

Building Report

16-37 Northumberland Avenue, Kidderminster

Author: Nigel Gilbert

Date: 5th October 2007; revised 18th December 2010

Historic Kidderminster Project Ref: 761

Introduction

This report was undertaken as part of the Historic Kidderminster Project. This is a row of elegant houses built in at least three stages between 1892 and 1903 by George Law, whose company still bears his name today. They exemplify the fact that Foley Park was built just outside the borough boundary as a slightly superior suburb of Kidderminster. For some years after construction these fine houses looked across at the attractive timbered grounds of the Larches. We have been able to look at deeds relating to both 24 and 37 Northumberland Avenue by permission of their respective owners, Tracey Hawkes and Margaret Cook. The report has been updated using comments by Jane Williams, owner of number 32. Resources of Kidderminster Library have also been used.

History

Northumberland Avenue was created as the north boundary of the Foley Park Building Estate, which stretched along the east side of Stourport Road down to Lisle Terrace. It took many years for the plots to be properly developed, and even by 1905 many plots still remained to be built upon. (pp124-125, Gilbert, 2004)

Some of the land at least was purchased by George Law in a conveyance dated 31st December 1881. The vendor was the Worcester Land and Investment Co. Ltd., which had acquired land on both sides of the Stourport Road. The company had laid out the streets, but they were not yet public streets. The deed makes clear that the purchaser was responsible for maintaining the section of the street adjoining their property 'to the centre thereof'. It is also clear that the streets were sewered, but were not yet the responsibility of the Sanitary Authority. Therefore the purchaser was committed by the deed to 'pay a due proportion with others using the sewers which should for the time being be connected with the said outfall for the cost of cleansing and maintaining the sewers and also the tanks and other outfall works'.

The Worcester Land and Investment Co. Ltd. inserted into the deed clauses designed to ensure a certain standard of building was maintained. No dwelling house or other erection (except boundary walls not exceeding four feet six inches in height from the ground exclusive of palisading thereof) was to be erected on the land except ones fronting the street exactly against a building line shown on a plan. Also no dwelling house was to be erected upon the land at a less cost in labour and material than £100. Lastly no 'noisome or offensive trade or business' which might deteriorate the adjoining property belonging to the vendors was to be permitted upon the land.

George Law took his time developing the land. The first stage was the erection of numbers 16 to 24 in 1892. All these house have date stones for that year. Most of them have names which evoke the view they initially had into the grounds of the Larches. Number 16 is Copse View, numbers 17 and 18 are Grove View, numbers 19 and 20 are Larch View, 21 and 22 are Park View and 23 and 24 are perhaps strangely called Trimpley View. The 1902 OS map shows this group together in the same plot.

The same map suggests that 25 to 28 were built together, showing them in a separate plot. This is not obvious from their features. The central two, numbers 26 and 27, have a stone dated 1899 and are called Alexander Cottages.

The remaining houses are not shown on the 1902 map. It is likely that 29 to 37 were built in the period 1902/03. Numbers 30 and 31 have date stones for 1902 and are called Lily Cottages. Number 32 looks as if it was built on its own, showing a likely join in the brickwork on either side. Number 35 has St Mary's 1903 over its entry.

We must assume that George Law built all of 16-37. The deeds from both 24 and 37 make clear that their ownership was retained for some years by the Law family. Initially they were the property of George's wife, Betsy, who died 8th February 1911. In her will dated 26th August 1910 she appointed her husband and son George Law the younger as executors with George Pettitt.



24-27 Northumberland Avenue 2007

20-24 Northumberland Avenue

Amongst the property they had to deal with were her five dwelling houses 25-29 (now 20-24) Northumberland Avenue. On 30th March 1926 these passed to Harriet Martha Clibbery of The Glen, George Street, widow, died 22nd February 1927. Albert

William Evans of Bewdley Hill, a retired farmer, purchased the group of houses on 17th December 1928 for £960. On 20th September 1946 Charles Henry Humphries of 25 Bromsgrove Street, a shopkeeper, purchased them for £2800, but the price included Ivy Cottages, nos. 28-31 Hemming Street.

By 1952 ownership of the group was being split up. On 1st May 1952 Humphries sold number 24 to Ronald George Adams for £1000. Adams appears to have been tenant of the house. He lived there until he in turn sold on to Mr and Mrs Alfred John Shaw for £1670 on 24th November 1961.



30-34 Northumberland Avenue 2007

37 Northumberland Avenue

The disposal of no. 37 by the Law family was slightly different. Under the settlement of the will of Betsy Law, Lilly Law of The Turrett House, Oldnall Road, Kidderminster, was entitled during her life to the property, which she retained until her death on 27th April 1949. It was the Ashley Court Hotel until 1979 when it was purchased by Mr and Mrs Cook.

George Law

George Law (1837-1923) was a building contractor who built the Kidderminster and Stourport Tramway and also the new reservoir in 1886. (p92, Tomkinson and Hall, 1975). He lived at Clent View House, Short Heath. (Kelly's 1912 Directory) He died 12th October 1923.

His son, John George Law, but usually known as George Law, lived at Land Oak House and was himself a builder. He is described as a Public Works Contractor in a document of 1926.



34-37 Northumberland Avenue 2007



Rear of number 37

Description

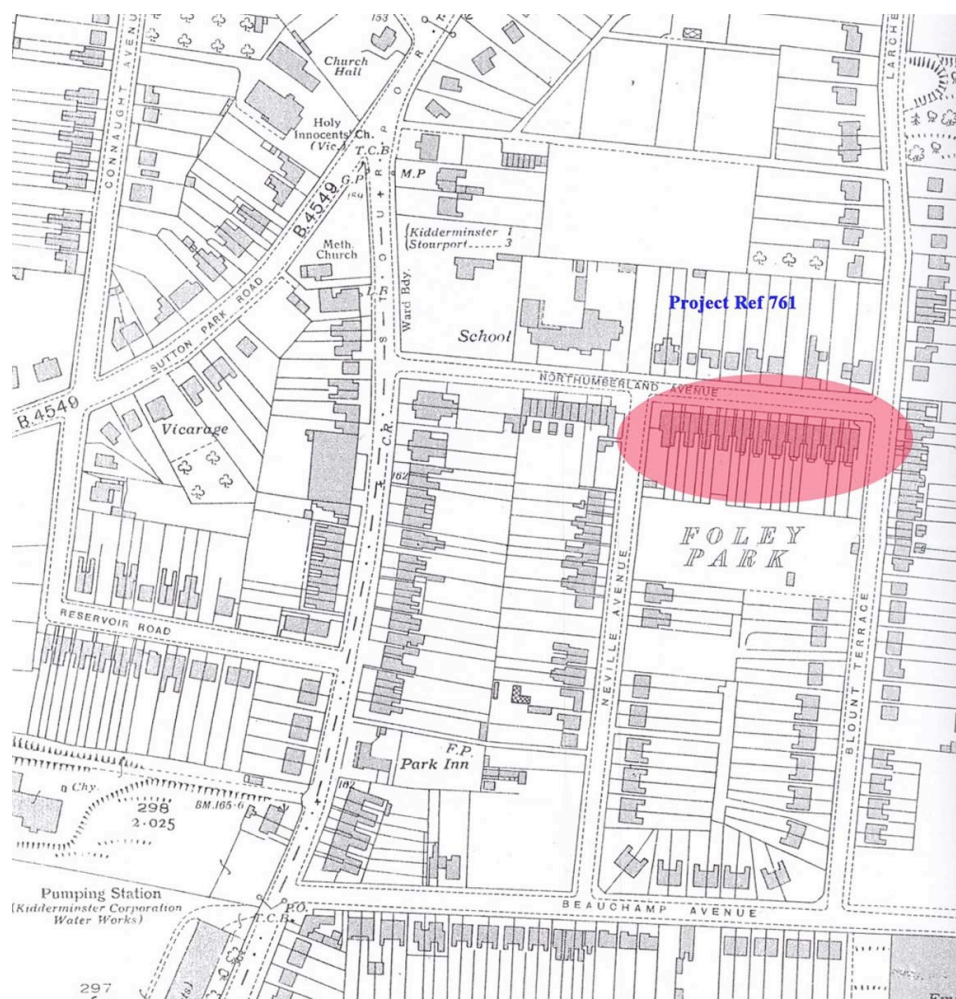
These are plainly brick-built terraced houses with slate roofs, though no. 36 has been re-roofed with tiles. They are substantially taller than most Kidderminster terraces of this period and were all built with attic rooms. Numbers 16-24 were built with plain dentilation and a clear effort was made to build the next few houses in the same style. The window heads are of the same arched type up to number 32. This house has no dentilation, which may have been lost when the house was re-roofed. The later houses, numbers 33 to 37, all have horizontal window heads and a more detailed dentilation.

The houses now have single story extensions at the rear. These may well have been formed out of original outbuildings, with a gap between them and the main house being filled in. The inner layout of number 37 comprises an extensive cellar, entrance hall, lounge, dining room, kitchen, first floor with four bedrooms (one converted into bathroom), second floor built with two bedrooms.

Bibliography

Kidderminster since 1800, Ken Tomkinson and George Hall, 1975

A History of Kidderminster, Nigel Gilbert, 2004



Foley Park 1938 – OS Ref: S0826753