, 17 in number, seized upon the masculine offender, and tossed him in a blanket 'till they were heartily tired of the discipline; after which they threw him into an adjacent horse pond amidst the shouts of a little multitude, who had become spectators of this summary mode of punishing a bad husband.