

Housekeeper, Public Servant and Suffragist: The Productive Life of Mrs Isabella Raynbird (nee Webb) 1837 -1925

The deceased lady, who was the widow of Mr. Hugh E. Raynbird, had taken an active part for many years in public life in Weston Patrick and the district. She was for many years a member on the Basingstoke Board of Guardians, representing the parish of Old Basing, and she also served as Overseer for the parish of Weston Patrick for many years, and in 1903 she was appointed a member of Basingstoke Divisional Education Committee, and was brought into touch with the work at Winchester. She took a keen interest in everything for the good of the parish in which she lived, and, always ready to help any in need, she was greatly beloved by all. A member of the Hampshire Field Club, she always evinced an intelligent interest – not merely casual – in the proceedings of the club.¹

These words taken from the obituary of Mrs Isabella Raynbird (nee Webb), although heartfelt, hardly do full justice to her rich and eventful life of 87 years. There is no mention, for example, of her active participation in the campaign for women's suffrage as a committed suffragist or her involvement in farm management.

In this biographical article it is intended to recount Isabella's life and works and to assess the many and varied contributions that she made to the public life of the area in which she lived. Much of the material is drawn from official records, such as the minutes of the Board of Guardians, and newspaper reports. Unfortunately, however, the surviving traces of her life are somewhat patchy and consequently it is not possible to provide a comprehensive account of all her many and varied interests.

Early Life

Isabella was born on 7 July 1837 in Mapledurwell, a small village near Basingstoke.² At the time of the 1841 Census, nearly 4 years of age, she was living on a farm with her parents James and Mary and three siblings - older brother James (age 9) and younger sister Fanny (age 2) and younger brother John (age 9 months).³ Ten years later in 1851 she was still living with her parents and siblings. Her father's occupation is recorded as a 'farmer owning 243 acres and employing 6 men'. Isabella, Fanny and John are recorded as 'scholars', although it is not known where and how they were being educated.⁴ Given the size of her father's farm and the fact that the family was able to employ a live-in 'house servant' it is clear that Isabella had a relatively privileged upbringing.⁵ Moreover, of significance for what was to happen in her later years, she was acquiring considerable familiarity with a farming way of life.

¹ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 4 April 1925, p.10.

² Ancestry <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/person/tree/16469794/person/29575764559/story?src=>

³ 1841 Census - HO107, 385, f6, p6. She also had an older sister, Mary Ann (age approx 6), who was not at home on the night of the census.

⁴ 1851 Census - HO107, 1681, f250, p25. By now, her brother James was 'a miller'.

⁵ For references to James Webb and Webbs Farmhouse see John Hare, Jean Morrin and Stan Waight, *Mapledurwell* (VCH, 2012), esp p.19.

Housekeeper

For the next three censuses of 1861, 1871 and 1881, Isabella is recorded as living in Weston Patrick. In 1861 she is listed as a 'visitor' at an unnamed farm where the head of the household was Samuel Sparshatt. Her occupation is noted as that of 'farmer's daughter'.⁶ In the census reports of 1871 and 1881 she is recorded as a 'housekeeper' at Manor Farm (see Figure 1).⁷ On both occasions, there were live-in servants and it assumed that one of Isabella's responsibilities was to oversee their work and ensure the smooth running of the domestic arrangements.

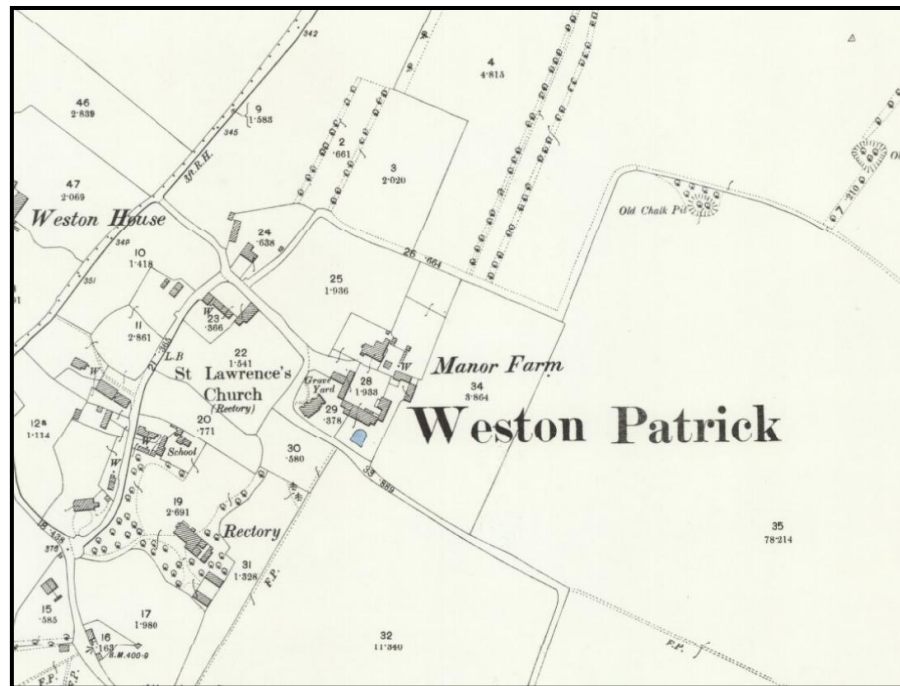


Figure 1: Extract from 1894/6 Ordnance Survey Map showing Location of Manor Farm

Over time, however, it would seem that she was also called upon to apply her farming knowledge and skills, so that following Samuel's death on 16 December 1884 (see Figure 2) she was in a position to manage the affairs of Manor Farm.

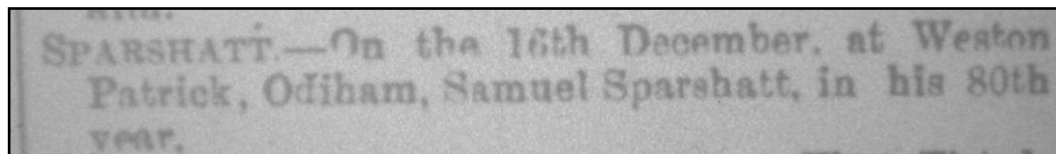


Figure 2: Notice of Samuel Sparshatt's death from *Hants and Berks Gazette*

In Samuel's obituary it is recorded that he 'belonged to the fifth generation of a family which had occupied in unbroken succession a prominent position in the parish

⁶ 1861 Census - RG9, 709, f92, p13. Her brother James, recorded as a 'farmer's son', was also there as a 'visitor'.

⁷ In 1871, Samuel's occupation is shown as that of 'farmer, occupying 730 acres and employing 16 men and 7 boys' and in 1881, 'farmer occupying 450 acres and employing 12 men.'

... His honourable and straightforward character won the respect of all who knew him ...⁸ He had served as churchwarden, guardian and overseer and at the graveside one of those present remarked that 'he had faithfully acted up to the Apostle's teaching, in caring for the fatherless and the widow in their affliction'. In these respects, he was for Isabella what today would be called a 'role model.'

Unsurprisingly, since Samuel had never married, Isabella was the sole executor of his will and the only beneficiary. As it was put formally: 'I give devise and bequeath all and every my Estate and effects whatsoever and wheresoever both real and personal unto Isabella Webb Spinster the second Daughter of my Friend James Webb of South Ham Basingstoke in the said County her heirs executors administrators and assigns according to the respective nature and quality thereof for her and their own absolute use and benefit.' The sum involved was just over £2000 (worth about £180,000 today).⁹ This bequest inevitably gave Isabella considerable financial independence.

As previously mentioned, after Samuel had died, she immersed herself in the affairs of the farm.¹⁰ Thus, in 1887 there are references in the *Hampshire Chronicle* to her selling 'prime Shorthorns' and 'excellent Shorthorn steers' at Basingstoke Cattle Market.¹¹ In addition, she took over some of his public duties, in particular those of churchwarden and overseer. In the circumstances, the term 'housekeeper' hardly does justice to the breadth of her responsibilities in the years prior to, and after, Samuel's death. Still single, her marital status was to change a few years later.

Marriage

On 23 January 1890, Isabella, at the age of 52 married widower, Hugh Edward Raynbird (see Figure 3), at St Lawrence's Church Weston Patrick, with the Rev F.H. Bowden-Smith, rector of Highclere, assisted by the Rev W.O. Newnham, the new rector of the parish, officiating. Hugh was 64 years of age at the time of the wedding, his first wife, Sarah Helen, having died on 17 July 1888.¹² As steward to Lord Bolton of Hackwood Park, he was a leading figure in the life of the parish of Old Basing. He was a county councillor from 1889, when county councils were first established, until 1910 and a member of Old Basing Parish Council between 1894 and 1907. In addition, he was a churchwarden and a supporter of the Old Basing Friendly Society and Working Men's Club.¹³

In a brief newspaper report written from the perspective of Weston Patrick, the wedding was described as one of 'considerable interest' with Hugh being a 'highly respected neighbour'. The honeymoon was spent in Oxford.¹⁴

⁸ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 27 December 1884, p.7. There is no obituary for him in the *Hants and Berks Gazette*.

⁹ Probate of the will of Samuel Sparshatt of Weston Patrick, farmer, 13 Apr 1878, proved in the Principal Registry dated 24 January 1885, HRO: 10M57/L226.

¹⁰ In *Kelly's Directory for Hampshire* 1889 she is listed in the entries for Weston Patrick as 'Miss Isabella Webb, farmer.'

¹¹ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 11 and 18 June 1887, p.2. It the second instance the sale raised £20 10s.

¹² See Appendix A for details of her character taken from a report of her funeral. *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 28 July 1888, p.5

¹³ See Appendix B for details of Hugh's business life and further information about his public service and intellectual interests.

¹⁴ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 1 February 1890, p.8

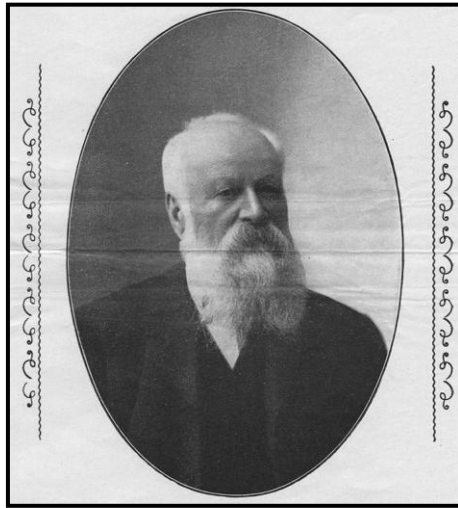


Figure 3: Hugh Edward Raynbird (Hampshire Cultural Trust)

It is not known when Isabella first met Hugh, but clearly they had a common bond in farming and as recorded in his obituary ‘... his intellectual interests [were] happily shared in later years by Mrs Raynbird.’ Pursuit of one of these was through membership of the Hampshire Field Club.¹⁵ In the circumstances, it seems likely that they knew each other long before the deaths of Samuel Sparshatt and Sarah Raynbird. Intriguingly, there is a reference to ‘Mr Hugh Raynbird and the Misses Raynbird, Miss Webb (Weston Patrick), and a large number of agricultural labourers,’ being present at a meeting addressed by the local MP, Arthur Frederick Jeffreys, which was held in May 1889.¹⁶ One wonders if they were engaged at this point.

Although Isabella moved to Old Basing to be with her husband and is shown as residing at the Steward’s House, Hackwood, in the census reports of 1901 and 1911, she retained her links with Weston Patrick. Thus, in 1905 at an event to mark her husband’s 50 years as steward of ‘Lord Bolton’s Hampshire estate’, the chairman, the Hon. C. Slater-Booth observed: ‘Mrs Raynbird, as you know, came from Weston, and is a farm tenant on the Weston estate.’¹⁷ Entries in *Kelly’s Directory* indicate that following her marriage Isabella employed a bailiff to manage Manor Farm. Initially this was Ernest Lunn¹⁸ and later James Usher.

Hugh died on 11 May 1914, aged 89. Needless to say his was a grand funeral and was fully reported in the *Hants and Berks Gazette*.¹⁹ Although, as indicated later, Isabella moved back to Weston Patrick she retained her strong links with Hackwood and Old Basing.

¹⁵ Hugh was a Field Club member from 1892 to 1914 and Isabella from 1894 to 1918.

¹⁶ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 1 June 1889, p.8.

¹⁷ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 15 July 1905, p.8. In *Kelly’s Directories* for 1907 and 1915, under Weston Patrick she is listed as ‘Mrs H.E. Raynbird, farmer Manor Farm.’

¹⁸ *Kelly’s Directory* 1898, p.541.

¹⁹ See Appendix B for extracts from the report of his funeral.

Poor Law Guardian

Under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1894, women were able to serve as poor law guardians for the first time. Although Isabella did not initially take advantage of this opportunity for public service, she did so in 1898 standing for election to the Basingstoke Board of Guardians as a representative of Old Basing.²⁰ There were four candidates for two seats, with the result being recorded in Table 1.

Table 1: Result of Old Basing Guardians/Council Election 1898

Candidate	Votes	Elected/Not elected
William Heathcote Neate	69	Elected
Mrs Isabella Raynbird	55	Tied
F.L Penny	55	Tied
Henry Barton	33	Not elected

In view of the tie for second place, it was necessary to draw lots. As it was put, ‘a drawing of lots on the following day favoured Mrs Raynbird’.²¹ In this way Isabella became the second female member of Basingstoke Board of Guardians, the first being Mrs Ellen Edith Mitchell. In her election notice, Ellen made comments with which Isabella would almost certainly have concurred:

The judicious administration of the Poor Law in its relation to women and children seems to offer special opportunities for the exercise of such knowledge of, and insight into, their needs as only a woman can possess.²²

All the evidence indicates that Isabella was a diligent and hardworking guardian a role she continued to perform until the early 1920s. In many elections she and her fellow Old Basing guardian were unopposed. There was, however, a contest on at least two occasions, one of which was in 1904. The candidates were the two sitting guardians, William Neate and Isabella; Henry Barton who had been defeated in 1898 but was subsequently co-opted onto the Board; and the Honourable C. Slater-Booth.²³ The results do not appear to have been reported but Isabella retained her seat.

As a guardian, one of her particular interests was the welfare of Workhouse children. For example, for a number of years she organised summer holidays for them. In 1905:

The master reported that the children had spent a very enjoyable month’s holiday, Mrs Raynbird having found homes for them chiefly in the village of Weston Patrick. Amongst their relaxations was helping in the harvest field, for which they were rewarded with a little pocket money, which the Guardians will place in a Savings Bank for them. Five boys brought back between them £1 3s 2d and five girls 6s 9d. Mrs Lefroy moved a vote of thanks to Mrs

²⁰ Guardians for rural parishes, such as Old Basing, also served as Rural District Councillors.

²¹ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 9 April 1898, p.5.

²² *Hampshire Chronicle*, 26 March 1898, p.5. Ellen Mitchell was one of Basingstoke’s representatives on the Board.

²³ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 12 March 1904, p.8.

Raynbird for getting the children such good homes, and this was cordially passed.²⁴

The minutes also indicate that she had a concern for the medical needs of schoolchildren and what should happen to them when they left the Workhouse.²⁵ Most importantly, she played a key part in the moves towards the 'boarding out' of Workhouse children, the precursor to fostering. This involved a considerable amount of administration and in April 1911 she was appointed to the committee that was to oversee the process.²⁶

Another interest was that of staffing or what today would be termed personnel or human resource issues. Thus, in 1904 it was reported that:

Mrs Raynbird was empowered to visit a Home for Epileptics at Maida Vale, London, and interview an applicant for the post of junior assistant nurse, and, if she is likely to suit, to appoint her.²⁷

In 1906/07 she served on a committee set up by the Board 'to enquire into the subject of the nursing staff and to report'.²⁸ Retention of, particularly nursing, staff was an ongoing issue throughout Isabella's time as a guardian. In 1908 she was appointed to a committee formed 'to consider and report ... [on] the duties of the Master and Matron and of the Superintendent Nurse respectively in relation to the Infirmary'.²⁹

A later staffing issue in 1909 related to the appointment of a 'permanent needlewoman'. In this instance Isabella argued that:

... instead of, as at present, employing temporary assistance ... there was work enough for a permanent needlewoman who would have the supervision of the nursery and could give assistance when the other members of staff were on holiday. All the able-bodied women in the house were employed in the laundry. Last year 1450 different items of clothing for boys and girls, and house linen were made up. The temporary help last year cost £22 0s 9d.³⁰

A needlewoman on a salary of £20 per annum was duly appointed.³¹

It is also noteworthy that Isabella was frequently one of the delegates from the Basingstoke Board to Poor Law Conferences. Some of these were held in Winchester, such as one in November 1899 on the 'feeble minded and epileptic',³² and others in London.

²⁴ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 16 September 1905, p.7.

²⁵ This might involve emigration or finding suitable employment, see Basingstoke Union Board of Guardians Minute Book 23 Sept 1904-31 May 1907, HRO: PL3/5/26.

²⁶ Basingstoke Union Board of Guardians Minute Book 4 Mar 1910-13 Sept 1912, HRO: PL3/5/28.

²⁷ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 30 April 1904, p.6.

²⁸ Basingstoke Union Board of Guardians Minute Book 23 Sept 1904-31 May 1907, HRO: PL3/5/26

²⁹ Basingstoke Union Board of Guardians Minute Book 14 June 1907 - 18 Feb 1910, HRO: PL3/5/27

³⁰ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 31 July 1909, p.5.

³¹ Basingstoke Union Board of Guardians Minute Book 14 June 1907 - 18 Feb 1910, HRO: PL3/5/27

³² Basingstoke Union Board of Guardians Minute Book 1 July 1899 - 20 Dec 1901, HRO: PL3/5/24

In addition, along with other lady guardians, Isabella served on the (Work)House Committee.

Re-elected unopposed in 1913 when, as reported, there was ‘no contest in any parish’,³³ she served throughout the War years. Although there are very few references to her in press reports of Board meetings during this period one from June 1917 provides some insights into another of her concerns:

Mrs Raynbird obtained the permission of the Board to reply to a question that was asked at a previous meeting as to the duties of the Ladies’ Visiting Committee ... [Initially] organised at the request of the Guardians in 1860 ... [it consisted of] a president [currently Lady Rycroft], secretary and others to the total number of 13. The duties then undertaken and carried on to the present time were: Weekly visits to the aged and infirm, which greatly cheered and brightened their lives; supervision of the able bodied women; care for the children during their early days, and later placing them out and keeping in touch with them for several years, delicate children receiving special care and attention. Young women admitted to the maternity wards were influenced and helped to gain an honest livelihood ... The Brabazon Employment Society was opened, and the work was still a source of great interest to those unfit for any other occupation. A library was provided by the Committee, who also subscribed to a winter and summer treat for all the inmates.³⁴

Clearly this Committee helped to ensure a more humane approach to the care of Workhouse inmates.

Still a guardian in 1919, Isabella stood for re-election against two other candidates, these being her longstanding fellow member, Mr Barton, and Mrs Madocks. The outcome is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Result of Old Basing Guardians/Council Election 1919

Candidate	Votes	Elected/Not elected
Mrs Rachel Madocks	77	Elected
Mrs Isabella Raynbird	34	Elected
Mr Henry Barton	29	Not Elected

Source: *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 12 April 1919.

As the results indicate, the electors were undoubtedly looking for some new blood and Isabella only just scraped in with a majority of five. Her attendance at meetings in her final three years as a guardian was somewhat spasmodic which is hardly surprising given her age. One of the last meetings she attended, in October 1921, was particularly noteworthy since it was the first occasion on which the guardians were addressed by a ‘deputation of seven or eight unemployed men’ of Basingstoke. They were seeking a more generous ‘scale of relief’, which covered financial support for those out of work and assistance in kind, such as coal and rent relief. Isabella’s reaction to this is not known, but it is probable that she would have been sympathetic

³³ *Hampshire Chronicle*, 19 April 1913, p.10.

³⁴ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 9 June 1917, p.2.

to the plight of those far less fortunate than herself.³⁵ She did not stand for re-election in 1922, thereby bringing to an end a long and memorable period of public service.³⁶

Suffragist

Another important aspect of Isabella's later life was her involvement in the campaign for women's suffrage. Right from the beginnings of the local campaign in 1908 she was present at meetings. A few years earlier, however, she had indicated that 'at that time she could not possibly undertake the uphill task of pioneering such a movement.'³⁷ Presumably this was due, in part, to the fact that she did not want to spread herself too thinly. By 1910, circumstances had changed to the extent that she was willing to accept the chairmanship/presidency of the Basingstoke and District Women's Suffrage Society.

At one of the earlier meetings in 1909 at which she presided, Isabella remarked 'how long the movement had been going on and how slowly it had progressed.' She also demonstrated her knowledge of the campaign's long history by referring to some of those who had supported the cause in its early days, such as John Stuart Mill and Charles Kingsley, and quoting at length from statements in support of women's suffrage by Lord Beaconsfield, Lord Salisbury and Arthur Balfour.³⁸

During the next few years Isabella was conspicuous by her presence at suffrage meetings in Basingstoke. She sometimes chaired them and, on at least one occasion, it was held at her home.³⁹ In addition, she was a member of the deputation that met Arthur Clavell Salter, the Conservative MP for Basingstoke, in July 1912, to press the case for enfranchising women. He can be said to have offered qualified support for the cause.

Later that year, in November, Isabella took the chair at an event that 'was much better attended than many previous ones in support of the same cause, the room being nearly full.'⁴⁰ On this occasion, the speaker was Miss Margaret Ashton, Manchester's first female city councillor.⁴¹ She argued that 'the woman's point of view, which had never yet been given a chance, would affect legislation so as to make England more wholesome, healthy and moral.'⁴² Isabella's views are not recorded but it can be surmised that she was much in sympathy with the stance adopted by Miss Ashton.

Other Roles

By comparison with her contribution to the public good as a poor law guardian and her suffragist activities there are only passing references to Isabella's other roles, namely those of churchwarden and overseer in Weston Patrick and membership of the

³⁵ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 22 October 1921, p.6.

³⁶ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 18 March 1922, p.5. Her place was taken by Mr W.R. Hoare.

³⁷ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 28 November 1908, p.5.

³⁸ *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 24 July 1909, p.6.

³⁹ Meeting held on 3 June 1913.

⁴⁰ Isabella was called upon to chair this meeting at the last minute because the intended chairman, the vicar of Alton, was 'compelled by clerical etiquette to give up his part in the meeting.' *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 9 November 1912.

⁴¹ She was first elected to the city council in 1908.

⁴² *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 9 November 1912, p.6.

Hampshire County Council Education Sub-Committee for the Basingstoke Division. This is unfortunate since it means that certain aspects of her life cannot be fully documented.

In an edition of the Suffragist newspaper, *The Common Cause*, from 1912 it was mentioned that, in addition to being a poor law guardian, Isabella had been 'churchwarden of Weston Patrick for 28 years.'⁴³ Records confirm that she inherited the role of churchwarden/overseer from Samuel Sparshatt following his death in 1884 and continued to perform it, even while living in Old Basing, for just over 40 years until her death in 1925.⁴⁴ At the time, it was extremely rare for a woman to be churchwarden and was testimony to her ability and competence that she was deemed a suitable candidate to undertake this role. It would be interesting to know something of her dealings with the male incumbents of St Lawrence Church during her churchwardenship (see Figure 4).⁴⁵ Presumably they appreciated her skills and understanding of the nature of the role which she had probably gained from shadowing Samuel.



Figure 4: St Lawrence Church Weston Patrick (c1915)⁴⁶

With respect to the Education Sub-Committee, Isabella was co-opted at the time of its establishment in the autumn of 1903 and served until it was wound up in 1908. Her husband, in his capacity as a county councillor for one of the electoral divisions covered by the Sub-Committee, was also a member. In this role, Isabella shared responsibility for the appointment of school managers; the inspection of school buildings; school attendance and non-attendance; and the appointment and salaries of teachers. The minutes indicate that initially she assiduously attended meetings but did so less frequently in later years.⁴⁷ Since members voted to bar the press from

⁴³ *The Common Cause*, 18 July 1912, p.254.

⁴⁴ Weston Patrick Parish Overseers Receipts and Payments Book 1868-1886, HRO: 68M72/DU49; 1887-1909, HRO: 68M72/DU50; and 1909-1927, HRO: 68M72/DU51.

⁴⁵ These were the Rev William Orde Newnham (1889-1893); Rev Edwin Freeman Padmore (1893-1910); and the Rev Alfred Duncan Wolley (1910-1922).

⁴⁶ HRO: HPP38-0620.

⁴⁷ Divisional Education Sub-Committee signed minute book: Basingstoke Division, HRO H/CX1/15a/17.

attending meetings a potential source of information about her contribution to the work of the sub-committee is unavailable.

Conclusion

It would seem that, following the death of her husband, Isabella moved back to Weston Patrick in 1915/16. Her address in the list of members of the Hampshire Field Club is shown as Hackwood until 1915 and thereafter Weston Patrick. While in *Kelly's Directory* for 1915 she is listed as a 'farmer, Manor Farm', with James Usher as her bailiff. By 1923 she was living at Lower House (see Figure 5), presumably having disposed of Manor Farm, where Sidney Flux was now the farmer. Isabella died on 25 March 1925 and her funeral was on 2 April.



Figure 5: Lower House Weston Patrick (c1915)⁴⁸

⁴⁸ HRO: HPP38-0615.

Appendix A: Helen Raynbird - Obituary

‘The deceased lady had ever taken a most active and useful part in everything that had gone on in Basing. Nothing that was for the good of the villagers was too insignificant for her to show her hearty appreciation of. Especially in work for elevating the thoughts and actions of the wives of those employed on, or in any way connected with the Hackwood estate. She was always ready to stretch out a helping hand, to help forward any good work. Her example was a noble one among the ladies of the village; and in the working of all charitable institutions she took a leading and most useful part. Her presence at meetings was felt as bright sunshine. Many are the times we have seen her among the women and children of the village, carrying happiness and comfort wherever she has gone. The education of the young was a favourite subject with her, and many an hour has she devoted to the religious training of the children in the Sunday School. For a long number of years she carried on a Sunday School at Hackwood, and in many ways endeared herself to the people of Basing, by whom she will be greatly missed. In the decease of Mrs Raynbird, all in Basing and Hackwood, have lost a true and a kind friend.’

Source: *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 28 July 1888, p.5

Appendix B: Hugh Edward Raynbird – Extracts from a Report of His Funeral.

‘A Veteran Land Agent and Auctioneer

... Mr Hugh E. Raynbird [was] head of the well known firm of Raynbird & Sons, land agents, surveyors and auctioneers and also of the firm Raynbird & Co. Ltd., corn and seed merchants ... up until a few weeks ago, he was frequently to be seen in his closed conveyance driving to or from the cattle mart which forms his most important contribution to the trade of Basingstoke. With ample forehead, full flowing beard, and tall, upright form, he stood, even in old age, a splendid specimen of English manhood; while his intellectual worth was manifest to all who intimately knew him. Usually laconic in speech ... yet on many public occasions demonstrated his possession of a rare fund of information on topics connected with agriculture, forestry, and village life; and only a few months ago he began the publication, in the form of “Hampshire Records, Old and New” of some interesting articles relating to these topics ... The loss of one who had earned so many titles to respect and regard will be keenly felt, not by the family alone, but by a far wider circle, who recognised in Mr Raynbird a man of no ordinary merit – a conspicuous example of diligence in business, of perfect integrity and honourable conduct in all the relations of life

... His first post in this county was that of resident agent on Mr Melville Portal’s estate at Laverstoke. He soon afterwards became agent for Lord Bolton’s Hampshire estates at Hackwood, Kingsclere and Wallop, and this position he retained for fifty years, retiring in 1905. “It is seldom” (said a writer in an agricultural journal at that time) “that for so long a period the same person occupies the important and responsible post of steward of a large property, and still more rare for him to work for such a time in such unbroken harmony with those around him”

... for many years [he was] associated with the late Mr Alfred Dowling, the late Mr W.W. Caldecott, and the late Mr Bawtree in carrying on an extensive seed business, and he survived all the partners of that amalgamation, which dated back to 1865. The seed firm gained many distinctions both at home and abroad by the

excellence of their exhibits the last being at Vienna in 1873, and the fame of Raynbird and Co. spread far and wide.

As head of the auctioneering firm of Raynbird and Son, by whom the important weekly stock sales are carried on ... [he] will be remembered with respect by a large community of farmers and dealers. Mr Raynbird's first cattle sale was held at Christmas, 1873, and this subsequently developed into monthly and then weekly sales, which have so grown in popularity that Raynbird's auction mart is now one of the leading businesses of its kind in the South of England, the proximity of the pens and sheds to the L. and S.W. and G.W. railway stations being most advantageous to all concerned.

In February, 1893, Mr Raynbird was instrumental in forming an important organisation for the advancement of agricultural interests known as the Old Basing Association of landowners, farmers, traders and workmen, which was influentially supported and in connection with which some valuable discussions took place on the position of agriculture and the improvement of village life.

... A man of independent thought and progressive ideas Mr Raynbird took comprehensive views on public policy, and, so far as lay in his power, he endeavoured in various ways to promote the welfare of those about him. He laid special stress on the importance of physical training for the young, and the desirability of teaching young men and lads to drill, scout, shoot and ride, in order that they might become efficient both as breadwinners and as defenders of their country. On the formation of Hampshire County Council in 1889 he was elected the first county councillor for the Basing division, which he continued to represent until the election in March, 1910, when in consequence of his advanced age, he felt that he ought to relinquish this responsibility. He did not often address the County Council, but whenever he did so he contributed useful advice and was always listened to with respect.

... Mr Raynbird took a deep interest in matters that more immediately concerned the parish of Old Basing, particularly the Old Basing Friendly Society, which for many years lent a helping hand to the labourers of that village, the Working Men's Club, the Horticultural Society – in fact any movement that was calculated to enhance the welfare and increase the happiness of the people of Basing. He took his share in the work of the Parish Council when that body began to manage parochial affairs; and continued to do so for many years; and the late Canon Hessey bore eloquent testimony to Mr Raynbird's regular and valued help as a layman in connection with St Mary's church at Old Basing. He was interested in the archaeological researches of the Hampshire Field Club, and frequently joined their excursions in this neighbourhood. In short his intellectual interests ... were manifold, and doubtless conduced to the enjoyment of that *otium cum dignitate* which came as the reward of a long and honourable career.'

Source: *Hants and Berks Gazette*, 16 May 1914, p.8

ROGER OTTEWILL
September 2018