



*The Right Hon. George Smith MP (British Library).*

*Selsdon House was the Smith family home between 1809 and 1877. Their move to Selsdon precipitated profound changes in the area and their residence continued the historical association with Royalty and Parliament, in the grand figure of George Smith.*

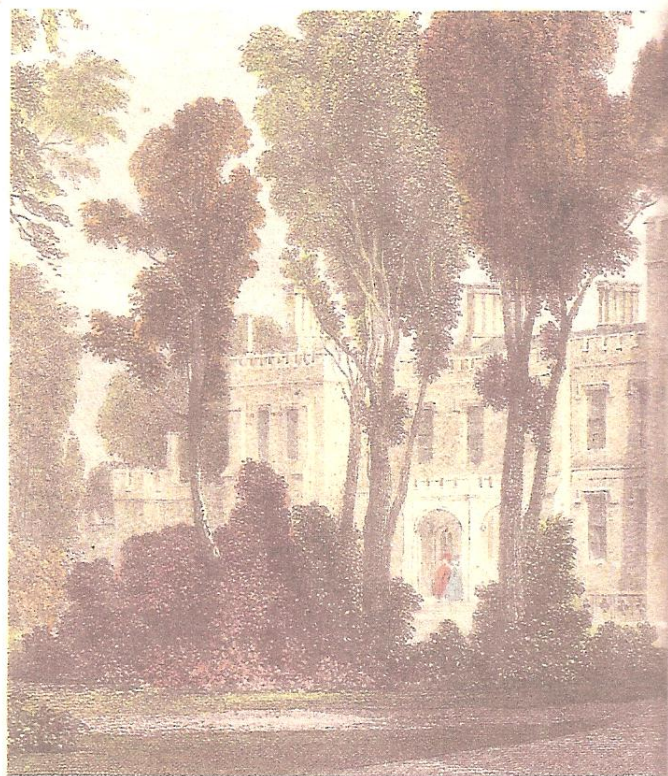
*George Smith was born in 1765, son of Abel Smith who was a prominent and wealthy banker. The family bank "Smith, Payne and Smith" moved from Nottingham to London in 1765. The building was situated in the City of London "at the sign of the Phoenix, adopted after the Great Fire of London". (The symbol of the Phoenix is still used as the Hotel's emblem and can be seen in the stained-glass window which adorns the main staircase.) The bank itself remains in existence today, having been taken over by the National Westminster group.*

*The Smith family has a prestigious lineage, which includes the first Lord Carrington (George's brother, Robert Smith), the first Governor of New South Wales, Australia, and perhaps the most famous and revered descendant of all — H.M. Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother.*

*George Smith married Frances Mary, daughter of Sir John Mosely and they had fifteen children. (Frances, daughter of the Smiths' second son Oswald, married the 13th Earl of Strathmore in 1853; their son, the 14th*

*Earl, was the father of H.M. Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother). George became a board member of the family bank and a director of the famous East India Company; he was also a Member of Parliament for Midhurst and Wendover from 1806 to 1830. Because his parliamentary and business activities were based in London, he needed a country residence within easy travelling distance of the City, and so he came to purchase a partly constructed foundation from William Coles, a London broker. Coles had demolished the Bowyer 16th-century farmhouse and had begun building on the site, but had become bankrupt in the process.*

*It is George Smith who is credited with the design and construction of the early 19th-century mansion that forms part of the present building. The engraving by J.P. Neale in 1819 illustrates the elegant gothic-style house of the Smith family. At that time the house was made up of eleven symmetrical bays with castellated turrets, rising in splendour over the parapet; the castellated water tower is also shown. George Smith was obviously influenced by the gothic revival in the early 19th century. The gothic style was associated with Christianity and truthfulness, and symbolised high principles and good cheer — well befitting the new "mansion on the hill".*



*Selsdon House, 1819. J.P. Neale.*



*H.M. Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother. Painting by Sir Gerald Kelly, c.1938 (National Portrait Gallery).*

*Selsdon House extended east from the present main entrance; the entrance to the Smith house was the arch adjacent to the entrance of the present Phoenix Bar. The hall, where the Smiths received their guests is now*



*the lounge with the Bromley-by-Bow ceiling. The interior of Selsdon House was enriched by an immense collection of books and prints from India. The architecture was very much an extension of Smith's cultural appreciation, and a fine example of an elegant house designed for gracious living in the 19th century.*

*The 400 acre grounds were landscaped by Smith; his artistic and horticultural talents created of the gardens a living heritage, which is still giving pleasure today. He extended his estates and became the principal landowner in the area. This made him one of the wealthiest and most influential men in the county, following in the footsteps of Selsdon's Anglo-Saxon ancestor, Earl Aelfred.*

*As well as being a parliamentarian and banker, George Smith was a very active squire of the manor, yet still found time to devote to charitable deeds for the poor of the neighbourhood. He died in 1836, leaving his estates to his eldest son, George Robert Smith. His wife Frances continued to live at Selsdon House, where she took over many of her husband's local activities; she was responsible for giving the turret clock to the church at Sanderstead, where in fact most of the Smiths of Selsdon are buried. The family connection with the church was acknowledged by H.M. Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother, when she recently contributed to the restoration of the turret clock; this event is commemorated in the form of a plaque inside the church.*

*George Robert Smith was born in 1793; like his father, he became a Member of Parliament and senior partner of the family bank, and served as the High Sheriff of Surrey in 1852. He was responsible for some additions to the house, in particular the terrace winter garden. On his death in 1869, his eldest son Ernald took over the estate and moved into Selsdon House.*

*Ernald Smith married Lindsay Murray and they had a daughter, Mabel. Ernald served as a Captain in the Second Surrey Rifle Volunteers. He died at the age of 33, leaving the widowed Lindsay and 5 year old Mabel, who subsequently inherited the estate and house. Mabel, the last of the Smith family to live at Selsdon House, was awarded the C.B.E. for her services in the First World War.*

*The Smith era at Selsdon ended in 1877, when the house and part of its grounds were leased to a member of the Church — a man very different from the austere clergy who owned the manor in the medieval period.*



*The tenure of Selsdon House was secured by Bishop Thorold in 1877 and he was consecrated Bishop of Rochester the same year. The cartoon by that talented and witty artist Spy in the famous Victorian magazine "Vanity Fair", illustrates the Bishop as quite a character of his time. He was highly regarded as a statesman as well as fulfilling his role in the ecclesiastic hierarchy. The Bishop was once described as "a good, hard working ecclesiastic, and a man of plain, practical commonsense, without any great theological or literary pretensions. Although he was once called evangelical, he is tolerant, for he is a man of the world. He speaks fluently, gushes moderately and rules with firmness".*

*Bishop Thorold was a genial and considerate host, and entertained many of his ecclesiastical friends and associates at Selsdon Park. His guests enjoyed "the most bracing of air and everything to calm the eye." The peace and tranquility they found obviously gave them pleasant repose in their hard-working lives. The clergymen would often stroll in the beautiful grounds of Selsdon, where they perhaps discussed the finer points of theology or speculated on the movement of their careers and those of their associates. A path through the woods where the clergymen would saunter, has become known as The Bishop's Walk, and is still in existence today. This was where the famous Tudor seat was found. It is likely that the seat was used by the Bishop's guests as a resting place, where they would continue their ecclesiastic gossip and expound higher theories.*

*The Bishop made little alteration to the building, though he certainly added to its ambiance. He acquired the magnificent Elizabethan fireplace, which stands in the present lounge of the hotel; it is alleged to have been given to the Bishop by the philanthropist John Smith in 1878. It was removed from Purley Bury (a village near Selsdon) to Selsdon House. An inscription, which has since disappeared, stated "this was originally in the house of President Bradshaw of this parish erected in 1600". This fifteenth-century hand-carved fireplace was obviously housed by Bradshaw, who was the President of the High Justice Court, during the rigorous trial of Charles I. It was Bradshaw who first put his hand to the death warrant of the unfortunate King.*

*Bishop Thorold, by Spy.  
"Vanity Fair" 1878 (British Library).*

*The Bishop left Selsdon in 1890 to become the Bishop of Winchester and the whole of the Selsdon estate was sold by Mabel Smith to William Stevens, a wealthy publisher and printer from London.*

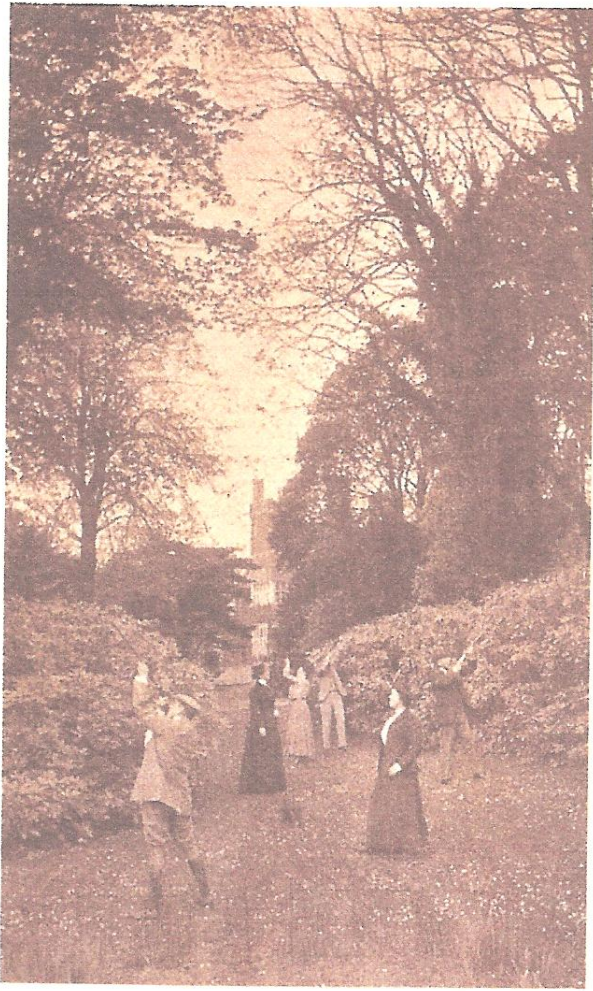
*William Stevens lived at Selsdon House for nine years, where he spent his retirement until his death in 1899. The only addition he made to the house was the belvedere with a weather vane over the square lantern above the original main entrance. On his death the estate and house was bought by Mr Wickham Noakes, an admirable country sportsman, who became a*



*Selsdon Park House and Gardens.*

*distinguished huntsman while living on his new and splendid country estate.*

*Wickham Noakes, who was born in 1840, became the head of a brewing firm, Noakes and Co. He bought the estate because it afforded him the prospect of continuing his sporting pursuits in auspicious surroundings, as well as becoming the new squire occupying a grand country seat. He entertained his hunting friends and business associates and was renowned locally for his organisation of shooting parties in the grounds of the estate.*



*Rook shooting in the grounds of Selsdon House, 1903.*

*It was Wickham Noakes who acquired the famous Blackfriars Arch, which still stands in the grounds of the hotel. The Arch was once part of the Blackfriars monastery of London, built in the thirteenth century and inhabited by the Dominican Order of monks. Most of this important, historical building has disappeared. In the light of this fact, the existence of the arch is immensely important and due solely to the foresight and imagination of Noakes. He died in 1923. On his death the original Smiths' estate was divided into two parts and Selsdon House with 200 acres of beautiful parkland was purchased by Mr Allan Doble Sanderson.*

*The transaction of this sale was to mark yet another great change in the development of Selsdon Park as a "mansion on the hill".*

*Allan Doble Sanderson was a prominent businessman, who owned the firm of London Lubricants, which he sold in 1927 following the acquisition of Selsdon Park. He was also a motor-racing driver who competed at the famous circuit, Brooklands, and at racing venues on the Continent between 1920 and 1924. He won many trophies and thrilled countless motor-racing enthusiasts. He was an inventive and enterprising motor engineer, as well as being a courageous driver. One of his cars, an Armstrong-Siddeley, housed a 1920 "Silver Ghost" Rolls Royce engine; the integral running boards had been removed from the car's chassis by blow lamp, no doubt in order to reach greater speeds on the racing circuit.*

*Allan Sanderson decided to pursue a new business career, and in 1924 he embarked on an exciting, innovative commercial venture by purchasing Selsdon House and its estate grounds. His idea was to convert the 23-bedroomed Victorian country residence into an illustrious hotel. For this purpose, he employed the architect Hugh Mackintosh, who spectacularly enlarged the building in three stages. Between 1927 and 1930 he constructed the East Wing; then in 1935 the conservatory was demolished to make way for the West Wing. The original building was encased in red brick and built in the neo-Jacobean style of the additional wings, and today spans a total of 640 feet.*

*The hotel's undulating acres featured in this historical mosaic contain resplendent woodlands, graduated terraces, two Cedars of Lebanon (one 400 years old, the other over 250) and open verdant grounds with winding, shady walks — all of which create a magnificent vista, affording peace and tranquility to everyone who stays at Selsdon Park.*

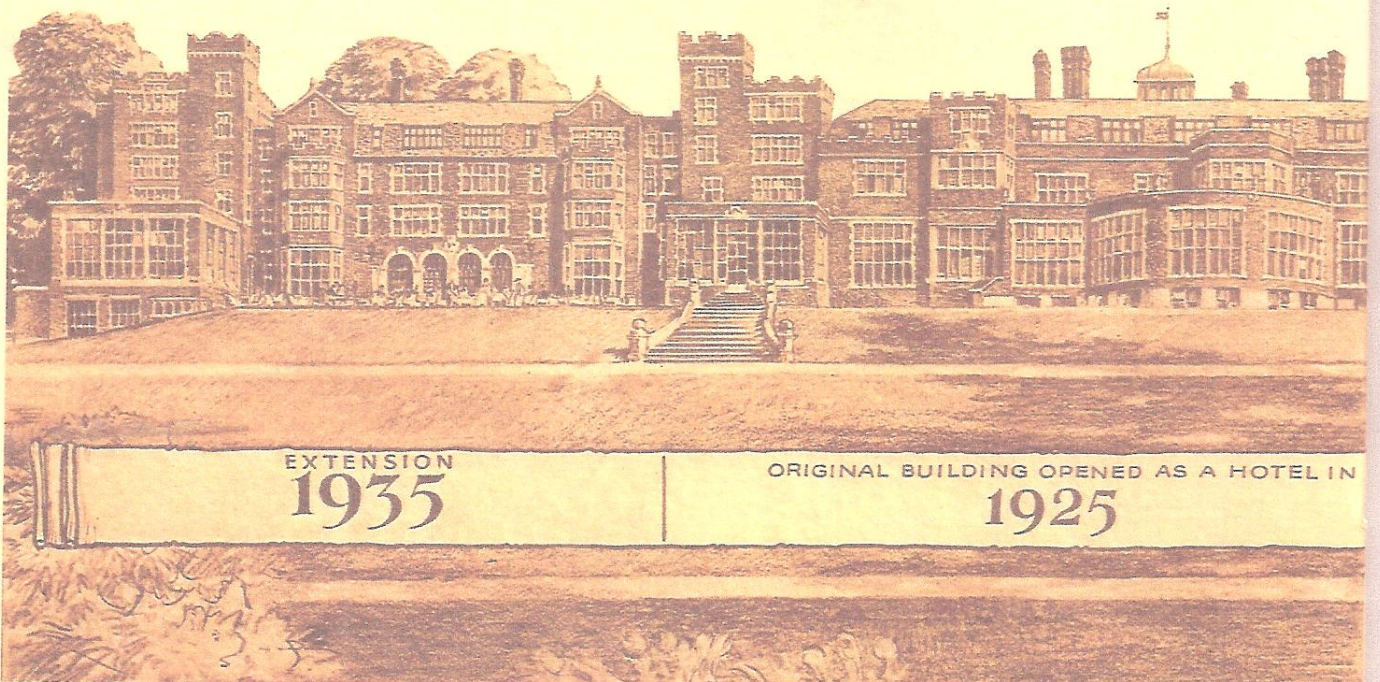


*Mr Wickham Noakes and hunting party, 1903.*

*It is interesting to note that as far back as 1799, when one of the first tourist-style pamphlets was published, entitled "Twelve hours perambulation of the rural beauties of Sanderstead", the area was thus described: "..... remarkable not only for the salubrity of the air and beauty of its scenery (which is of the most romantic and perspective kind) but likewise for its seeming seclusion from the busy bustle of country towns ..... no noise excepting the melodious chaunting of hounds" – this description from the eighteenth century is, in part, remarkably apt today.*

*The present proprietor of the hotel is Mr Basil Sanderson, son of Allan Doble Sanderson, who founded and inspired the building of the hotel. Mr Basil Sanderson was educated at Wrekin College in Shropshire and subsequently studied electrical engineering at Faraday House. He later joined the famous shipping line, Cunard, and spent two years in catering; this provided him with a useful background when he returned to Selsdon, where he acquired the expertise of the hotel business from his parents. He took over control from his father in 1960, and since then this esteemed family business has developed Selsdon Park into one of the finest hotels in Europe. The name of Sanderson will continue to be associated with the future of Britain's largest proprietor-owned hotel in the figure of Mr and Mrs Sanderson's son Mark, whom it is hoped will eventually take over from his father.*

*Selsdon Park Hotel embodies the successful blending of the old and the new, the past and the present. This fine hotel has the ambiance of a grand country residence, which offers the many leisure activities of the twentieth century. It has now fulfilled its destiny of becoming the great "mansion on the hill". Continuity is embedded in its timbers, stones and bricks, and in the histories of the people whose lives are recorded here.*



*Selsdon Park Hotel, 1935.*

*The story of Selsdon is, in a sense, the story of England itself, and it is comforting to imagine that the gentle ghosts of Selsdon's past are mingling cheerfully within its walls, strolling about its grounds and watching benevolently over its future.*



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