

Building Report Hill Grove House, Comberton Road, Kidderminster

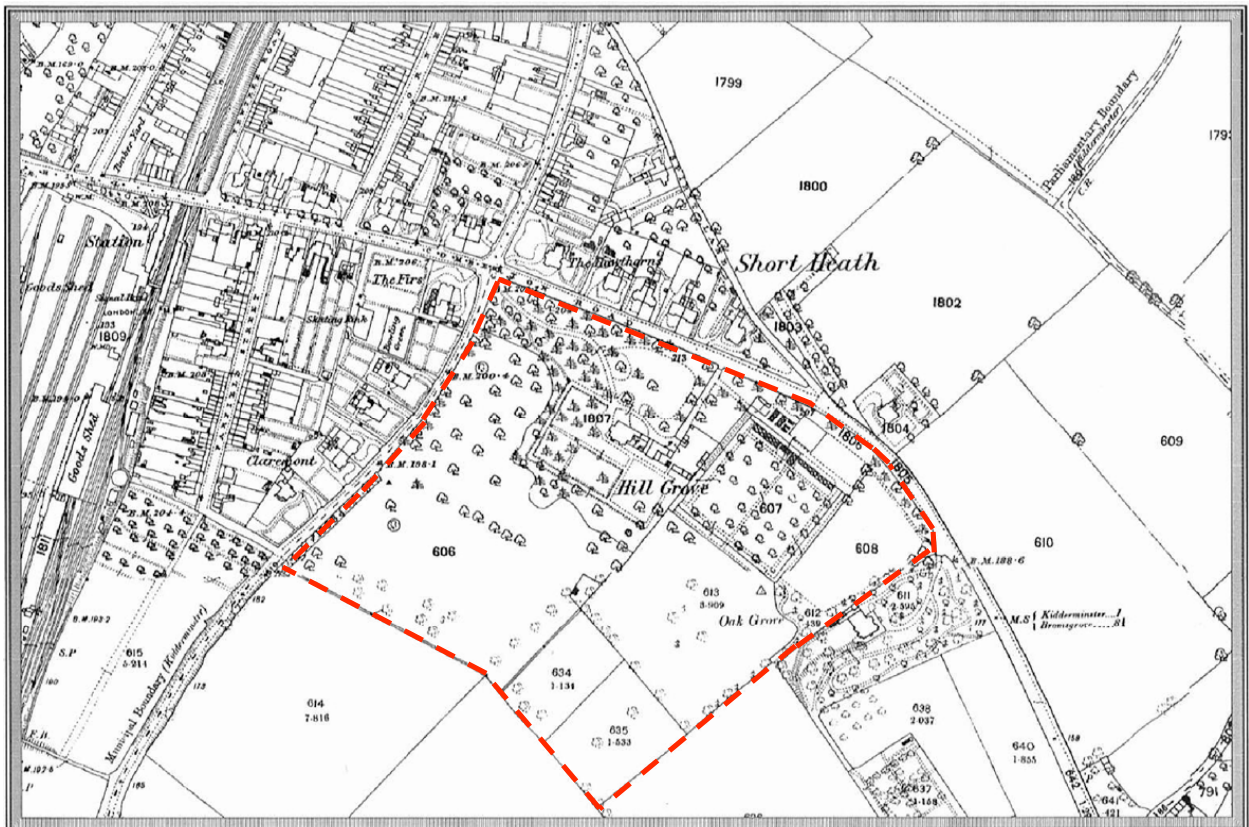
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Introduction

This report was prepared as part of the Historic Kidderminster Project. Hill Grove House is a substantial two storey, red brick, detached house built between 1818 and 1819 with later 1920s additions now part of King Charles I School. The building is situated at the corner of Comberton Road and Chester Road. Resources at both Kidderminster Library and Worcester Record Office have been used to compile this report.



1885 County Series 1:2500 OS Grid Ref. SO842761

History

The earliest known reference to Hillgrove is contained in a document relating to the lease and release of two tenements in Chaddesley Corbett "*to William Boycot of Hillgrove, Kidderminster, gent*" dated 6th - 7th September 1819. William had been paying land tax for a property in Kidderminster Foreign from the previous year the land being previously owned by Lord Foley.

The house comprised on the ground floor. A handsome stone portico, with columns, spacious entrance hall, dining room, drawing room, morning room, butler's and cook's pantries, china closet and two kitchens; on the first floor, six bedrooms, two dressing rooms, two servants rooms; the basement, four airy and arched cellars, two wine cellars and a larder. The outbuildings consisted of a stable. Loose box, coach house, harness room, knife house, barn, sheds and ample domestic offices.

William Boycot was originally from Lilleshall, Shropshire and arrived in Kidderminster circa 1796 shortly after his marriage to Ann Masefield in the market town of Newport, Shropshire. He established a drapery business dealing in linen and wool and became a very important figure in the history of the town. He commanded the Loyal Kidderminster Volunteers, became High Bailiff of the town on three occasions and when this office was replaced by that of Mayor in 1836 he went on to serve a further two successive terms between 1846 and 1848.

William bought the land opposite Hill Grove and built The Firs and moved in with his second wife, Harriet, circa 1847. He continued to live there until his death in December 1852 and was buried with due ceremony on 28th of the month at St. Mary's Church.

His eldest surviving child, William (Junior), had taken up residence at Hill Grove with his wife Elizabeth and two young sons William and Reginald. The area at the time was described in Bentley's Trade Directory as:

"..remarkably well cultivated, being chiefly occupied as gardens, or by the numerous mansions and villas of the gentry, clergy and professional and commercial gentlemen connected with the town.."

William (Junior) was a prominent solicitor in the town and member of the Town Council. He was elected as Tory Mayor in 1849, 1850 and 1871. He unsuccessfully stood as Member of Parliament for Kidderminster against Robert Lowe in 1857.

On Monday 17th May 1868 Hill Grove various other holdings were put up for auction at The Lion Hotel, Kidderminster. Interestingly, the family residence was not sold; however at a later date, an offer was made for the sum of £6,200 by a Mr. John Lewis who owned land to the east of the estate.

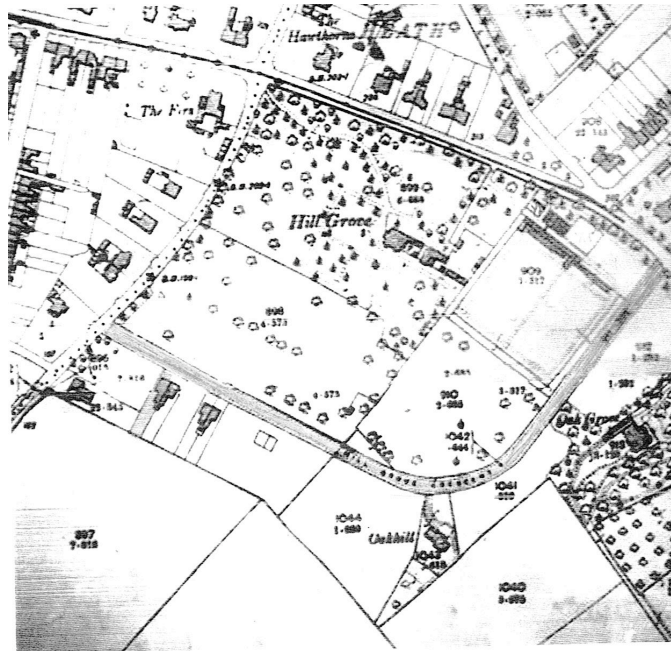
An indenture dated 15th May 1875 reveals William Hatton as the new owner of the Hill Grove Estate. William was an iron and tinplate manufacturer who had recently moved

from Bilston, Staffordshire, where he was part owner of the Bradley Tin Plate Works, to run their latest acquisition the Lower Broadwaters Forge locally known as Stack Pool. Upon the retirement of his partner William set up business with his youngest son and formed Hatton, Sons and Co.

William's only daughter, Fanny Elizabeth, was married on Tuesday 4th September 1877 to Rev. Gerald Cokayne Vecqueray. The ceremony was held at St. George's Church followed by a wedding breakfast at Hill Grove the entrance to which had been decorated with banners and festoons.

In 1894 details of the estate were drawn up which reveal that the domestic accommodation had changed very little over the intervening years however the grounds had been developed extensively and now included an Italian garden, park land and pleasure gardens, which were laid out as lawns, ornamental flower beds, rose walks and shrubberies. There was a kitchen garden, an array of glass houses and a small farm.

The estate sold prior to auction but within four years it was once more on the market. Two local corn merchants, Josiah Harvey and Samuel Loynes Harvey, saw the enormous potential and were offered very favourable terms of sale.



1902 O.S. Map highlighting Hill Grove Crescent

A new road, Hill Grove Crescent, was constructed, pipes for sewerage, water and gas were laid and the adjacent land was divided into residential building plots. By 1903 twenty five sites had been developed with others being contemplated.

This was a very unsettled time for the house and several families passed through; however, in 1919 George and Mary Ann Anton bought Hill Grove and were to be the last

private owners of the estate. George was one of the co-founders of Victoria Carpets and his wife a prominent and influential member of the town.

In 1923 local architects Pritchard and Godwin were engaged to produce a set of drawings for a large extension to the house; a large reception room on the ground floor and three bedrooms, a bathroom and linen room on the first floor.



HILL GROVE

Pat Whiteley (Lower Va.)

After the death of Mary Ann Anton in July 1948 Worcestershire County Council were given first option to purchase the estate. Kidderminster High School and Hill Grove had been neighbours since 1912 and as a School Governor would have been well aware of the need to extend the school premises as a result of the 1944 Education Act.

The lower sixth form moved into the ground floor and the reception room was converted into the school library; upstairs the music department took over front of house whilst the art department utilised the area above the library. Despite the change of use to this magnificent building many original features have been preserved.