

Postcards of Ottershaw Park (by John Athersuch)

Postcards offer a valuable source of historical information. They show buildings as they were in the past and sometimes feature people associated with those buildings. There is also the occasional gem contained in the messages written on the reverse side. I thought readers might be interested to see a selection of postcards of Ottershaw Park from my collection and to read a little about the photographers who created them. I am sure that some readers will have collections of their own and I would be interested to see any relevant cards that shown here. Please help me fill the gaps!

In this photographic survey I have included the lodges on Coach Road and the lodge on the Guildford Road (Woking lodge) as they originally stood in the Ottershaw Estate. The church, vicarage and the school are also included as these were on estate land gifted to the people of Ottershaw by Sir Edward Colebrooke, one-time owner of the estate and local benefactor.

William Bates & Son

The earliest dated postcards featuring Ottershaw Park date from the first few years of the 20th century and are by William Bates of Chertsey. Bates died in 1904 and thus his photographs are of the old mansion which was demolished and replaced between 1910 and 1912 by the mansion all Ottershaw boys will remember.

Bates was born in Coventry in 1827 and was a freeman of that city. For a while he followed his father as a boot and shoemaker but he preferred painting and sketching and moved to London where he made a living in this field. He later took up photography and occupied premises in High Holborn. He was very innovative and developed several new photographic techniques and was the first to offer portrait enlargements. In 1874 ill health forced him to leave London and he moved to Chertsey where he continued working as an artist and photographer.

His postcards of Ottershaw Park in my collection feature the north and south fronts of the mansion, the school, the vicarage and the exterior and interior of the church. Evidently, he or his employees made at least two trips to the estate as there are two views of the north front taken in different seasons. One depicts a horse carriage in the portico, the other features a little dog. The earliest postmark is from 1904, the year of his death, after which it appears that his son (also William) continued to trade in Chertsey.

Other postcards of Ottershaw include Brox End, the village (i.e. the site of the Otter roundabout), the interior of Ottershaw Church and Botleys Park mansion.



W Bates & Son - The original mansion built in the 1760s, north front showing a horse drawn carriage under the portico



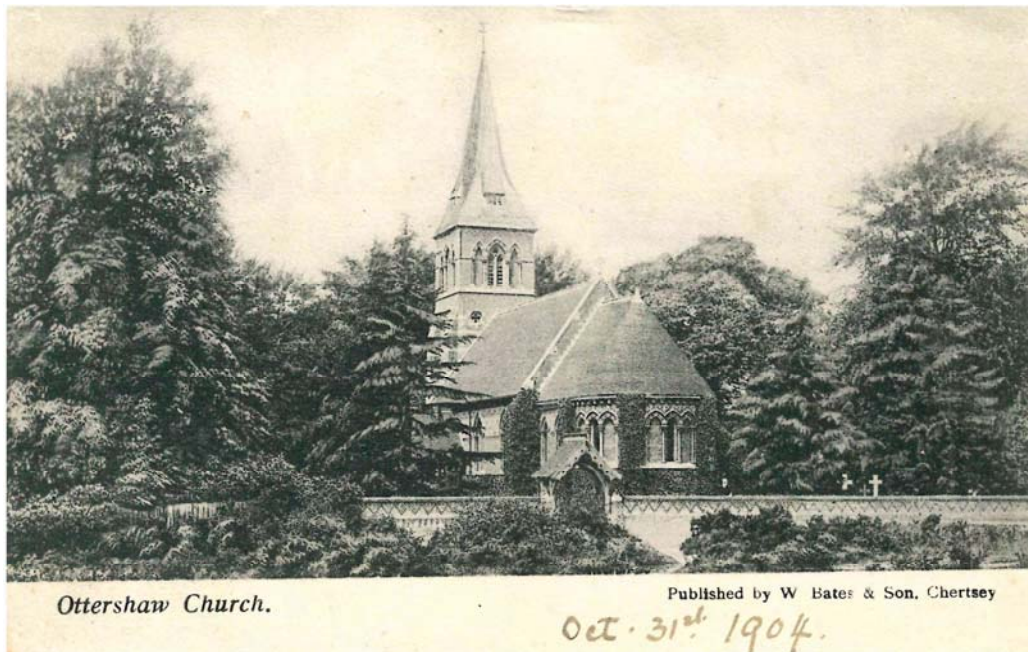
W Bates & Son - A similar view of the mansion, north front portico with a small dog.



W Bates & Son - The south front of the original mansion built in the 1760s



W Bates & Son - The Ottershaw School built in 1869



W Bates & Son - Christ church , Ottershaw consecrated 1864



W Bates & Son - Ottershaw vicarage built 1866 (demolished 1983)

WWI postcards (E.M.R. and Elliot & Fry)

During WWI the mansion was used as an Auxiliary War Hospital. I have a series of postcards marked E.M.R. 1-5 taken during the war and featuring the mansion, a view from the mansion and two group photographs taken inside the mansion of convalescing soldiers in their "blighty blues". I have so far been unable to find out what or who E.M.R. was. In my collection I also have a copy of a postcard (courtesy Ann Smalldridge) by Elliot and Fry, a leading London firm of fine quality photography. The card displays a group of convalescing soldiers, nurses of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VADs) and other staff under the portico of the mansion.



EMR 1 - The new mansion built 1910-1912 north front



EMR 2 - The new mansion built 1910-1912 southwest front



EMR 3 - A view from the terrace of the mansion during WWI



EMR 4 - Convalescing soldiers in the mansion



EMR 5 - Convalescing soldiers in the mansion



Elliot & Fry – Convalescing soldiers and hospital staff under the portico of the mansion
(image courtesy Ann Smalldridge)

William Henry Applebee (W.H.A.)

Applebee travelled round the home counties from village to village on a three-wheeled motor bike taking photographs. He produced a large number postcards, among them many views of Ottershaw Park and surroundings. Cards are identified by the initials W.H.A. followed by a number. He is thought to have worked initially for Young and Co., postcard publishers of Teddington, and there is a suggestion that some of his early cards may have been the product of that company. Applebee started his own postcard business in 1912 and may also have produced cards under the "Southern Series" imprint (q.v.). He died at the age of 30 in 1915 and his widow continued the business until about 1926. The cards of Ottershaw I have found are numbered W.H.A. 411-422, 783-790, 1491 and 3879. I am missing 414, 420 (post office), 784, 785, 787 (school). The photos in this series are probably the most interesting as not only do they depict the newly built mansion and grounds but also other important buildings in and around the estate – the lodges on Coach Road, the Woking lodge, Durnford lodge, the marsh garden in the woods, The Bothy (then garages), the bridge near the Bothy, the bridge at Tanglewood and Ottershaw church and vicarage.



W.H.A. 411 - Ottershaw vicarage



W.H.A. 412 - The mansion , north front (rather faded copy!)



W.H.A. 413 – Dunford lodge (on Guildford Road) once the estate managers lodge



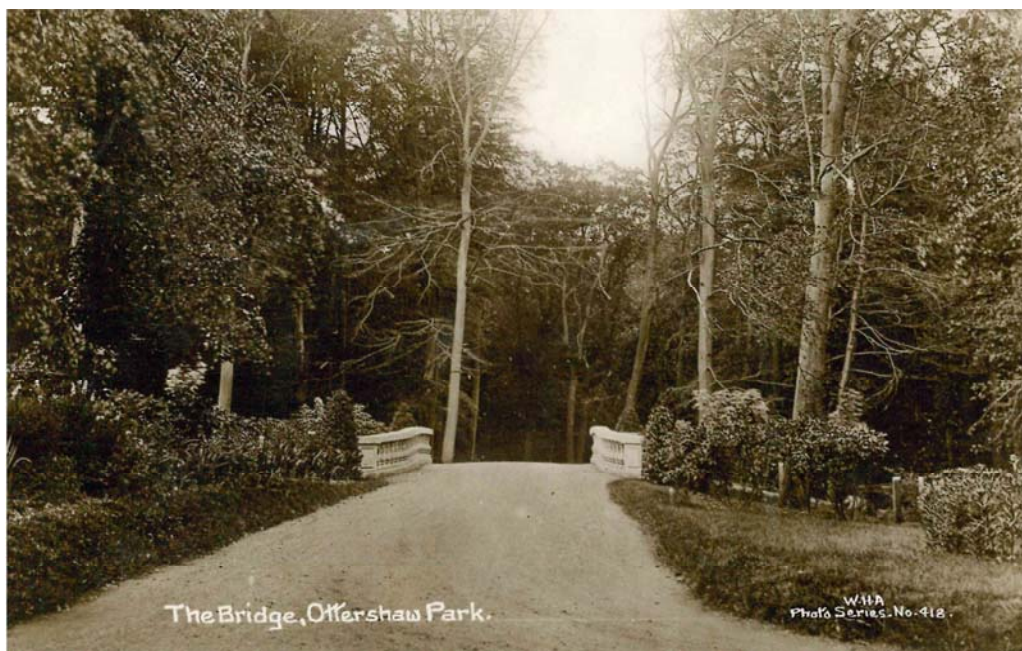
W.H.A. 415 – The Woking lodge (on Guildford Road) – showing the gates and gryphons surmounting the pillars



W.H.A. 416 – Christchurch, Ottershaw



W.H.A. 417 – Ottershaw Park mansion, south front with mirror pond



W.H.A. 418 – The bridge, Ottershaw Park



W.H.A. 419 – The vicarage (built 1866)



W.H.A. 421 – The lodges on Coach Road – now much altered but the wrought iron gates remain



W.H.A. 422 - The Mirror Pool in the formal gardens of The Mansion.



W.H.A 783 - The Lake, Ottershaw Park (probably the one filled with refuse in the 1950s/60s)



W.H.A. 786 - The Garage, previously stables and now residential accommodation at The Bothy.



W.H.A. 788 - Dunford bridge on Guildford Road with Dunford lodge on the left



W.H.A. 789 – The marsh garden



W.H.A. 790 - The bridge in the grounds of Tanglewood



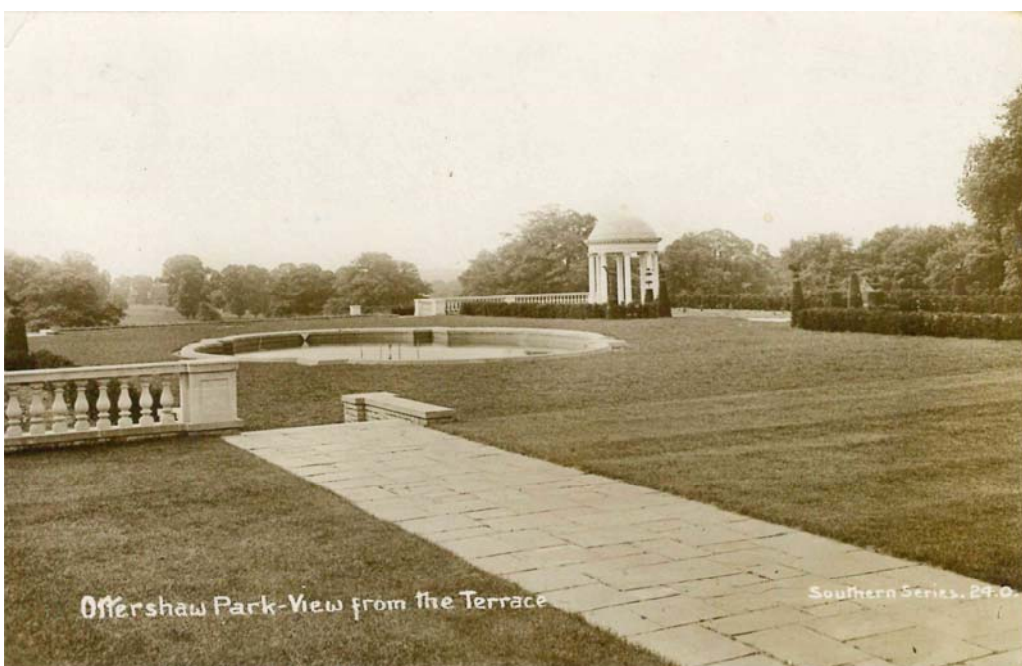
W.H.A. 1471 – Christchurch interior

Southern Series

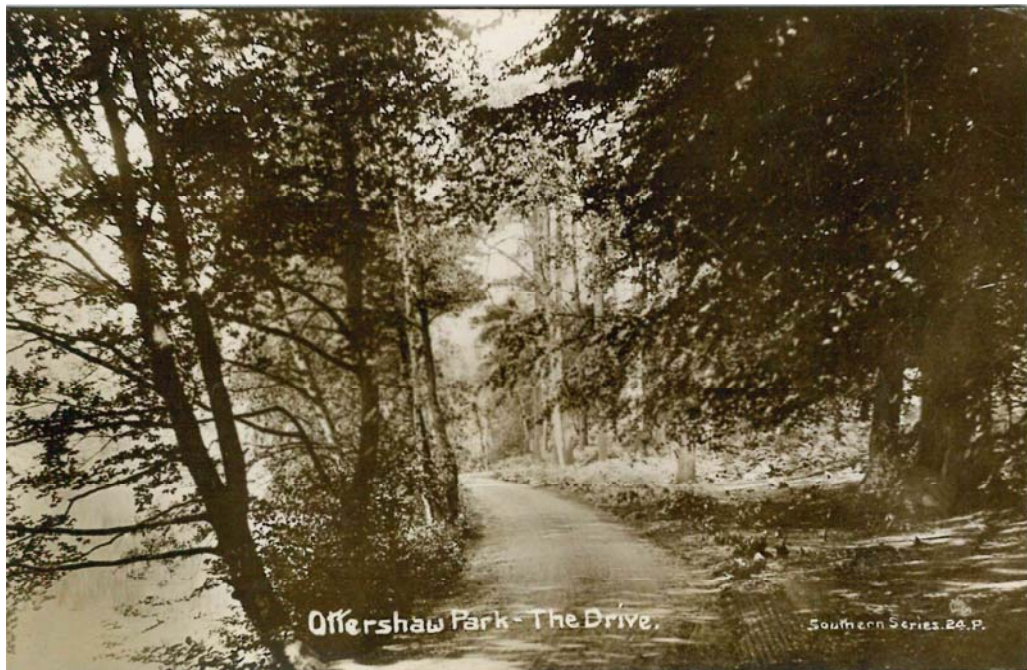
Another prolific source of Ottershaw Park photographs at the beginning of the 20th century is to be found in the Southern Series. The distinctive style of captions on these cards is identical to that on the WHA (William Applebee) cards (q.v.) and it has been suggested that these were the work of William's wife, Lucie. Presumably these were produced by William as a separate series. The cards are identified by a two-digit number followed by a letter. I have found cards of Ottershaw in the range 24D–24X and 25D. Some early cards in the series lack the "Southern Series" label seen on all the cards of Ottershaw Park (24N–24X). The earliest postmark of any of these is 1912 which coincides with the completion of the mansion and several cards depict the clean lines of the new building and views of the formal gardens decked out with numerous topiary birds and rose bushes. One shows the track by Great Blackmole pond and another "A Pretty Spot in Ottershaw Park".



Southern Series 24N – South front of the mansion



Southern Series 24O – a view from the terrace



Southern Series 24P – the track by Great Blackmole pond



Southern Series 24Q – the west wing of the mansion – note the numerous topiary birds



Southern Series 24R – the north front of the mansion



Southern Series 24S – the lodge on the Guildford Road (now the A320!). The wrought iron gates are long gone



Southern Series 24T – View of the formal gardens from the terrace



Southern Series 24T – The formal gardens with newly planted roses and topiary



Southern Series 24V – a view of the mansion across the estate lands



Southern Series 24W – The west wing of the mansion



Southern Series 24X – A pretty spot in Ottershaw Park!

Aerial Photographs

Photographs for the earliest postcards depicting Ottershaw Park (then Ottershaw College) from the air were taken by Aero Pictorial in 1938 and show the mansion, formal gardens and surrounding estate land. This aerial photography company was in operation between 1934–39 and then 1946–60. It was founded by Aerofilms photographer Cyril Murrell. The card is numbered 4869.

The same Aero Pictorial images re-appeared in the 1950s bearing the same number but re-titled Ottershaw School.



Aero pictorial aerial view of Ottershaw College, 4869 from the late 1930s

Aerofilms Ltd of Hendon was founded in 1919 by Francis Wills and Claude Graham White. To quote from their website *"Born in the aftermath of the First World War, Aerofilms Ltd was an unprecedented business venture. Marrying the fledgling technology of powered flight to the discipline of photography, the business took more than 760,000 oblique aerial photographs between 1919 and 2006. Flying the length and breadth of the country, Aerofilms Ltd charted the changing face of the UK."* This company produced at least one view, probably in the 1950s, and again it shows the mansion and grounds. The card is numbered R/32334. It appears to have also been issued under the egis of both Aerofilms Ltd and Aero Pictorial Ltd.

Airviews Ltd of Manchester also produced a pair of similar images of Ottershaw School. These cards are undated but are probably from the 1960s. The cards have distinctive crinkle-cut edges.



Aerofilms aerial photograph of Ottershaw School R/32334. ?1950s



A pair of aerial photographs of Ottershaw School by Airviews Ltd. ?1960s.

Percy Alex Buchanan

Percy Alex Buchanan started out life as a commercial traveller and may have later worked as a photographer for his father-in-law Carl Wilhelm Stackemann who ran the Photographic Tourists Association in Chiswick. This business involved photographers touring England calling in on schools, colleges and other institutions, offering to photograph the interior and exterior of the buildings and to take group photos of students or staff. They would then make up a portfolio of photographs in the hope of selling them to the institution. Buchanan appears to have set up his own business when Stackemann was bankrupted in 1907 and by 1913 he had moved his business to Thornton Heath. He specialised in school and college postcards showing many interiors and took panoramic photographs using a special camera in the 1930s. I have found one postcard of his showing the interior of Ottershaw College dining room (the Library in School days) numbered 43370 and posted in 1936, and most interestingly a double-width panoramic card of the mansion, unnumbered but postmarked 1938. Does anyone know of any other cards by this photographer?



Percy Alex Buchanan no. 43370– Ottershaw College dining room posted 1936



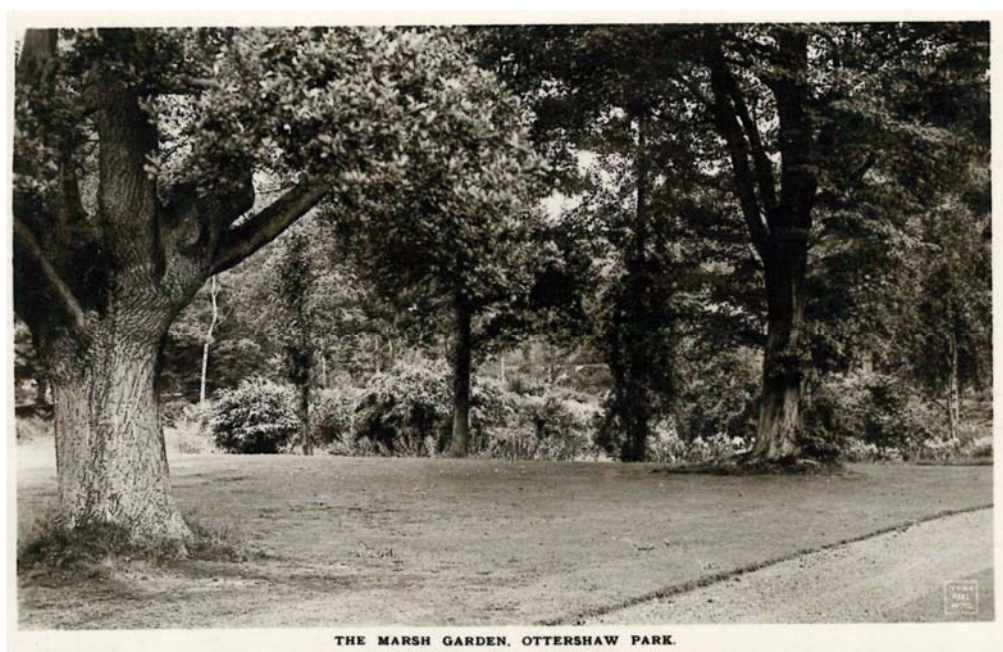
Percy Alex Buchanan double width panoramic view of the Mansion, postmarked 1938

Real Photographs

In 1903 Kodak introduced a camera, designed for postcard-size film, which allowed the general public to take photographs and have them printed on postcard backs, usually in the same dimensions (3½" x 5½") as standard vintage postcards. Many other cameras were used, some of which used glass photographic plates that produced images that had to be cropped in order to fit the postcard format. In 1907, Kodak introduced a service called "real photo postcards," which enabled customers to have a postcard made from any picture they took by developing a negative onto photo paper with a pre-printed postcard backing. I have a couple of "Real Photos", one of the marsh garden and another of the south front of the mansion. I don't know who the photographers were and I suspect there must be other examples.



A "Real photo" of the Mansion south front undated but probably c. 1913. Note the "Real Photo" stamp in bottom left hand corner.



The Marsh Garden. Undated. Note the "Real Photo" stamp in bottom right hand corner.

Miscellaneous

I have several other postcards by as yet unidentified photographers, most of which don't add to the pictorial history of Ottershaw Park. I include a few examples here. One stands out as unique as it portrays the "gothic chapel, once the laundry and kitchens for the mansion and connected to it by a tunnel which I am sure many of your readers will have explored! The card is titled in handwriting "The Laundry Ottershaw Park" and dated 13th July 1905. Sadly it was demolished in 1962 but not before the lead had been removed from the roof!!



Photographer unknown. Card no. 1660. Entitled Ottershaw College so dates from late 1930s



Photographer unknown. Card no. 1591? Entitled Ottershaw College so dates from late 1930s



Photographer unknown. A very faded photograph of the "Gothic Chapel". Card used 1905



Photographer unknown. The Mansion, South side. Card number G19. Post marked 1921.



Photographer unknown. Unnumbered card of the monopetra in the formal gardens of the Mansion.