

Building Report

43 Woodfield Crescent, Kidderminster

Author: Nigel Gilbert

Date: 21st February 2008

Historic Kidderminster Project Ref: 767

Introduction

This report was undertaken as part of the Historic Kidderminster project. The house is of great interest, having been one of the earliest built by the Woodfield Estate Land Society, which was formed by 1878. It carries a date stone 1883. Other streets which were part of the scheme were Peel Street, Cobden Street, Crescent Road and part of Plimsoll Street. In 1905, for reasons which he did not explain, Ebenezer Guest described the society as 'pretentious'. (KS 9.9.1905). This report is based upon deeds held by the present owner, Andrew Briscoe, and also deeds held by the owner of 59 Peel Street, Marcus Cousins. Resources of Kidderminster Library have also been used.

Woodfield Estate Land Society

The initial purchase for development of this land was by David Corbet and Edward Broadfield on 28th December 1876. They bought the land from Caroline Talbot, widow of Henry Talbot Jnr., who had inherited from his father Henry Snr. much of the land in this area. It formed part of the Caldwell Estate purchased from John Jefferys in 1842. On the next day after their purchase, 29th December, Corbet and Broadfield mortgaged the property for £3000. This may well have been the purchase price for the land, which extended to just over 15 acres. It is likely that Corbet and Broadfield had bought the land on behalf of the society. Dr. David Corbet was appointed on 28th May 1873 as the first Medical Officer of Health for Kidderminster, a post he held until 1911. (p88, Tomkinson and Hall, 1975) Clearly, he would have had an interest in the growth of good housing. Edward Broadfield seems to have enjoyed a number of occupations simultaneously. These included postmaster at Church St. post office, but as accountant and manager of the Kidderminster Permanent Benefit Building Society he too would have had an interest in the growth of housing. (Littlebury's Directory, 1879)

On 15th June 1878 the land was passed to the Society subject to the mortgage of £3000. This was first reference to the Woodfield Estate Land Society in the legal documents. It seemed to lead immediately to the borrowing of more money. On 29th June the land was conveyed by the Society to William Henry Talbot and Edward Broadfield subject to the mortgage of 29th December 1876 by way of mortgage for securing the sum of £3345. Regarding the earlier loan, £500 was still outstanding in November 1884, and it was not fully paid off until March 1885. We do not know when the second loan was repaid, except that it must have been cleared by the time that the Society was wound up on 17th December 1887.

It should not be thought that the Society was dissolved because the streets were fully developed. On the contrary, it is likely that many plots had not been built upon. We know that the property which is the subject of this report had no houses on it for another decade after the winding up of the Society. Also the 1885 OS map, surveyed in 1883, shows perhaps only 26 out of 92 plots with houses on them.

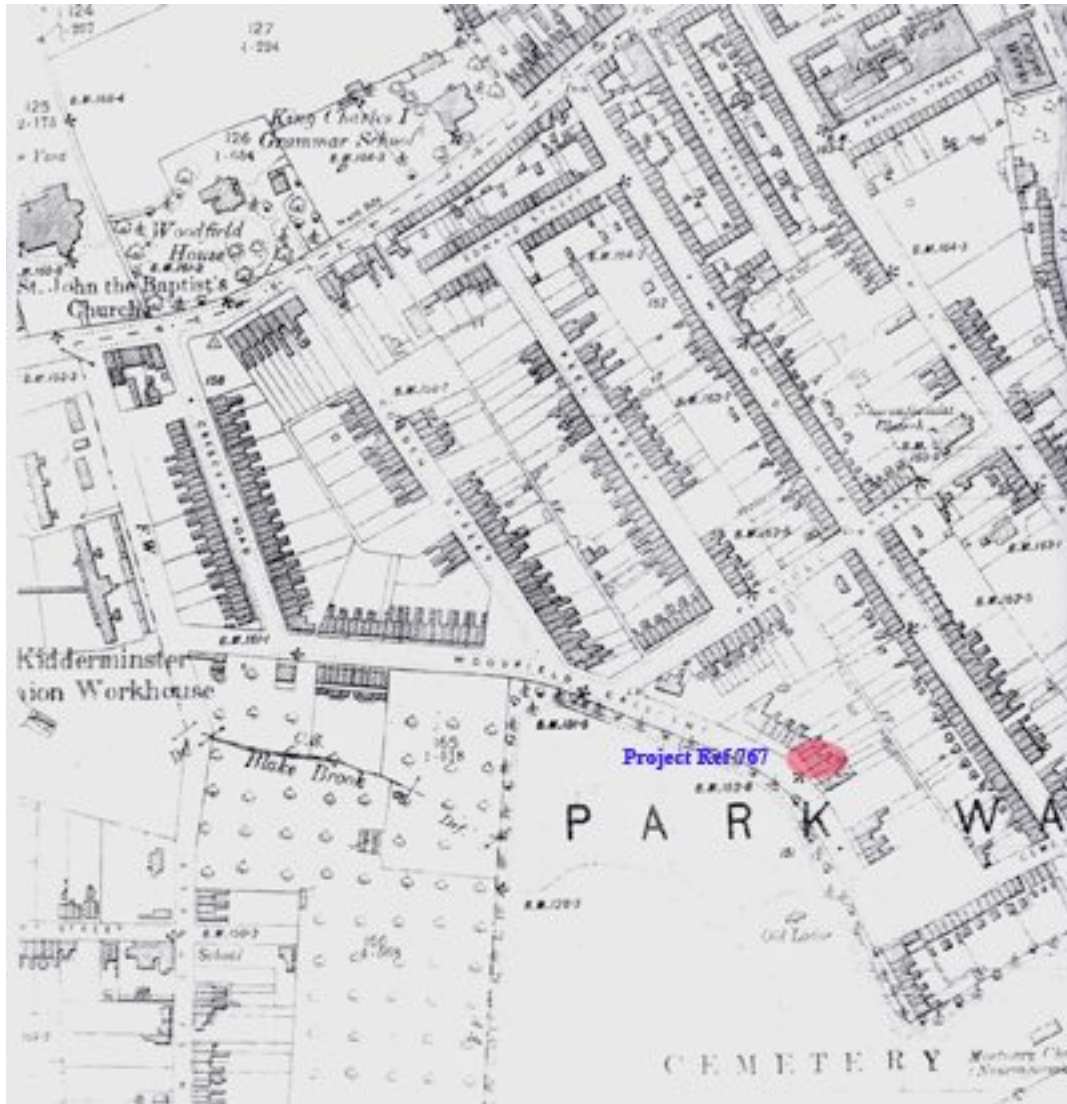


Woodfield Crescent built by Robert Durrance with Clarence Villa on the right

History of 43 Woodfield Crescent

On 5th November 1883 the Woodfield Estate Land Society Kidderminster Limited sold to Robert Durrance a piece of land having a frontage of eight yards to Woodfield Crescent containing 349 sq yds, forming the south east part of Lot 15. Durrance paid £52 7s. Talbot and Broadfield joined in the conveyance, ensuring that Durrance took his land free of the mortgage of June 1878. No mention is made of the 1876 mortgage, so we must presume his plot was not charged with any debt still arising from that loan.

Durrance built his house in 1883. We know that because the house carries a date stone. However, it was built too late for the survey of 1883 undertaken for the 1885 edition of the OS map. The three houses on the south side of no.43, now numbered 44-46 Woodfield Crescent, are shown on that map. They were owned by William Greatwich and were among the earliest houses built by the society, being listed in an 1879 valuation list for the poor rates. (WRO BA 10470/230)



43 Woodfield Crescent and neighbouring houses 1902 - OS Ref SO827763

A valuation list for 1887 shows that Durrance also purchased the land on the north side of no. 43. (WRO BA 10470/231) Two further houses are listed owned by Durrance, these being numbered 41 and 42 today. Durrance was occupying no. 43, which was valued at an annual rental of £14 as opposed to £10 each for the other two houses.

The 1887 list entries for the land covered by the Society show a pattern of several houses being owned by the same person, who occupied one of them. These included Durrance and Greatwich who were immediate neighbours. We may presume they were members of the Society. It is likely that Durrance was permitted to commence building his house in 1883 before the formal conveyance to him.

Durrance, who was an engineer, later moved to Beechurst on Bewdley Hill (now numbered 103). By his will of November 1923 he appointed his son Arthur and his friend Joseph Wright of Stourport Road to be executors. Robert died 4th January 1925. In April of that year Arthur Durrance and Joseph Wright sold Clarence Villa, no. 43

Woodfield Crescent, to Mr George Deakin for £470. He made a quick profit in September by selling on to William Thomas Spilsbury for £550.

Spilsbury died on 12th December 1947, when he was described as of the Lodge, Station Drive Wribbenhall. The executors of his will conveyed the property to Wilfred Morgan in 1957. He would have been the first owner occupier. He died in 1976 and his widow, Ivy, died in 1998, the property passing to their son, Guy, of Nottingham. In 2003 the house was sold to Hannah Ensor.

Description

The house, like all its neighbours, was built in red brick. The roof has been renewed with tiles, but was presumably originally slate as are those of the adjoining properties. There is no side access, with the three houses built by Durrance forming part of a long terrace on the north east side of Woodfield Crescent. There is a cellar basement, the ground floor of these houses being set slightly above pavement level.

Bibliography

Kidderminster since 1800, Ken Tomkinson and George Hall, 1975.