

# **Derek Shuttleworth and Mashams**

**Memoir by Patrick Streeter**



**A watercolour of the front of the  
house, painted by a visitor.**

**Frances Phillips in 1995**

## **Derek Shuttleworth and Mashams**

In this memoir it is hoped to catch on paper the extraordinary character of Derek Shuttleworth, and to describe his background and family so that the reader might understand a little of the man and how he came to found the Masham's project.

The Shuttleworths originally came from Lancashire where they were gentry and lawyers. Derek's great Grandfather Edward, was a clergyman who was vicar of Egloshayle in Cornwall and Canon of Truro. His eldest son Henry Cary Shuttleworth was born in Cornwall and then from Forest School Walthamstow, won a scholarship to Oxford. He took Holy Orders in 1873 and his career as a clergyman left an impressive imprint. A noted athlete when young and a musician all his life and a lover of the theatre, he became a Canon of St. Paul's., lectured in Divinity at King's College, London, identified with the Christian Socialist movement and in 1889, while Rector of St Nicholas Cole Abbey in the City of London, founded his most lasting memorial, the Shuttleworth Club. This club was for the education and recreation of young people who lived and worked in the area and was remarkable for its time as both men and women were members of equal status. Henry worked excessively hard to such an extent that he endangered his health and in 1899 he was taken seriously ill. In the October of that year he died at the early age of 51. Testimonials at his death describe him as an unstuffy man with the common touch who was loved and



*Written by James  
H. Shuttleworth.*

Reverend Henry Cary Shuttleworth 1848 – 1899



Verena Shuttleworth 1883 - 1959

respected by the young clerks and warehouse workers with whom he worked.

Henry had married in 1879 Mary Fuller, the daughter of a Brighton doctor. They had three sons and three daughters. Laurence, the eldest was a scholar at St. John's, Oxford and gained a first class degree in Oriental Languages. During the First World War he served with the East Surrey Regiment on secret assignments in the Middle East. On one occasion he took £100,000 worth of bullion and an escort of men to Khartoum to buy camels, He later served in Macedonia where he found the dagger that is now kept at Mashams. He then caught Malaria, a disease that dogged him for the rest of his life. His war experiences and the Malaria, however, deeply depressed him. He became a schoolmaster at Cheltenham College and married in 1921 Emma Bennett daughter of the Headmaster of Sutton Valiance School but he never recovered his health and committed suicide in 1925.

Kingsley, the third son was only three when his father died. He followed him to Forest School and enlisted as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. with the Suffolk Regiment in the Great War. He was killed in action in 1917 aged 20 and is buried at Tyne Cot cemetery.

Derek's mother. Verena, the second daughter, was born in 1883. She worked as a private secretary to Edward Speyer at Ridgehurst, Shenley, Herts for 19 years from 1906 and in 1911 when she was 27 Derek was born. The birth was out of wedlock and the father was understood to be a vet in the Royal Household. Derek would never speak of his father except to say he was totally despicable.

Whoever he was he had no further connection with the little family except perhaps providing financial support. Verena stayed on at Ridgehurst and in the last year of the War struck up a close friendship with a French airman, Roland Garros. He had been taken prisoner in 1915, escaped in 1918. rejoined and was killed in October of that year. There are at Masharns school essays by the young Derek describing these exploits. This tragedy of the war must have been particularly hard for Verena because she had also been very close to her brother Kingsley who had been killed a year earlier.

Although Derek knew that he was his mother's son he was brought up to tell the outside world that he was her nephew. His birth was never registered and he was given the surname Borboen. a totally made up name although it might have been inspired by a property owned by some Shuttleworth cousins called Barbon Manor. Derek was hampered by not having a birth certificate. This problem was partly remedied with the help of a declaration sworn by Lady Caillard in 1931 when he was 20. This document states incorrectly, -

The said Derek Borboen was born at Ashburton Mansions. Chelsea, London, on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of August. 1911. At that time I was on intimate terms with his mother and I was present a few hours after his birth. His mother died shortly after the birth and his father soon afterwards. I do not know where they are buried. To the best of my belief the child was never registered hut I know he was christened some considerable time afterwards when he had been adopted by his aunt.' it is not surprising that with

such subterfuge surrounding his birth and upbringing Derek was to develop a prickly temperament. It is interesting to note that within a year of his mother's death in 1959 he changed his name by deed poll to Shuttleworth and even in her obituary in the Parish Magazine Derek is described as her nephew.

At the age of 13, after attending a preparatory school. Derek enrolled at Aldenham School situated near where he and his mother were still living at Shenley. By all accounts he was happy there; he made some lifelong friends and always kept in touch with the school. Two years later his mother bought Mashams for £360. Conditions were primitive. Water came from a pump and the outside privy was 50 yards away. Derek as first found the small garden disappointing after the extensive grounds of Ridgeway but he soon grew to love it. After Aldenham he went up to Corpus Christie College Cambridge to read History and Modern Languages. It was at Cambridge that Derek first contemplated marriage but was advised that because of his financial circumstances he should not take matters further. He then spent seven years with the Gas. Light and Coke Company but he had no business acumen and this was an unsatisfactory time. More fulfilling was the voluntary work he did in the evening at the Aldenham School boys' club in Kentish Town. Here he met Basil Henriques. Chairman of Toynbee Hall Juvenile Court who suggested he trained as a probation officer. This he did joining that Court in 1938. At the outbreak of war Derek enlisted as a Lance Bombardier and was subsequently commissioned as a 2nd Lieut. in the Royal Fusiliers. He saw service in India and



Derek in Düsseldorf 1947



Burma and ended the war as a Major and Company Commander.

Meanwhile Verena, who was commuting to London to earn her living before the war, kept the home fires burning at Mashams. She took in evacuees, dug for victory, rode about on a motorbike. Kept hens and maintained an Air Warden's Post. When peacetime came Derek returned to Toynbee Hall but then volunteered for a post on Allied authorities in Dusseldorf re-establishing the German probation service. Here Derek was involved in another romance but again circumstances prevented it becoming permanent.. By all indications this was one of the happiest periods of his life. Two and a half years later he returned to East London and worked as a Probation Officer with the Juvenile Court at Old Street. He was involved in literacy schemes in the area and in 1953 set up the Redvers Club, partly financed by a glue millionaire, in a Nissan hut on a bombsite just off Hoxton Street. The club was for unclubbables' and would open five days a week with table tennis and a vaulting horse among the facilities. The ages of members could vary from 3 to 23 and the club became an accepted part of the local community. In 1963 it was succeeded by the Hoxton Café Project. It was said that the existence of this club was due to the dogged persistence of Derek whose life was dedicated to bettering the lives of the young Hoxtonians. Indeed the bad behaviour of delinquents caused the closure of the club for 9 months but Derek's determination ensured its reopening. Derek retired from the Probation Service in 1975.



Derek with visitors in the garden of Mashams. Summer 1986



The garden party. Mashams 1986

Colleagues of Derek at work and later when the Mashams Project was set up could find working with him exasperating, but all the time there was a powerful force of goodness shining through him but his extreme sensitivity would make him capricious. This was compensated by an iron determination to see any project through. On one occasion he housed a homeless family in his room and, until the local authority agreed to take them in, slept on the floor himself.

After the war Verena worked as a teacher at St. Nicholas School, Old Harlow and she died aged 76 in 1959. Derek would live in London during the week at Toynbee Hall, or nearby, and come out to Mashams at weekends. His relationship with his mother worked best if he kept her at a bit of a distance.

Derek retired at 65 and enjoyed a fruitful 23 years of retirement. For a number of years he ran the local youth club and also the Good Companions, a club for older people. The garden he created at Mashams was magical and he liked nothing more than inviting groups of schoolchildren down on summer afternoons to enjoy his house and garden. The annual summer garden party, started in 19?? and became a local institution. In later years, in consequence of his service in the Artillery, he became hard of hearing, but refused to claim an Army pension for this disability. Like many deaf people his hearing was amusingly selective. In 1992 a Trust was set up to continue the educational and charitable work of Mashams. Derek remained active right up to his last year and died peacefully in December 1997.

