

THE HOMES OF WINSTON GRAHAM

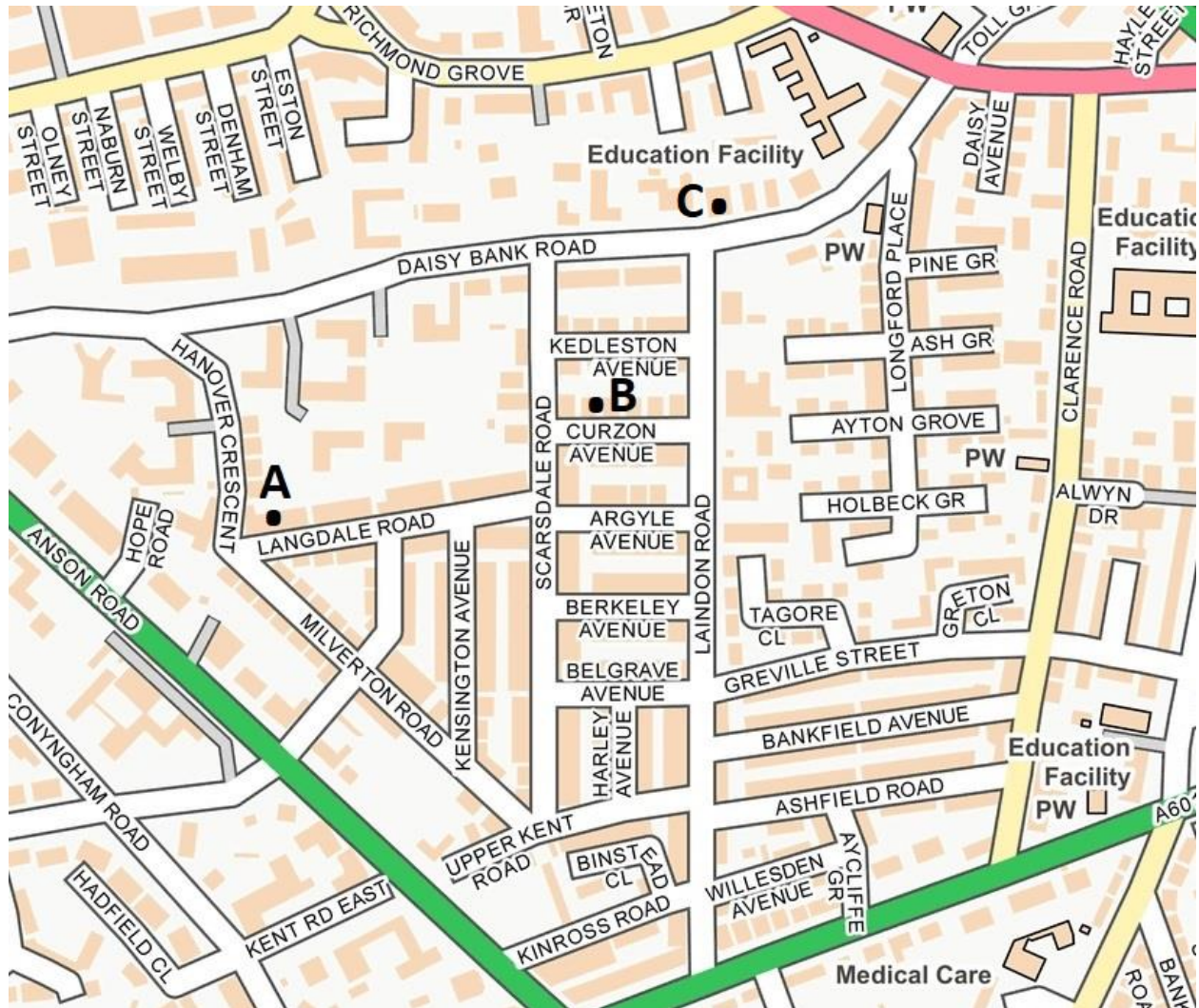
(1) From eight a.m. on 30 June 1908, when he was born, until he was two, WG lived at **66 Langdale Road, Victoria Park, Manchester** (present day postcode: M14 5PN), with his parents Albert and Annie Grime, his elder brother Cecil (who, born on 25 September 1898, was almost ten years older than Winston) plus domestic help.



[64-66 Langdale Road, Victoria Park, Manchester¹](#)

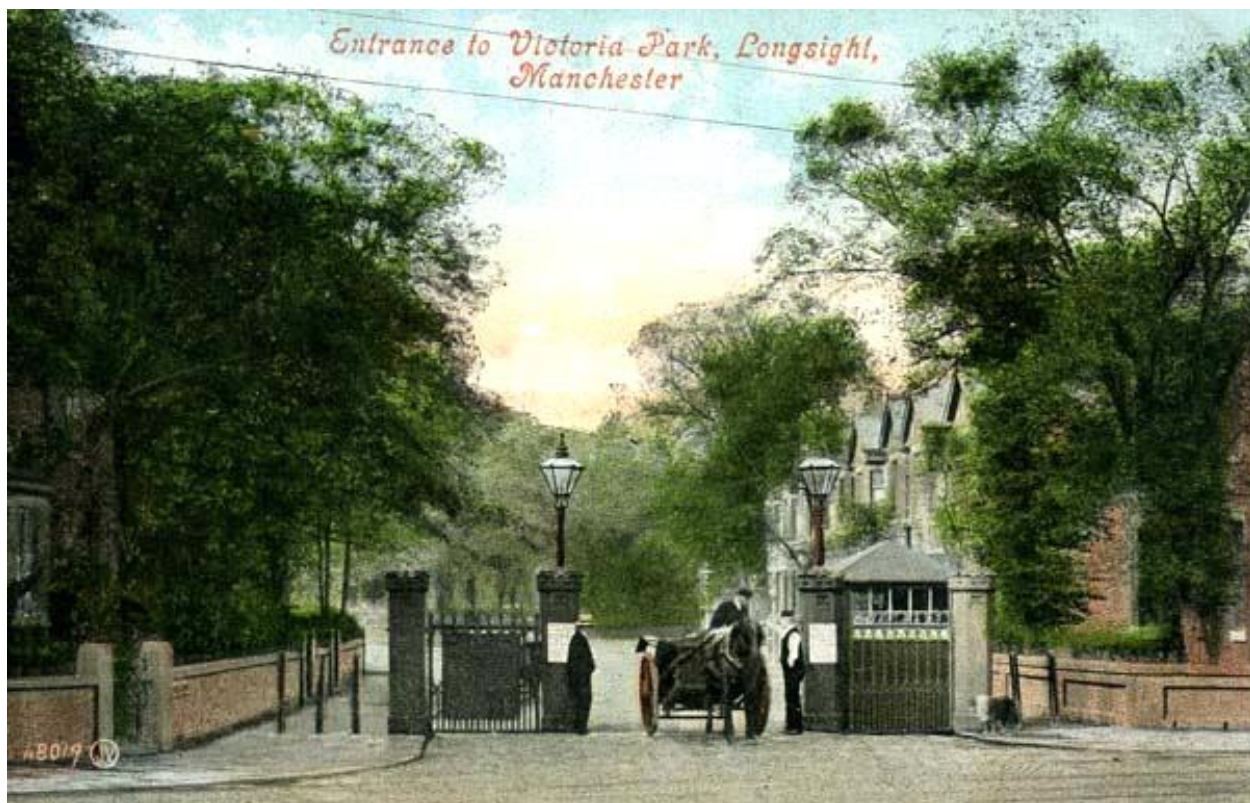
According to WG, his father was "a wholesale merchant ... with a firm of tea importers"² – on the 1911 census form Albert described himself as a "commercial traveller" in the "grocery" business – who, later, following the tea firm's

demise, was given management responsibility at his wife's family's thriving pharmaceutical supply company D. Mawdsley & Co. (which, under a slightly different name, thrives to this day). This "aroused intense jealousy" in his brother-in-law Tom. Sometime in 1910 the Grimes moved the short distance across Victoria Park from their terraced home in Langdale Road to a newly-built semi-detached property in Curzon Avenue.



Victoria Park, Manchester

This page: A: 66 Langdale Road; B: 18 Curzon Avenue; C: Longsight Grammar School (attended by WG from circa 1917 to 1923). Next page: (1) East side gated entrance (2) Milverton Road, which intersects with Langdale Road, at around the time of WG's birth.



(2) From 1910 until October 1925 – this, then, the home he grew up in – WG lived at **18 Curzon Avenue, Victoria Park, Manchester** (present day post-code: M14 5PU). This "tall, narrow, semi-detached" property was, according to WG, "a somewhat better house" than his birthplace. He describes it in some detail in his semi-autobiographical short story "The Island". In addition to father, mother and two sons, the 1911 census shows also living at the address WG's Aunt Ellen (his mother's younger sister; a spinster of "private means") and 23-year-old domestic servant Ellen Moore.



18 (on the right) and 20 Curzon Avenue, Victoria Park, Manchester

In November 1921 Albert suffered a "severe stroke" which left him "physically ... a ruined man". Annie's health, too, was uncertain, with the damp air of Manchester said to exacerbate her constant catarrh and winter bronchitis. Cecil, meanwhile, was "frustrated beyond measure in his dead-end job" – all in all, then, by 1925 the family was more than ready for a move. Southport and St. Anne's (Blackpool) were considered – but Cecil and his fiancée had just paid a first, life-changing visit to far-off Cornwall (a holiday destination chosen at random from a railway guide) and couldn't wait to return.

(3) So off to the small village of **Perranporth** on the north Cornish coast they all went; parents and WG first in October 1925 followed by Cecil and his new bride Elsie six months later. J F Healey, a local builder was engaged to erect a house and shop which Cecil and Elsie would occupy and run as a draper's. (The chemist's next door was owned by Cyril Polgreen, whose son Ridley would become, until his death "at the grievously early age of thirty-two", not only a friend of WG's but instrumental in the naming of Ross Poldark.) The parents took a year's lease on **Chybean** (meaning "Little House") in **St Michael's Road**; WG described it as "a furnished bungalow on rising ground three hundred yards from the proposed shop".³



[Chybean \(since demolished\) in 2009](#)

Though already by this time most of the local mines were long closed, one – Cligga Head, originally a tin mine but latterly worked for wolfram – remained in production until 1944, giving WG the opportunity to mix with and learn from working miners; also (presumably) to inspect the mine, its hardware and its levels. "Wheal Leisure" in his books is named for an old copper mine once located in the centre of Perranporth, but its physical description is said to match closely Cligga Head.

(4) From November 1926 until 18 September 1939 (his wedding day), WG lived at **Tresloe Vean, Perrancoombe, Perranporth, Cornwall** (present day postcode: TR6 0HY) with both his parents until his father's death, aged 60, in November 1927, then alone (except for domestic help) with his mother.⁴



[Tresloe Vean in 2009](#)

A mile south of the village, the house was "one of only three put up by a speculative builder" and at that time had no electricity, piped water or telephone (though it had then – and still has now – a stream at the bottom of the garden). It was accessed via "a dark, muddy lane ... lit, at appropriate seasons, only by the green glimmer of glow-worms or made noisy with the love-sawings of crickets."⁵ WG would write his first books here, his first stories, and his first play. He would enter the house as a dreamy eighteen-year-old with little formal education, no career and no prospects beyond his ambitious but improbable determination to write and leave it a relatively unsung but still internationally-published author. Not bad going – but still the best was yet to come.

As it approaches its centenary, the future existence of Tresloe Vean is far from assured, for, in January 2020, WG's daughter Rosamund Barteau applied to the Planning Committee of Perranzabuloe Parish Council for permission to construct "two detached infill dwellings" on the site. The application was opposed on the basis that "the bulk, massing and design of the two properties are out of character with the rest of the village".⁶ Nonetheless, on 16 June the same year, the proposal was considered by the Central Sub-area Planning Committee of Cornwall Council. Objections were again made, this time on the grounds that progressing the development would necessitate the felling of trees currently subject to a Tree Preservation Order, which would run counter to the county's policy of opposing climate change and protecting the environment. Though a vote to approve the proposal was lost narrowly (8-7), a second to refuse it was tied, with the applicant invited to consider re-submitting a suitably revised plan (with the clear inference that it would be likely to succeed) and additional data sought from the Council's Tree Officer.⁷ Further developments are awaited.



An artist's impression of the proposed development at Tresloe Vean

(5) From the end of his honeymoon in late September 1939 to January 1960 WG lived with his wife Jean at **Treberran, 4 St Michaels Road, Perranporth, Cornwall** (present day postcode TR6 0FD), joined by his mother from 1940 to her death in February 1949 and the couple's children from their births in June 1942 (Andrew) and March 1946 (Rosamund).⁸



This is 4 St Michaels Road, Perranporth after the Grahams left it. Formerly Treberran, the property is here named the Nampara Lodge Hotel. The metal plaque above the door reads: *Nampara Lodge Hotel, former home of novelist Winston Graham, Author of Poldark novels.*

The building became structurally unsound and was demolished circa 2008; the plaque can now be seen in the Perranzabuloe Museum, Ponsmere Road, Perranporth.

(6) When Winston and Jean made the momentous decision to leave Cornwall, partly because of her asthma and partly, perhaps, just because it was time for pastures new, they stayed from January to March 1960 in a fourth-floor flat at **40 Harley Street, London, W1⁹** (now W1G 9PP) before heading off across France in two cars, (seventeen-year-old Andrew sharing the driving) with a minimum of belongings, destination the Côte d'Azur.



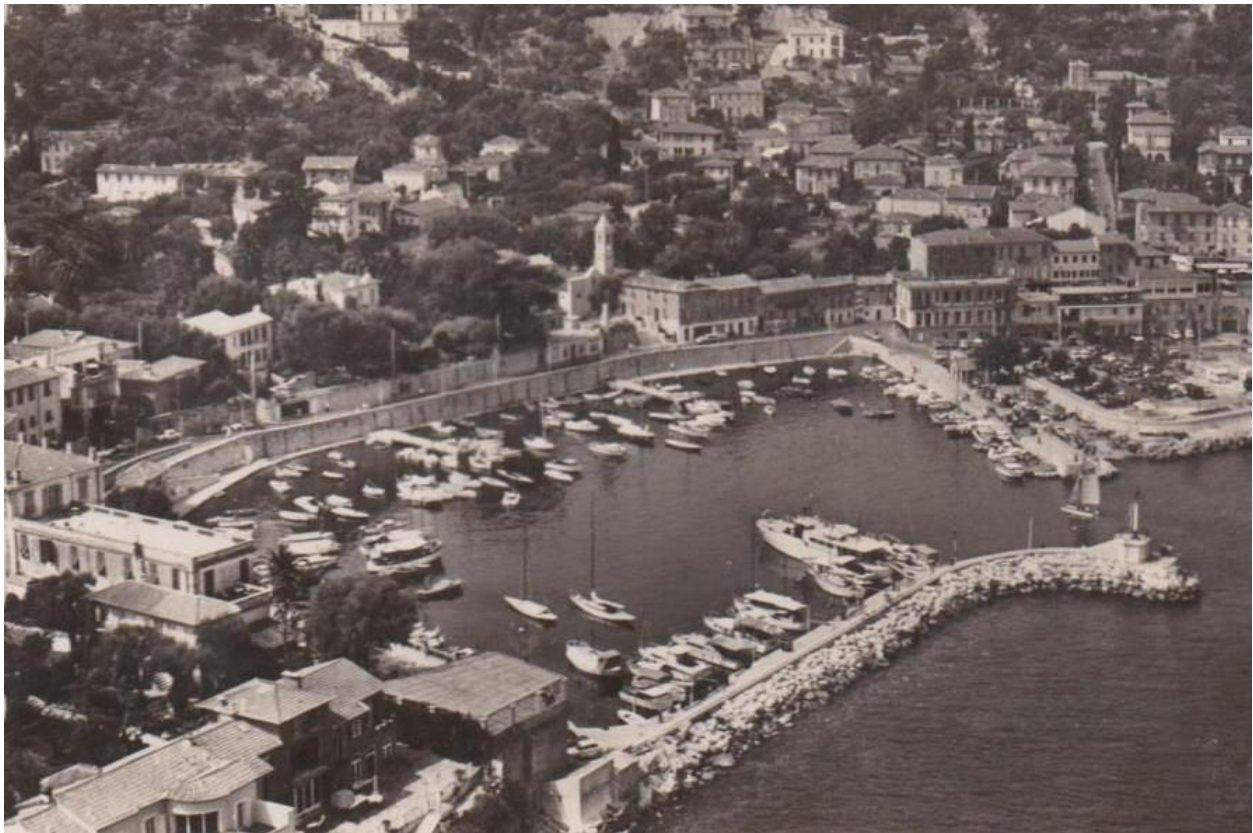
40 Harley Street is the white building (the property adjoining is Number 42). WG stayed here through the early part of 1960 on the top floor.

As *Memoirs* confirms, WG had an abiding passion for cars – after a 2002 meeting with Michael Williams, the journalist wrote: *When you are about to interview an author in his nineties, you don't expect him to turn up in a sports car capable of 150 mph, but Winston Graham was not your average man.*¹⁰ His particular love at this time – indeed, "the pride of our lives" – was a "big, open ... three-litre ... drophead Alvis"¹¹ which, although it "glued itself to the road", young Andrew was not allowed to drive. But it was the second car that drew all the attention: "Wherever we stopped we were surrounded by people staring at the Mini." New to the market in 1959, Minis were rare in England (WG had to use his "pull" at the garage to get one) and unseen abroad: all things considered, Andrew was probably just as happy with the driving arrangements as his father.

(7) So, from March 1960, WG's next and very different home was the **Villa Caprice in Cap Ferrat**, an exclusive promontory that juts into the Med just east of Nice **on the French Riviera**, with all his family during school holidays and, during term time, with his wife.



The plan, if they found the new life congenial, was to stay in permanent tax exile.¹² But, despite the select company – Gregory Peck, Kathleen Sutherland, Ralph Richardson and more – and a "wonderful" summer of "fourteen-hour" days "of incomparable pleasure", the plan came to naught. For WG found the Mediterranean sun "oppressive" and the location too far from ready access to the reference books he needed to write (he was working, at this time, on *The Grove of Eagles*). He also missed London's theatre and cinema and (his club) The Savile. What's more, Jean's asthma was no less troublesome here than in Cornwall, and his children "felt the need of a root in England". So, on 20 September,¹³ after six months in the Villa Caprice, back north they went – for a return to Poldark country? No, said WG, – though "in our eventual sights", that would be "defeatist". He looked instead to "one of the only (counties) I thought I could bear to live in after Cornwall" which was Sussex. Close to London and France as well as several of their friends, it had "a long sea coast", was "wooded and undulating" and, as an added bonus, was "a great cricketing county (though abysmal at rugby)". "While ... footloose," he wrote, "we should experiment." And so the two laden cars crossed the Channel once more in search of yet another home.



The image above shows Cap Ferrat harbour in 1960. Concerning the location of the Villa Caprice, WG writes in *Memoirs*:

[It] was a four-bedroomed house, pleasant but small, perched directly above the road leading round the harbour. It could hardly have been more central: when we opened champagne, the corks would fly over the road and into the harbour.

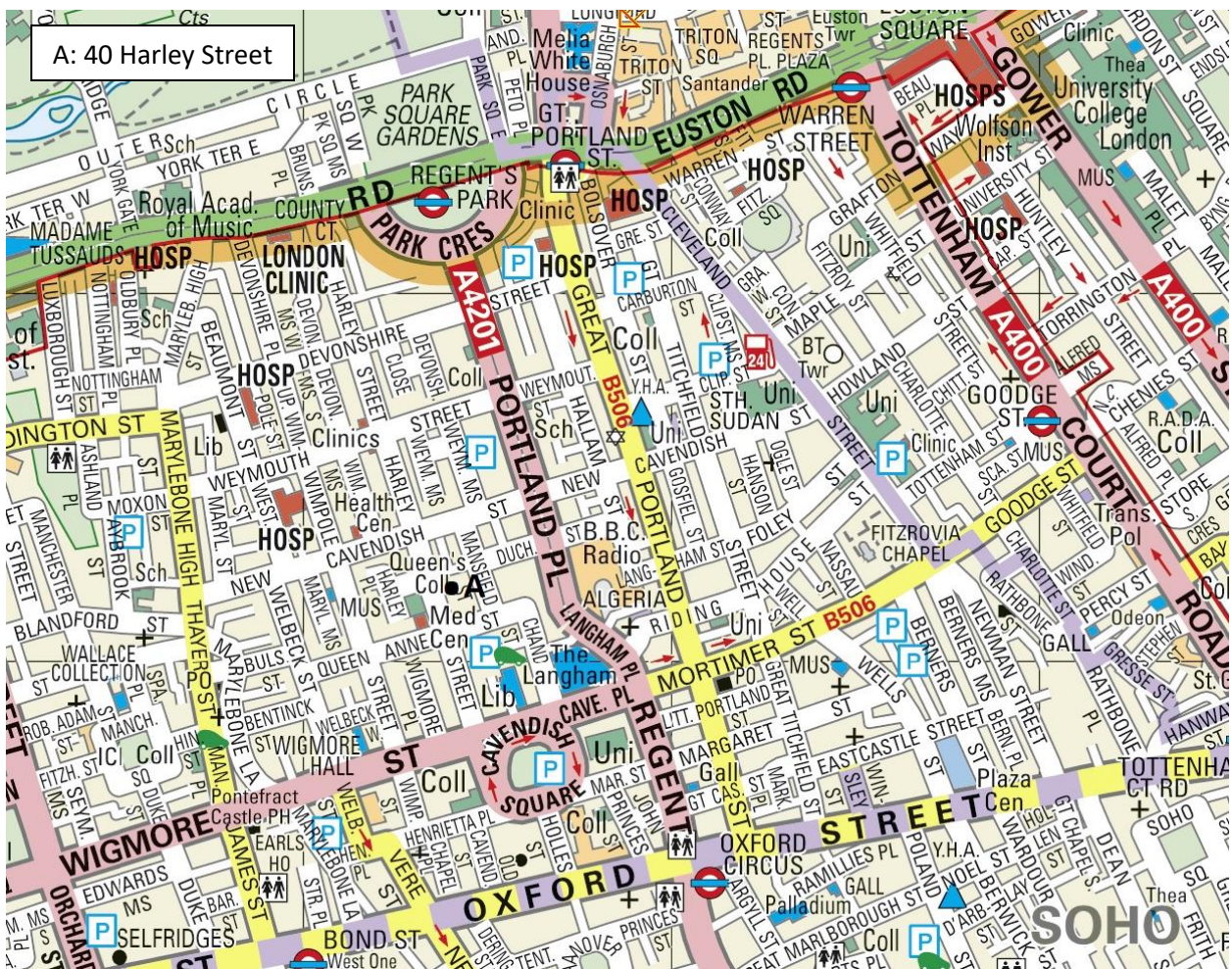
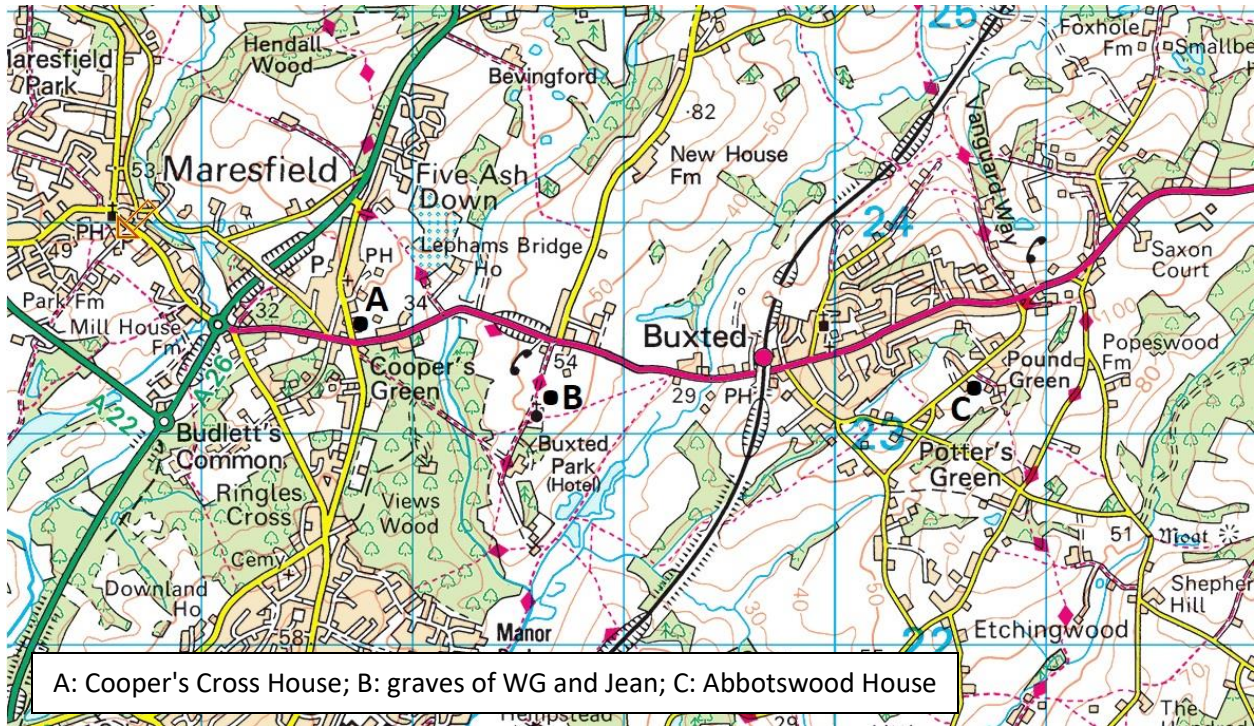
Presumably, then, it is one of the properties, visible on the left side of the photo, that abut Avenue Jean Mermoz, the harbour road.

In a letter dated 16 December 1960, WG advised Frank Swinnerton that the house was "about a mile from W.S.M." (i.e. W. Somerset Maugham, who, excluding travel and the war years, lived on the Cap in the Villa La Mauresque from 1926 until his death in 1965). Did WG visit this "writers' Mecca" during his stay? *Memoirs* confirms that he was an admirer of his fellow author and that the two had been acquainted since the late forties, so probably yes.

(8) But until that next permanent home could be found, it was back into temporary accommodation, this time from September 1960 until January 1962 at **Coopers Cross House, Coopers Green, Uckfield, East Sussex** (present day postcode: TN22 3AD), with Jean, as the couple set about house-hunting together, plus the children when not away at school.



WG continued to work here at *The Grove of Eagles* and other writing projects too, such as a 69-page spy thriller screenplay, ultimately unproduced, called "Top Secret – Next Of Kin" or unpublished short story "The One That Got Away" that relates the tale of Tuesday, a broiler chicken that escaped from a lorry *en route* to the processing plant to land in WG's garden.¹⁴ Once rehabilitated, it was homed with "a well-to-do lady ... who was so soft-hearted with animals that they proliferated about her". This may well have been Miss M. Raymonde-Hawkins, to whose 1970 charity fundraising book *Just for Animals* WG contributed an untitled tongue-in-cheek poem about last wishes. Meanwhile the Grahams viewed "about forty" properties as their quest for a new home continued.



(9) They eventually settled on, and in **Abbotswood House, Limes Lane, Buxted, East Sussex, TN22 4PB** where from 20 January 1962¹⁵ WG lived with Jean until her death, aged 80, on 21 December 1992 and then alone (with domestic help) until his own death, aged 95, on 10 July 2003. A month before taking possession, he'd described the house as "a rather horrid Victorian structure in a lovely position", but within two years, having had a chance to settle in and get some building work done, it had become "a Victorian-cum-Georgian mix-up (that) suits us very well".¹⁶



[Abbotswood House, Buxted in 2017](#)

Along with cars, another interest of WG's was gardening. On the exposed and soil-depleted north Cornish coast, this had proved something of a challenge (not to say lost cause)¹⁷, but Sussex, surely, would offer more scope? Abbotswood House came with five neglected acres, part meadow, part tennis court, part orchard, part copse, plus assorted flower beds and patches of lawn



Old Abbotswood: (1) 1920s, by Beatrice Parsons (1870-1955) (2) date unknown

"just discernible among rank weed and overgrown bushes." WG's assiduously planned and ultimately successful campaign to restore the grounds of his new home is described in the "In My Garden" column of the October 1965 issue of *Homes and Gardens*.

(10) The couple, 53 years married then ten and a half years apart, are now united once more in the churchyard of **St Margaret the Queen, Buxted Park, Uckfield, TN22 4AY**.

RIP.¹⁸



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NOTES AND SOURCES

¹ Photos from Streetview (pages 1, 4 and 6), Colin Brewer (page 8) and JPW (page 14). Thanks to all.

² This quote derives in part from *Memoirs of a Private Man*, Macmillan, 2003 and in part from *Argosy*, December 1967. All others, unless specified otherwise, are from *Memoirs*.

³ When advertised for sale by auction in the *West Briton* of 24 August 1939, the property was described as "of concrete block construction with red tiled roof, in a thoroughly good state of repair and decoration; two double bedrooms and one single bedroom all with built-in wardrobes and fitted washbasins (h. and c.), bathroom and w.c., heated linen cupboard, lounge hall (leading to verandah) with fitted wardrobe and cupboard, living room with service hatch and tiled grate, kitchen with coal range, larder, back porch, coal house and a maid's bedroom in the roof. Mains water and drainage; electricity throughout." Reputedly the first bungalow to be built in Perranporth, Chybean was number one of three standing to the immediate west of Treberran.

⁴ For a map showing the locations of Tresloe Vean and Treberran, see [P'PORTH](#), page 15.

⁵ *Poldark's Cornwall*, Bodley Head + Webb & Bower, Ltd, 1983

⁶ Planning Committee minutes, 20 January 2020

⁷ *Falmouth Packet*, 16 June 2020

⁸ One of the earliest consequences of the outbreak of war in 1939 was the emergency passage through parliament of *The National Registration Act*, which required the establishment of a National Register and subsequent issue to all subjects of an identity card, to be produced on demand or presented to a police station within 48 hours. Registration Day was 29 September, just eleven days after WG and Jean's wedding, and, concerning Treberran, the *England & Wales Register, 1939* makes interesting reading, for fourteen residents are logged. Although four entries are redacted, the ten still visible read as follows:

Jessie Burgess (aged 45), domestic nurse
Holly Southwell (15), at school

Louise Kaplan (42), unpaid domestic duties
Anthony Kaplan (13), at school
Winston Grime (amended to Mawdsley Graham) (31),
author, novelist
Jean Mary Grime (amended to Mawdsley Graham)
(27), manageress of guest house
Annie Grime [WG's mother] (71), private means
Samuel Williamson [Jean's father] (70), retired RN [i.e.
Royal Navy]
Beatrice Williamson (amended to Summers) [Samuel's
wife; Jean's mother] (55), household duties
Kate Foster (amended to Wakelin) (55), domestic help

⁹ WG disclosed the address in a letter dated 20 August 1985 to Irene Campbell.

¹⁰ *Cornish Guardian* online, 4 March 2015.

¹¹ David Abden's father in *The Green Flash* and Henry Gaveston in *Stephanie* both drive just such a machine, the latter named Grey Lady.

¹² So suggests *Memoirs*, though in a letter written on Christmas Day, 1959, WG confided to Frank Swinnerton that "I think we shall eventually settle nearer London, perhaps in Sussex, which I am very fond of, but we shall probably spend a few months in France first."

¹³ The date is specified in the Swinnerton letter referred to on page 11.

¹⁴ Both manuscripts held in the WG archive at RCM, Truro.

¹⁵ Letter to Frank Swinnerton dated 14 December 1961.

¹⁶ The quotes are from letters to Frank Swinnerton dated 14 December 1961 and 16 December 1963.

¹⁷ "During the war we tried to plant potatoes, with ludicrous results." (*Memoirs*, 1.8)

¹⁸ It is instructive to note that WG's reluctance to reveal his age in life persists in the hereafter – indeed, both stones record a precise date of death but not even a birth *year*.