

Many years later, on 7 September 1844, Charles Mordick wrote his will in which he described himself as a yeoman, rather than a gardener, and it is of particular interest because his trustees were directed to sell all his cottages, lands, etc., in Chaddesden and elsewhere, but only after they had given Sir Henry Sacheverel Wilmot the first option to buy them. Charles died on 9 January 1845 aged 82 (or 83 in some accounts) and was buried in St. Mary's churchyard, where his gravestone (no. 87, Fig. 6) tells onlookers that he had been a gardener at the Hall for fifty years [Note 1].

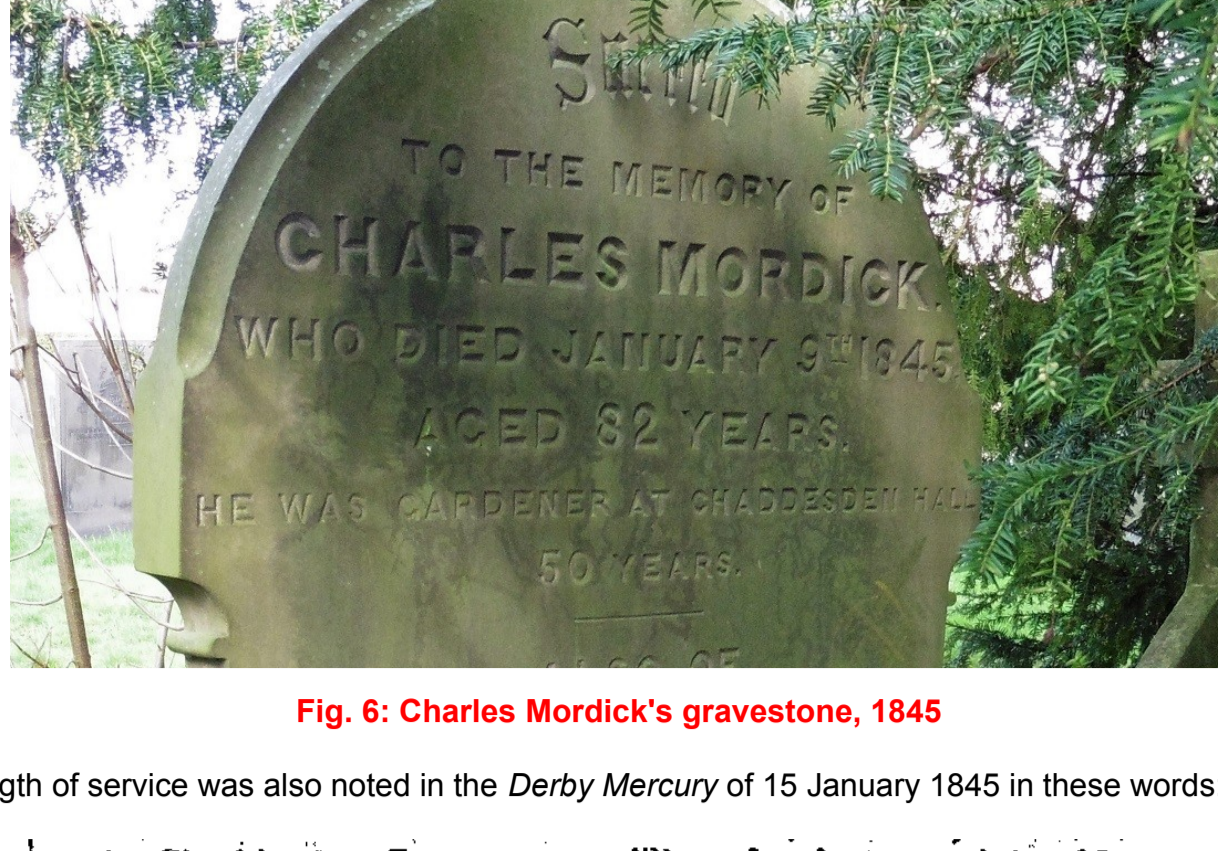


Fig. 6: Charles Mordick's gravestone, 1845

His length of service was also noted in the *Derby Mercury* of 15 January 1845 in these words:

At Chaddesden Common, on Thursday last, aged 82, Mr. Charles Murdock. He was for more than 50 years a good and faithful servant to the late Sir Robert Wilmot, Bart., by whom, and the present family, he was much respected, and by all who knew him. His illness was but short, but he died in perfect happiness.

Fig. 7: Charles Mordick's obituary notice in the *Derby Mercury*, 1845

Another of Charles Mordick's sons, also named Charles, followed his father into the service of the Wilmot family. Sadly he was not destined for a long life and in fact died in 1838 (aged 42), some seven years before Charles senr.

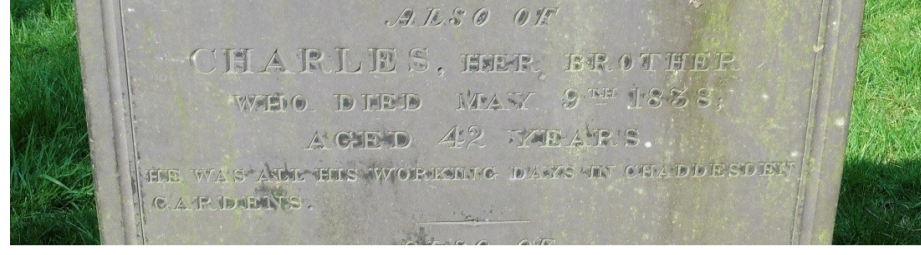


Fig. 8: Inscription on Charles Mordick junr's gravestone, 1838

The *Derby Mercury* of 9 May 1838 noted: 'This morning, at Chaddesden, Mr. Charles Murdock, gardener to H. S. Wilmot, Esq., leaving a wife and a large family to lament their irreparable loss.' His gravestone, also in our churchyard (no. 86, Fig. 8), records that he spent all his working life in Chaddesden Gardens. His son Robert also practised the same occupation, but worked for himself as a market gardener at Chaddesden Common.

Charles Mordick senr's successor in the gardens at Chaddesden Hall seems to have been Thomas Sligh (1812–1876). He was certainly here in 1841, for that year's census lists Thomas and Isabella Sligh (both aged 25) and their one-month-old daughter, Patricia Beatrice, who had been baptised at St. Mary's Church on 20 April, her father's occupation being noted in the baptism register as 'Gardener'. That Thomas Sligh was certainly Sir Henry Sacheverel Wilmot's gardener is explicitly recorded at the time of his second daughter's baptism two years later, as well as being confirmed by the directories of *Bagshaw* (1846) and *White* (1857), where he is listed as 'Gardener, Hall'.

Interestingly, just like Charles Mordick, both Thomas Sligh and his wife had been born in Scotland. Further miscellaneous references to Sligh feature from time to time in the local newspapers, for example, the *Derbyshire Advertiser* of 3 June 1853 recorded that at the recent Midland Horticultural Society's Fete, 'Mr. Sligh, gardener to Sir H. S. Wilmot, Bart., of Chaddesden Hall, had a capital collection of vegetables'. Twenty years later, he was one of the judges at West Hallam Horticultural Society's exhibition (*Derby Mercury*, 20 August 1873). A conscientious head gardener would always strive to do well in local events to demonstrate to his employer just what an accomplished horticulturalist he was. Of course, the employer would be delighted if his gardener won more prizes than the gardeners of adjacent landed estates. In 1865 Thomas Sligh's eldest daughter, Patricia Beatrice, married William Poyser of Mickleover and within a couple of years they had moved to Chaddesden ... many years later one of their sons, Tom Poyser, would be remembered for the work he did on behalf of numerous Chaddesden organisations. After more than thirty years spent working in the Hall gardens, Thomas Sligh died on 10 August 1876, aged 64, seemingly with no obituary notice in the local paper. His headstone in St. Mary's churchyard (no. 144, Fig. 9), unlike those of his predecessors, makes no mention of his occupation.



Fig. 9: Thomas Sligh's gravestone

John Evans, the man who was destined to be the last head gardener at Chaddesden Hall, is first shown in the 1881 Census for the village together with his wife Mary (both aged 36) and their seven children. The children's places of birth most probably indicated where Evans had previously worked, i.e. Leckhampton, Gloucestershire (1867); Cheltenham, Gloucestershire (1868–1874); Monmouth, Newport (1876), and Bath, Somerset (1879). The Evans family expanded still further after they moved to Chaddesden and by 1888 they had ten children ... life in the gardener's cottage (Fig. 10) with its seven rooms must have been somewhat cramped.



Fig. 10: The Gardener's Cottage, Chaddesden Lane.

On 20 December 1892 John Evans placed this advertisement in the *Derby Daily Telegraph*: 'WANTED, a good THATCHER, for Buildings. – Apply to J. Evans, Chaddesden, near Derby.' As we have already seen, just a few years previously in 1883 (Fig. 4) there were only two permanent buildings in the kitchen garden, so presumably Evans was seeking to recruit a thatcher to work throughout the whole of the Wilmot estate in Chaddesden.

John Evans appears in *Bulmer's Directory for 1895* as 'head gardener, The Hall'; and on 25 June 1900 this advertisement appeared in the *Derby Daily Telegraph*: 'WANTED, a young MAN, for Kitchen Garden and General Garden Work. – Apply to J. EVANS, Chaddesden.'

For a few years around 1900, the village wheelwright here in Chaddesden was Arthur Evans, one of John Evans' sons. When horses and carts were superseded by motorised vehicles, wheelwrights quickly had to change occupations to stay in touch with the times ... in Arthur's case he became a building joiner and moved to Derby.

A potentially serious accident occurred in the gardens during the period of John Evans' stewardship, resulting in a hasty hospital visit for the victim, Francis Cockayne, in October 1900 (Fig. 11). Fortunately, it appears the hospital staff managed to patch him up, for he was still working as a gardener at the time of the 1911 Census.

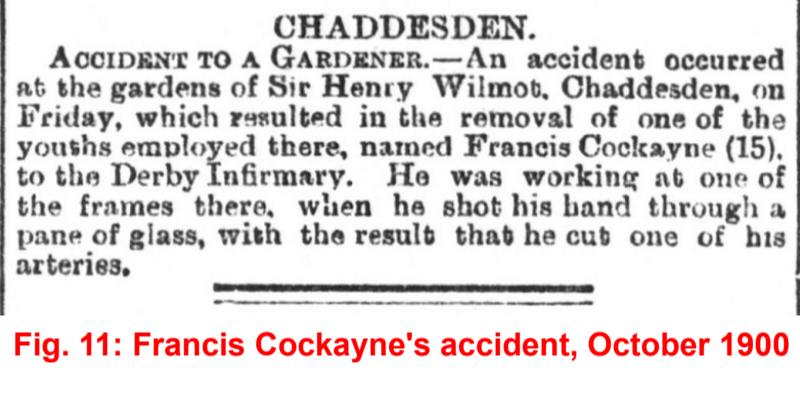


Fig. 11: Francis Cockayne's accident, October 1900

In September 1907, St. Mary's Church celebrated its annual Patronal Festival and on one particularly memorable evening a social gathering for all those involved in the work of the church was held at Chaddesden Hall, 'the grounds of which were beautifully illuminated with 500 fairy lamps, arranged by Mr. Evans, head gardener' (*Derbyshire Advertiser*, 13 September 1907). The following year, we read that at the Harvest Festival, 'the church had been prettily decorated with plants, flowers, fruit, and vegetables by Mr. J. Evans, Head Gardener at Chaddesden Hall assisted by members of the congregation' (*Derby Daily Telegraph*, 6 October 1908).



Fig. 12: John Evans' gravestone

In the spring of 1913, a Derby group had a tour of Chaddesden Hall, courtesy of Miss Wilmot. 'Mr. Evans conducted the party round the gardens and in the greenhouses many blooms of great beauty were to be seen' (*Derbyshire Advertiser*, 2 May 1913). Just three years later, the same newspaper carried this short notice of his death: 'EVANS – June 11, at The Gardens, Chaddesden, John Evans, aged 71.' As can be seen in this photograph, his gravestone (no. 195, Fig. 12) in the churchyard is now becoming difficult to read because of its proximity to a tree:

Somewhat ironically, an indirect tribute to Mr. Evans' years of hard work formed part of the original advertisement for the sale of Chaddesden Hall and 108 acres of farmland, which appeared in the *Derby Daily Telegraph* just a few days prior to his death. As can be seen in Fig. 13, mention was made of the old pleasure grounds, woodland walks and productive kitchen garden ... all of which were looked after by Mr. Evans and his staff.



Fig. 13: Sale advert of 1913

Mr. Evans' death not only marked the end of the gardens at Chaddesden Hall in general and the kitchen garden in particular, but also coincided with a huge upheaval in the way large estates were owned and run throughout the country as a whole. The First World War had serious repercussions for anyone employing staff – the days of an endless supply of cheap labour were over, and many workers were now tempted into industrial jobs where they might earn far more than they ever could as a farm- or garden-labourer. Furthermore, changes to the tax regime resulted in some country-estate owners having to dispose of their inheritance in order to pay heavy Death Duties, which was precisely the case at Chaddesden.

A CONNECTION WITH EDUCATION AND THE CHADDESSEN SCOUT GROUP
Also seemingly associated with the Hall Gardens was a group of buildings situated a few yards to the north of the Gardener's Cottage. Here the prominent 'L'-shaped range included a two-storey structure which had an interesting history of its own. When accessed from the west side, the ground floor was simply a cart-shed and equipment store. The upper floor, however, was reached via a set of stone steps (just visible on Fig. 4) on Chaddesden Lane a few yards to the south of Jasmine Cottage, and for many years in the nineteenth century it was used as the village school instead of the original building in the churchyard. This dual-purpose building was affectionately known by many villagers as the 'Piggyback School' for obvious reasons, but in its turn became obsolete when a new, larger school (now the Community Hall) was built on Chaddesden Lane in the 1870s. However, the Piggyback School's role in educating young people had not entirely come to an end, for when the Chaddesden Scout Group was formed in 1912, Miss Wilmot allowed the scouts to meet in the building, which formed their HQ until Mr. Hurd acquired the site in 1919.

THE GARDEN IN THE POST-WILMOT ERA
Shortly after the death of Ralph Henry Sacheverel Wilmot, the 6th Baronet, in January 1918, the sale of the family's extensive Chaddesden estate was concluded. The garden area on the west side of Chaddesden Lane, together with its old walled kitchen garden and some adjacent land were acquired in 1919 by Jeremy Hurd, a Derby florist, who wanted to expand his own market-garden business. More glasshouses were installed on the site and for many years from the early 1920s onwards his business – *Old Hall Gardens* – supplied his own stall in Derby Market Hall, other local florists and the general public with produce.

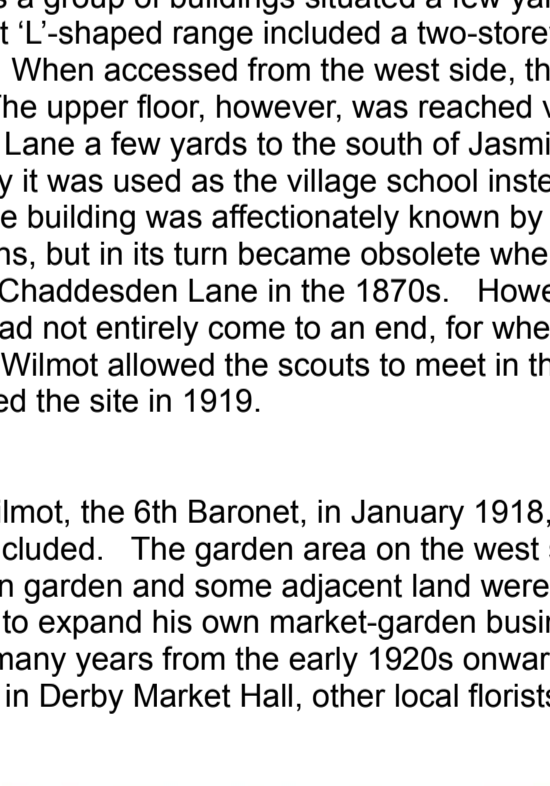
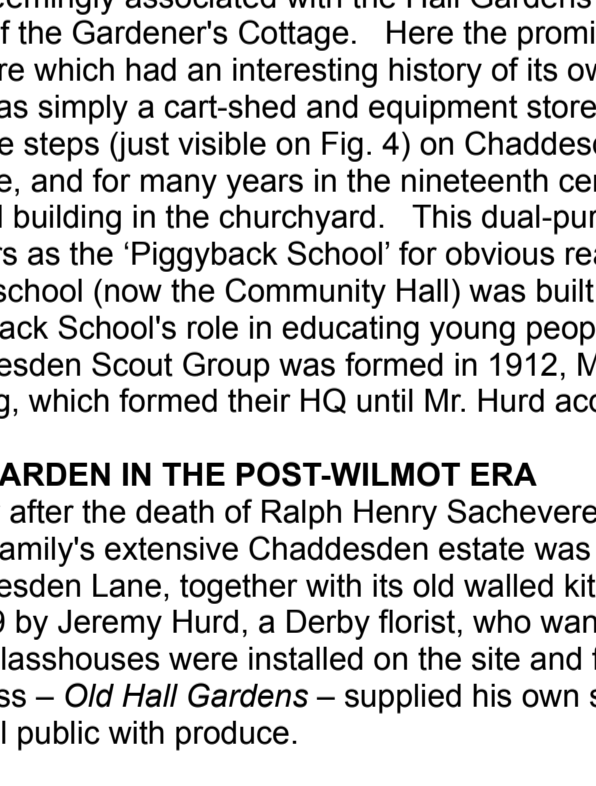


Fig.14: Two adverts for Old Hall Gardens from 1930 and 1940

Several members of the Hurd family helped out with this new Chaddesden venture, but in the immediate aftermath of the First World War finding suitable accommodation close at hand was difficult, there were simply not many houses in Chaddesden at that time – a fact underscored by the 1921 Census which showed the entire population of the village to be just 560 people, living in 128 houses. Furthermore, it was not easy getting a new house built because so many tradespeople had been killed or injured during the war. As a temporary measure, a railway was brought to the site and converted into a rather novel home.

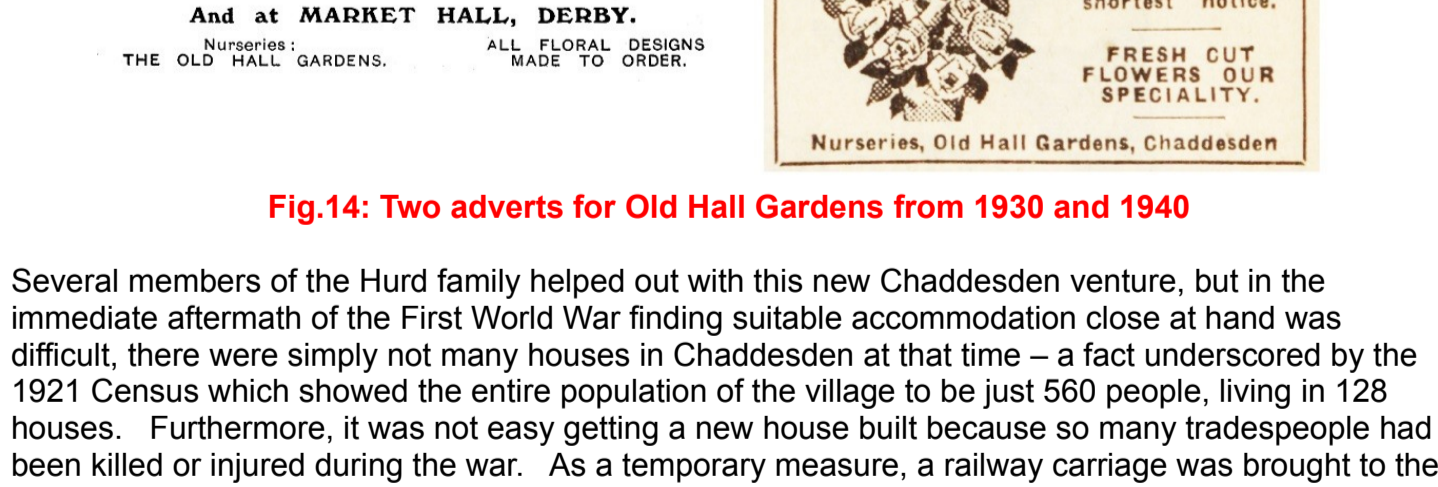


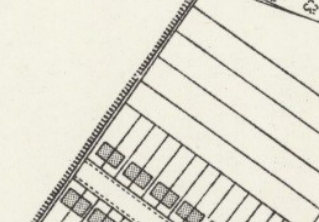
Fig. 15: Old Hall Gardens in 1942. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland (<https://maps.nls.uk/index.html>)

The site continued in use as a nursery garden for over thirty years, but all the while new housing developments were springing up around it – just compare the map of 1942 shown in Fig. 15 with the earlier one of 1883 (Fig. 4). Jeremy Hurd died in 1953 and by then it was inevitable that the land would soon be developed for residential purposes. Sure enough, it was not long before the houses of Tudor Road, Sherwood Avenue and Woodthorpe Avenue were under construction. In a brief article about Chaddesden in the *Derbyshire Miscellany* of October 1958 (Vol. 1, Part 10, pp. 161–2), Raymond Window commented: 'What were formerly the kitchen gardens of the Hall are now in the hands of the speculative builder.' A short while later, all vestiges of the kitchen garden originally established by the Wilmot family some 200 years previously had vanished, leaving no trace behind.

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FOOTNOTE

Note 1. The gravestone numbers quoted here and elsewhere are taken from my article *St. Mary's Church, Chaddesden – Graves Plan & List*, which is also available on the Chaddesden Historical Group website.



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