

Building Record

Woodfield Row, Bewdley Street, Kidderminster

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Introduction

This report was undertaken as part of the Historic Kidderminster Project. This row of 24 cottages was an interesting example of early 19th century working-class homes, built to house those employed in the growing carpet industry. Resources of both Kidderminster Library and Worcester Record Office have been used.



Woodfield Row at the Coronation of 1937 (Courtesy of Elizabeth Hill)

History

The date of construction is not known. It is not shown on the James Sherriff map of 1780. This shows a field of nine acres bordering the Bewdley road, and Woodfield Row was later built on this frontage. (See also HKP report 742 concerning this field.) The houses do not appear to be included in the poor rates for 1823. (WRO, BA10470/170) The best guess, therefore, is that they were built around this time towards the end of a boom in the carpet trade before the strike of 1828.

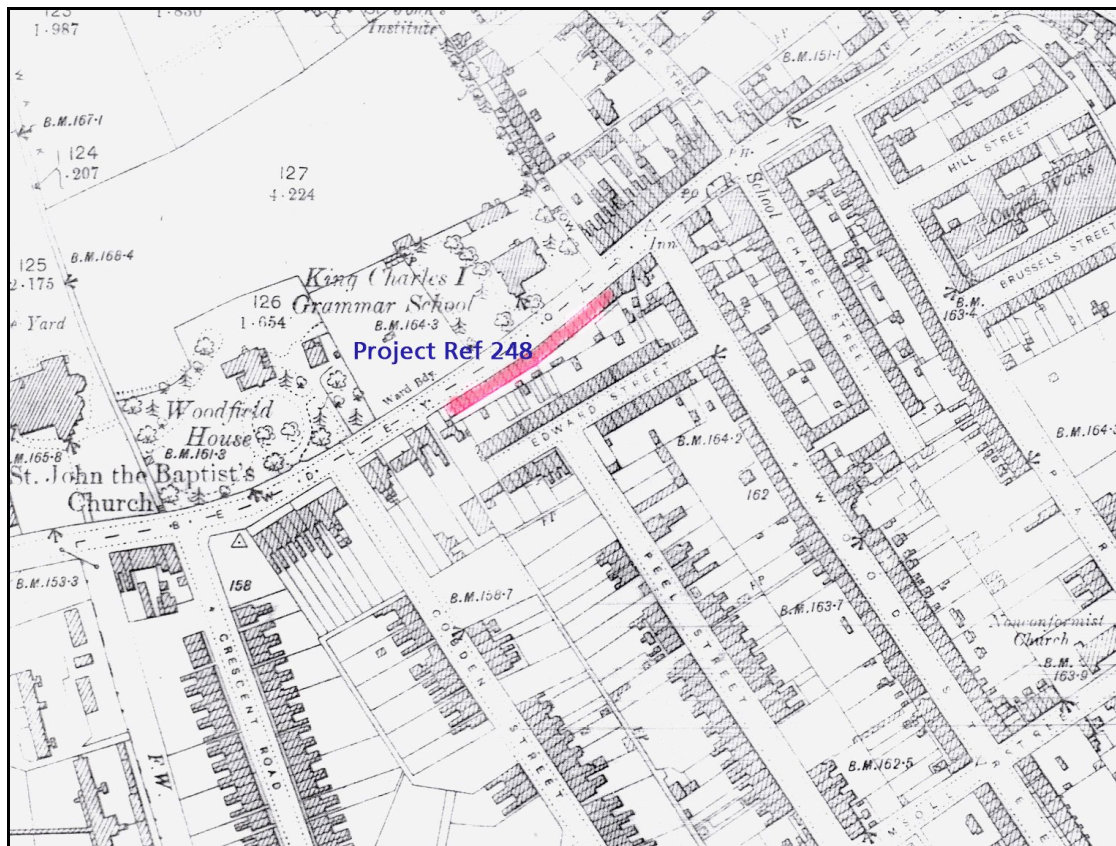
In 1832 poor rate list the cottages are listed under heading "Milward's", so presumably this was the name of the man who built them. By December 1836 they were owned by William Lea. (WRO 10470/172) In February 1842 the list shows the 24 houses owned by John Jones. (WRO 10470.179) He continued to own them in October 1848, each valued at a gross rental of £6.

The 1851 census has 24 numbered entries for Woodfield Row. This confirms that the cottages provided much needed accommodation for workers in the carpet industry, which was still based on the hand loom. The heads of household include 11 carpet weavers and 2 dyers, all being male. One female, Hannah Dugard, head of household at number 5, described herself as “working at tapestry carpet mill”. Many young people in these households, male and female, between the ages of 11 and 22 were described as “carpet weavers assistant”.

In July 1869 Woodfield Row was mentioned at the official enquiry into the sanitary state of Kidderminster held at the Guildhall. The medical officer of Kidderminster District No. 1, Samuel Stretton, gave it as an example of bad drainage and water supply. Berrows Worcester Journal reported him as follows:

“There was a row of houses called Woodfield Row, which was very seldom free of disease of some kind or other. He had three cases of scarlet fever in one family in December. At the backs of those houses there was no real drainage. The slops went into an open gutter. There were open ashpits, which always contained a deal of liquid filth. They were in close proximity to the walls, but not so close as in other localities. If there were public drains, the liquid filth would go into the drains.”

Woodfield Row was part of an area subject to compulsory purchase for development of the Ring Road. The public enquiry was in October 1971. (Kidderminster Shuttle 8.10.1971) The houses were pulled down probably c1973-74.



The 24 houses of Woodfield Row shown in 1902 – OS ref: SO826766