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Airlie House

I enjoyed Nicholas Roskill's article (in *CQ* 179) about *Madcap Violet* and its author William Black. It is always interesting to have these glimpses of another Camberwell.

From 1872 to 1878 Black lived at Airlie House in Camberwell Grove, and Nicholas wonders in passing whether anyone has a record of it.

In 1891 Black published *Donald Ross of Heimra*, a novel about a young Englishwoman who inherits an estate in northern Scotland. There is a copy in the library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and this has been digitised and can be read online. Just inside the front cover there is a letter from William Black. Its connection with the novel isn't clear. It is dated "Febry 21" – no year – is addressed to "Dear Sir" – no name – and refers to "MacWhirter's drawing". What is perfectly clear, however, is the sender's address: "AIRLIE HOUSE, 166, CAMBERWELL GROVE".

166, Camberwell Grove is a Grade II listed building, one of an attractive pair of houses built around 1835. According to the listing text the top floor was a later addition, but the text doesn't say when it was added so we do not know if it was there in Black's day. Perhaps the present occupants – if they read this – can tell us more.

