

### Owners and Occupiers

Rose Hill was a house which stood alone at the south end of Bobbing parish. Its hill looked down upon the Watling Street and the fields and orchards of Borden further south.

### The Gores

The house was built on the lands of Bobbing manor about 1770 by the Irish aristocrat cousins Arthur and Booth Gore, as a shooting seat. It was known as Gore Hill in their time. One might wonder why they came out as far as Bobbing to shoot, for the land around the house had long ago been farmed. The attraction must have been the wild ducks and geese of the Medway estuary two miles away. In the 1770s the historian Edward Hasted wrote of the Gores' shooting seat that "they both pretty constantly reside in it". Arthur and Booth would have gone down to the mud-flats at dawn and dusk to shoot when the birds were aloft, but during the day the sportsmen would retire to the house to eat and sleep and avoid the mosquitoes.

Arthur Gore had acquired further land around the house by 1798. Soon after, it was described as "a neat dwelling house consisting of two parlours, a hall and kitchen on the ground floor, six bed chambers on the first floor and two in the atticks - good cellars, a pleasance and kitchen garden, a fishpond, good stabling and every other office and convenience for a small genteel family." Note the eight bedrooms. The Gores must often have had guests down to shoot. The Gore tenancy ended in 1800.

### The Montrésors

A new tenant was found for Gore Hill in 1801. She was the recently widowed Mrs Frances Montrésor. Her husband John had been a



## OCCUPIERS

British military engineer in America when the War of Independence broke out and he had an adventurous career until his retirement in 1778, when they bought Belmont Place at Throwley. Montrésor was to have years of dispute with the Audit Office over his expenses during his active service and he was eventually committed to Maidstone prison, where he died in 1799. The Montrésor family lived on at Belmont until John's bankruptcy, when the estate was taken by the Exchequer and sold.

By September 1801, Montrésor's widow Frances was living at Gore Hill, 8 miles away, probably with her two sons and two daughters.

Recent excavations have shown that the walls of Gore Hill were clad with pale yellow mathematical tiles, which gave the appearance of yellow brick, much like those at Belmont Place. We hope that excavation will show whether this was how the Gore cousins had built it, or whether Frances Montrésor had added the tile cladding when she moved there. Frances began using the alternative name of Rose Hill for the house in 1822 and after her time Rose Hill was the only name used. She died in 1826. William C Fairman had the tenancy from 1827 to 1832 and William Augustus Munn, from 1835.



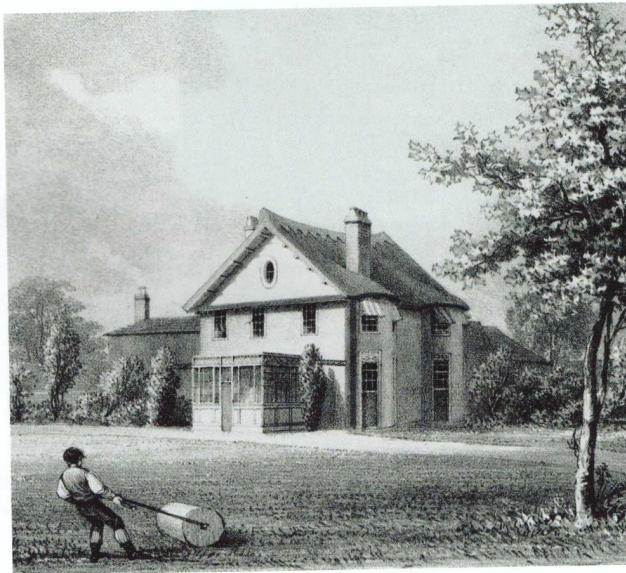
## The Simpsons

Back in 1796 the manor of Bobbing and its lands, including Rose Hill, had been bought by Valentine Simpson, an innkeeper of Sittingbourne. He and his descendants were to own Rose Hill for 130 years. Valentine was living at Bobbing Court at his death in 1832. His son George became vicar of Bobbing in 1818 and he duly inherited Bobbing Court and Rose Hill, but the Simpsons did not occupy Bobbing Court again. By 1839, the Revd George had resigned the living of Bobbing in favour of his son the 26 year old Revd. George Stringer Simpson though both remained in Sittingbourne. William Munn was then occupier of Rose Hill and was still there in 1841.

The only detailed illustration of Rose Hill appears in a mezzotint by Greenwood of 1838, later copied and coloured in. It shows a remarkable resemblance, on a small scale, to the mansion at Belmont, both having the yellow mathematical tile walls, the shallow bay windows and the hilltop situation. Possibly this was how the house had looked in 1770 when Arthur Gore built it, but Frances Montrésor might have employed a local builder in 1801 to make the shooting seat resemble her old home.

By 1847 Rose Hill was the property and residence of the Revd. George Simpson. He was one of two principal landowners in Bobbing and lord of the manor. Bobbing was a vicarage in his patronage and his son the Revd. George Stringer Simpson was vicar. The elder George Simpson died in April 1854. George S Simpson was still the vicar of Bobbing in the 1861 census and his address was now Rose Hill House. In the 1871 census George was termed vicar and land owner.

The Revd. George S Simpson



**TOP** Mezzotint of Rose Hill by Greenwood, 1838



**BOTTOM** Coloured image of the house based on the mezzotint

resigned the living of Bobbing in 1872 and he died in 1888. The house passed to a relative, the Revd William H Simpson, of Frant, Sussex, possibly a nephew. In 1898 Rose Hill House and lands of 4¼ acres were transferred from the Revd William Simpson to Sybilla Lucy Hilton of East Farleigh, a widow, who proved to be a younger sister of George Stringer Simpson.

## Tenants at Rose Hill

The 1891 census found tenants at Rose Hill, Walter Staggs and his family. The Staggs were still there in 1908, but by the 1911 census they had moved to Tunbridge Wells and one Guy de Mattos and family were at Rose Hill.

## Admiral Doyne

Admiral Herbert Doyne, a naval surgeon, had retired in 1919 and

probably purchased the freehold from the Simpsons that year. He was certainly there in 1926 and in 1929 he sold some land for a sports ground. He died in 1936.

## The Stockers

Mr and Mrs Stocker from Key Street purchased Rose Hill about 1938 though he died soon after the move, leaving his widow to live there alone for another 29 years. She moved to an old people's home in 1969. After her death her niece inherited Rose Hill and sold it to a developer but his plans to build houses did not happen. In the 1970s local people recall a fierce lady caretaker living at Rose Hill, who died about 1975.

## The end of the house

Now the house was coming to its last days. Much of the yellow tiling, which in its earlier life had made it strong and waterproof, had gone. Local children found they could rock the bare timber frame from side to side and only good fortune kept it from falling upon them. Then a child found a shotgun cartridge in the house and sadly injured himself. In 1976 local residents asked Swale Council to demolish it. After some discussion, Rose Hill House was finally demolished that year.

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by Roger Cocket**