

Building Report

The Beeches, 146 Hurcott Road, Kidderminster

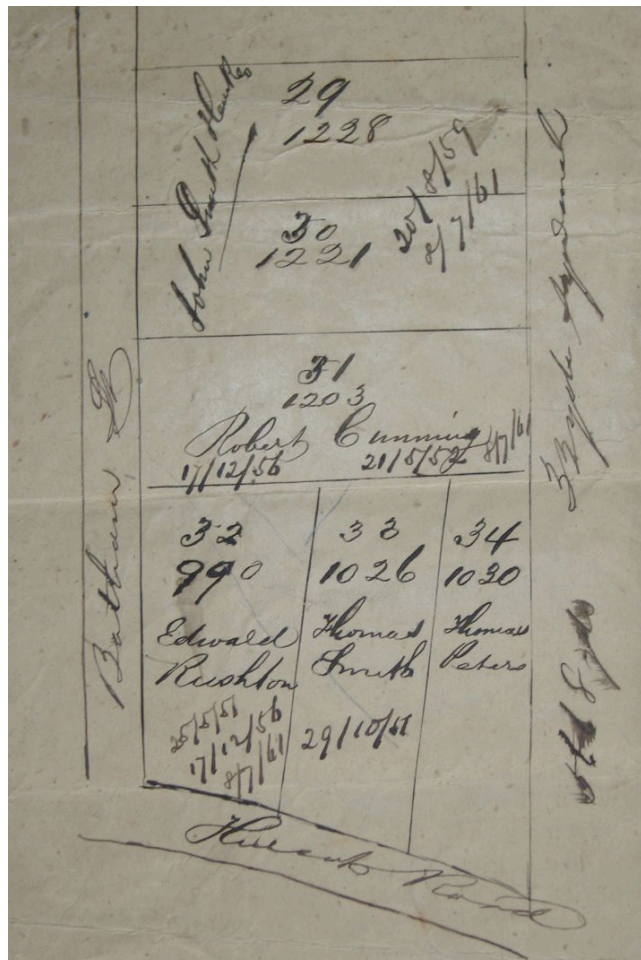
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Historic Kidderminster Project Ref: 751

Introduction

This report was undertaken as part of the Historic Kidderminster Project. This house is of great interest, being built on a site within the land at Greenhill purchased by the Kidderminster Freehold Land Society around the end of 1850. (Berrows Worcester Journal 16.1.1851) It is one of a pair of semi-detached houses once called Greenhill Villas. They provide further evidence that the Society struggled to build houses quickly on many of its plots. They also are an indication to us that the Society often fell short of its stated aim of enabling working men to become home owners. These are elegant middle-class homes. Records at both the Worcestershire Record Office and Kidderminster Library have been used. However, the basis of the report comes from deeds held by the present owners of the house, Andrew and Debbie Cole.



Early Plan of Plots laid out by Freehold Land Society 1851-61

History

The plots for Greenhill were allocated by ballot at a meeting in the Plough Inn on 22nd January 1851. Plots were allocated in Hurcott Road, Turton Street and Batham Street. Hurcott Road was intended to be called Cumming Street, presumably after one of the members allocated a plot in Batham Street, Robert Cumming, who in the 1851 census appears to have been an ironmonger of Coventry Street. The list of those receiving plots in Hurcott Road included Thomas Smith.

In his will dated 26th February 1856, Smith left his real and freehold property on Greenhill to his wife. This contained the land on which 146 Hurcott Rd would later be built. In October 1868 Ann Smith sold this land to Henry Lister for £245. It is shown on the plan pictured below. It shows that Mrs Smith had acquired five of the plots laid out by the Kidderminster Freehold land Society and none had been built on.

Lister was buying a plot on Hurcott Road with 1026 square yards, presumably the plot originally allocated to Thomas Smith in 1851. He also bought land occupying the corner of Hurcott Road and Batham Street containing 4642 square yards, which the plan shows to have been formerly four distinct plots. One of them was the plot allocated to Cumming. The two houses 145 and 146 Hurcott Road were to be built by 1872 and the property was to remain with the Lister family until 1952.



146 Hurcott Road, on the right of the pair, pictured in 2007

By indenture of 26th January 1872 Henry Lister, a grocer, conveyed two dwelling houses called Greenhill Villas to James Lister, commercial traveller. Lister was living

there and he was said to have erected the two houses on the land. James paid nothing. The conveyance was made in consideration of him having built the houses.

This was a family affair. Henry is listed in the 1851 census as an apprentice grocer in Coventry Street. In the 1881 census he remained in the same street as a grocer, aged 46. In 1881 James was listed living in Blakedown as a retired draper, aged 48, with his wife Ann, aged 32, and no children listed. Both Henry and James were born in Bewdley, and we must presume they were brothers.

There is an intriguing family story here. The documents held by Andrew and Debbie Cole show that James Goodwin Lister of Blakedown made his will dated 23rd August 1881. He left one half of his real estate to his sister-in-law Eliza Ann Surman during her lifetime. All the rest of his real estate he left to his daughter Phoebe Adelaide Lister. Phoebe was clearly a child, because if she was to die under the age of 21 years her share was to go to Eliza. The absence of her name from the 1881 census suggests that Phoebe was born in 1881. The absence of James' wife, Ann, from his will suggests she died in that year, possibly in childbirth.



Rear of 146 Hurcott Road

It would appear that Greenhill Villas were rented out during this period. Inland Revenue forms from 1884 reveal that one was occupied by Henry Fawcett, a yearly tenant at a rent of £28 per annum, and the other was void but had been in the occupation of Mrs Wright, also a yearly tenant at £28 per annum. A piece of land at the end of the gardens was let to Hurcott Tennis Club at an annual rent of £8.

In 1888 the houses were for sale as 17 and 18 Greenhill Villas, the former being still in the occupation of Henry Fawcett. No 18 was occupied by 'the owner', who we must reasonably suppose to have been Eliza Ann. We must also suppose that this was

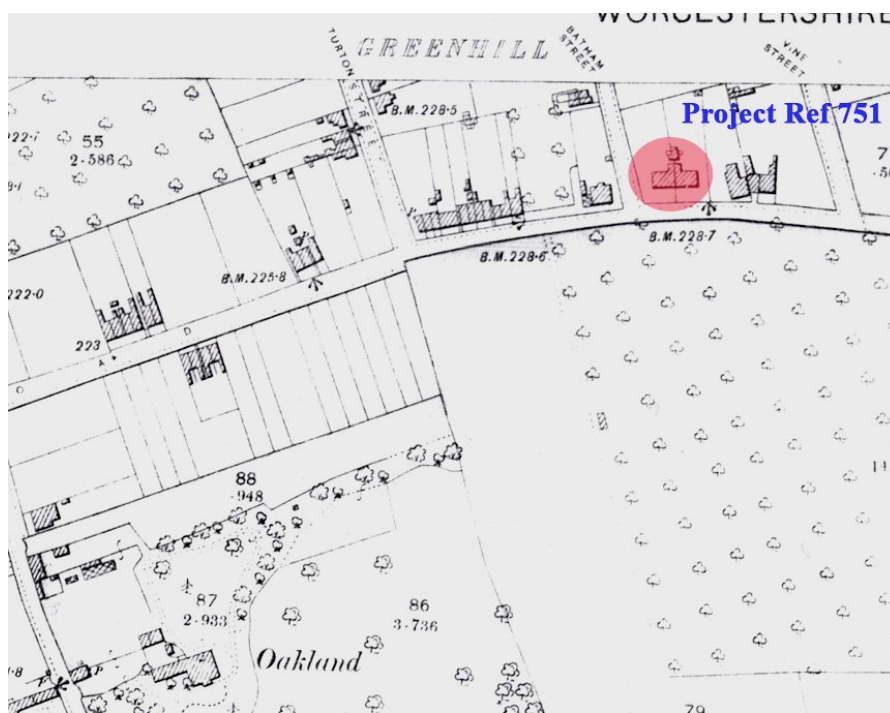
the present 146, where she certainly lived towards the end of her life. Also for sale was 'a splendid tennis lawn' let to Hurcott Tennis Club at the end of the gardens. This covered an area of over an acre, so clearly comprised at the very least the three plots laid out by the Freehold Land Society fronting Batham Street in the above plan.

Eliza was probably the sister of James Lister's wife Ann. She evidently took responsibility for Phoebe, who seems to have been orphaned at her father's death. In her will Eliza, living at 161 Greenhill (the old address of 146 Hurcott Rd), described Phoebe as her daughter. Eliza's full name was given as Eliza Ann Lister. We do not know whether she adopted that surname or married another member of the Lister family. At any rate her will refers to her as a widow.

Phoebe continued to live at the house until her death on 27th October 1951, when she was still Phoebe Adelaide Lister. In February 1952 her personal representatives sold 146 Hurcott Road to Mr C. D. Peters an engineer of 6 Birchfield Road Kidderminster for £1875.

Description

On 16th October 1888 the houses were auctioned at the Lion Hotel. The sales notice stated that they 'each contain entrance hall (7ft wide), dining room (15ft x 14ft), drawing room (13ft x 13ft) with bay window, kitchen (13ft x 12ft) with 4ft range, larder (11ft 6in x 9ft), a large cellar, 4 bedrooms, 1 dressing room, and suitable downstairs offices. The exterior walls are stuccoed and the roof slated, all the buildings are in capital repair; gas and water laid on, and the sanitary arrangements are in proper order.'



145 and 146 Hurcott Road 1902 - OS Ref SO844776