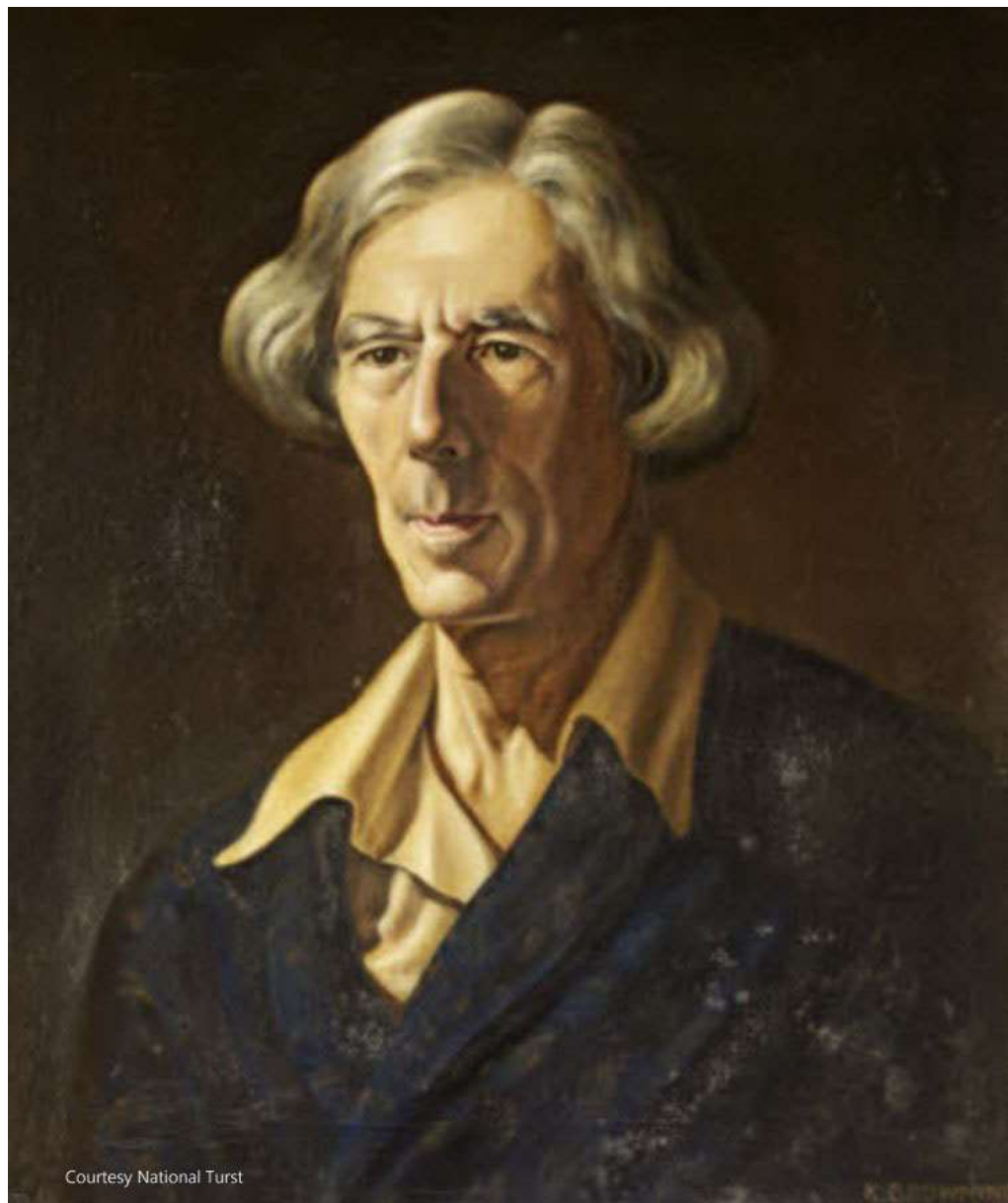


Charles Paget Wade

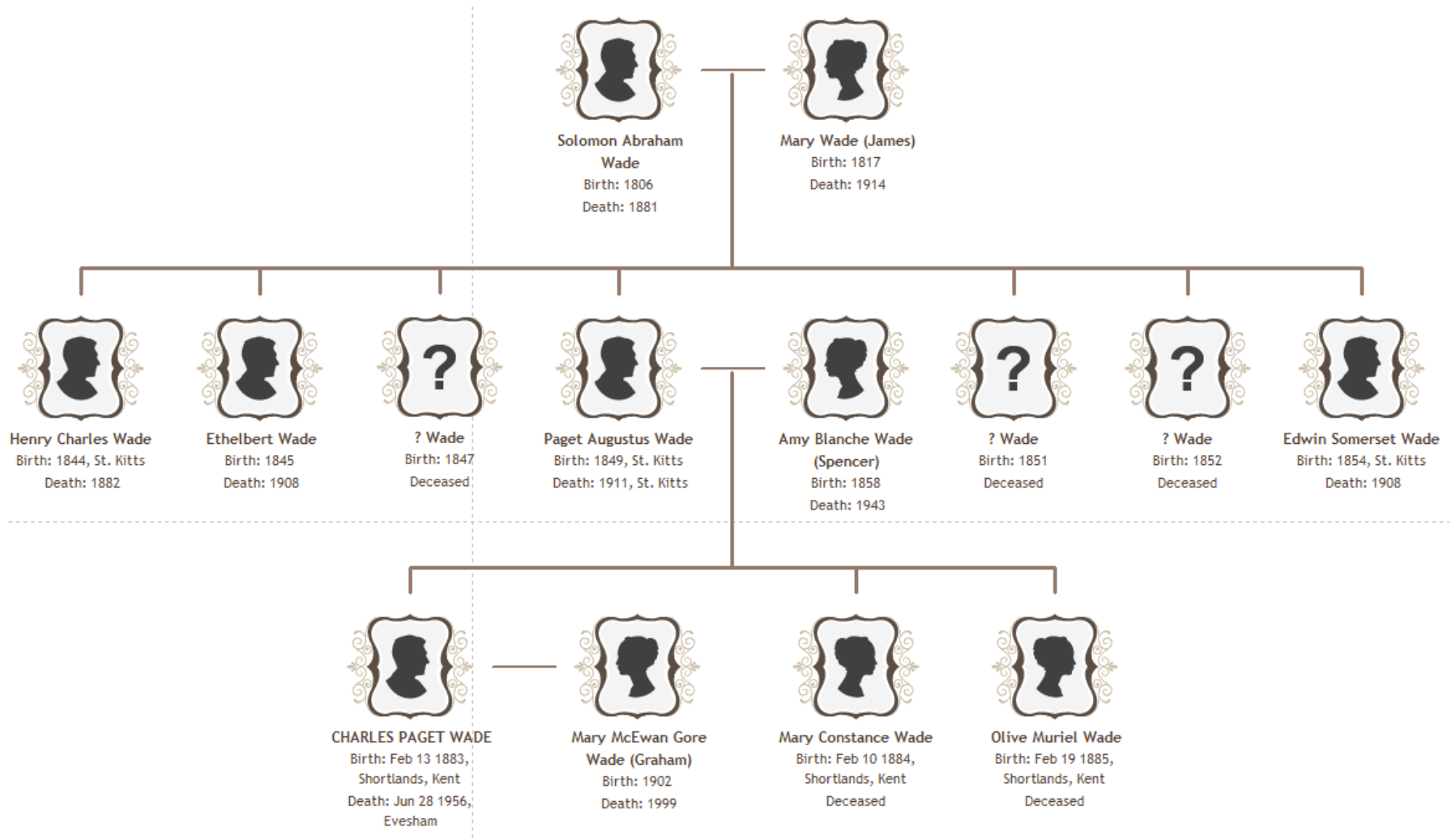
This is Charles Paget Wade, a gentleman I came across whilst on holiday in the Cotswolds in 2014 near the picturesque village of Snowhill in Gloucestershire, which is noted for its extensive lavender fields and for its Manor which is where Charles Wade spent much of his life. Its name may be familiar to National Trust members.

So what did he do and why is he of local interest? Well first let's have a look at his family tree:



Courtesy National Trust

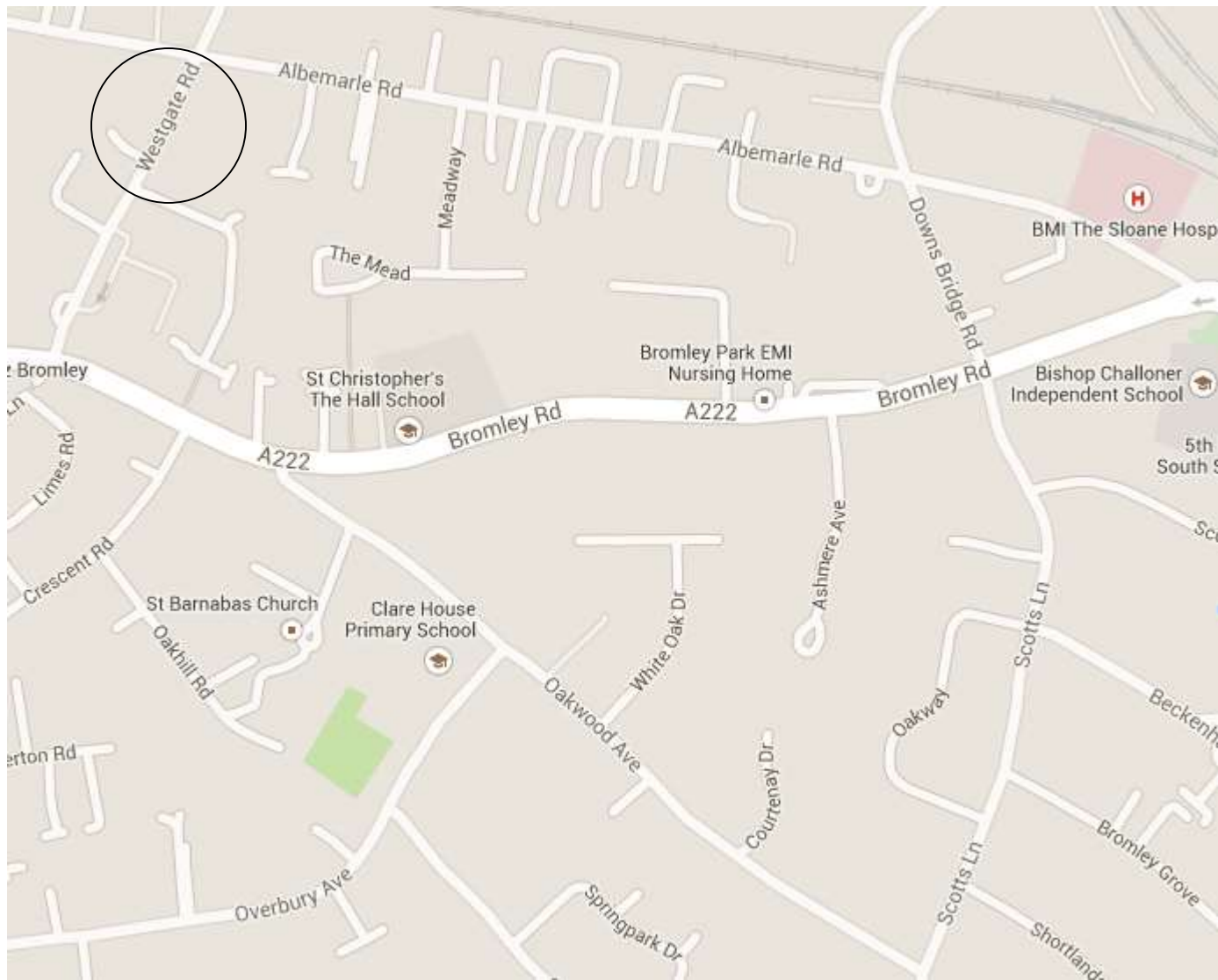
Wade Family Tree



As a teenager, Wade's paternal grandfather, Solomon Abraham Wade (1806-1881), moved with his family from St Martin, an island in the north east of the West Indies archipelago to St. Kitts, about 50 miles to the south. Solomon set himself up as a merchant and by the early 1860s had built a thriving business with four stores on St Kitts. Initially it was as S. A. Wade & Co and then, with a trusted employee, Samuel Abbott, he formed the partnership of Wade & Abbott. Through his business as a supplier and increasingly as an agent for the island 'plantocracy', Solomon gained knowledge and profits he used independent of Wade and Abbott to diversify and acquire property (including sugar cane plantations) in St Kitts and in nearby Nevis and Montserrat. His success established the fortune of the family into which Charles Wade was later born.

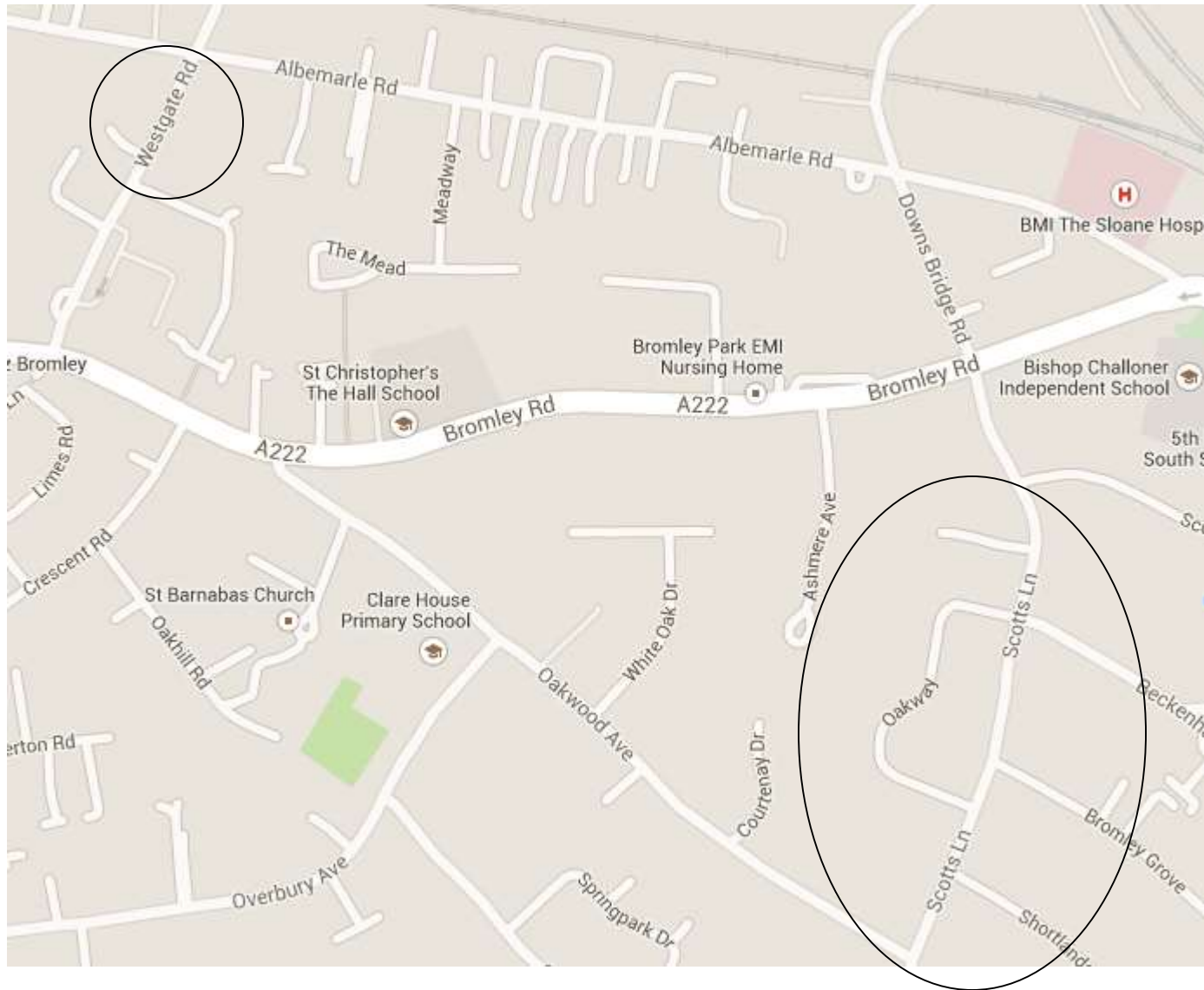
Between 1844 and 1855 Solomon had seven children with Mary James (1817-1914), his housekeeper, who was of Afro-Caribbean descent, finally marrying in 1855. I do not have full details of the family and their birth dates but the names shown here are correct. Within a couple of years of the baptism of his youngest child, Edwin Somerset Wade in 1856, Solomon and Mary moved the family from St Kitts to live in England, perhaps planning to do this had led to the regularisation of their relationship!

Solomon continued to spend the majority of each year in St Kitts but eventually retired to England and purchased a house in Westgate Road in Beckenham which he called St. Martin (after the island he had once lived on). In 1865 his eldest son Henry Charles Wade was appointed attorney for the local management of the family interests in the islands and later a younger son Edwin also returned to St Kitts to manage one of the estates called Douglas.



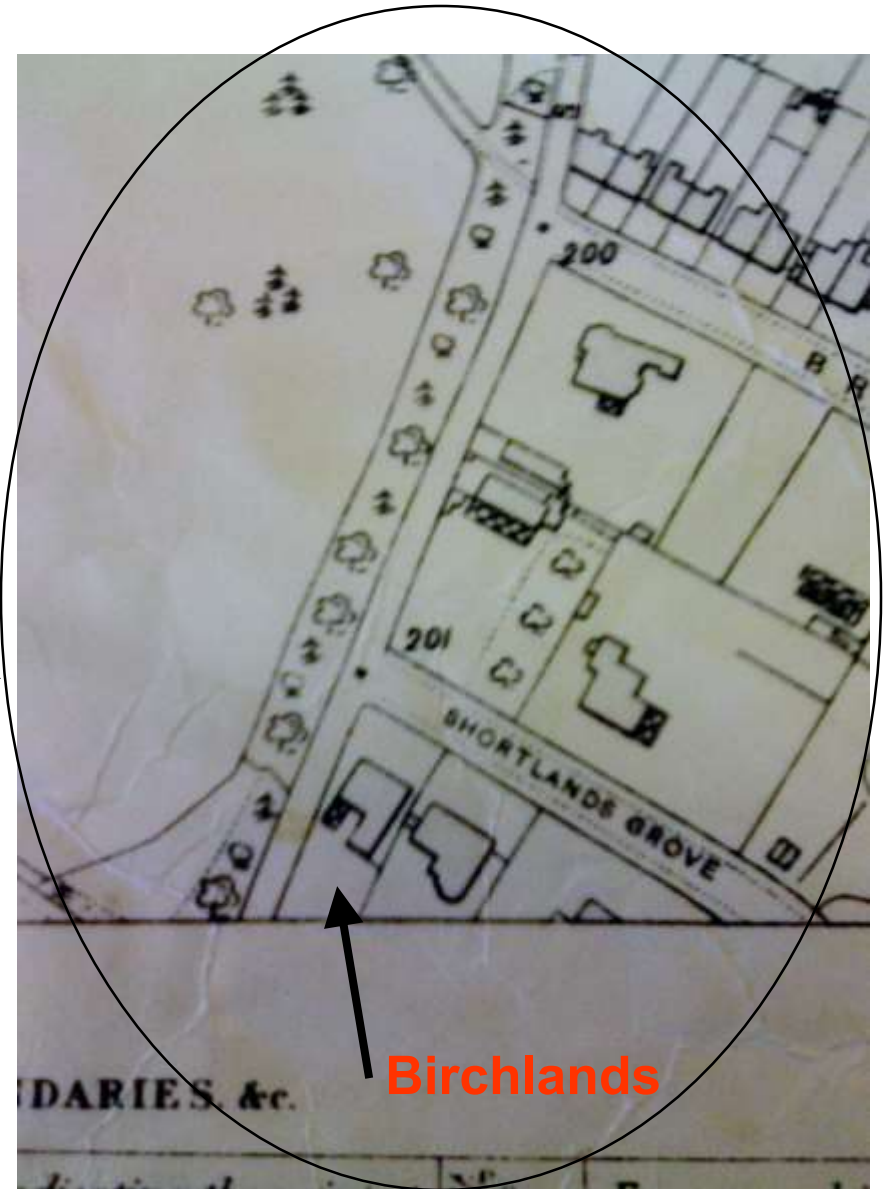
Paget Augustus Wade (1849-1911), Charles's father, the fourth eldest of Solomon's seven children, remained in England after reaching his majority to establish himself as a merchant in London, in the partnership of Sendall & Wade. This company had been formed to manage the exportation to foreign markets of the sugar produced on the Wade estates in St Kitts and Montserrat. In 1879, in recognition of work for the family, Solomon gave Paget enough money to purchase the plantations of Mansion and Woodley's (which were later known as 'Upper' and 'Lower' Mansion, the estate area is still shown on maps) for himself. This did not prompt a permanent move to St Kitts; Paget remained a merchant in London, returning to St Kitts for long periods of time each year to inspect his holdings.

However, after the death of his father in 1881 whilst on a visit to St. Kitts and older brother Henry in 1882, Paget took overall responsibility for the majority of the Wade family plantations. At this time the family estates numbered twelve on St Kitts and Montserrat.



Probably having waited to settle his father's estate, a year later Paget married Amy Blanche Spencer, the daughter of a Worcestershire curate with whose family they had been acquainted with since at least 1866 and they moved to an address in the newly built Scotts Lane at Shortlands which had eight houses all identified just with names.

The name Shortlands (originally the building which is now Bishop Challoner school) as an area in its own right seems to have appeared around 1883 when the postal address was Shortlands, Bromley, Kent but by 1900 it was just Shortlands, Kent. Tracking the house has proved difficult as originally it appeared in the Bromley directory, then as a separate area of Bromley and then in 1930 moved to the Beckenham Street Directory. However I think this is the right one as seen on these maps:



As seen from
what is now
33 Scotts Lane



As seen from
Shortlands Grove



Charles Paget Wade was born to them at the house, called Birchlands, later No. 9 Scott's Lane, Shortlands, on 13 February, 1883. There followed in quick order two sisters, Mary Constance Wade born 10th February 1884 and Olive Muriel Wade born 19th February 1885. This picture shows Charles as a young child.



The family lived there until 1896. As more houses were built, No 9 became No. 23 and now seems to be No 33 in Scotts Lane and has a separate address in Shortlands Grove.

His father Paget continued to make his annual visit to St Kitts, sometimes with his wife but not his children. Charles was a very imaginative and self-contained little boy, which stood him in good stead when in 1889 he was sent to live with 'Grannie Spencer' at 15 Wellesley Road, Great Yarmouth, to allow his attendance at Miss Haddon's Little School. Having no young companions at home and finding no stimulation and friendship in his grandmother's house, Wade's creativity and imagination took refuge in characters, objects and scenes found along the quayside and in town, as well as in 'old family relics of interest and value' half-hidden in the house. Of particular significance to him was a Cantonese shrine cabinet which was only opened on Sundays.

This 'Heavenly Palace of faraway Cathay' ignited his passion for collecting and greatly influenced the interiors he would later create at Snowhill.



From 1893 until 1900 Wade boarded in Eastbourne. His 'chief joy' was carpentry'; the only other lesson he enjoyed was drawing. Later in life he was to call schools 'Graveyards of Imagination', and 'Factories of Boredom'. It appears that Wade made his first visit to St Kitts in 1900 when he was 17. In 1901 Wade was indentured to the diocesan architect Edward Fernley Bisshopp in Ipswich. Here was a rich and varied collection of buildings to study and sketch, and Wade spent many happy hours at the harbour, markets, and antique shops although he apparently found Bisshopp an uninspiring architect.

Against the conditions of his indenture to Bisshopp, Wade was drawn to the theatre, attending historical dramas at the Ipswich Lyceum and, later, in London. Photographic portraits of Wade during this period reveal the influence of the theatre. Many show him in period costume from his own growing collection, in poses and settings reminiscent of postcards depicting theatre stars he saw perform, such as Sir Henry Irving, Sir John Martin-Harvey and Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson.



Despite these distractions, in May 1907 Wade qualified as an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects and began searching for a post elsewhere. The architect William Flockhart, unable to offer him a position, nonetheless praised the 'lively and delightful architectural imagination' (Letter, 12 November 1907) his portfolio revealed.

Around this time he completed an unpublished illustrated essay entitled *The Country Cottage and its Garden* and for the garden design Wade won second prize in a competition run by the influential arts and crafts journal *The Studio*. In the same year he was taken on as an assistant to Raymond Unwin of Parker and Unwin, who were working on the Hampstead Garden Suburb in London. Wade's work in the suburb included the design of the tiled arch of Twitten Passage, Asmunds Place, No. 3 Rotherwick Road, the Great Wall, and the Club House.

Unwin recognized that Wade was as much an artist as an architect, and had him illustrate his seminal book *Town Planning in Practice* (1909) which is still in print today.



Illus. 97.—An imaginary irregular town.



Raymond Unwin

In 1908 Wade's two surviving Uncles, Edwin and Ethelbert Wade, died within a week of each other and left his father Paget solely responsible for the Wade businesses on behalf of his mother, sisters, sister-in-law and his own family. He appears to have been well thought of as both a businessman and an employer. Then, in late December 1911 his father Paget died at the White House, another of their St. Kitts properties and Charles inherited the Mansion estate as his personal property. Wade's mother, Amy, took overall control of the Wade businesses, having bought out the business interest of other family members. She continued to manage in the style of her late husband, visiting St Kitts annually and corresponding with the estate managers in the islands.

Wade had already resigned from Parker and Unwin to concentrate on his new career as an artist and illustrator, but as a result of the death of his father he was increasingly drawn into the family business in support of his mother. It was during this period that he produced more than ninety pen and ink illustrations for Mary Stratton's *Bruges: A Record and an Impression* (1914).

Frontispiece



The Belfry from Rue aux Laines.

BRUGES

A RECORD AND
AN IMPRESSION

by
MARY STRATTON

Illustrated by
CHARLES WADE



London.
B.T.Batsford, Ltd 94, High Holborn
New York.
Charles Scribner's Sons, 597-9, Fifth Avenue.

The following year saw the publication of his friend Kate Murray's *The Spirit of the House* (1915), an account of an imaginary house called Caldicott Court, for which Wade supplied pen and ink drawings and paintings. A copy of this has been available on Amazon for \$781. Two years later, now in his 20s, he was serving in the Royal Engineers Field Company as a Sapper, sketching and painting French buildings, as well as imaginary scenes, to 'escape from the most terrible surroundings in the midst of all the horrors of war'.

While posted as Orderly Room Clerk near Arras, the style in which he furnished the orderly room with pictures and books and 'a pleasing cover for his bunk' was 'far too comfortable for a war', his officer felt. And while serving in France, Wade came across an issue of *Country Life* advertising the sale of Snowhill Manor, an extended sixteenth-century Cotswold manor house. He was on the lookout for a suitable property to house his ever-increasing craftsmanship collection, which had begun at the age of seven and was now chiefly stored in his bedroom at Red House at Yoxford, Suffolk, the Wades' family home in England since 1896. About 20 miles south of Grannie Spencer's house in Great Yarmouth, presumably it was an area they were familiar with.

Visiting Snowhill for the first time in February 1919, he found that it 'was in the most deplorable state of ruin and neglect, but had not been spoilt with modern additions'. He purchased the property and spent three years restoring it, with up to twenty-eight men working and living there at a time.



He designed and crafted many of the internal features of the Manor himself. For Wade, the relationship between a house and its garden was vitally important – at Snowhill, the garden was an extension of the house, ‘a series of outdoor rooms’. He worked on its design with M. H. Baillie-Scott, whose works and writings had influenced him greatly and whom he had been acquainted with when living and working in the Hampstead Garden Suburb.

From the outset Wade regarded the manor house as a home for his collection, rather than himself. He moved into the Priest’s House, a small cottage beside the Manor, and divided his time between hunting for artefacts (often with friends and fellow collectors, Fred Hart and Sir Albert Richardson), repairing and restoring objects in his workshop, and arranging them in the Manor.



Priest's House



Although a significant proportion of his collection was exotic, most pieces were acquired in England, including seven suits of Samurai armour from a tiny shop in Cheltenham. The collection encompassed such diverse objects as spinning wheels, clocks, kitchen utensils, musical instruments, bicycles, samplers, model ships, masks, toys, pipes, mouse-traps, tapestries, manuscripts, locks and keys, rush lights, and reliquaries.

The guiding principles that unified the collection were good design, colour and workmanship – not rarity or value. He set out to create a total environment, to ‘find things that would make an attractive series of rooms pictorially, not to form a museum’.



Wade never saw his collection as a merely private experience and much of his pleasure was in seeing visitors' responses to it as he guided them around the house and garden.

He had built a very detailed model village in 1907 to entertain Kate Murray's daughter, and now transformed this into a fishing village set around a pond, called Wolf's Cove, which he would dress with model ships, working steam train and canal system when visitors came.

One of his most frequent guests was Albert Richardson (later knighted), who brought carloads of visitors. The evenings that followed were often spent by the fireside watching Richardson's lively one-man enactments of various Georgian scenes.



Other notable visitors to Snowhill included Graham Greene who stayed in nearby Chipping Camden (1931-33), who described Wade in vivid terms in *A Sort of Life*. J. B. Priestley did likewise in *An English Journey* (1934), as well as writing on Wolf's Cove in *Architectural Review* in 1932. In 1935 John Buchan drove Virginia Woolf forty miles to see Snowhill, as he felt that one could not visit anywhere more unusual. She later complained that she had missed her train because Wade could not tell her the time accurately; although he had more than a hundred timepieces they were all set to different times so that they could be heard to chime and strike individually, and this is the same today. In that year Snowhill received 1,357 visitors. Two years later Queen Mary visited in 1937 and remarked that Wade was the most remarkable part of the collection.

During the 1920s and 1930s Wade and his mother and sisters, together or separately, were regular visitors to St Kitts. Wade stayed at the Mansion estate, or the White House, the town house where his mother stayed. By this time the Wade family had 7 estates in St. Kitts and the estates in Montserrat. Wade oversaw the reconstruction of the buildings and the installation of state-of-the-art machinery at Spooner's Cotton Ginnery, which had been destroyed by fire in 1938. As Wade grew older he began to look to the future. In 1938 the English National Trust agreed in principle to accept Snowhill Manor and collection at a time of his choosing. Reassured as to its future, he doubled the size of the collection between 1938 and 1946 to well over 20,000 objects of craftsmanship.



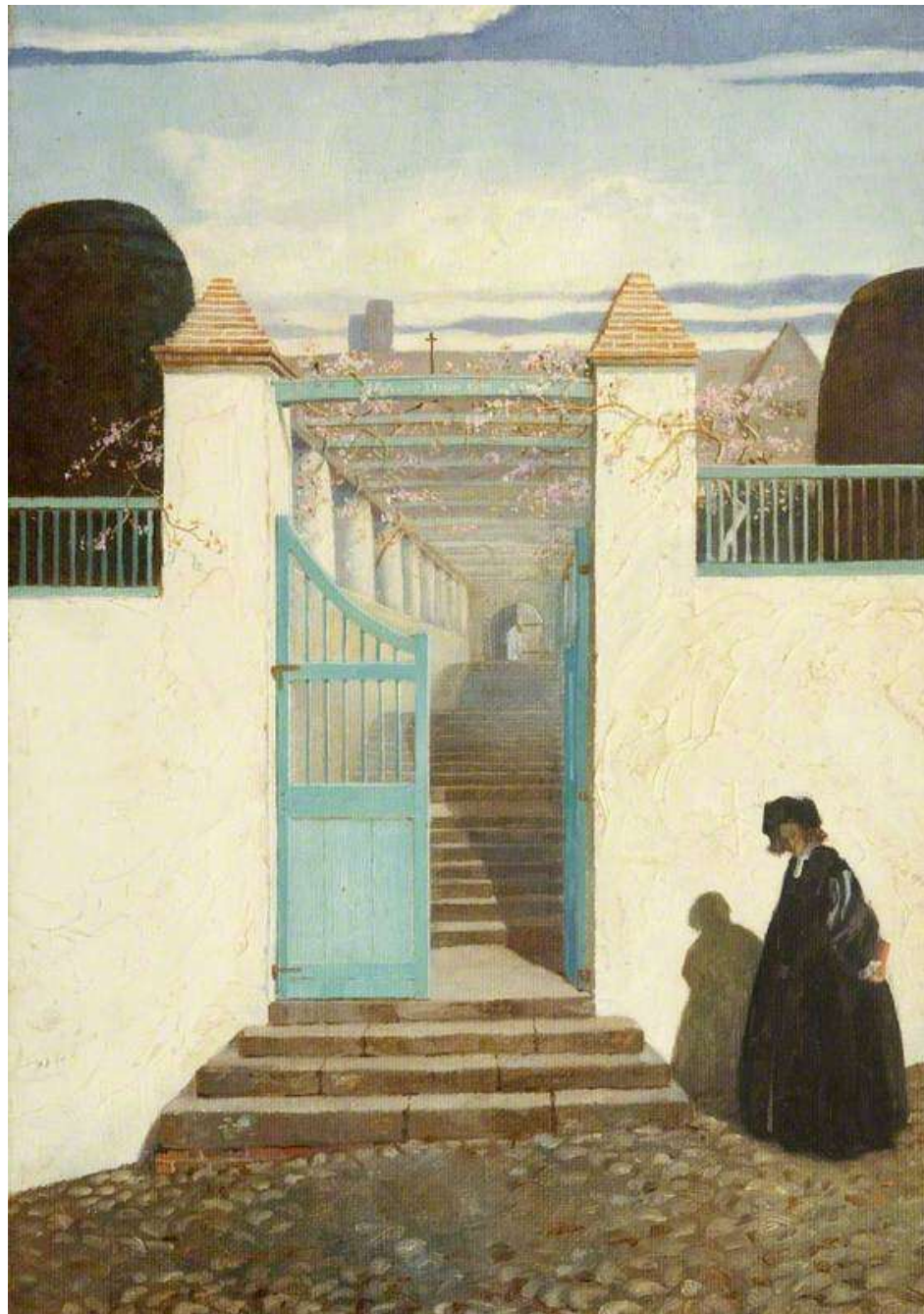
In 1944, he began to compile an illustrated inventory of all the objects in Snowhill Manor together with more than thirty illustrated notebooks which included guides to the manor and gardens, poetry, childhood memories, and thoughts on architecture.

The following year he wrote *Days Far Away*, a memoir. During the Second World War Wade and his mother could not make their annual visit to St Kitts and relied heavily on the estate managers. After his mother's death Wade became managing director of what was to become Wade Plantations Limited.

Some illustrations of his artistic talent follow:



Blakeney



St. Kitts



Hendon

Yoxford



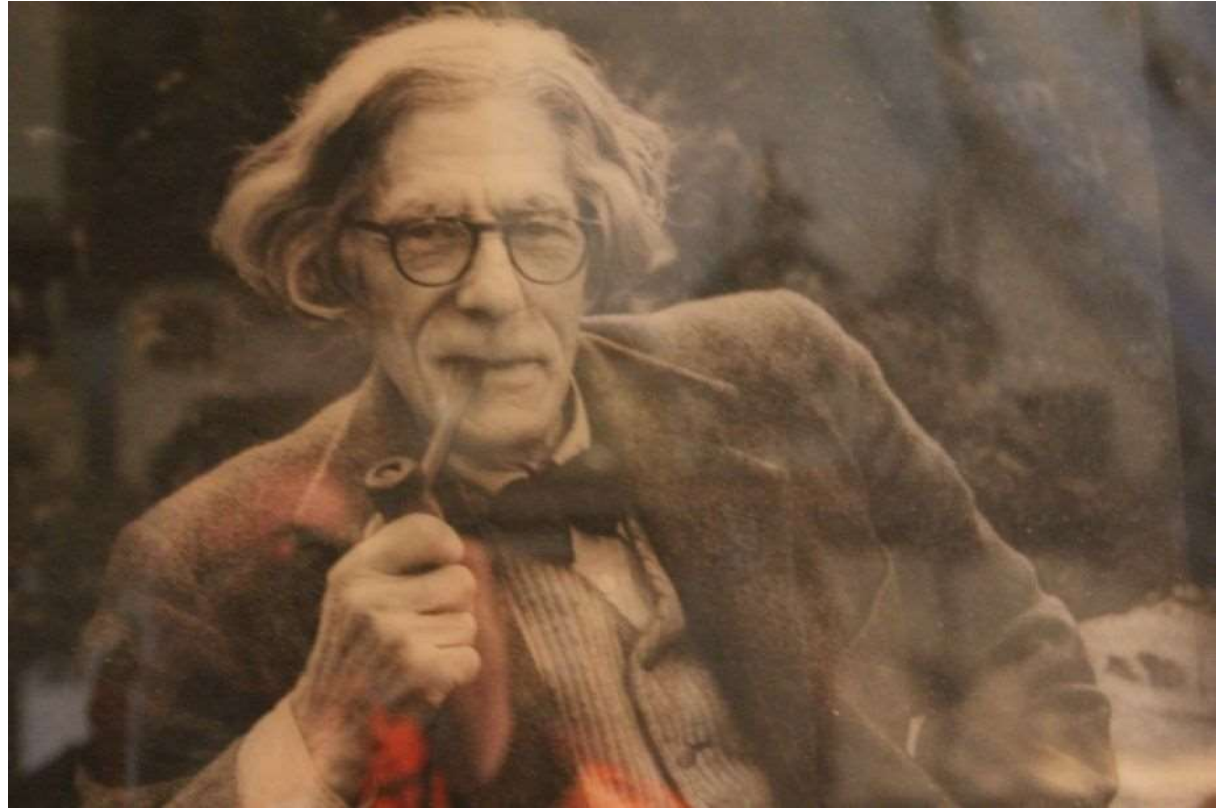
Bruges



Up until now Wade, like his two sisters, had not married, but on 5 September 1946, at the age of 63, he and Mary McEwan Gore Graham (1902-1999) were wed at the Cheltenham Registry Office, after meeting her the previous year while she was working in nearby Broadway and visited Snowhill. By 1949 Wade had decided to retire to St Kitts permanently and in 1951 he handed Snowhill Manor over to the National Trust. He returned to Snowhill each summer to stay at the Manor and add to the collection.

In early 1956 he left St Kitts for a tour of Europe en-route to his annual visit to England. He was unwell during the trip and grew steadily worse during his stay in England. He was eventually hospitalised and died at Evesham Hospital on 28 June 1956. He was buried in the graveyard of the church in the village of Snowhill.

Mary Wade returned to St Kitts and lived at the White House until the late 1960s when she went back to live in Broadway. She died at the age of 96 in 1999.



Charles Paget Wade

Born Shortlands - 1883

Died Evesham - 1956

as painted by
Mrs K Browning,
wife of the vicar of
St. Kitts in 1954.

