

Building Report
Spring Bank House, 28 Leswell Lane
OS Grid Ref: SO 837769
Author: Bob Millward
Date: June 2008
Historic Kidderminster Project Ref: 457

Introduction

This property sits at the top of Leswell Lane overlooking Coventry Street and St George's church and once possessed an elevated panoramic view over the town. Initially a family home in the late 18th century, Spring Bank House later provided accommodation for private and Diocesan educational purposes, before reverting to residential use. In the 1960's/1970's its appearance change dramatically to the present 'warehouse' look after conversion into flats; and its garden was transformed into housing.

Location

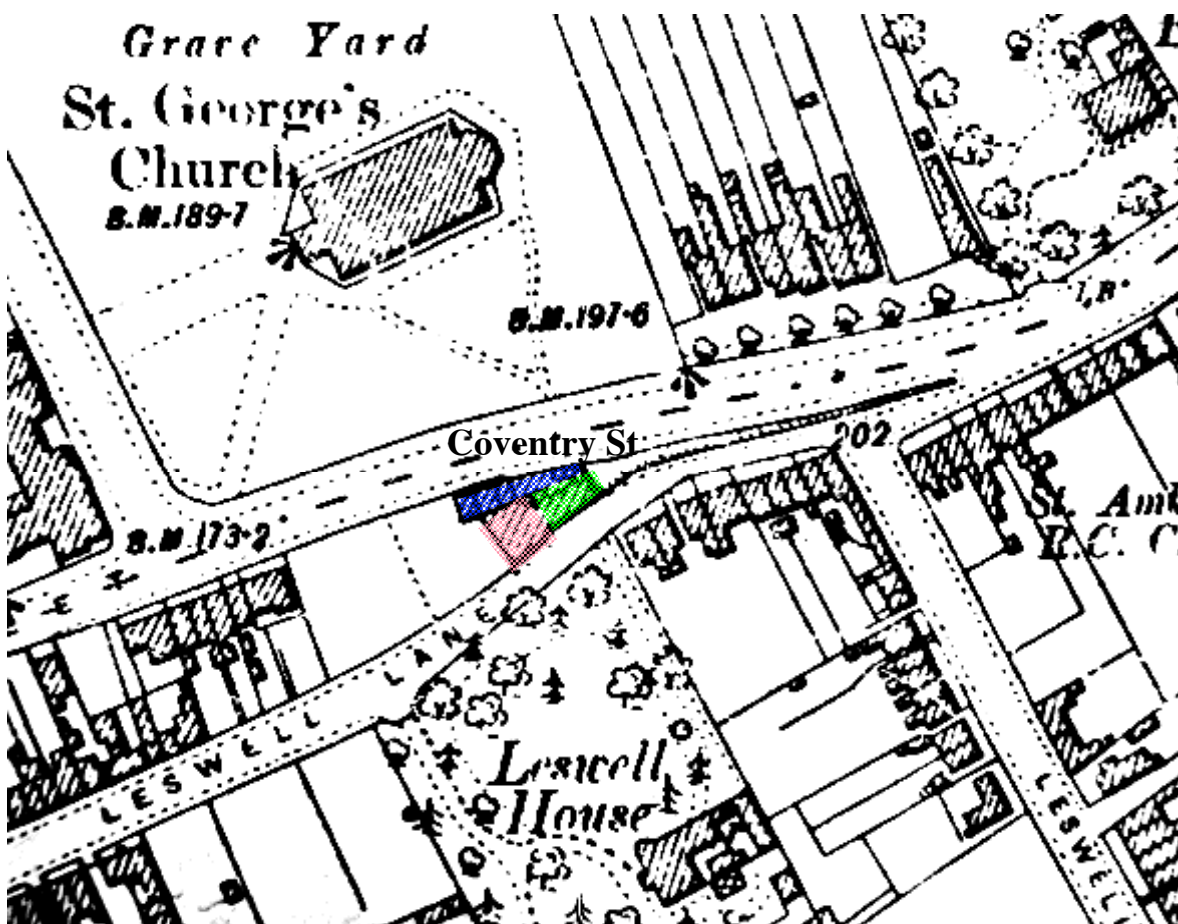


Fig. 1 OS map [1] for 1902. Spring Bank House at Grid Ref: SO 837769

The present building is shaded 'pink'. The area shaded 'green' was a two-storied attached building. The group of buildings shaded 'blue' were at a lower level with access from Coventry Street. Traces can still be discerned behind the billboard shown in Fig. 2(c) below.

Description

Before conversion into flats this building had a gabled roof and period windows which overlooked the town [2]. The sloping garden stretched westwards down the lane and there was a gated stepped access to it from Coventry Street (the bricked gateway can still be discerned).

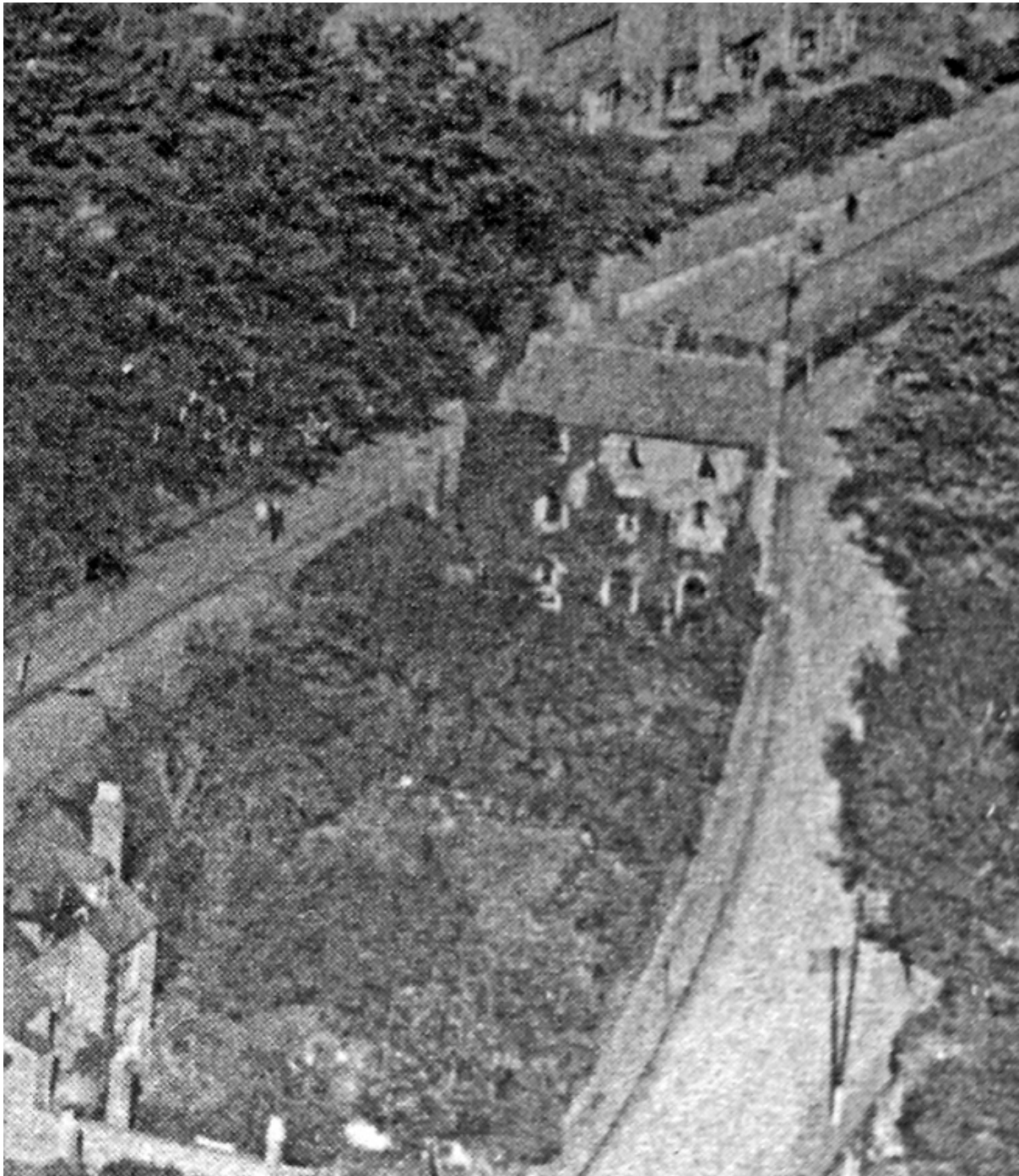


Fig. 2 Photograph shown in the Kidderminster Shuttle 16th 1974. The image was quoted as 'from nearly 50 years ago' making the date about 1924/25. The gardens are shown, the pitched roof is still in place, a central door into the garden can be seen and the windows are unaltered (compare with below). With thanks to the Stephen Cooke Collection.



Fig. 3(a) Looking North East



Fig. 3(b) Looking West



Fig. 3(c) Looking South from Coventry Street

**Spring Bank House
December 2006**

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The door and remains of a foot scraper near the main entrance are rare original external features of the property - see Figures 4(a) and (b). Within living memory a name plate proclaiming 'Spring Bank House' was near this doorway [2].

We have not had direct access to inside the building but an ex-inhabitant of the downstairs flat understands that the original main staircase remains in situ but hidden from view behind a walled up stairwell.

**Fig. 4(b) Main doorway
May 2008**



**Fig. 4(a) Remains of foot scraper
near the main doorway.
November 2007**



History

The first record we have found for Spring Bank House is described in a book by Don Gilbert [3]. James Pinches, an ex-Town Clerk had died in May 1801 and the Worcester Journal carried a notice asking his debtors to pay their dues to Mrs Pinches. Spring Bank House, Leswell, was the Pinches family home and in October 1801 Mrs Pinches was advertising that she had opened 'a Boarding School for Young Ladies' on Spring Bank. This school was still being run by Eliza and Harriet Pinches in 1840 [4].

By 1851 there were two schools operating at Spring Bank: a day school by Mrs Sarah Andrews, and a Diocesan & Commercial school whose headmaster was Richard Johnson with William Taylor as second master and Rev. Thomas Baker Morrell as principal [5,6].

The Diocesan school was advertised in an 1851 Trade directory [5]: "Pupils are diligently instructed in such departments of knowledge as are essential to a mercantile life, together with

Surveying, Drawing, History, the Mathematics, Vocal Music, Use of the Globes etc. – The Ancient and Modern languages if required. Religious and Moral training is superintended by the Clergy.

Board and education	£23	per Annum.
Weekly Boarders	£20	per Annum.
Day Boarders	£10	per Annum.
Day Pupils	£3	per Annum.

The only extra charges are Washing £2 per Annum, and for Stationary. A separate Bed is provided for each Boy."

There were nine Scholars or Pupil teachers aged between 8 and 17 listed on the school premises in the 1851 census [6].

It would appear that the school had closed by 1868 when Miss Cole is listed as a Private Resident at Spring Bank House in the Post Office Directory for that year [7].

In 1907 R A Taylor F.R.C.O., organist of St George's church, was advertising for pupils in: Harmony, Counterpoint, organ, pianoforte and violin at his new address – Spring Bank, Leswell [8]. Mr Taylor was also the conductor of the Kidderminster Male Voice Choir which had been inaugurated in 1904 [9]. The choir rehearsed at Spring Bank Room, Leswell, on Tuesdays and won First Prize at the Madresfield Competition in 1905, 1906 and 1907 [10].

Later private residents of Spring Bank House noted in Trade Directories include: Daniel Duck in 1912 [11] and Arthur Copeland in 1921 [12].

In the 1960s or 1970s Spring Bank House was remodelled The gabled roof was replaced by a flat roof, the windows were much altered, the attached building on the east side was demolished and replaced by a row of garages and the garden was developed for housing. [2].

The group of cottages shaded blue in Fig. 1 are referred to by Margaret Phelan in her recollections 'A Walk down Coventry St. in the 1930's': "Halfway down the hill one passes, opposite St. George's Church, wooden advertisement hoardings... behind those lie the remains of several small cottages, built back into the sandstone cliff. The older generation spoke of seeing people living there, and washtubs outside."

Sources

1. ' OS maps held by Kidderminster Library
2. Personal recollections of the author and other local ex- residents
3. 'Town & Borough: A civic History of Kidderminster' by Don Gilbert , David Voice Associates (2004) p60
4. Bentley's History, Gazetteer & Directory, 1840 – Kidderminster Library.
5. Lascelle's Directory & Gazetteer, 1851 – Kidderminster Library.
6. 1851 Census records: Ancestry.co.uk
7. Post Office Directory, 1868 – Kidderminster Library.
8. Kidderminster Shuttle 1 June 1907
9. 'Kidderminster since 1800', Tomkinson & Hall (1975) p198
10. Kidderminster Shuttle 5 October 1907
11. Kelly's Directory 1912 – Kidderminster Library
12. Kelly's Directory 1921 – Kidderminster Library
13. www.margaretphelan.com