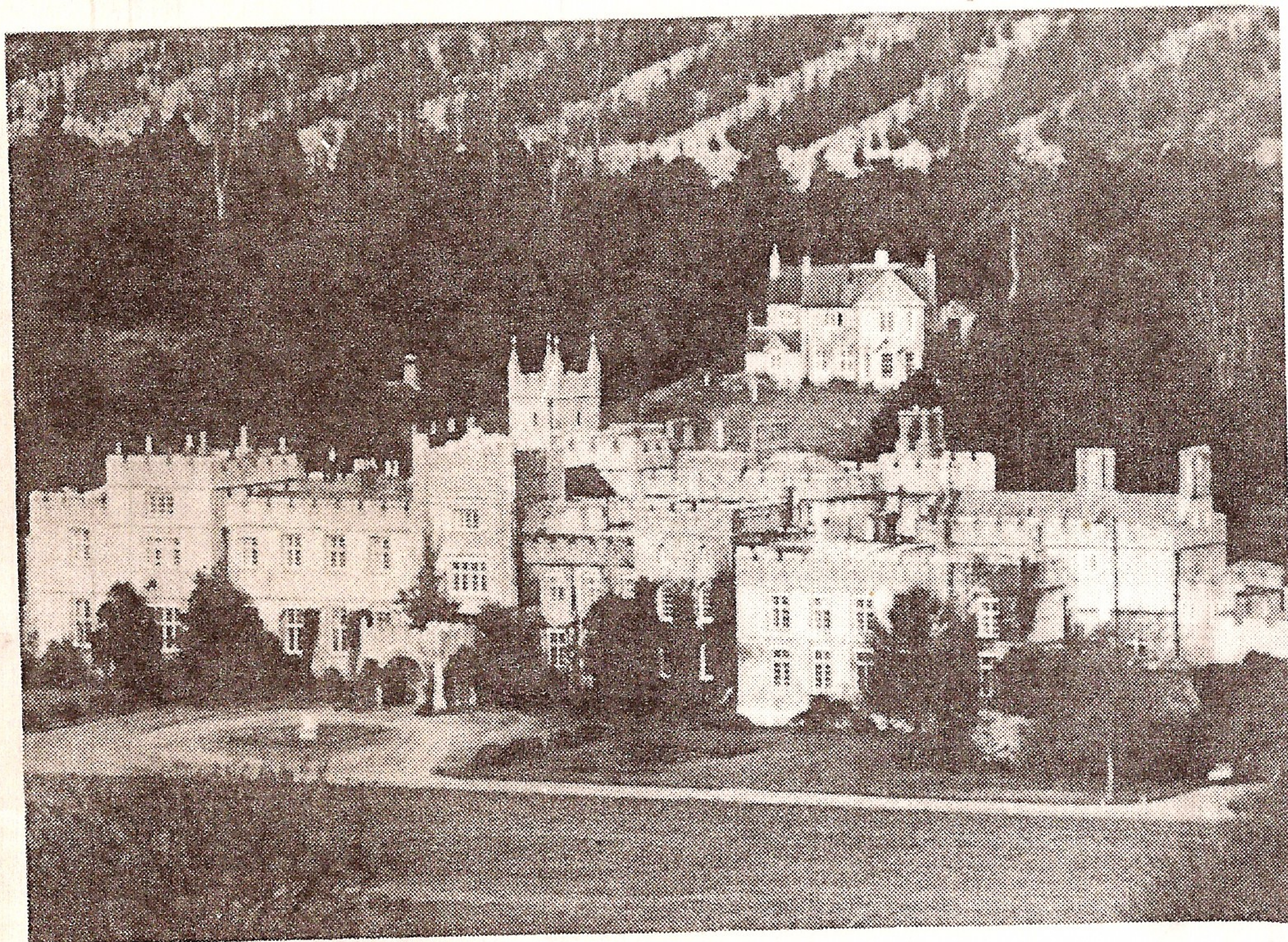


West Dean House

The Jacobean Manor House was built by John Lewkenar in 1662, on a site previously occupied by a medieval building. It was known as the Cannon House, since it had connections with Chichester Cathedral, which led to the Manor Court, presided over by the Dean and Chapter, being held at West Dean. Little is known of the Jacobean House. It appears as a three gabled structure on a map of 1623, and was probably built of flint, though parts of it may have been faced with stone. Various alterations were made to the house after it came into the possession of the Peachey family in 1738, but it remained as a Jacobean E-shaped building even in a description of 1774.

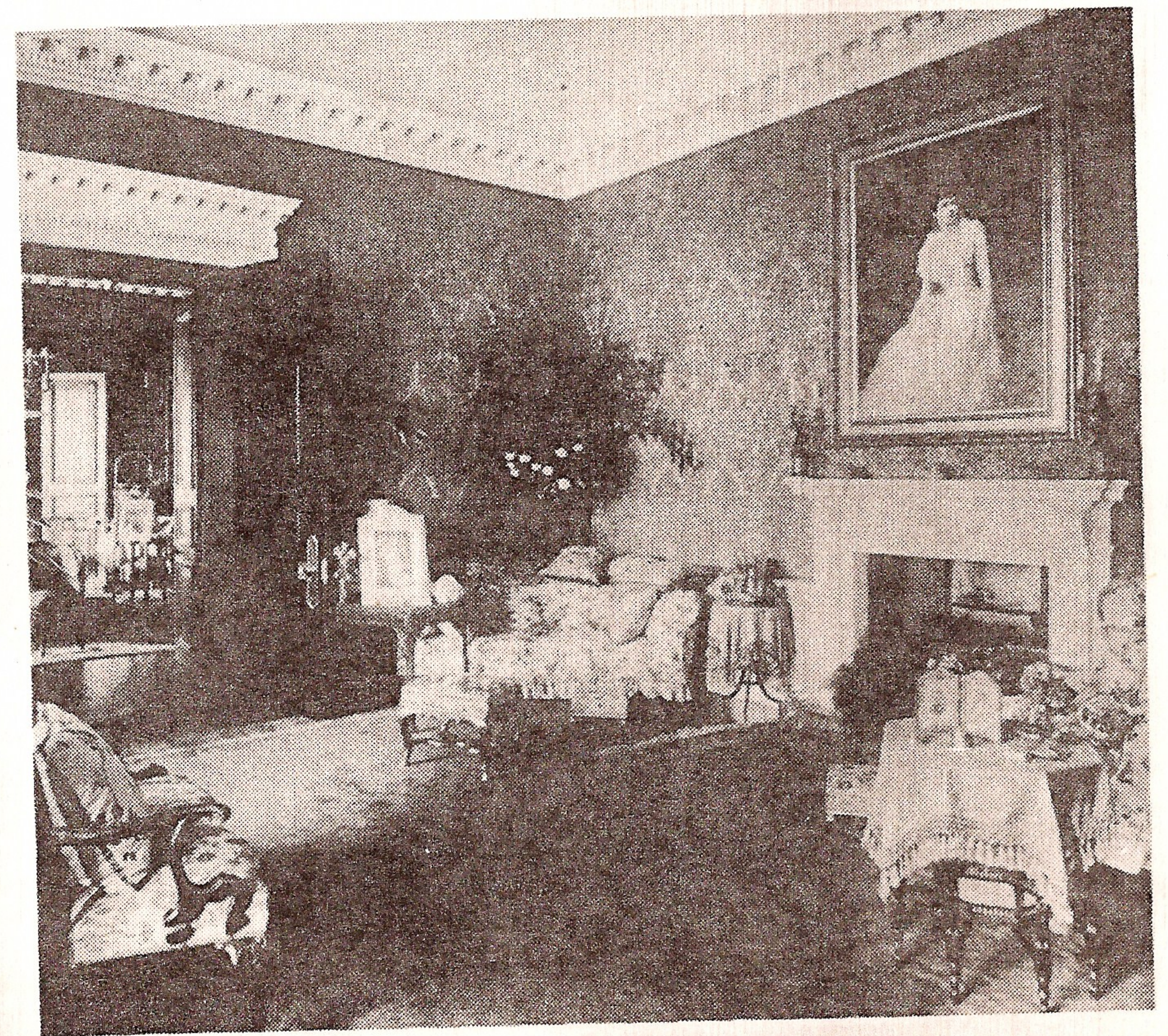
The present house was built by Sir James Peachey, the first Baron Selsey. In 1804, he commissioned the leading architect of the day, James Wyatt, to rebuild and enlarge the mansion. (James Wyatt also rebuilt Liverpool Town Hall after it was destroyed by fire in 1795). He was accidentally killed in 1813.



When William James acquired West Dean Estate in 1891, he at once set about altering and greatly extending the house under the direction of Sir Ernest George and Harold Peto, (and Alfred Yeates after Peto's death in 1897). The appearance of the motor car at the end of the nineteenth century is reflected in the pair of garages closes to Coachman's Cottage.

The Morning Room

In contrast with the dining room, this room radiates some of its eighteenth century charm. It has delightful proportions and retains its fine mahogany doors, as well as its elegant eighteenth century chandelier and its beautiful late eighteenth century marble mantelpiece with a pierced polished steel fender below. The overmantel is in the style of Chippendale carved with rococo flowers and foliage. The finest things in this room are the excellent gold anchor Chelsea porcelain groups and some of the earlier Chelsea pieces. Somewhat disappointing are the James family portraits: "William James" by Robert Brough; "Evelyn James" (1898), "The Two Sisters" (1904), and "Audrey James" (1907), by Edward Hughes; and "Edward and Audrey James" by L.R. Galesta.



The Morning Room c 1900

The Dining Room.

William James left his stamp on this room, the scene of many splendid dinners and well known to Edward VII who, in the eighteenth century tradition, had his own footman behind his chair, serving him exclusively

The 26 foot long mahogany dining table is Victorian. Around it is a set of nineteenth century Dutch marquetry chairs. The curved sideboard of walnut which fills the east wall, was first designed by James Wyatt and then embellished by William James. The panelling to the left contains a hand operated lift for bringing up foods from the basement kitchens.



The Dining Room

The Library

This magnificent library which, in the Wyatt house had been two rooms, was designed in 1900 in the Louis XVI style, with gilded and elaborately carved oak panelling. The original library lay at the east side, separated by a corridor from the drawing room. On the library shelves is a collection of more than 2,500 books, many of them beautifully bound.

Some of the finest French furniture — and there was a large collection — is here.

Over the white marble mantelpiece hangs a portrait group by Robert Brough (1872-1905) — Evelyn James with her daughters, Xandra aged 7, and Silvia aged 5. Brough's portrait of her father hangs in the morning room.

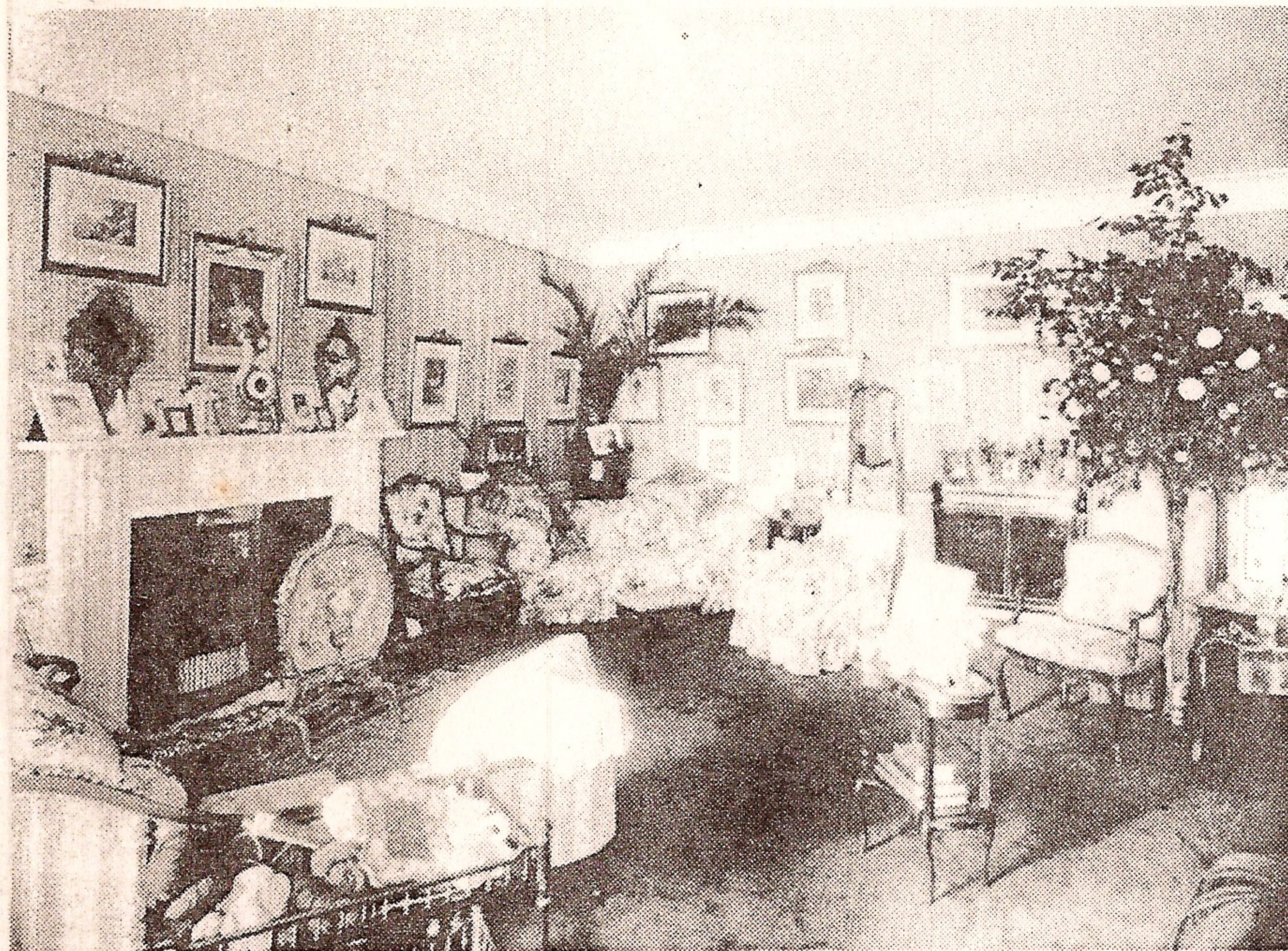


General view of the Library.

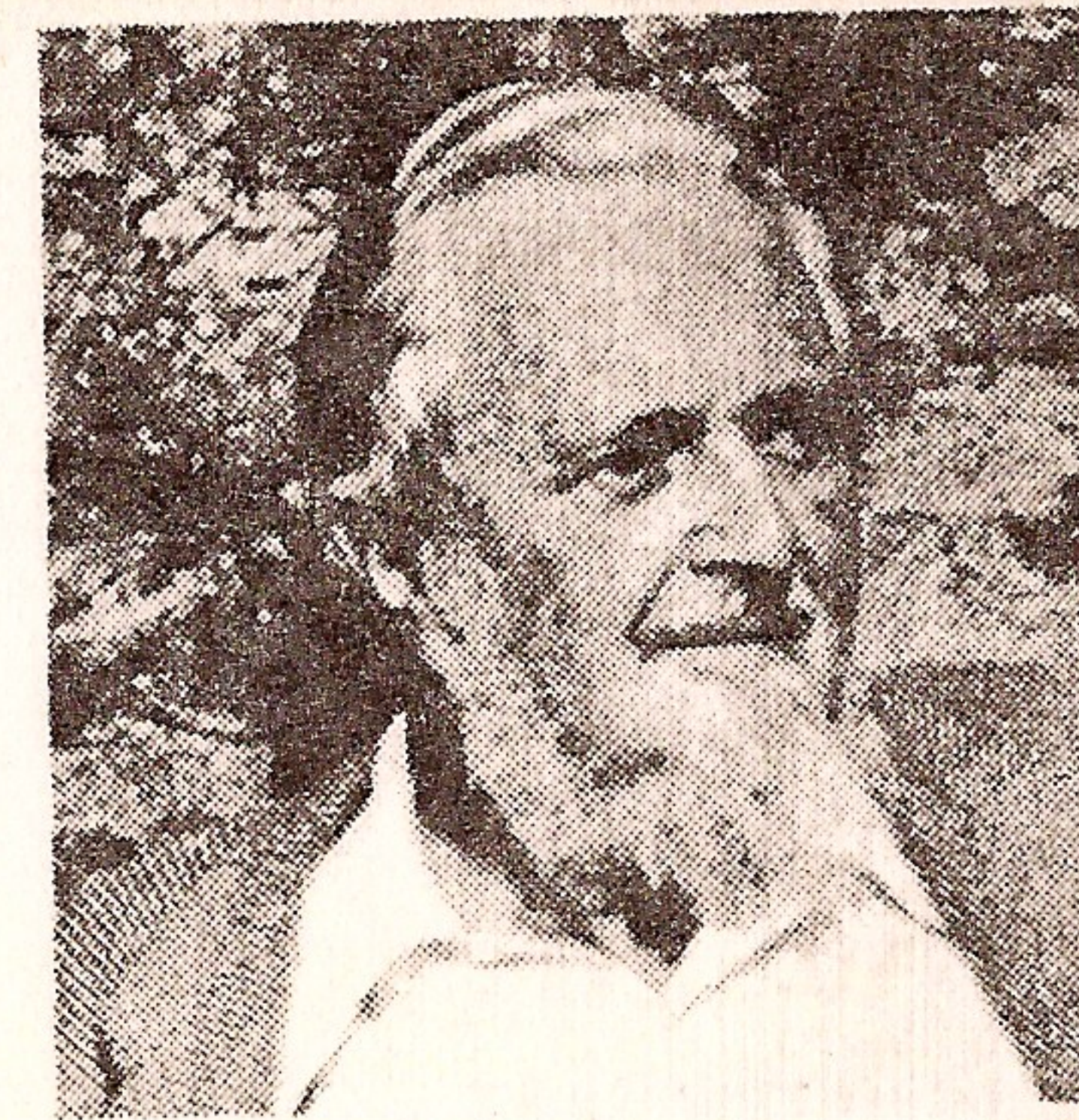
The Boudoir

This, the favourite room of Evelyn James, is now the Principal's office. When Edward VII was on a visit, he used it as his anteroom. In contrast to the gilded splendour of the library, one finds here a simple and intimate charm.

Damage to the wall coverings is due not only to wear and tear, but to a fire in 1899 when four bedrooms immediately above were gutted. Luckily, William James had installed fire fighting equipment which saved the house, but not before the boudoir had been damaged by water.



The Boudoir c 1900



Edward James, 1976.

The Late Mr. Edward James

It was with deep regret that the members of Woolton Village Club heard of the death of Mr. Edward James, the only son of our founder, Mr. William James, in San Remo, Italy, on 2nd December 1984, at the age of 77. His mother, Evelyn James, one of the most renowned society beauties of the Edwardian era, was a leading hostess of the Marlborough House set, and her son, Edward, was Edward VII's godson.

Following the death of his father in 1912, Edward inherited the West Dean estate, when he was barely five years old.

After Eton and Christ's College, Oxford, and a brief marriage to the ballet dancer, Tilly Losch, he lived only spasmodically at West Dean.

Mr. Edward James was a lifelong patron of the arts, and having inherited wealth early in life, was much concerned with what to do with his load. He realised his obligation to aid others, more especially as his father had given a notable example of public generosity. He soon noticed that there were very few patrons of the arts aiding living painters, composers and writers. Thus inspired, he proceeded to finance the promotion of the arts. He was concerned to help those young composers who had not yet met with recognition and who needed the backing of a patron to reach a larger public. He commissioned ballet scores, symphonies and oratorios, many of which were performed in London and Paris.

Edward James himself wrote lyrics and poetry. He was remarkably gifted in recognising new and innate talent, in such artists as Salvador Dali, Rene Magritte, Pavel Tehelitchew and Leonor Fini.

Over the years, Mr. James acquired numerous works of art, most of which have been loaned or sold to various museums, principally the Tate Gallery, the Brighton Museum, and others.

The creation of the Edward James Foundation Trust in 1964, secured Edward James's primary objective — the survival of the house and estate.

The house is now a residential college, accommodating some 85 students and is devoted to the study and promotion of silversmithing, pewter work, jewellery-making, enamelling, glass engraving, book binding, calligraphy, blacksmithing, wood-carving and many other arts and crafts.

The fullest appreciation and gratitude is extended to Edward James and his family, to whose generosity the whole enterprise is due.