

Mendelssohn, the Bishop's Grandmother and Slaters Oak

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A longstanding mystery was set in place in 1973 when Effingham historian Monica O'Connor recorded being told that some unnamed Bishop had claimed that Mendelssohn had composed one of his 'Songs Without Words' at Slaters Oak. This article examines the plausibility of the claim, taking into account the known movements of Mendelssohn and of potentially relevant connections he had with others, and puts forward a much more credible interpretation of what O'Connor had been told.

Introduction

In *The History of Effingham in Surrey* by Monica Mercy O'Connor and Effingham Women's Institute published in 1973, there is on p94 the following statement:

'Colonel Hughes told the writer [Monica O'Connor] that he had had a visit from a Bishop who told him that Slaters Oak was the home of his (the Bishop's) grandmother and that Mendelssohn composed one of his *Songs without Words* there. It has not been possible so far to confirm the statement about Mendelssohn, but it may be true as Mr. Deryck Cooke of the BBC informed us that it is not known where Mendelssohn wrote all the *Songs without Words*.'

This article is the account of how in 2022 the above statement was tested for the likelihood that Mendelssohn had indeed visited Effingham and composed some of his most popular work here. If true, even if it only amounted to an enforced overnight stay during an interrupted journey, this would be rather exciting.

Slaters Oak

If Mendelssohn did visit, what would Slaters Oak have been like at that time ie 1830-1850 roughly?

The plot on which the house stands is approximately 4 acres. As we can see from 19th century Ordnance Survey maps, it was originally an 'island' site on Effingham Common, and would still have very much been so in those two decades. The main north-south track across the Common ran to the east of the 'island' (not to the west as now), and an early main entrance door still exists in a courtyard on the eastern façade of the house. This usage had changed by 1871, in other words long before the arrival of Effingham Junction station in the late 1880s. By 1871

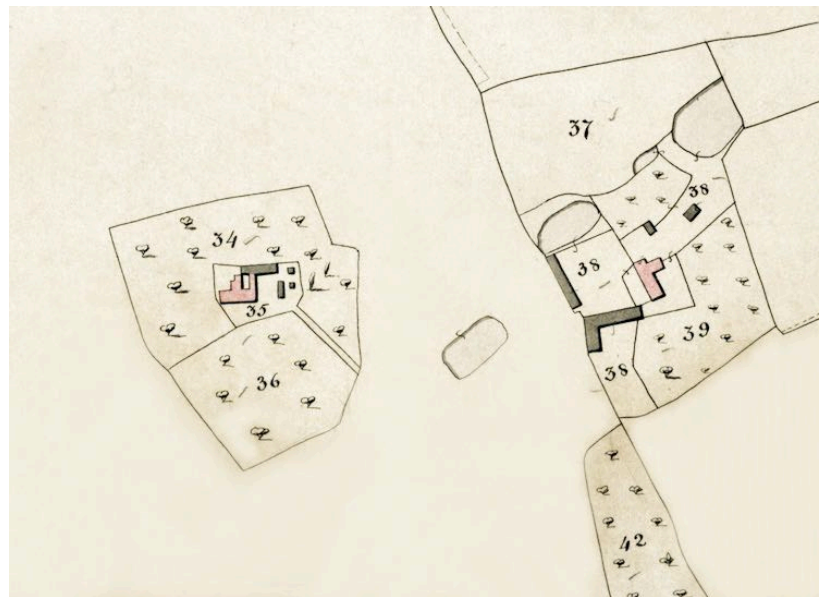


Figure 1 Slaters Oak (left of centre) in the 1842 Tithe Map, with Norwood Farm to the right.

evidently the most direct route for people and vehicles moving between the village and the northern gate to the Common, the 'White Gate', was a track to the west of the property. The siting of Effingham Junction Station alongside this track in the late 1880s meant that it gradually handled more and more traffic, eventually becoming the Effingham Common Road we have today. Today Slaters Oak is off that road, and it no longer presents as an island in the midst of open common.

The property must originally have been established by enclosing an area of common. Because of its area of approximately 4 acres, Monica O'Connor theorises that Slaters Oak has Elizabethan origins, reflecting a prohibition on the building of any new house with *less* land than that in order to deter a recent proliferation of squatters settling on common land: *An Act against the erecting and maintaining of cottages*, 1588. Who 'Slater' was remains a mystery, but the current first known instance of the name appears in a document dated

23 September 1678 [Effingham East Court manor, Steward's papers 1677-1692, Add. Ms 23752, British Library]. O'Connor cites the date as 4 April 1684, but this relates to a transaction about a different property not mentioning Slaters Oak but rather 'land on the north common' involving William Mascall, John Skynner and William Elyot.

Comparing the layout of Slaters Oak in the Tithe map of 1842 with later Ordnance Survey maps shows that the property was remodelled between then and 1871, assuming a Z-shaped layout. Between 1871 and 1896 the buildings remained pretty constant in layout and extent.



Figure 2 Slaters Oak in the 1871 25" OS Map.

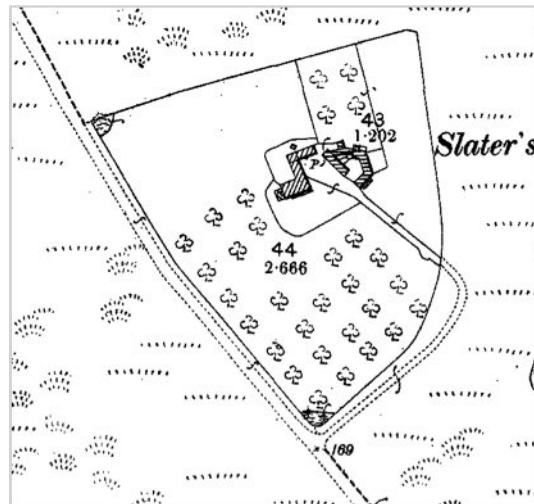


Figure 3 Slaters Oak in the 1896 25" OS Map.

The size and appearance of the house today is much affected by the extension and remodelling of the south-facing range made in c1907 [Surrey History Centre (SHC) Ref: 5118/5/2/1/829]. The drawings submitted with that planning application give an indication of the exterior views of some of the pre-existing structure (see Figures below). Recent occupiers have confirmed to Effingham Local History Group (ELHG) that in the past the house had been much altered and adapted internally. Consequently it is now very difficult to know how old those pre-1907 elements were, and exactly what living at Slaters Oak was like for mid-nineteenth century occupants. We can however perhaps be confident that it was more in the category of farmhouse than historic country house.

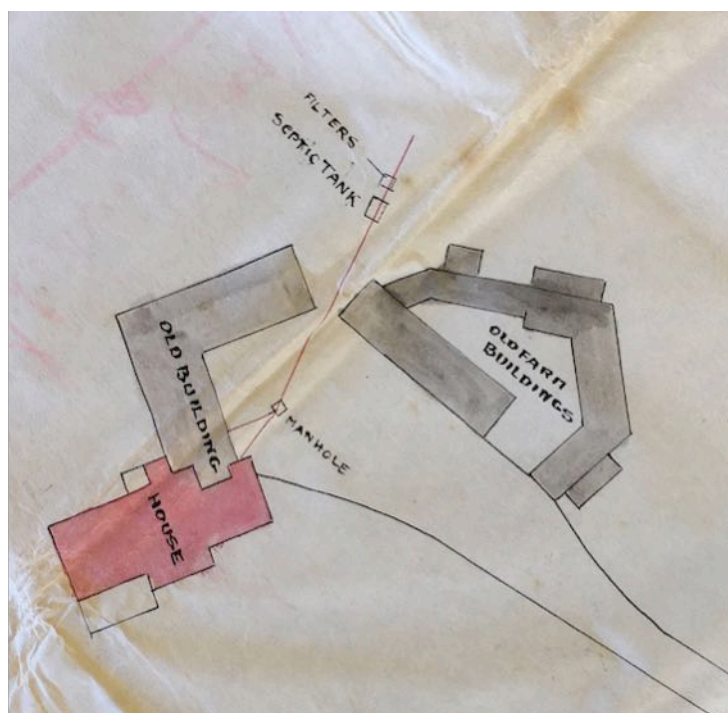


Figure 4a The block plan of Slaters Oak in the 1907 planning application, showing the broadly Z-shaped layout.



Figures 4b, c Two more views of the pre-existing structure at Slaters Oak from the 1907 planning application. In the details of the façades, the uncoloured parts are the original house and the pink ones are areas proposed for extension and re-modelling. One can see that the earlier house had a lower roof-line and was plainly built. The non-symmetrical layout of the windows in the older part shows that previous alterations had already been made. The new extension will have diamond-paned windows to match the older part. The façades of the most northerly range of the 'Z' were not affected by the proposals so not drawn, but according to the floor plans, this run incorporated a store room and larder off the kitchen, a stables and a coach house.
Above, the west-facing elevation; below, the east-facing elevation.



Felix Mendelssohn

Jacob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, customarily known as Felix Mendelssohn, was born in Hamburg in 1809. A child prodigy, by the age of 9 he was already performing in public and producing finished musical compositions. As an adult he was multi-talented: not only as a musician but as poet, artist, athlete, linguist ... He died in 1847 aged only 38 after, seemingly, a series of strokes or brain haemorrhages.

His musical output had been immense, but for the purposes here we are especially interested in his hugely popular *Lieder ohne Worte*, or *Songs without Words*. These were short piano pieces published in several groups between 1829 and 1845. Attractively varied in mood, they were just challenging enough for competent amateurs. Huge numbers of copies of the sheet music were sold and played in homes across Europe.

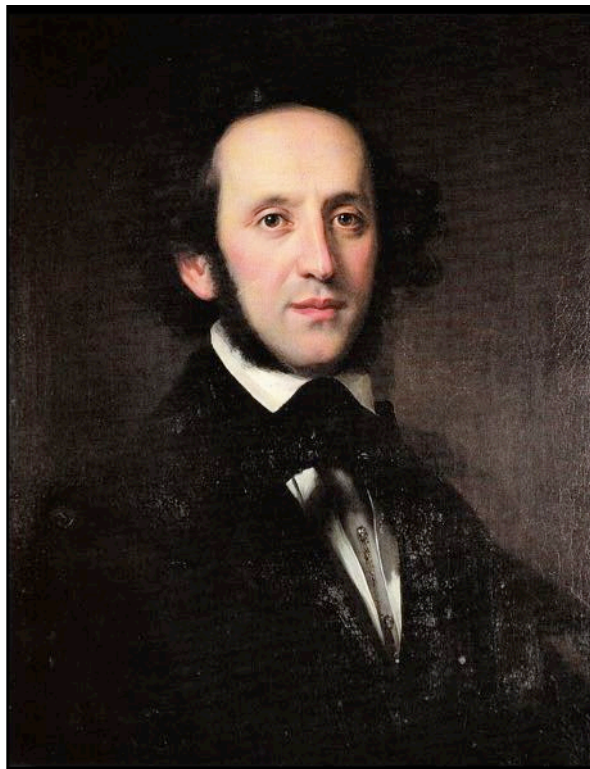


Figure 5 Felix Mendelssohn, painted in 1846 by Eduard Magnus (public domain).



Figure 6 Felix's wife Cécile, painted in 1846 by Eduard Magnus (public domain).

Mendelssohn came to England on ten separate visits between 1829 and 1847, amounting to some 20 months in total. An obvious first step in the search for The Truth about whether he had passed through Effingham was to see whether anything further had been discovered about his movements since Deryck Cooke's opinion of 1973. In 2019 Dr Chris Hogger, a member of ELHG, contacted the Mendelssohn scholar Professor R Larry Todd to enquire whether, in the light of further research into Mendelssohn's time in England, it could now be known whether Mendelssohn had visited Slaters Oak. Prof Todd replied that ostensibly the situation had not changed: there was still no definitively conclusive information that he either had or had not. We would have to go the long way round. Who would have been living at Slaters Oak at the time of Mendelssohn's visits to England? Who was the Bishop that had spoken to Col Hughes, and who was the Bishop's grandmother?

Col Hughes

Two things that could be settled with relative ease were the envelopes of time within which Col Hughes had (i) apparently been visited by the unknown Bishop, and (ii) had himself conveyed the anecdote to Monica O'Connor.

Electoral Roll evidence first places Col Charles William Hughes (1896-1970) and other family members at Slaters Oak in 1946. Along with the Colonel at that time were:

- his father George Harold Hughes (1866-1947)
- his mother Annie Woolf Hughes (1871-1958)
- his older brother Major Harold Victor Hughes (1892-1966).

Both parents are buried in Effingham at St Lawrence.

In 1925 Col Hughes had married Florence Mary née Curry in Hampshire. A son, John Philip Victor Hughes, was born in the Southampton district on 20 October 1926. Colonel and Mrs Hughes appear to have separated before Col Hughes came to Effingham. Florence died at Epsom in 1958 and was buried in

the Effingham Parish Council Burial Ground. The Colonel's brother Major Hughes died in 1966. It is not currently known where Major Hughes – and later Col Hughes – were buried.

It is a pity that currently we have no photograph of the Colonel, for he is someone to whom Effingham owes considerable gratitude. As mentioned above, Slaters Oak is an ancient property and has an interesting role in the history in the parish. It is one of four on Effingham Common which have retained their commoners' rights. From 1955 onwards the Hughes brothers were active in defence of the openness of the Common when it was seemingly under threat of permanent enclosure by Robert Calburn, the lord of the manor. Col Hughes shared the determination of Adrian Estler, the owner of Leebrook nearby, that it should not be fenced off. It is recorded that on more than one occasion the Colonel went out at night to cut wire fences put up by Calburn's tenant farmer, even appearing in court in 1959 after one particularly dramatic physical altercation which caught the nation's interest.

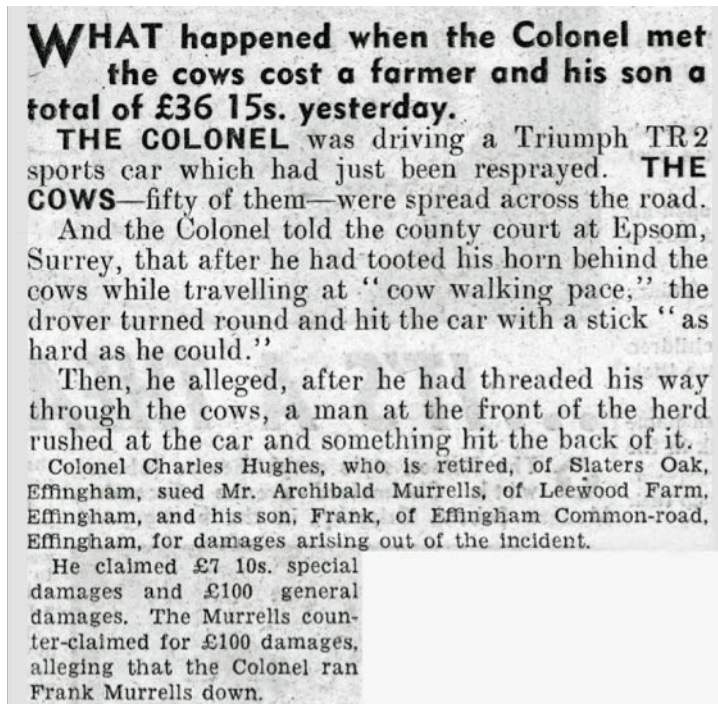


Figure 7 *The Daily Mirror* reports on the quarrel between Col Hughes and Mr Murrells, 23 June 1959.

See Appendix IV for the full article.

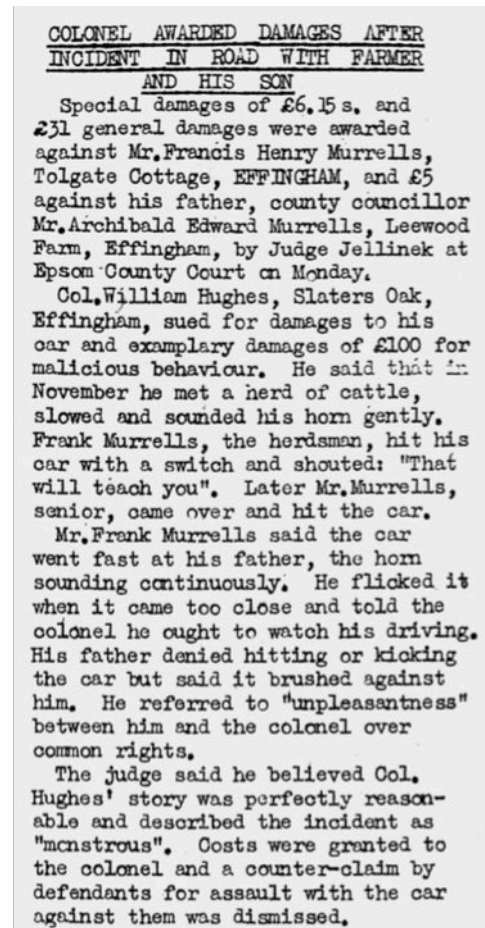


Figure 8 A summary of the issues and the verdict from *The Surrey Advertiser and County Times*, 27 June 1959.

Col Hughes was also one of the claimants prepared to go to court to get the commoners' rights of his own property registered, but he died before December 1975 when the case was eventually heard. Fortunately the new owner of Slaters Oak, Ray Davies, had been prepared to continue with the claim where Col Hughes left off. A relative, John Hughes, also appeared at the hearing. He was a highly respected figure in the racecourse world, Clerk of the Course at Aintree and heavily involved in the battle for the survival of the course and of the Grand National, and that these still exist today is attributed largely to his stupendous efforts. Effingham Parish Councillor Derek Hubbard was one of the driving forces behind the campaign to get the Common registered and as Clerk of the Course at Fontwell for 36 years was in the same profession as John Hughes. Hubbard attended the hearing. He recalled that

John Hughes was at that time involved in saving Aintree Racecourse and the Grand National threatened with closure. John found time to come down to give evidence of his trips as a boy on his bicycle to his Uncle at Slaters Oak and his memories of various activities there then. After his evidence the Judge thanked John and wished him well with the Grand National.'

[Letter dated 2 January 2011 written to the author by Hubbard from Vine Cottage]

John was successful in his aim and in reviving the fortunes of Aintree. When he died suddenly on 2 September 1988 aged only 61 his passing was mourned nationally by the racing fraternity. A memorial

service was held for him at St Martin in the Fields, London, at which such sporting luminaries as Cliff Morgan and Derek O'Sullivan spoke. A new annual race at Aintree was named in his honour. He was buried at the church of St Giles, Ashted on 8 September 1988.

In theory, the visit of the Bishop to Effingham could have taken place at any time between the Colonel's arrival in 1946 and his death in 1970. Research for *The History of Effingham in Surrey* began in 1967. Presumably then the telling of the anecdote to Monica occurred between 1967 and 1970, at which latter date Monica would have been 66 and Hughes 73.

Knowing roughly when and by whom the anecdote was captured, the next line of attack was to inspect owners of Slaters Oak between 1829 and 1847, the years of Mendelssohn's visits to England, for signs of anyone who might have hosted him there.

Robert Fish and John Martin

The first candidate is Robert Fish (Senior) (1755-1844). Robert Fish (Senior) is first detected in the Effingham Land Tax record for 1789 as the occupier of 'the Lower Farm and Banckes' which he was holding from the manor of Effingham. He held both until 1795 but thereafter Lower Farm only, until 1809/10. It is not clear that he actually lived in either of these. In 1796 he began to acquire a steadily expanding portfolio of other properties around the village including, in 1810, a 'house and garden' that he appears to have fully owned in his own name and to have occupied for many years, at least until 1831 which is the end of the known sequence of Land Tax records. Judging by the value of its rent as assessed for tax purposes, initially £3, but later £2 10s, this was a village centre property; it was certainly not a farm. It accords with Electoral Register evidence locating Mr Fish in 'Effingham Street'. This is not the place to go into the history of all Mr Fish's holdings and tenancies, but suffice to say he became connected with Slaters Oak in or just before 1821. In that year (as stated by Monica O'Connor; source not seen) Effingham East Court manorial court recorded that Ann (née Burgess) Martin, who would have been acting as Executrix on the wishes of her late father James who had died in 1819 [The London Archives; Ref Number DW/PA/05/1819/002], 'surrendered' Slaters Oak to Robert Fish. The Burgesses had been at Slaters Oak since 1777, but in 1819 there was no male heir to take it on. Land Tax records corroborate this transfer from Burgess/Martin to Fish. From 1821 onwards Slaters Oak was owned by Mr Fish but as we have seen, not occupied by him. The occupier is given as 'Martin'. In subsequent years the entry was expanded to 'John Martin'. John Martin was the name of Ann Martin's husband (they married in 1791) but whether *this* John Martin is he, or a child of theirs, or by complete coincidence an unconnected individual, remains unclear. A further enigma is that in 1827 Robert married as his second wife Elizabeth née Martin. Their only son Robert Fish (Junior) was baptised in 1831.

There is no sign of a 'Bishop Fish' or a 'Bishop Martin' who could have been descended from or related to either of these families.

The Tilleys

The transfer of Slaters Oak from Robert Fish (Senior) to the next name of interest, Thomas Tilley, took place or was at least publicly formalised, in 1834. It is described by Monica O'Connor as follows:

'Robert Fish ... came again to the same court [General Court Baron of Miles Stringer, lord of the manor of Effingham East Court, held on 27 June 1834] and in consideration of £395 paid by Thomas Tilley of Effingham Lower Common, Horse Dealer, Robert Fish surrendered the property to Tilley who was admitted tenant by copy of Court Roll at the will of the Lord, heriot 2s, yearly rent 12d.'

[*The History of Effingham in Surrey*, 1973, p94]

Fitting reasonably well with this timetable, the Electoral Register captures a Thomas Tilley as the occupier of a copyhold property on Effingham Common from 1835 to 1853. There is however not full clarity about which 'Thomas Tilley ... Horse Dealer' it was that Mr Fish Senior had sold to, and which Thomas Tilley it was who, in due course in about 1853, would sell Slaters Oak on.

A 'Mr' Tilley is detectable in the Effingham Land Registry records for 1805-24, occupying the property called Walton Poor. This seems to be the first Tilley in Effingham, George. George was born in 1763 in Stoke next Guildford. He married Elizabeth Marlow in Wisley in 1786 but was widowed and in 1820 he married his second wife, widow Elizabeth née Stevenson at Effingham. George was buried at St Lawrence in 1843, and Elizabeth in 1844.

A 'Thomas' Tilley, George's son, was baptised at Wisley in 1790. He married in 1813 to Anne (probably née Chapman, baptised in Dursley, Gloucestershire in 1787) and their children began arriving: George baptised in Chessington in 1814; Henry in 1817 baptised in Effingham as were all the subsequent children:

Harriet 1818, Thomas 1819, Anne 1820, Mary Ann 1821, William 1823 and Anthony 1827. In all the baptism records of his children, Thomas is described as a 'husbandman'; in other words his farming business was principally with animals rather than agriculture.

In 1819 when he would have been about 29 'Thomas Tilley' took up occupancy of a 'House and orchard' owned by John Chippen. The location of this property has so far not been pinpointed. Thomas remained there at least until 1830 so far as can be seen from Land Tax records, and we do not know when he gave it up. His arrangement with Robert Fish for Slaters Oak was made around 1834/35.

The 1841 Census is not conclusive for locating the two Tilley families it records. In one of these was Thomas's father George Tilley (Tilly) aged '75'. From its placement in the entries, it *looks* as if this household was in the centre of the village.

In the other household the head was Thomas, 'Farmer'. Setting aside children who were elsewhere and/or had not survived, in 1841 this unit comprised:

- Thomas Tilley age '45', born in the county, farmer
- Anne Tilley age 50, not born in the county
- George Tilley age 25, the eldest son
- Mary Ann age 15
- Anthony age 10
- Harriett [sic] Ledger age 2; born in Weybridge, daughter of a John and Sarah Ledger; John was a master blacksmith.

The Tithe map property survey of 1842 reveals that 'Thomas Tilley' was evidently occupying three Effingham dwellings over two sites. At Banks Farm / Whitehall there were two adjacent 'cottages with garden' sublet from Joseph Bonsor. According to O'Connor, these cottages had been built of re-used materials from an uninhabitable old house 'early in the nineteenth century'. Elsewhere at Slaters Oak, there were 'farm buildings, yard and orchards' held and occupied by 'Thomas Tilley'. Potentially, however, by 1842 there were two Thomas Tilleys of suitable age to be holding these properties: the one previously mentioned baptised in 1790, and his third son Thomas Tilley baptised in 1819 who married in December 1842 to Ann Mills at Byfleet (after her death he remarried in 1854 to Caroline Beard in Kingston).

There were also other Tilleys apparently resident in Effingham the location of whose dwellings has not been specifically recorded. In June 1842, Thomas and Anne's second son Henry married Elizabeth Brett in Effingham, where both were said to be residing and Henry was a baker. In 1848 the fourth son, William, married Ann Healy Nash at which time William was said to be a brewer living at Effingham Common. In the 1851 Census, William was a grocer and draper then at a property in Effingham Street. His brothers, also in trade, were by now further afield. George the eldest of them was a brewer in Walton, Henry was a master baker employing 2 men also in Walton, Thomas was a master brewer in Twickenham and Anthony was a grocer and baker in Norbiton.

At the time of the 1851 Census, Thomas and Anne, now both aged '60', were still in Effingham and with them was their motherless grandson George, age 1. We cannot know for sure whether they were at Slaters Oak or elsewhere in Effingham, although it *looks* as if they are listed amongst householders on the Common. Thomas is described as 'Late farmer'. In 1853, Anne died and was buried at St Lawrence. Thomas's whereabouts from then on, and the place and date of his death, are unclear. No Will is known. But this date (1853) would seem to correspond with the transfer of Slaters Oak to its next occupants.

The Effingham Tilleys, industrious and seemingly solid as they were, were clearly farmers and tradesmen. It is hard to think of Mendelssohn staying with them and settling down to compose. There *was* however a 'Bishop Tilley' (1884-1969). He was born in Market Harborough, Leicestershire. Could he have been a descendant? The only drawback is that he was not a man of the cloth: 'Bishop' was his forename! One wonders how often the poor man had to explain that. In the 1939 National Register, Bishop Tilley's occupation was listed as 'Clicker Boot trade'.

The Webers

After the Tilleys the next occupants of Slaters Oak were the Webers: Dr Frederic William (or Friedrich Wilhelm) Weber MD (1808-1886) and his wife Helena Louisa née Benecke. They married in Camberwell, London on 10 August 1846 when Weber was 38 and Helena a minor aged 18.

A letter written many years later in 1891 (see Appendix II) claimed that Slaters Oak was a wedding present to Helena – although from whom is not known – and that the newlywed Webers spent their honeymoon there.

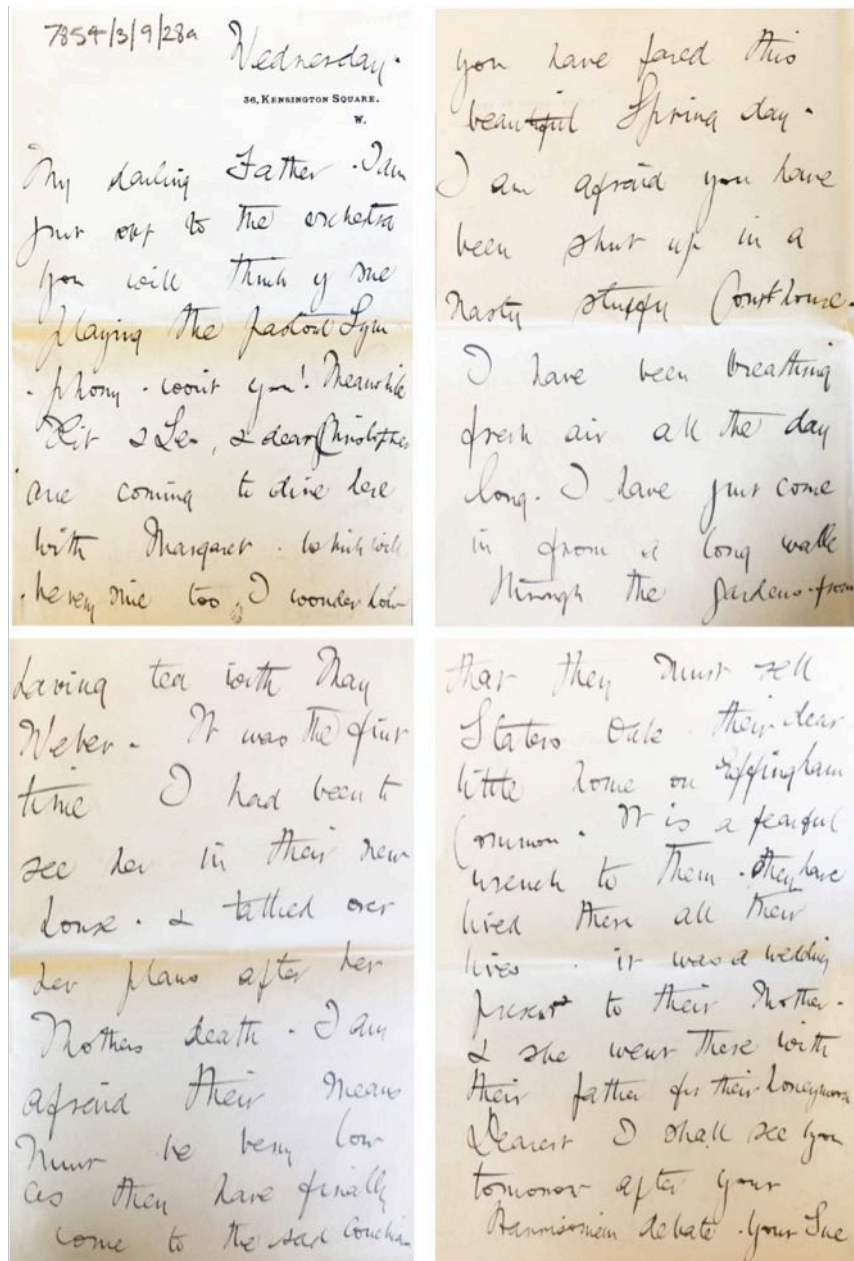


Figure 9 Letter from Susan Lushington to her father; 4 February 1891.
(See Appendix II) SHC Ref: 7854/3/9/28a-b.

This statement was made by Susan Lushington, a friend of the Webers' youngest daughter, May Weber. The Lushingtons' country house, Pyports at Cobham, was very near Slaters Oak and it is clear the two families were well acquainted, even friends. In a chatty letter to her father Vernon Lushington, Susan included the news that the Weber daughters now definitely had to leave Slaters Oak and mentioned the 'wedding present'. Thus the anecdote comes at some distance from the actual event. Furthermore, as surmised above, in the 1851 Census, Thomas and Ann Tilley were probably still at Slaters Oak, in other words well after the honeymoon of the Webers. We might muse whether the gift of Slaters Oak was intended as a country retreat for the Webers, Dr Weber maintaining his medical practice in London. Perhaps its orchards, its privacy and any historic fabric lent it charm, as well as its relatively close proximity to London even in pre-railway times. Perhaps the new couple retained the Tilleys *in situ* to manage the land or act as caretakers on a regular basis, until such time as the family should next be in residence. Perhaps the wedding gift was the money to buy a country retreat, not the house itself. There is some evidence that Dr Weber himself at least paid over the money for it.

Monica O'Connor notes the transfer of ownership from the Tilleys to the Webers being recorded in the manorial court. This took place very much later than 1846:

‘On 23rd November, 1853 Thomas Tilley of Walton, Gent., came before the Deputy Steward of the Manor, and in consideration of £800 paid by Frederick [sic] Weber, M.D., of London, surrendered Slaters Oak to him. Dr. Weber, however, was not satisfied with the title, so Thomas Tilley, Gent., and George Tilley of Walton, Brewer, entered into a bond for his [Weber’s] quiet enjoyment of the property.’

[O’Connor’s source currently unknown]

There is nothing to say that it this not Thomas Snr, still alive and competent, now a widower living in Walton with one of his sons. He would be about 63. Alternatively, the ‘Thomas Tilley of Walton’ could have been Thomas Snr’s son Thomas, entering the bond alongside his brother George, the brewer of Walton. Perhaps these two were acting in some capacity of Administrators or Executors after their father’s demise. The date of 1853 when Weber attended the court may not be unduly significant. Formalities in the manorial court could only be carried out when the court itself was summoned. By this era it was often called only periodically, even at intervals of a few years. If Frederic – or technically Helena – was given the actual property in 1846 by an unknown person who had acquired it from the Tilleys, and in every real sense it was theirs, the transaction still had to be cleared in the manorial court with Miles Stringer, Lord of the Manor. But a gap of 7 years is a stretch for this interpretation.

What do we know about Frederic Weber and Helena Benecke? On both sides, they had extremely interesting cultured backgrounds. And – spoiler alert – we find that probably before they had connections with each other, and well before they had connections with Effingham, each of them separately had links with Mendelssohn.

Frederic's background

Frederic William Weber, or ‘Friedrich Wilhelm’ as he was by birth, was a very close contemporary of Mendelssohn although Mendelssohn was born in Hamburg, Germany and Weber in Trieste, Austria. He studied medicine and from 1837 was settled in London where he became a naturalised British subject and a very successful medic. The following biography is offered by the Royal College of Physicians, of which he was a senior member:

‘Frederic Weber

b.1808 d.10 March 1886

MD Pavia (1835) FRCP (1848)

Frederic Weber, a native of Trieste, studied at Heidelberg and Pavia, taking the M.D. degree of the latter University in 1835. For the next two years he made a round of the hospitals of Parma, Leipzig, Berlin, Paris and London. During his visit to London, Sir Thomas Watson and other members of the profession persuaded him to settle there and, with his charm of manner and his knowledge of Continental spas to help him, he succeeded in establishing himself in consulting practice. His first appointments were as physician to the St. George’s and St. James’s Dispensary and as assistant physician to the Middlesex Hospital. He took a keen interest in the Harley Street Institute for Invalid Ladies, with which he was associated for no fewer than forty-six years. Various embassies, too, employed him as their physician. He was a Censor of the Royal College of Physicians from 1859 to 1861. Weber was endowed with a fine voice and considerable musical talent.

G H Brown’

[*Med.-Chir. Trans.*, 1887, lxx, 8]

<https://history.rcp.ac.uk/inspiring-physicians/frederic-weber>

Frederic was also a friend of fellow German composer, pianist and critic Robert Schumann (1810-1856), another close contemporary. Given Frederic’s love of music it would be natural to wonder whether he was related to the German composer Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826; born in Schleswig Holstein, died in London), but if so it is currently not apparent. At some point Frederic was engaged to the highly acclaimed English soprano Clara Anastasia Novello (1818-1908), although the circumstances of this are only briefly alluded to in contemporary records and remain obscure. The engagement seems to have been broken off in 1840.

Frederic was to become greatly admired as a singer by Mendelssohn. When the two first met is not known but they certainly encountered one another at a social gathering in the London house of the Benecke family, and as discerned by Prof Todd, this was probably on 27 September 1840 [Dr Larry Todd, *pers comm* with Dr Chris Hogger]. Weber’s singing made a highly favourable impression on Mendelssohn.

Helena's background

The head of the Benecke family was Friedrich Wilhelm Benecke (1802-1865). His wife was Elizabeth Henriette (née Souchay) Benecke (1807-1893), often known as Henriette. Ten children were born to this couple between 1828 and 1847. The eldest daughter, Helena (sometimes given as Ellen) Louisa Wilhelmina née Benecke, would become the wife of Frederic Weber but, as yet, that would be well in the future. In September 1840 Weber would have been 31 (perhaps with a freshly broken heart) and Helena only 12.

The Beneckes were not only friends but also relations of Mendelssohn. Helena's *mother* Henriette was aunt to Mendelssohn's wife, Cécile Charlotte Sophie née Jeanrenaud (1817-1853) whom Mendelssohn married in 1837. In 1860 Helena's *brother* Carl Victor Benecke would marry Mendelssohn's daughter Marie (his first cousin once removed).

The website of the Camberwell Society describes the well-to-do Beneckes and the extremely pleasant circumstances in which they lived:

'The Beneckes were one of the many wealthy German families who had moved to Camberwell, attracted by its clean air, rural setting and good road link to the City of London. Charles Booth says in his *Survey* that their sons were "more English than the English in dress and games". Even so, services at the Lutheran Church they built in Windsor Walk in 1855 were in German. Felix Mendelssohn himself came from an illustrious Jewish family – his grandfather was the great Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelssohn – but his father had converted to Christianity along with all but one of his siblings.

The Beneckes' house ... was situated in what is now Ruskin Park, across the road from the Fox on the Hill. Fortunately, we have a map that was drawn in that same year by J Dewhurst with all the buildings marked. It shows just how rural Camberwell was. From the Beneckes' house, Felix might well have been able to see the greenery of Camberwell Green. And had St Giles' Church not burnt down in the previous year, he would have had a view of its tower. Between the road Denmark Hill and Grove Lane, it was all fields, pastures and gardens. East of Camberwell Grove it was country till Lyndhurst Square in Peckham. Only to the north of Camberwell Green does this rural landscape turn urban. This was what inspired Mendelssohn to compose what Benedict described as a "sparkling and delicious melody".'

[http://www.camberwellsociety.org.uk/?post_id=342&title=felix-was-here]



Figure 10 Dane House (front view), 168 Denmark Hill, the home of the Benecke family; 1906. The London Archive LCC Photograph Library Cat No SC_PHL_01_244_76_12288.



Figure 11 Dane House (rear view), 168 Denmark Hill, the home of the Benecke family; 1906.
The London Archive LCC Photograph Library Cat No SC_PHL_01_244_76_12283.

The following sequence of extracts from written sources relating to the years 1840-1846 illustrates aspects of the friendship and relatedness of the Mendelssohn, Benecke and Weber families. We see a wealthy, cultured and affectionate group of family and friends who were socialising not only in London but also on the continent where their paths also met. We will come across a valuable reference to *Songs without Words*. Unless stated otherwise, the texts below are based on electronic translations from the original German in the collected letters of Felix Mendelssohn and the references are to that work: *Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy: Sämtliche Briefe*, by Münnich, Schiwietz and Wald, publ Barenreiter, 2015.

The first extract comes from a month after the gathering at the Beneckes' house on 27 September 1840 mentioned above. From back in Leipzig, Mendelssohn wrote the following to his friend Carl Klingemann in London:

26 October 1840

Letter 2839, Vol 7, p311 and notes p665

'You must say hello to the Beneckes a thousand times and tell them that I love them very much, more than I could ever tell them and that they may believe it. God, could the three of us (I mean with Cecile) take a walk out from there, into the countryside, on a Sunday morning!'

A day later Mendelssohn wrote to his mother Lea Bartholdy Mendelssohn in Berlin:

27 October 1840

Letter 2842, Vol 7, p315 and note p666

'The two Beneckes are also very nice people, I wish you knew the woman in particular, you would like her very much. I spent a lovely Sunday there; they live far out in the countryside, in Camberwell; and we found so many acquaintances from our homeland, such a real German, nice household there, that it was very pleasant for me. In the evening, Dr Weber sang my songs so extraordinarily beautifully that I had

never heard them before; also the slumber scene by Rinald von Gluck, and some Beethoven – they have now got him, Klingemann à la tête allied with Mme Benecke, and have driven out his exclusive Bellinism [Vincenzo Bellini 1801-35, composer of operas], and now it is really fabulous how eager he has become for the other music, how wildly he sings it, how wonderful his voice sounds with it. If he were a little more musical, I would prefer him to all the other tenors I know. He is now a busy doctor and hardly ever sings in any society except at the Beneckes'; his relationship with Clara Novello has been completely broken off. I have never in my life seen a beautiful career so wantonly smashed to pieces and to pieces as this girl did to hers; in England no one wants to know anything about her; one has hardly ever heard her sing, because she absolutely wanted to be treated like Malibran [Maria Malibran 1808-1836, famous Spanish singer of both soprano and contralto roles, famous for her dramatic presentations and strong personality], to sing her arias, to get her money's worth; people laughed at that, and she went to Italy to try her luck on the stage; unfortunately, one can predict with certainty that she will have a bad success. Her brother, the publisher, gave me Burns' works - that is proof of success, I tell you – it is great. But enough chatting.'

If she were allowed to be present with the grownups at this gathering, it may mean that Weber knew his future wife Helena at least from when she was 12.

The next extract is simply Mendelssohn sending a piece of music to his friend Klingemann in London, and refers in passing to Weber:

24 January 1841

Letter 2990, Vol 7, p436 and note p737

'It's probably not suitable for Dr Weber, but I would still like to send you something and I don't have anything else to do today, so please take it.'

Next there are several engaging and more detailed contemporary accounts of a period in 1842 when Mendelssohn stayed with the Beneckes at Dane House. He (and his wife Cécile) arrived in England for his seventh visit to England, in late May. They had a busy schedule. On 20 June he was received at Buckingham Palace by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. He needed to be near town because of his commitments, but being in central London during the summer heat was not pleasant. By 1 June he and Cécile had removed to Camberwell to stay with the Beneckes and their children. They remained there until 12 July and by all accounts had a very happy time. While there, Felix wrote *Song without Words* No 6 in Book 5 (Opus 62), sometimes called *Spring Song* or *Chanson du Printemps* or *Camberwell Green*, which he apparently gave to Clara Schumann as a birthday present.

The most timely account of the stay was written by Cécile. Taking advantage of some 'heures tranquilles' while Mendelssohn was away in London for the evening playing for the Queen, she wrote vividly to her mother and siblings in Frankfurt about some of her experiences there, giving us a glimpse of the family and its lifestyle. She touches in passing on the two eldest daughters, who would include Helena, then at a very difficult 'in between' age. The letter was written in French. Some but not all misspellings have been corrected. As this extract begins Cécile is explaining that the Benecke children there remind her of her own, whom she is missing. She and Felix were to have five: Carl, Marie, Paul, Lili and Felix.

15 & 17 June 1842

Letter 3554, Vol 9, p426

'Seeing Aunt Henriette's children play, especially watching little Otto, who has a singular resemblance to Charles in his appearance, I think of them a lot. The little Beneckes are charming children; especially little Lilli, who is Felix's favorite, is very graceful. The two eldest are already very tall, and have surpassed their mother in height, but neither will be as pretty, I believe. They have a very pleasant expression and are very fresh, but they are still in the critical age, where no girl is pretty. Victor is a handsome boy, but very shy, he doesn't talk to anyone & loves nothing as much as his donkey, Teddy is very small for his age, no longer as pretty as he used to be, & very mischievous. Otto looks like Victor, but he is much more pleasant, caressing, & obedient & kind. Little Mathilde is very lively, even naughty, very healthy but a Pimpernüsschen next to my little Paul.

All these children lead the life of a king, and God grant them a future as happy as their childhood. Aunt Henriette gave us a charming party last Sunday. It began with a dinner, attended by Mr & Mrs Moscheles, Mr & Mrs Horsley with two sons & a daughter, Auguste Schlemmer Mr Steinkopf Miss Schwabe Dr Sween & a few others I have forgotten. An English dinner is very funny, don't you think? This one was extremely grandiose, many dishes were brought back without being touched; after dinner we lost ourselves in the garden, and little by little many people arrived; there were more than 70 people. After we played in the garden for a long time because the weather was superb, we made some music. Mr. Benedikt, who has a Neapolitan for a wife, played a trio with a Mr. Mohr from

Fft & Haussmann. Then Mr. Moscheles played alone, and Felix, and then these two began to fantasize together with four hands which greatly amused the whole company. There was plenty of good food and drink to eat, and we left around midnight very happy. I go to society almost every day, so it's a bit too much. However, we are so polite that it is difficult to refuse. I speak English haphazardly, and they are kind enough to assure me that if I lack words, my accent is at least good.

The other evening I was in a charming little house, where there was a company of around fifteen people; but with a refined elegance, like the whole house. The ladies all had several skirts on top of each other, which is the latest fashion for old and young people, necklines down to the stomach, and with short sleeves. I must give you the description of a lady who protects me a lot, her husband is a member of parliament and very rich, but this woman made us laugh so much with her dress that we had to leave the room. In her 60s she wears a blonde wig, on the top of which is planted a small pink cap with flowers, a silk dress with wide yellow & lilac stripes, dotted with yellow bobbles, and black blondes, neck bows & arms of same red shoes, a stentorian voice & drinking wine like six men.'

The following extract makes clear Mendelssohn's strong attachment to the Benecke children. In 1892, Henriette Benecke reminisced with one 'F G Edwards' about the time the Mendelssohns were her guests. It seems to record that as well as the *Song without Words*, Mendelssohn also composed some other music specially for the children:

'I may perhaps be allowed to supplement this incident by some further details which Mendelssohn's hostess, Mrs Benecke, kindly gave me when I visited her in 1885. We were seated in the room which Mendelssohn used as his study, overlooking the beautiful garden, and in which he wrote the *Lied* ... [*Chanson de printemps*, Opus 62, No 6]. Over the old grand pianoforte, upon which he had often played, was a beautiful oil-painting of him. In the course of a most interesting conversation, Mrs. Benecke said that Mendelssohn and his wife intended staying only a few days till they should find apartments near the concert rooms, as Mendelssohn had engagements with the Philharmonic Society, &c. One day on his return from town he said, "Those lodgings in London are so stuffy after this pleasant house; may we stay *here* all the time?" The request was readily granted, and the sojourn of a few days extended to six or seven weeks. As to the picnic, Mr. Benecke thought at the time that the reason of Mendelssohn's absence from the party was owing to some previous musical engagement in London. On the long drive to Windsor Mrs. Benecke said to Frau Mendelssohn: "Why did not Felix come with us today?" She replied, "I think he has something in his mind that he wants to write down." "But," said her hostess, "there is nothing for his dinner, only cold meat and rice milk – just the children's dinner." "Oh, never mind," replied Frau Mendelssohn; "he likes nothing better than rice milk. He will be all right." On their return home, Mendelssohn, full of spirits, was waiting in the garden-drive to receive them, and greeted them with a hearty welcome. When they were all assembled in his temporary study he played the lovely "*Lied in A*" (No. 30), saying "This is what I have been doing while you have been away." He was very fond of romping with the children, and they with him; and the quaver rests in the bass of this *Lied* and the frequent staccato notes in the treble, represent the constant withdrawal of his hands from the pianoforte in order to defend himself against the repeated attacks of the little ones, who, being alone with him, wanted to drag him away from the pianoforte and into the garden for a romp. The autograph MS is dated "London, June 1, 1842," the day of the picnic.

Mrs. Benecke told me of other incidents of this visit. She gave a small musical dinner party, at which William Horsley (the glee writer), Moscheles, Benedict, and others were present. After dinner one of the guests suggested that there should be "some playing" (pianoforte). "Oh, yes," said Mendelssohn, "we'll have some playing!" And he at once marched the musicians off to play – not the pianoforte – but the game of "Hen and chickens" in the garden. Horsley, who was not so young as the others, was in fits of laughter as he stood at the window watching the overgrown boys at their "play", Mendelssohn being the life and soul of the game.

Although Mendelssohn was 33 at the time of his visit to Denmark Hill, he revelled in a game of leap-frog, played with the tutor to Mr. Benecke's sons; and he once practised the horizontal bar so vigorously as to take the skin off his hands. He composed for the children a very humorous "Bear's dance" with the following title: "The real, genuine, warranted Barentanz, as performed with unbounded applause at the Denmark Hill Chamber Concerts, composed and dedicated (by permission) to the Gooseberry-eaters of Benecke Castle, by their humble colleague and servant, Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, usually called Peter Meffert." This comical little piece, dated "London, 11th July, 1842," is on a rapidly reiterated pedal bass (the lowest F on the pianoforte), and each hand plays at the extreme ends of the keyboard throughout. At the end is the direction: "Da capo [= play from the top again], very often."

[‘Reminiscences of Mendelssohn’ by F G Edwards, *The Musical Times*, 1 August 1892, pp 466-7, quoted in *Mendelssohn Remembered* by Roger Nichols, publ Faber & Faber, 1997.]

Perhaps, at age 14 during Felix's stay, Helena might have been too old for such romping. But it appears that two of the younger ones were particularly favoured by Mendelssohn. These were Johann Eduard Wilhelm

or ‘Teddy’ born in 1833, and Elise Cornelia or ‘Lilly’, born in 1835. Prof Todd also mentions additional compositions written during the stay at the Beneckes’ house:

‘Felix sought to capture in both pieces [that he was composing while at Camberwell, the *Song without Words* Opus 102, No 1 in E Minor being the other] a childlike naiveté, a quality he explored more thoroughly in eight keyboard miniatures recorded in sixpenny music books of two of the children, Teddy and Lilly. The composer prepared six of the pieces for publication as *Kinderstücke* in 1846, but their release was delayed until December 1847, one month after Felix’s death, when they appeared in England from Ewer & Co. as Op. 72, with the surely unauthorized title “Six pieces for the Pianoforte, composed as a Christmas present for his young friends, by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy.”’
[*Mendelssohn: A Life in Music*, R Larry Todd, publ Oxford University Press, 2005.]

By September 1842 the Mendelssohns had left London and were in Frankfurt staying with other members of the Souchay family. In the following extract from a long letter to his friend Carl Klingemann in London Felix remembers with great nostalgia and affection the jollity and informality of his stay with the Beneckes and again asks Klingemann to give them his love:

13 September 1842

Letter 3607, Vol 9, p41

‘Oh God Klingemann, how strange it is for me, as I am about to write a long sentence about Switzerland and all the delights of this unique little piece of the world, and as I think: You’d better say it orally. Orally then; that’s better! But it was wonderful there! Orally! – We returned from there 8 days ago today; the day after us John and Thekla Souchay arrived from Dresden, and are staying about as long as we are, i.e. another 6-7 days. They are very well and cheerful, as is the whole house. Last night Mme. Souchay gave a big party where Hiller played and Mme. Hiller sang and I played and Schlemmer suddenly brought the Rothschilds (the Parisian girl who had just married at the age of 17) and Aloys Schmitt didn’t play and Miss Fischbach was beside herself and Sprenkel was driving back and forth and this morning we couldn’t even have breakfast in the study because there were so many glasses and cups there, with Mozart’s four-handed pieces mixed in. What is unclear to you here is something every child in Denmark Hill understands. And now when I come to Denmark Hill (I mean just in words) I feel a little weird, almost moved – I never really know who to think of first because they have all grown so incredibly dear to my heart. All of them are great people, good ones who must make God happy. You can give them my regards. And tell them that they have no idea how much I love them, and how every day and every hour, and especially at the best of times, up in the Alps, where it was so beautiful, or in the evening when I put on my slippers after a long walk, or early in the morning when I got up and there was a bright, cloudless day outside the window, how I thought of them and was happy about them. You can address this declaration of love to Benecke or his wife, or so on to Otto, and each time you will reach the person it is intended for in a very special way. I have wanted to write eight letters to them for a long time, because one is not enough and I have something special to talk about with each of them; it will happen soon – but up to now the silence has continued, which you could also call piquant, or other unforgivable – but as I said, what do the letters say? Nothing at all – after all, you know what is best.’

Here is an extract from a long letter written early in the following year, 1843, by Mendelssohn to his host, Cécile’s aunt, Elizabeth [Henriette] in Denmark Hill, Camberwell. Most of it covers his intensely happy memories of staying with the family, but he also alludes to the death of his mother Lea Mendelssohn Bartholdy on 12 December 1842.

17 January 1843

Letter 3766, Vol 9, p163 and note p585

‘My dear, good aunt. That this should be the first time since those happy days in your house that I am writing to you! Strangely, the gratitude for everything I experienced with you, the most intimate, heartfelt love and joy with which those times then, and every day since, warmed and blessed me in my memory, had grown too close to my heart for it to have been enough for me to write a letter and paint the individual letters of thanks, joy, and happiness.

“They all know that just as well and better than you can write it down,” I thought to myself, “and they also know how happy they made you back then.” Then I thought again of one such Sunday afternoon, when I had been in town just two days before, wandering around and had been busy with business, negotiations, meetings, and all sorts of useless things, and when I finally came out again and, from the top of the garden steps, surveyed the entire lawn, full of well-dressed, happy, good, and educated people. The children came towards me right up to the steps, and I said to myself: This is what happiness looks like, and this is what it feels like. I wasn’t able to talk about all that back then; it was too new, too fresh for me, and I always thought it was better experienced than described. Now I have

decided to write to everyone in the house for Christmas and to send something with it: drawings to the girls and bridles to the boys, and you should have spring songs, such as you liked and as best as I could have thought of them.

You know what has clouded and robbed me and all of us of our Christmas joy this year. It took some time before I could recover from the confusion and shock of such a sudden loss, and such a gap in life that could not be repaired, and find my way around somewhat. God kept Cecile and the children quite healthy during this time, and I soon regained the strength to thank Him for everything and to be calmer, both outwardly and inwardly. Just being among people, participating in some of what people call entertainment, is still not possible, and the public performances that repeat themselves here every week, and whose direction I had to resume immediately afterward, are a real burden to me. But it does me good to think, all by myself, of all the good things I have enjoyed – the bad things too – in short, of my past life, as it was. As often as I do this from now on – no matter how old I get – you'll know that you and yours are very close and present to me. So I had to write this letter today, even though it's not worth it.

People had invited me back to England later this year, but I had to turn it down and don't intend to make a longer trip than, say, to Dresden from here. If you do come to Germany next year, that would be the first time I could hope to see you again, as much as I would love to meet Otto before he can fully pronounce parcel, and Lilli before her incredible joy in finding ripe strawberries is replaced by something else. I would also have liked to hear Teddy play another concert, ringing on the broken bell, and to be inspired by Bertini's Étude [A few bars of music score here] waking me from my sleep – but as I said, nothing will come of it. Perhaps by then Otto will have made at most a mistake in a Greek word which I can tease him about (*In English*: What is the cell of it?), and Lilli will enjoy embroidery or flower painting, and Victor will jump over a gate on horseback instead of riding behind the carriage on a donkey, and Teddy will play the hunting horn instead of the breakfast bell, and instead of Bertini I will be woken up by the greatest Beethoven sonata – all of that was fine with me. As long as it's the same people, the same kindness and piety and bravery, the same happiness, then outwardly things can and should change. But may heaven preserve for you the inner being, for you and all yours; I can now count myself among them too.

Now farewell, and remember me from time to time, and let us soon hear happy and pleasant news from you. Kiss all your beloved children for me – I'll write a few lines to Benecke. Always and forever

Yours

Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy'

Just as he promises at the end, Mendelssohn wrote an equally long and varied letter to Friedrich Benecke on the same day.

According to the Dulwich Society, the extended Benecke family were also visited by other notable musicians:

'Mendelssohn gave the piece [*Spring Song*, composed at the Beneckes'] to Clara Schumann as a birthday present. Later Berlioz came to visit another branch of the Benecke family on Denmark Hill and sang with the daughters of the house. He said the audience 'drank it up like consecrated milk'. Richard Wagner also visited the Beneckes.'

[<https://www.dulwichsociety.com/the-journal/autumn-2014/the-germans-of-champion-hill-by-sharon-o-connor>]

We now jump three years to 1846. In the next extract from a long letter sent by Mendelssohn to Carl Klingemann he has just finished exploring some ideas about major or minor keys when he turns to asking for news of his many friends in England. It comes from a time just before the marriage of Frederic Weber and Helena Benecke and alludes to some problem, although further details are so far unknown.

15 April 1846

Letter 5249, Vol 11, p267 and note p638

'What is happening with the postponement of Dr. Weber's wedding? I don't quite understand what Cecile told me about it. And when is John getting married? And when is Charles? And when is Sophy? And do you know how Bennett is doing? And when is Moscheles planning to move to Germany? Are the Alexanders okay? Is Grote back in London? Are the Sartoris still in Rome? What is Henry Greville singing? What is Henry Bishop saying? What is Lucy Gordon writing? What is Mr. Hawes up to? (You see I'm now in Queen Square, Pimlico.) Have you met Käthchen Eichhof, and how is she? And when will Satan take Mr. Ella, along with his musical union, and various other charitable institutions in England and on the Continent? I could go on asking questions like this for a long time. But just answer me soon; you know what I want to ask before I've even asked it.'

1846. Marriage solemnized in <u>St Paul's Church</u> in the Parish of <u>Lambeth</u> in the County of <u>Surrey</u>								
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
4	August 18 th	Frederic Weber Helena Wilhelmina Louisa Benecke	Officiary Bachelor Minor	Physician Printer	Poland Garrison St Grosvenor Sq London Desmond Hill	Louis Weber Frederic William Benecke	Merchant Merchant	
Married in the <u>Church of St Paul</u> according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the <u>Church of England</u> by me, <u>G. Leman</u> <u>in the presence of</u>								
This Marriage was solemnized between us,		<u>Frederic Weber</u> <u>Helena Wilhelmina Louisa Benecke</u>		in the presence of us, <u>Charles Victor Benecke</u> <u>William Edward Channing M.D.</u>				

Figure 12 Marriage record of Frederic Weber and Helena Benecke, 18 August 1846.

As mentioned above, when they married in 1846 Helena was still a minor aged 18. In 1851 the couple were living at 3 Norfolk Street in Westminster. At some point between 1852 and 1856 judging by the baptism records of their children they moved to a splendid six-storey terraced townhouse at 44 Green Street in the exclusive and wealthy Grosvenor Square area. All of their eight children were born in London, none in Effingham, which further suggests that Slaters Oak was the Webers' 'cottage' in the country. Luckily the 1861 Census captured the Webers at Slaters Oak. Frederic Weber MD then aged 52, a naturalized British subject, is there described as MD Pavia, Fellow and Censor of the Royal College of Physicians. With him is Helena age 33. In 1861 their known children were:

- Lewis William, age 13, born Reigate, 22 July 1847
- Edward, age 10, born London 7 August 1850
- Henrietta, age 9, born London 22 March 1852
- Charles Alfred, age 7, born London 14 November 1853
- Helen Caroline, age 5, born London 7 November 1855
(the only one of these children to marry, in 1898)
- Dora Eliza, age 3, born London 12 March 1858, died 1865
- Mary Beatrice, age 1, later known as May; born London 22 December 1859
- 4 servants
- Finally, a further son Frederick Herman was born after the 1861 Census

Also, at Slaters Oak in 1861 were Thomas Chambers, a Bailiff, and his wife, and two servants.

As one would expect, the Webers brought their daughters up to be musical. A report about winter evening entertainments in Effingham's village hall in December 1881 details a long list of 'turns' presented by residents amongst which 'The Misses H. and M. Weber, the accomplished daughters of Dr. Weber, delighted the audience with their exquisite duets and solos ...' including the duet 'My Bark is Bounding' by (presumably) Helen and May, song 'Home Sweet Home' by Helen, song 'Bluebells of Scotland' by Helen, and duet 'The Venetian Boat Song' by Helen and May [*The Surrey Advertiser and County Times*, 10 December 1881]. We may also perhaps wonder whether the Webers were responsible for an unusual item on the programme that evening: 'Mr Bion Reynolds, M.A., who came from town for the occasion, rendered some difficult pieces most effectively, especially his Bavarian mountaineer's song, with 'jadelling' [sic – presumably a mistype of yodelling].

The Webers occupied Slaters Oak from 1846/1853 until 1891 when the daughters reluctantly had to let it go (see Appendix II for extracts of letters written by Frederic and Helena's youngest daughter Mary (May), some of which discuss having to move out).



Figure 13 Photograph of 'May' (Mary) probably taken in the period 1875-1894.

Sadly, Dane House, the Beneckes house in Camberwell (later renumbered from 168 to 174) was demolished between 1907-10 for the creation of Ruskin Park. It used to stand near Champion Hill, where Ruskin Park is now, not at the present 168 Denmark Hill. While Dane House itself may have gone, the memory of the composition which took place there has been preserved. The following is from the website of the Heritage of London Trust:

‘When the 18th century villas were demolished to lay out the new Ruskin Park in 1906, a sundial with inscription was placed at the location of the Benecke’s house, paid for by the Benecke family. It commemorated Mendelssohn’s visit and composition with the words ‘Here stood the house where Mendelssohn wrote the Spring Song, 1842’. The bronze sundial was scored with a part-notation of the music. The terracotta base was decorated with Tudor roses. The Mendelssohn sundial was in very poor condition. The bronze sundial with its inscription is missing and the terracotta base has severe cracks and has been subject to poor-quality cement repairs. Heritage of London Trust and Lambeth Council joined forces to restore this base. The surface cement or mortar from past repairs was removed and missing material replaced with lime mortar. A replacement of the original bronze sundial was created based on surviving records and images.

The sundial stands in its new position inside the walled garden.’
[<https://www.heritageoflondon.org/projects/mendelssohn-sundial>]

The result of the foregoing is that we can convincingly associate Mendelssohn, and one of his *Songs without Words*, with the Beneckes and Frederic Weber, if not yet with Slaters Oak itself. But – what about the grandmother, and the Bishop?

We must rely on a lucky hit to make the link. In 1898 one of the Webers’ children, their second daughter Helen Caroline (1855-1941), then aged 42, married as his second wife Edwin Waterhouse (1841-1917) aged 56, a chartered accountant who lived at Feldemore, Holmbury. In 1905 Edwin and Helen had a son, Theodore.

From his first marriage, Edwin already had a son, Nicholas, aged 23. Nicholas was destined to become Sir Nicholas Waterhouse (of Price Waterhouse). His father’s re-marriage meant that Nicholas gained a stepmother and (although she was deceased) a step-grandmother. The step-grandmother was the Helena Louisa née Benecke at whose childhood home in Camberwell Mendelssohn had stayed whilst composing a *Song without Words*. Helena Louisa, and also her daughter Helen Caroline née Weber, had both lived at Slaters Oak.

More about the Waterhouses including photographs of them can be found in an article by Jeremy Palmer [<https://elhg.org.uk/discovery/lives/lives-the-waterhouses/>]. Suffice it to say that with his wife Audrey, Nicholas was destined to live from 1930 onwards in Effingham at Norwood Farm – just a few steps from Slaters Oak. Doubtless the coincidence of living next door to his step-mother’s childhood home was a source of family interest. In 1930 Slaters Oak was the home of the predecessors to the Hughes family, which is to say Sir Guy Meyrick Mallaby Mallaby-Deeley and his family who lived there from 1927 to 1946. Who knows whether perhaps the Mallaby-Deeleys allowed Helen Caroline Waterhouse to revisit her former home – although it had gone through various owners and considerable re-modelling since Helen and her sisters had sold it in 1891-3. Helen Caroline was 75 and a widow by this time. She died in 1941 and was buried at the church of St Mary the Virgin, Holmbury St Mary.

And the ‘Bishop’? Even he can conjecturally now be identified. Jeremy’s article reveals that

‘Sir Nicholas continued at Price Waterhouse until 1960, when at the age of 82 he finally retired. His retirement was commemorated by a visit to Norwood Farm by the Dean of Westminster Abbey, as Sir Nicholas had held the Auditorship of the Abbey from 1916.’

Sir Nicholas himself described this visit in some detail – it had clearly been a very memorable and enjoyable occasion. In his unpublished memoir *Reminiscences* is an account of it:

‘Last month I had the great pleasure of a visit at Effingham from the new Dean (whom I had not previously met), and all the members of the Chapter who came to present me with two valuable volumes of “Ackerman’s Westminster Abbey” (a copy of which in vellum Ackerman had presented to King George the Third), as a gift on my retirement. I felt almost as honoured by this visit as if I had been offered burial in the Abbey. The atmosphere was so friendly that I ventured to tell some stories and even let them know just what I, with my Quaker upbringing, thought of certain Church of England practices, such as the intoning of prayers etc! It was certainly a red-letter day for me and I was delighted when I found that the next number that was issued of the Westminster periodical *Occasional Paper* contained a page headed “A Visit to Sir Nicholas”.’

The new Dean was Rev Eric Symes Abbott (1906-1983) [see Appendix III]. He had been elected to the post in 1959 and left his post as Warden of Keble College, Oxford to take it up in 1960. Most fortunately, the periodical mentioned by Sir Nicholas still exists, and the following was kindly supplied by Miss Christine Reynolds, Assistant Keeper of the Muniments.

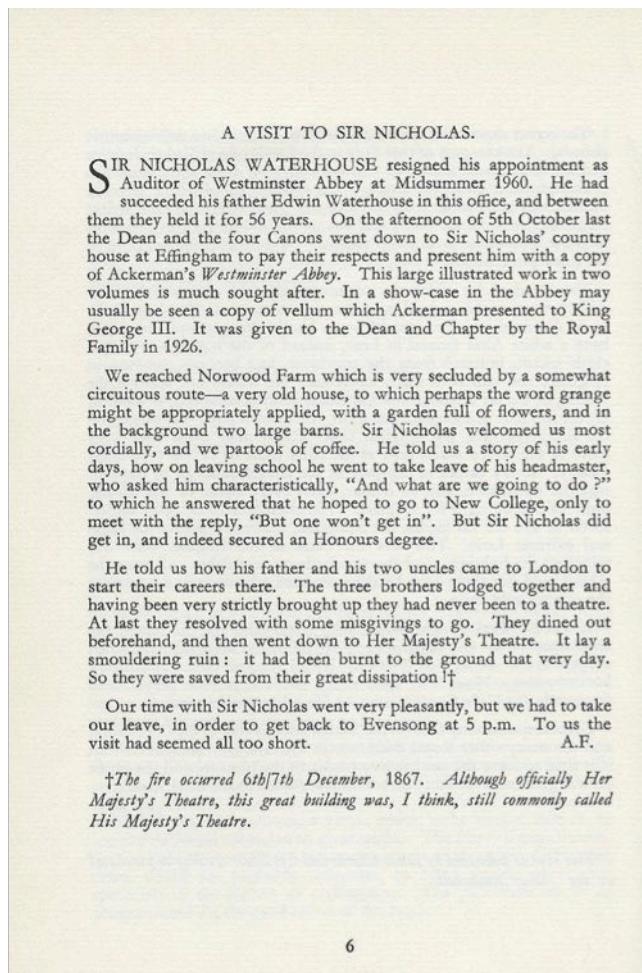


Figure 14 Eric Symes Abbott, Dean of Westminster, by William Dring, 1969; Kings College London Archives, © The Artist's Estate, Bridgeman Images.

Figure 15 The article in the Occasional Paper describing the visit to Sir Nicholas, written by Canon Adam Fox.

Conclusion

From all of the above we may surmise that:

- In 1960, a Dean, rather than a Bishop, came to visit Sir Nicholas Waterhouse at Norwood Farm. They reminisced about Sir Nicholas's family history.
- Sir Nicholas's step-mother had been Helen Caroline née Weber, and she had spent time at Slaters Oak from her birth in 1855 until she and her sisters let the house in 1891. More significantly, Sir Nicholas's step-grandmother had been Helena Louisa Benecke / Weber who spent time at Slaters Oak between her marriage in 1846 and her death in 1890. In 1842 when Helena Louisa was a girl in London, Mendelssohn had stayed with her family, and while there he wrote two of his *Songs without Words*.
- From 1946 Sir Nicholas's neighbour at Slaters Oak was Col Hughes. Either Sir Nicholas told the Colonel about the visit of the Dean, or perhaps the Colonel had even been present as a guest.
- Sir Nicholas died in 1964.
- Presumably at some time in the period 1964-1970 (in other words when Sir Nicholas was no longer around to corroborate, and more probably after 1967 when the research for *The History of Effingham in Surrey* began), Col Hughes and Monica O'Connor had a chat. Between them they remembered and recorded a version of the facts.

In summary, if we were to re-express this more accurately, the original text reading

‘Colonel Hughes told the writer that he had had a visit from a Bishop who told him that Slaters Oak was the home of his (the Bishop's) grandmother and that Mendelssohn composed one of his *Songs without Words* there.’

would become

‘Colonel Hughes told the writer that Sir Nicholas Waterhouse of Norwood Farm had had a visit there from the Dean of Westminster. Sir Nicholas told the Dean that Slaters Oak was the country home of his (Sir Nicholas's) step-grandmother, and that Mendelssohn had composed two of his *Songs without Words* at her childhood home in London.’

ILLUSTRATIONS

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 Figure 12: from *Ancestry*, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1754-1940
 Figure 13: Surrey History Centre, Ref: 7854/4/47/3/5
 Figure 14: Kings College London Archives, Accession No KCL011; © Bridgeman Images
 Figure 15: courtesy of the Dean and Chapter Library, Westminster Abbey
 Figures 16-18: Surrey History Centre, Refs: 7854/4/43/22/34, 33 and 36

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Jeremy Palmer, for discovering and sharing the unpublished memoir which includes the information about the Dean's visit to Sir Nicholas Waterhouse at Norwood Farm. This effectively cracked the case, making all the rest discoverable backwards. The memoir is *Reminiscences*, 1877-1960 by Nicholas E. Waterhouse, 1961, CT788.W38 R45 1961, part of the Wyndham Lewis Collection in the Burke Library, Hamilton College, New York.

Grateful thanks are also due to Prof R Larry Todd for identifying a specific date on which Weber, Mendelssohn and the Beneckes were all together, and also in pointing us to the *Sämtliche Briefe*, the ‘complete’ correspondence of Mendelssohn in 12 volumes, that revealed the strength of the relationship of the Webers and the Beneckes with Mendelssohn. Prof Todd also drew our notice to the following sources which have not been consulted for this article, but in due course may reveal more:

- ‘the *Mendelssohn-Werkverzeichnis* [*Mendelssohn Work Index*] by Ralf Wehner (Leipzig, Breitkopf & Haertel, 2009) – the first modern fully researched music catalogue of the works of Felix Mendelssohn. It lists the autographs of those pieces, including all the dated ones that have survived. If we could pin down when Mendelssohn might have visited Surrey, then it would be possible to check the dated autographs of the *Lieder ohne Worte* in case there are any correspondences. I'm dubious, though, that there are, but Mendelssohnian riddles often take unusual turns’.
- ‘the Mendelssohn pocket diaries are in the M. Deneke Mendelssohn Collection at the Bodleian Library (I believe the call numbers are g.1-10; there is a catalogue that was published by Margaret Crum in the 1980s with Hans Schneider in Tutzing.’
- ‘the Bodleian (which has one of the largest collections of Mendelssohniana in the world) also preserves the *Gegenbriefe* to Mendelssohn, that is, about 6000 letters to the composer. Margaret Crum also published a checklist of these letters by correspondent, which is indexed (also published by Hans Schneider, Tutzing). One could check to see if Weber appears there.’

APPENDIX I

Occupiers of Slaters Oak

Between the Webers and the Hughes family, the occupiers of Slaters Oak were

Mrs Slack 1891-1893
Miss F A Levien 1893-1907
Misses Gradwell and Richardson 1907-1927
Sir Guy Mallaby-Deeley and family 1927-1946

APPENDIX II

Extracts from correspondence

Mary 'May' Beatrice Weber (born London 22 December 1859) was the youngest but one of the Weber children. Surrey History Centre (SHC) holds several letters written by her to Susan Lushington of Pyports, Cobham, which record for instance her and her sisters' sadness about having to face the sale of Slaters Oak. Extracts from these letters have been reproduced below.

May's father Frederic died on 10 March 1886 aged 77 and was buried at West Norwood Cemetery. Their London family home up to this time had been the very spacious 44 Green Street, and at some point the ladies moved from there to 25 Leinster Gardens. Helena Louisa Wilhelmina died aged 63 on 8 October 1890, and on 13 October 1890 was buried in the same grave as Frederic. After their mother's death, the three sisters moved again, to 4 Blomfield Crescent in west London, today's Westbourne Grove area. In June 1891 the executors, presumably Frederic's two surviving sons, arranged for an auction to sell the contents of Slaters Oak, 'it being let'. The lease was taken up by a Mrs Slack, but in 1893 she moved on and at that point the property was sold to Miss Levien. Some of May's letters refer mournfully to this parting with Slaters Oak.

Susan Lushington who appears as a correspondent and friend of May was a sister of Katherine 'Kitty' Lushington, wife of Leo Maxse of Dunley Hill, Effingham.

Other letters in the SHC collection were exchanged between Lushington siblings and also mention the Webers in passing. Many of the letters are undated so the order in which they are given below is by no means guaranteed to be chronological.

19 June, no year

From May at Slaters Oak to Susan

'Dearest Susan,
I have only just got your letter sent on from L. S.[?] and that is the reason you did not see me yesterday. We came here last Saturday, & find the country very delicious after the bit of season we have had ... I shall hope to see you as soon as you come to Pyports, by the way how horrid it is to see the Labalmondiers in your house, not that I have any objection to them but I want you.'

7854/4/43/22/34

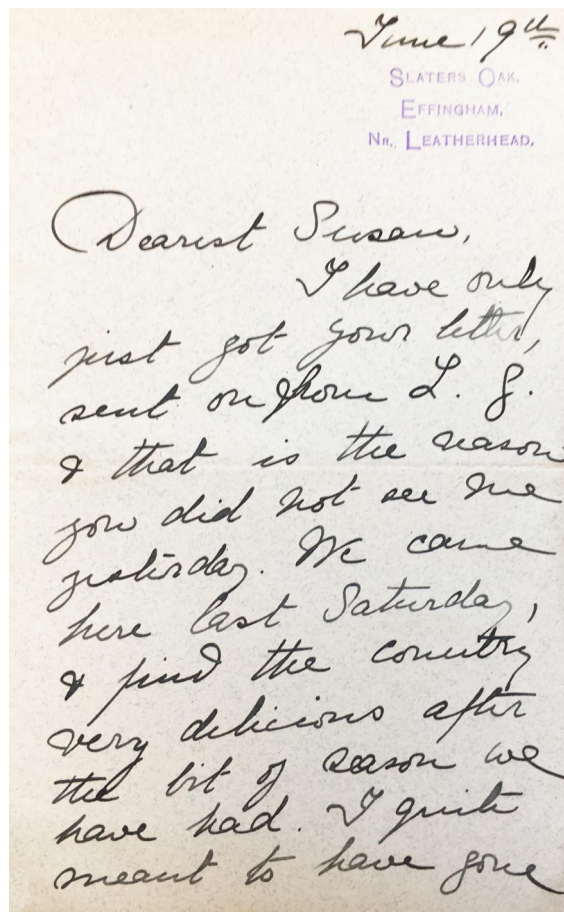


Figure 16 This letter paper is stamped with the Slaters Oak address.

No date

May at Slaters Oak to Susan

'Dearest Susie

Here we have been actually three weeks already, the time does go so fast, & we enjoy the drives & rides in this glorious country immensely ... Pyports looks so dreary when we pass & know you are not there.'

7854/4/43/22/33

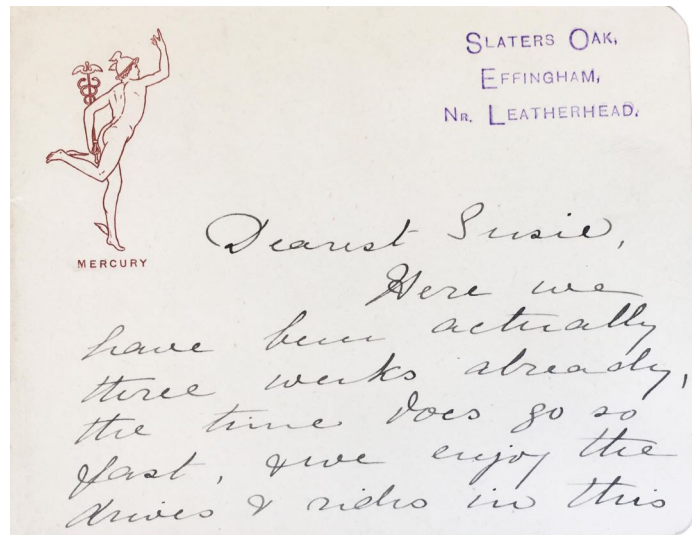


Figure 17 This notecard is headed with the address of Slaters Oak, and a charming figure of Mercury, messenger of the gods.

28 July, no year

May at Slaters Oak to Susan

This is also written on 'Slaters Oak' headed notepaper

May writes to say she is off to Scotland to stay with friends at Aboyne. She is also invited to the Lawsons and will be going to Miss Gurney's.

7854/4/43/22/35

22 May, no year, but probably 1887 after her father's death.

May at Slaters Oak to Susan Lushington

There is a reference to Katherine (Kitty) Lushington breaking off her engagement to Charles Howard to whom she was engaged for a brief period in 1887.

'Why have you gone back to calling me Miss W, I used to be May last year! I am indeed sorry to hear of your trouble dear Susie, it must be very sad for you all, especially your poor sister. I know how fond you are of all the Howards & can imagine how trying a separation from them must be, & feel sure the country will be far more congenial than town to you under the circumstances. We have let our town house for 5 months [presumably 44 Green Street] & are established here, so please let me know when you go back to Pyports.'

7854/4/43/22/36

18 November, no year

May D Weber, 44 Green Street, Grosvenor Square, W, to Susan Lushington

This is likely to be after 15 June 1888 from the reference to the death of Frederick William Crown Prince of the German Empire and the succession of his son William (Kaiser Wilhelm).

Thanking Susan for her letter.

'I am very sorry to hear that your sister has been so unwell & I hope that Malvern will do her good ... Helen has just come back from Italy ... Are you not sorry for the poor Crown Prince? It seems he has

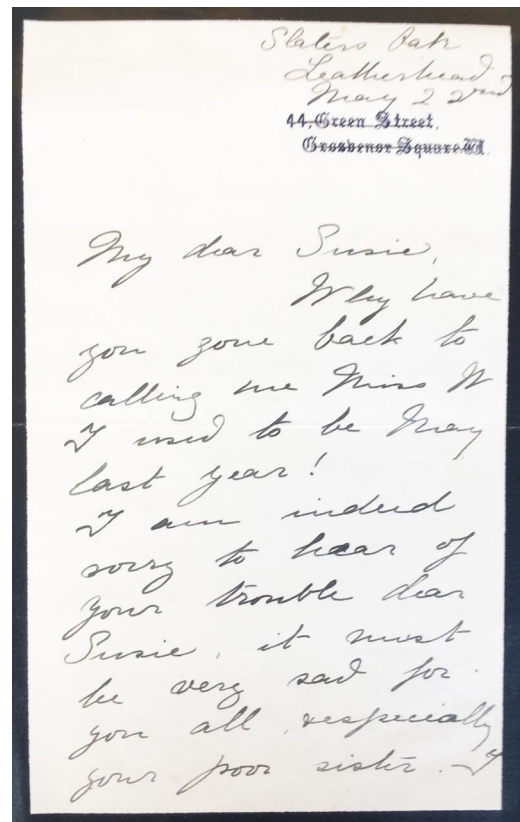


Figure 18 Mourning stationery with a black edge.

been ill for some years it is only that we English have not known of it before. The Germans have known it a long time & looked on William as the future Emperor. There is to be another demonstration on Sunday, & I expect there will be a collision between police, soldiers, & people like last week, it is very disturbing & one cannot see what is to be the end of it, & what the roughs think they can gain unless it is a better circulation from the exercise. The Park is nearly always full of rough fellows now, & police looking after them.'

7854/4/43/22/32

29 November, no year

May D Weber, 44 Green Street, Grosvenor Square, to Susan

'Saw your sister Margaret at the Herschel Concert on Tuesday'.

May had been travelling in Warwickshire visiting Kenilworth, Warwick Castle, Stratford, Evesham, Oxford.

'We stopped at the Randolph Hotel & were very comfy. I was much struck with Sir Joshua Reynolds window in the chapel at New [College], isn't it glorious?'

7854/4/43/22/37

21 September, no year but probably 1890

From May to Susan

Kitty Lushington became engaged to Leo Maxse in 1890 and they married at St Andrew's Church, Cobham on 23 December 1890. Kitty died in 1922 and a persistent rumour began that she was the 'inspiration', if that is the right word, for Mrs Dalloway in Virginia Woolf's 1925 novel of that name. Mrs Dalloway committed suicide by throwing herself off an upper balcony. 'Mrs Maxse' was Cecilia née Steel, the wife of Admiral Frederick Augustus Maxse of Dunley Hill, Effingham. This couple had separated long since but remained on amiable terms and never divorced. The two Maxse daughters were Violet and Olive.

'I am so glad to hear you are pleased at Kitty's engagement ... I did not even know there was a Mrs Maxse, as I had only heard of the two daughters, please tell me more!'

7854/4/43/22/29

25 October, no year

May at 25 Leinster Gardens to Susan

This letter has a black border for mourning; May's mother died 8 October 1890. May is reflecting on the fate of the three unmarried daughters, Henrietta, Helen and herself, now aged approx 38, 35 and 31 respectively.

'After our father died it was so different – he left us our mother to watch over & help, but now there seems to be nothing to live for! We three shall live together still, but we must move into a smaller house as soon as we can let this one, & we shall have to let Slaters Oak too! I wonder whether you can help me to find a place for our coachman whom we are very sorry to have to part with, he has been with us 20 years, but is only 45 and wants a quiet place in town or country, he is very recommendable in every way, is married and has no children. Perhaps you may know of someone wanting a man they can rely on without supervision.'

7854/4/43/22/30

9 December, no year – presumably 1890

May at 25 Leinster Gardens, Bayswater, to Susan Lushington

The letter has a black mourning border. 'Booth's book' is presumably the first of Charles Booth's 17-volume *Life and Labour of the People in London*. Volume 1 was published in 1889.

'I expect you are full of wedding preparations now, as I hear it is to come off this year still ... we shall be very busy moving into our new house next week ... 4 Blomfield Crescent ... It is just at the top of Westbourne Terrace, on the other side of the bridge. We would rather have been nearer to our friends on Campden Hill, Kensington Square &c, but could not find a decent house for the rent we can give, & so had to give up the position. It is a nice house with just the right number of rooms for us three. I am glad to say our coachman has got a place, he went into it straight from us, which was a comfort, it would so horrid to be out of work in the winter. We have been much interested in reading Booth's

book, though of course it is very sad, I only hope he may be able to do some good to the wretched unemployed for they need it sadly. I should like to hear your father on Parnell & Gladstone just now!' 7854/4/43/22/31

4 February 1891

Susan Lushington, 36 Kensington Square, to her father Vernon Lushington, Reading.

She is just leaving to join the orchestra in playing Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony. Kitty and Leo and Christopher [Howard?] are coming to dine with Susan and Margaret.

'I have just come in from a long walk through the gardens & from having tea with May Weber. It was the first time I had been to see her in their new house & talked over her plans after her Mother's death. I am afraid their means must be very low as they have finally come to the sad conclusion that they must sell Slaters Oak their dear little house on Effingham Common. It is a fearful wrench to them. They have lived there all their lives. It was a wedding present to their Mother & she went there with their father for their honeymoon.'

7854/3/9/28a-b

Perhaps the decision to sell Slaters Oak was staved off for a little while longer. The daughters did however have to clear out the family possessions. In June 1891 the executors advertised an auction of the contents because the house had been let; presumably the new tenant wanted it empty.

31 October, no year – ?1891

May answering Susan's letter.

'We are beginning to shake down in our new quarters ... I have had most of it to do as Helen [her older sister, the future wife of Edwin Waterhouse] started for Italy very soon after we got up to town ... I don't know of anyone wanting a country house just now but I will think of your friends at St Ives.'

7854/4/43/22/28

January 1893

Susan Lushington, 36 Kensington Square, to Vernon Lushington, Reading

She has been skating and to a ball. Visitors to their 'At Home' included Emma Vaughan, Hilda Barry, Christopher Howard, Claude Russell, Mr & Mrs Legge, Mrs Kemp Welch, Stella and Gerald Duckworth, May Weber, Margaret & Arthur Stanley, Myra Jerningham, Stephen & Diana Massingberd.

7854/3/9/48a-b

30 June 1893

Margaret Lushington, 36 Kensington Square, to Vernon Lushington, Oxford.

She has been practising music:

'Mildred & I went off to Shakespeare who I think was pretty pleased & gave me a most excellent lesson. He is such a delightful musician every note he played gives me joy.' She was later visited by Eva Ashton, May Weber, Maude & Gwen Parry, Mrs Leonbard Darwin, Mildred Massingberd, Mary Massingberd, Stephen Massingberd, Mr Fielding, Mr Ball, Hugh Norris & Gerald [Duckworth?]. Miss Wetton, Charley & Hubert Howard came to dinner after which they all went to see "The Taming of the Shrew" with Stella Duckworth and Gerald Duckworth.'

['Shakespeare' was William Shakespeare who was a fashionable and sought-after singing teacher at the end of the nineteenth century. He taught at the Royal Academy of Music and was the author of 'The Art of Singing'. Lucy Broadwood took lessons from Shakespeare in 1884.]

7854/3/8/65a-b

Shortly after this, ie by September 1893, the lease for Slaters Oak had come vacant again, and the property was finally sold to Miss F A Levien.

By order of the Exors.—Slater's Oak, Effingham Common (two minutes from Effingham Junction).
MESSRS. WATERER and SONS are instructed by the Exors., the property being let, to sell by Auction, upon the premises, as above, on **MONDAY, June 22nd, 1891**, at 11 for 12 o'clock, the whole of the **HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE**, comprising bedsteads, bedding, and usual bedroom appointments, linen, drawing room and dining-room furniture including mahogany dining tables, antique pedestal clock, pictures, carpets, china and glass, kitchen utensils, dairy utensils, &c. Also a valuable dark bay cob, pure-bred Alderney in-calf cow, three well-bred heifers, two sows, 10 store pigs, about 40 head of poultry well-built park phaeton, capital dog-cart, a spring cart, pony cart, and a useful manure cart, harness, saddles, &c.; small rick of prime meadow hay, chain harrow, chaff-cutting machine, oat crusher, ladders, 10 acres of standing grass, few greenhouse plants, garden seat, lawn mowing machine, tools, and numerous other effects.
 May be viewed the morning of sale, and catalogues obtained upon the premises, and of the Auctioneers, at either of their Offices, Chertsey, opposite the Booking Office, Weybridge Station, and opposite the Station Entrance, Walton-on-Thames. 6733

Figure 19 Advertisement for the auction of the contents of Slaters Oak in 1891; *West Middlesex Herald*, 13 June 1891. Note that by this time, proximity to the recently-opened Effingham Junction Station was a feature of the advertisement.

Slater's Oak, Effingham, Surrey, three minutes walk from Effingham Junction Station.
MESSRS. WATERER and SONS have received instructions from Mrs. Slack, who is leaving the neighbourhood, to sell by Auction, on the premises as above, on **WEDNESDAY, September 27th, 1893**, at eleven for twelve o'clock, the superior **HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, LIVE STOCK, HAY**, and other Effects, comprising tubular brass and iron French bedsteads, bedroom suites in pine, &c., marble-top washstands, chests of drawers, and the usual bedroom appointments; set of mahogany telescope dining tables, rosewood, card, and other tables, antique carved oak tables and chests, oak bookshelves, bamboo settee, mahogany Chippendale and other chairs, art squares and Kidderminster carpets, Axminster, black buck, and tiger skin rugs, kitchen utensils, 8-day dial, 20lbs. of superior orange Pekoe tea, direct from the plantation, an excellent fast grey pony, battlesden car, and harness, capital black mare with good action, three well-bred Ayrshire shorthorn and Jersey cows, pedigree terrier, small rick of new and stump of old meadow hay, nearly new 2-knife chaff cutter, American hand lawn mowing machine, garden implements, and other useful effects.
 May be viewed the day previous and morning of sale, and catalogues had of the Auctioneers, at either of their Offices, at Chertsey, Weybridge Station, and opposite the Station Entrance, Walton-on-Thames. 11617

Figure 20 Advertisement for the auction of the contents of Slaters Oak in 1893. It is not impossible that Mrs Slack had purchased the Webers' contents when she took on the lease in 1891. *West Middlesex Herald*, 18 Sept 1893.

APPENDIX III

Concerning Eric Abbott: the "Bishop"

The role of Dean of Westminster Abbey is a particularly special one and Abbott filled it with great success. He was somewhat more important than any old bishop. From *Wikipedia*:

"The Abbey ... is a Royal Peculiar meaning the dean answers directly to the monarch ... While dean, in addition to leading many national memorials and celebrations, he conducted three royal weddings: the wedding of Princess Margaret and Antony Armstrong-Jones, the wedding of Princess Alexandra and Angus Ogilvy, and the wedding of Princess Anne and Mark Phillips. After the death of Princess Margaret it was reported that she regarded Eric Abbott as "a father figure." He presided over the 900th anniversary of the founding of the abbey in 1965–1966. In the 1966 New Year Honours, he was appointed a Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (KCVO), although clergymen do not use the title "sir". Despite his unstable health, he served fifteen years as dean before retiring in 1974."

APPENDIX IV

When the Colonel met the Cows – The Daily Mirror, 23 June 1959

WHEN THE COLONEL MET THE COWS . . .

WHAT happened when the Colonel met the cows cost a farmer and his son a total of £36 15s. yesterday.

THE COLONEL was driving a Triumph TR2 sports car which had just been resprayed. **THE COWS**—fifty of them—were spread across the road.

And the Colonel told the county court at Epsom, Surrey, that after he had tooted his horn behind the cows while travelling at “cow walking pace,” the drover turned round and hit the car with a stick “as hard as he could.”

Then, he alleged, after he had threaded his way through the cows, a man at the front of the herd rushed at the car and something hit the back of it.

Colonel Charles Hughes, who is retired, of Slaters Oak, Effingham, sued Mr. Archibald Murrells, of Leewood Farm, Effingham, and his son, Frank, of Effingham Common-road, Effingham, for damages arising out of the incident.

He claimed £7 10s. special damages and £100 general damages. The Murrells counter-claimed for £100 damages, alleging that the Colonel ran Frank Murrells down.

continued on next page ...

He claimed £7 10s. special damages and £100 general damages. The Murrells counter-claimed for £100 damages, alleging that the Colonel ran Frank Murrells down.

Colonel Hughes, 63, said he was driving across Effingham Common on November 25 last year when he came up behind the cows.

He slowed from thirty-five to forty miles per hour to "walking cow" pace—about two to four miles an hour.

'Lot of Noise'

His car engine made a lot of noise, but the man at the back of the herd took no notice.

After about a minute, with the drover doing nothing to assist him to get through, "I gave one toot on the horn," said Colonel Hughes.

"The drover immediately turned round and hit my car on the wing as hard as he could with the stick in his hand. Then he came nearer and hit it less hard on the bonnet.

"He said: 'That will teach you manners, whoever you are.'

"I recognised him as Frank Murrells."

Colonel Hughes said he got out and said he would report the matter.

Frank Murrells, he alleged, replied: "Report it to who the hell you like."

'Bump on Car'

Colonel Hughes said he got back into his car and manoeuvred through the cows.

As he got to the other end of the herd, he saw Archibald Murrells, who rushed towards him and either kicked or hit the back of his car.

The Colonel said there was a bump on the car which would have to be repaired and re-cellulosed.

During the lunch adjournment, the judge and barristers went into a yard behind the court.

There, the judge listened while

2 FARMERS HIT SPORTS CAR

the Colonel revved and idled the engine of the car.

At the judge's request the Colonel gave a toot on the horn.

Frank Murrells, 30, who is in partnership with his father at Leewood Farm, said he was at the back of the fifty-strong herd and his father in front.

The car came up so close behind him that it touched his gum-boots, he said.

"The engine was revving up and down and the hooter was being continuously sounded."

He said he shouted: "Wait a minute," and swished his stick behind him, hitting the car on the opposite side to a dent which the judge had been shown.

Frank Murrells added that he hit the car only once.

'Straight at Me'

Archibald Murrells, 59, a county councillor, said he was standing at the gate of a field which the cows were going into when the car came up.

"I stepped out into the road and signalled him to slow down. He came straight at me and I jumped on to the grass verge," he said.

"The hood brushed my left arm as it passed. If I had not jumped out of the way he would have run me down.

"He was going very fast and came at me like a flying bullet."

Judge Lionel Jellinek awarded a total of £36 15s. damages with costs against Mr. Murrells and his son.

"I think it is monstrous that the Colonel should be unable to drive his car through a herd of cows without young Mr. Murrells hitting it three times with a stick," he said.

"Mr. Murrells, senior," said the judge, "gave the car a bang with his fist and behaved like a stupid child in a rage."

Colonel Hughes was awarded costs.