

**Building Record
'Lower Comberton'
Comberton**

OS Grid Ref: SO847754

Date of Work: February 2010 Revised: November 2010

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Historic Kidderminster Project Ref: 477

Introduction

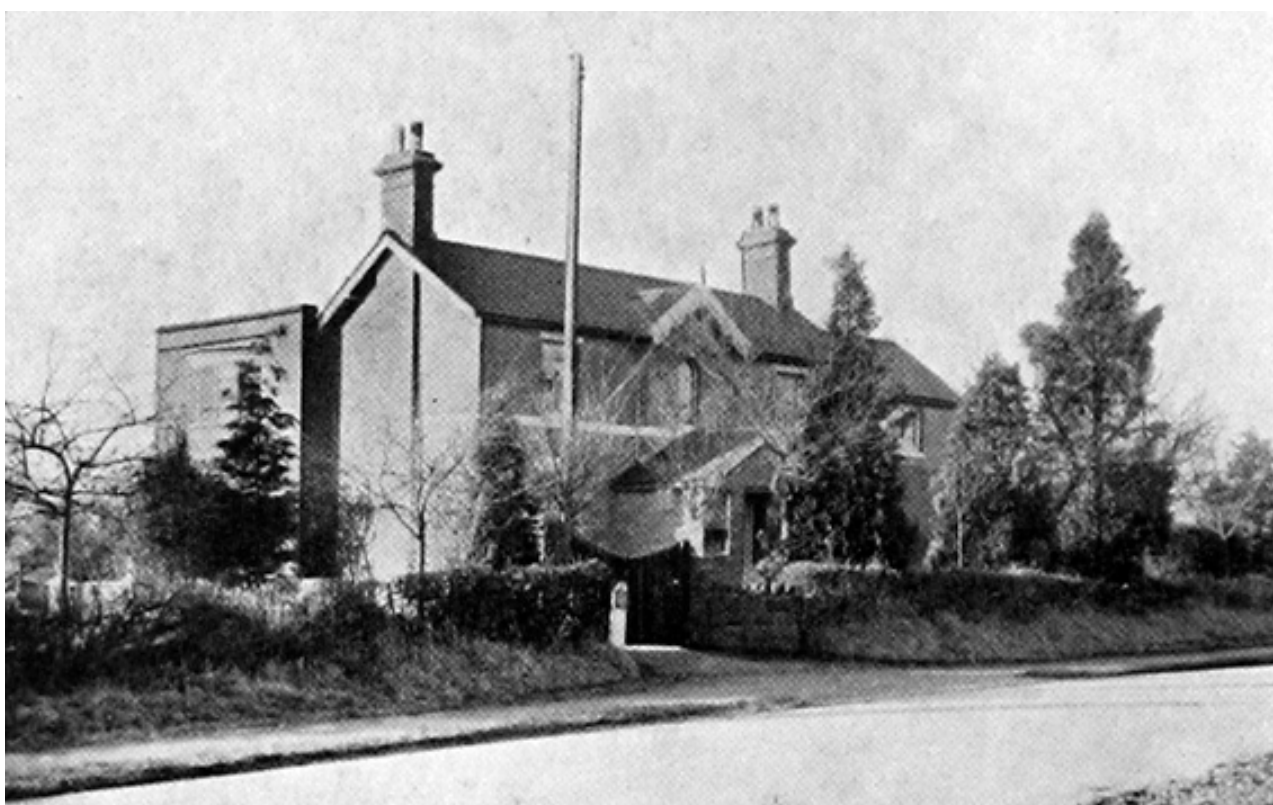


Fig. 1 Photograph of the 'Lower Comberton' c1952 [1]

Lower Comberton, the property shown above, was demolished in the mid 1970s when the road to Bromsgrove was straightened as part of the development of the Spennells housing estate. The construction work also included the building of the nearby Spennells traffic island and the Spennells Valley Road link from Comberton Road to Hoobrook.

The earliest building that we know of on site of 'Lower Comberton' is given on the 1841 tithe map

for Kidderminster Foreign [2] but subsequent maps indicate substantial rebuilding and/or remodelling of the property over the years.

The building or its predecessor served as a Farm House in the mid-1800s and there is a possibility that it also saw service as a licensed premises (see the History section).

The only remaining trace of the building is the dropped kerb entrance (Figure 2) to the property that can still be found in the access road to Heathy Mill (the original road to Bromsgrove until the mid 1970s). This entrance would not have been the one to the left of the house (Figure 1) but an opening further up the road towards Kidderminster that once gave access to the rear of the property (see inset Figure 2), but now leads to the present main road under which most of the site now lies.



Fig. 2 Photograph (October 2009) showing the dropped kerb side entrance to 'Lower Comberton' that was still surviving in January 2010. The present main road to Bromsgrove can be seen on the left of the picture. Inset: 1928 OS map showing probable location of this entrance (see arrow).

Location

The Ordnance Survey Grid Reference for this property is SO847754 and its location in the Spennells/Comberton area of Kidderminster (once Kidderminster Foreign) is shown in the map below: Figure 3.

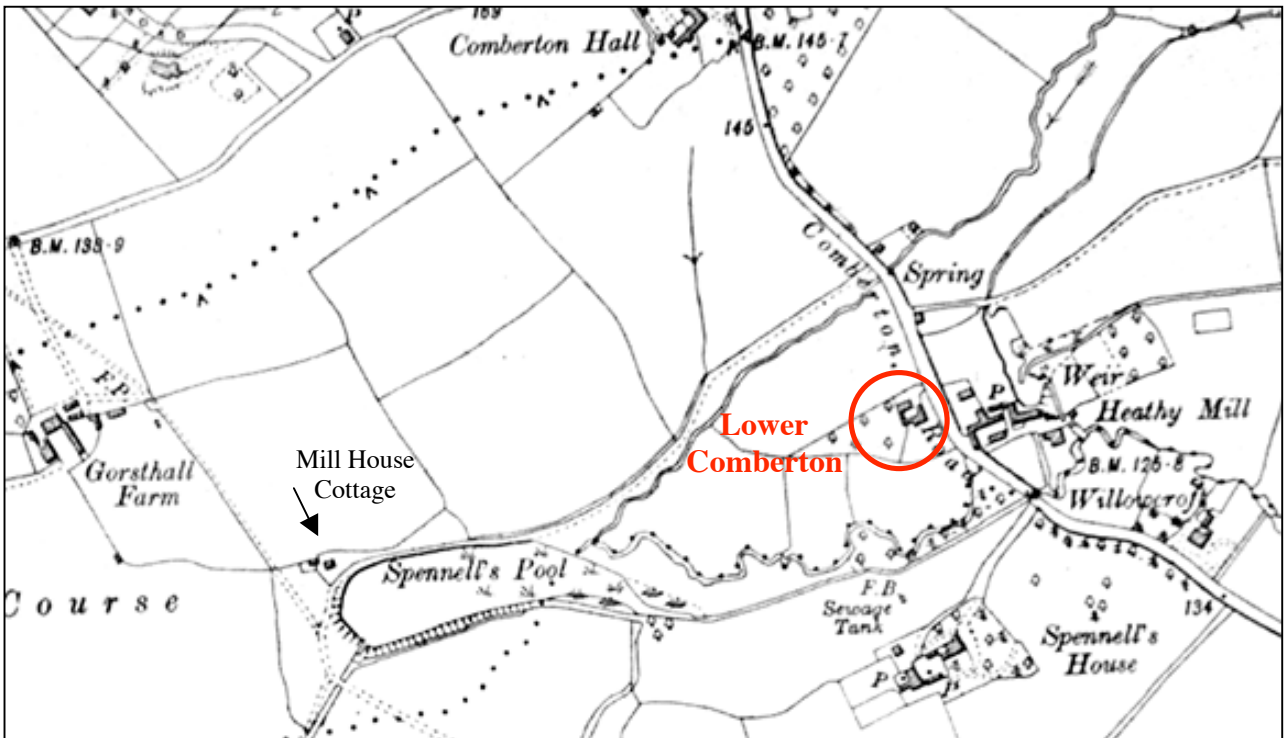


Fig. 3 OS Map of Spennells and Comberton area dated 1928. 'Lower Comberton' is circled in RED.

History

Changes of building on the Lower Comberton site can be followed by studying historic maps.

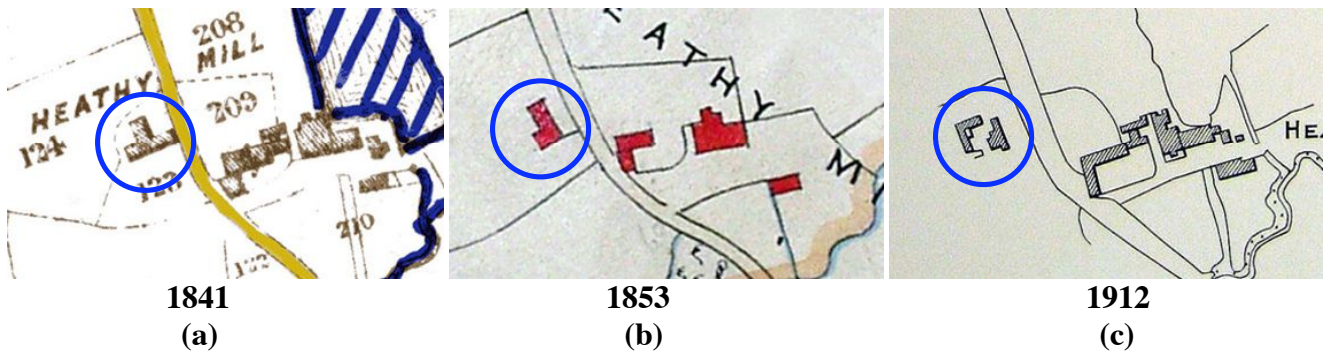


Fig. 4 Maps showing plan views of the Heathy Mill (right of road) and the buildings (circled in blue) on the site of 'Lower Comberton' (left of road): (a) from the 1841 Tithe Map [2], (b) from the 1853 Broadfield map [3] and (c) from the 1912 plan included with Sale Particulars for Comberton House [4].

The maps in Figure 4 show clearly that the shape of the building changed considerably between 1841 and 1912. The most obvious change shown is the outbuilding that has been added in (c). Indeed, the same outbuildings also appear on the OS maps of 1886 and 1928. However, taking into account that that the plans are not necessarily always precisely to scale it is difficult to establish what aspects of the main house are the result of demolition, extension or new building from map to map. Thus, is (b) indicating a demolition of a wing or a total rebuild from (a). Is the main house in

(c) an extended version of (b) or a new build. Has the site of the main house in (c) moved slightly towards Kidderminster from the position shown in (b)?

Census returns can often tell us about historical uses of a property and its inhabitants. In this case it would seem that 'Lower Comberton' has served, under different names, as a farmhouse and possibly a public house. This conclusion is based on Census returns for 1851 and 1861. In other census years the property has not been able to be identified in the records.

In the 1851 census returns the entries are recorded sequentially as: 21, Gorst Hall; 22, Spennells Mill Cottage; 23, 'Spotted Cow'; 24, Heathy Mill. This sequence followed by the enumerator can still be traced in a clear and consistent manner on the 1928 OS map shown in Fig 3 - with the 'Spotted Cow' logically sited in the position of 'Lower Comberton'.

The 'Spotted Cow' was occupied by William Wilks a Farmer of 11 acres with his wife Elizabeth and 2 daughters: Emma and Elizabeth. The property's main function was probably as a small farm but does the name also suggest that it provided a sideline service as a Beerhouse or similar establishment?

In 1861 we can follow a similar path from: 43, Gorst Hall; 44, Mill House, Spennells; 45, School House Farm. The next entry breaks with the 1851 sequence since it is not Heathy Mill but: 46, Comberton House. This property is close to Comberton Hall (see top right Figure 3.) but on the opposite side of the Comberton Road This apparent discrepancy arises because Heathy Mill was allocated into a different neighbouring District for census purposes to that for 'School House Farm' etc.

David Maiden (Farmer of 11 acres) is recorded as the occupier of School House Farm with his wife Sarah.

Further support that links the Spotted Cow and the School House Farm with 'Lower Comberton' comes from the Sales Particulars of 1953 [1] which lists the acreage of the property including House, Garden, Orchard and Pastures as 10.771 Acres; perhaps a more accurate assessment than the 11 acres given in the census returns.

Sources

1. Particulars of Sale. Residential Property known as "Lower Comberton", 31st January 1952, at the "Lion Hotel", Kidderminster. Auctioneers G. Herbert Banks. By order of the Executors of the late Mrs A. E. Massey. Worcester Record Office BA9526/63. Courtesy Geoff Weale.
2. Tithe Map dated 1841 for Kidderminster Foreign. Courtesy of Richard Warner.
3. Broadfield Map of the Stone, Hoobrook, Spennells, Comberton and Offmore areas dated 1853. Courtesy of Mr Billing.
4. Particulars of Sale. Residential Estate known as "Comberton House", 20th August 1912. Courtesy Geoff Weale.
5. Various Ordnance Survey maps accessed at Kidderminster Library.
6. Various Census data accessed at Ancestry.co.uk and the 1851 Census transcript Vol. 2 , Kidderminster, published by the Birmingham & Midland Society for Genealogy & Heraldry. (1992).