

## The Lych Gate and the Ashpitel Family

The Lych Gate was designed by Frederick Kinneir-Tarte, a South African born architect who moved to St Albans in the 1880s. Kinneir-Tarte specialised in church architecture but also built a number of homes in St Albans, Harpenden and Hitchin, designed an extension to Camp School in St Albans and oversaw preservation work on the Roman walls at Verulam Park, St Albans.

The Gate was donated by Mrs Lucy Ashpitel, wife of a former Vicar of Flitwick, and was erected in 1901. An inscription on it reads:

“In loving memory of Arthur Edward, Ernest Hurst, Walter Sheppard,  
three sons Rev. F. Ashpitel. Erected by their mother”

Lucy was the only daughter of Edward Sheppard and married The Revd Francis Ashpitel in Bath in 1855. Francis was the son of William Hurst Ashpitel and brother of Arthur Ashpitel who were both renowned architects. Francis himself had gained a first in Mathematics from Brasenose, Oxford before joining the clergy.

The Revd Ashpitel served his first curacy at the parish church at Hampstead and, after a second curacy, moved on to be Rector of Great Hampden in Buckinghamshire. He became Vicar of Flitwick in 1880 by swapping his parish in Great Hampden with the then Vicar of Flitwick, The Revd T. W. Brooks. Whilst here, he was also Rural Dean of Ampthill. He retired due to ill health in 1894. He was a keen cricketer and had captained the Flitwick team on a number of occasions. From his obituary in the Guardian, he was obviously held in high regard as a theologian as well as having a particular interest in education and had travelled widely to India, Canada and South Africa.

Lucy and Francis had nine children:

Fanny Elizabeth ( <i>born 1856</i> )	Mary Lucy ( <i>born 1858</i> )
Arthur Edward ( <i>born 1859</i> )	Francis William ( <i>born 1861</i> )
Maud Anne ( <i>born 1862</i> )	Edith Louisa ( <i>born c.1864</i> )
Ernest Hurst ( <i>born 1867</i> )	Walter Sheppard ( <i>born 1899</i> )
Catherine ( <i>born 1871</i> )	

Unfortunately, many of the children died before their parents.

Edith, aged seven years, and her baby sister, Catherine, died in 1871. Fanny died in 1883, aged 26 years, soon after the family moved to Flitwick.

After her husband Francis died in 1897, Lucy was to see three of her sons die in less than a year: In 1899, Walter, who was working as a labourer in a soda water factory in Nelson, British Columbia, Canada, died aged 29 years, and then in 1900, Ernest and Arthur (a tea trader) both died from influenza, aged 32 and 40 years respectively. Lucy herself died in 1903.

Of the three surviving children, Francis William Ashpitel worked as a civil engineer in Madras (Chennai), India and married Magdalen Lizzie Hasteed in 1888. Francis William died in 1944, aged 84 years and Magdalen in 1958, aged 91 years, both in Surrey. They had two daughters, Kathleen and Olive, and one son, Geoffrey Francis Ashpitel, who was awarded the Military Cross in WW1. He died in 1948, aged 59 years. Francis William's sister, Maud Anne Ashpitel married a The Revd James Cartland Barrett Walter in 1898. Their other sister, Mary Lucy Ashpitel, never married and died in Surrey in 1943.