

## Rock Rose History 1795-2019

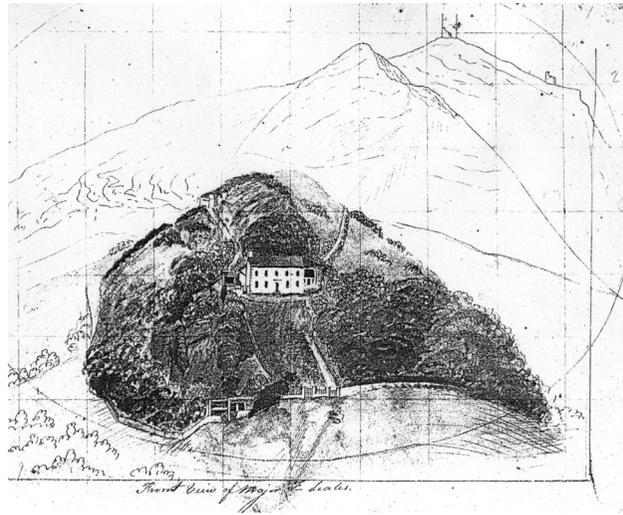
When Governor Robert Brooke (1787-1801) established Plantation House as his official residence in 1795, he decided to build another house a few miles further south, towards Sandy Bay, which would give the governor a less official dwelling, though still one of respectable size and standing.

A superb two storey house with spacious rooms and well laid out around a magnificent ebony staircase was built at the top of Deep Valley. The house was U shaped with a courtyard between the front and back buildings as shown below in the 1872 Royal Engineer map and sketch by J.Broadway.



A stone once found at the site bore the following inscription:- R.B. Esq. GOVERNOR 1789. This stone was probably cut for Plantation House by Robert Brooke.

The earliest view of the house is from J.Broadway's sketch book 1806 when it was the dwelling of Major Francis Seale.



The governors who came after Brooke, whether Patton, Beatson or Wilks, used the house both as a country retreat and, more often, as accommodation for long-term guests. While distinguished visitors who were merely stopping over on Saint Helena could easily be put up at Plantation House, important persons on visits lasting for weeks or even months were lodged at Rock Rose.

The place also helped the governor to make up for a shortage of other housing, as happened with Captain Pritchard's widow, who was still living at Rock Rose when Napoleon and Gourgaud visited it on 6 January 1816. They inspected Deep Valley, having managed, with Bertrand's complicity, to lose Poppleton, the English officer charged with escorting them, on the way.

Having intimated to Mrs Pritchard that she should find alternative accommodation, Sir Hudson Lowe installed a number of temporary lodgers there, including General Gourgaud who moved into the house on 13 February 1818 before embarking on the Marquis Camden on 14 March 1818. Lowe's secretary, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Wynyard and his wife stayed in the house until their departure for London aboard the Kingston on 13 June 1820.

The Seale family reoccupied the house until November 1867 when Mr G. V. Seale advertised it for sale. We believe the Estate was acquired by the Anglican Church and later sold to Solomon & Company around 1900.

The main house by that time was a ruin as this photo from 1903 shows.



Major Ted Moss recalls watching the building being demolished. The kitchens and servants quarters at the back survived the demolition and the back became known as Rock Rose as the front faded from memory.

It was in reasonably good condition and was lived in by several families until being abandoned in the 1970s.



By 1980 it was derelict...



and a ruin by 2015

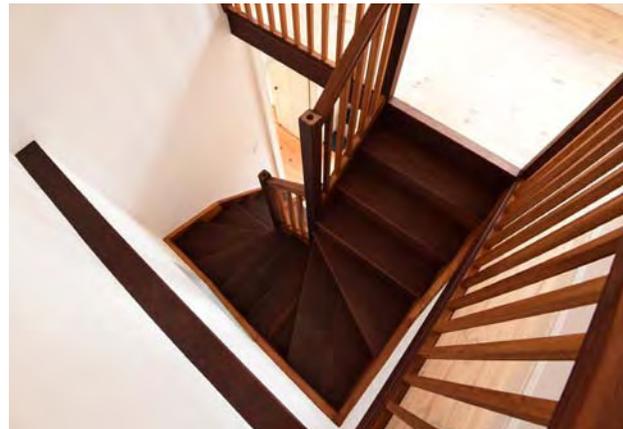


In 2016 the ruin was acquired by W. A. Thorpe & Sons Ltd and was restored to a 2 bedroom house after 3 years of work by:

Brian Davies - Tom Wortley - Remi Bruneton  
Mike Johnson - Tom Walker - Russell Leo  
Dave Marr - Derek Henry - Stuart Yon  
Nicky Phillips - Mark Fowler - Alex Williams  
Eric Constantine - Lionel Wade - Adrian Williams  
Justin Cranfield - Mark Anthony



The stair case was made not from ebony but from white ant resistant iroko by Mark Anthony.



The building was restored as sympathetically as possible using Spanish slate for the roof and lime mortar in a ratio of 1 lime, 2 dirt and 1 crusher dust to rebuild and point the stone walls. The main benefit of using lime is that it allows the house to breath because moisture is not trapped as it would be with cement.



Text adapted from 'In Napoleon's footsteps on Saint Helena' by Michel Martineau.



W.A.Thorpe & Sons Ltd.  
Market Street, Jamestown  
St Helena Island, STHL 1ZZ  
Tel: 22781  
Web: [www.thorpes.sh](http://www.thorpes.sh)