



The Old Government House over the years.

These words doomed any prospect that the house in Ann's Place might soon revert to its former role as Government House. Furthermore, although Bell concluded by suggesting that the Board 'look elsewhere for a proper residence and get rid of the old one altogether', it is probable that in stressing so forcibly the error made in this first purchase by the War Department, he may well have deterred successive Ordnance Boards far into the next century from embracing the notion of buying a permanent residence for the Lieutenant-Governor. It is hardly surprising that within a few years of Bell's advice to the Ordnance Board, the house had been let, most probably to Henry Gardner of Somerset, who converted it to use as a hotel and whose son John purchased it outright from the British Government in 1880.

Leading from the front

It was difficult to recognise the Lieutenant-Governor's residence of the early 1800s in the hotel of 1914 to which Sir Reginald and Lady Hart were directed. A wing of three storeys had been added at right-angle to the original house, while the formal garden which had graced the north of the property now had the character of a small piece of parkland. Not that his domestic environment seems to have loomed large in the priorities of the new Lieutenant-Governor who lost no time in getting stuck into his role as a leader and cajoler of Guernsey's war effort. He was soon expressing to the Bailiff his disappointment at what seemed to him an unreasonable delay in convening a meeting of the States to debate and resolve a matter requiring urgent attention. He and his counterpart in Jersey had been asked to determine at short notice the feasibility of raising from within the Channel Islands an infantry battalion which could be deployed to the front as a formed unit. Clearly the question required rapid consultation across all the Channel Islands if a response was to be made with confidence, and it was embarrassing to Hart that it was taking him longer to obtain a decision of the States in Guernsey than it was for his fellow General Officer Commanding in Jersey. Hart did not conceal his frustration. As it happened, an initiative dependent on pan-Channel Islands cooperation was asking too much of the traditional rivalry between Guernsey and Jersey even in the dire circumstances of war, and the raising of a full-strength battalion from fit volunteers proved to be beyond their combined resources in those early months of the war. All in all it had not been an encouraging episode for the newly arrived and strongly driven Hart.