

Building Report

5 Woodward Road, Sutton Farm, Kidderminster

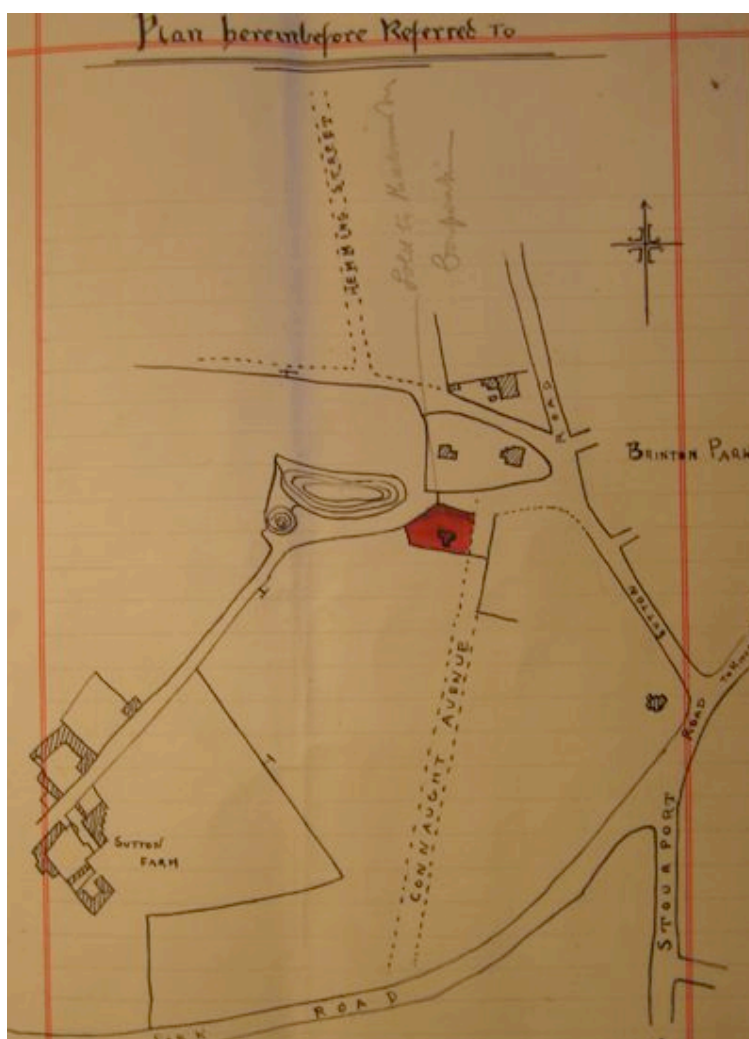
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Date: 29th July 2008

Historic Kidderminster Project Ref: 770

Introduction

This report was written as part of the Historic Kidderminster Project. This is an extraordinary property, offering little clue to the casual observer that it is ancient. Yet it seems that both number five and number six may well be farm labourer's cottages dating back to Elizabethan times. The present owner, Reg Harris, has completely renewed the cottage and extended it. The exterior is rendered and it is not possible to see the original brickwork, which he has informed us consisted of the smaller type brick from a previous era. This report is primarily based on deeds held by Mr Harris.



A plan of 1928 highlighting the cottages and showing the planned Connaught Avenue. Woodward Road was yet unbuilt.

History

The earliest detailed map of this area is c1841, and it shows these cottages. A track goes past them up to Sutton Farm. Across the way are other cottages, which also survive in a modernised form. The modern Woodward Road roughly follows this track.

Sutton was named in Domesday of 1086. The most likely site of that medieval settlement is where the farm stood until demolition in the 1930s, at the junction of Woodward Rd and Brinton Crescent where they meet Tomkinson Drive.

In the late eighteenth century, with Kidderminster expanding outwards and agriculture in the doldrums, Sutton Farm was ripe for sale and redevelopment. In 1881 much of the farmland was purchased by the Worcester Land and Investment Company. However, this company was unable to develop much of the land, and in 1902 its members resolved to wind up the business. In June 1903 the farm, which still operated under yearly tenants, was sold with 52 acres of land to Henry Packwood, a house furnisher of Kidderminster. Also part of this deal were the two cottages, which are now 5 and 6 Woodward Road.



5 Woodward Road transformed - pictured in 2007

Although the address is now Woodward Road, in 1928 the cottages were described as being in Connaught Avenue. The plan below from that date shows that Woodward Road had not been constructed by then. The plan comes from a conveyance in November of that year by the executors of Henry Packwood, who in fact had died in 1914, to Alice Mabel Powis of Rock. She paid £190 for the two cottages, which were then in the occupation of R. and H. Purcell.

In 1933 the cottages were sold on to Nora Ernestine Powis of Rock, spinster, for £100. Although the value of the cottages seems to have declined with this sale, a piece of land of 264 yards attached to them had been sold to the Corporation in January 1931. This was described as being at the junction of Connaught Avenue and Woodward Road, which had been constructed by then.

In January 1946 the cottages, 'known as Farm Cottages', were sold to Mrs Dorothy L. Cotterill of Handsworth in Birmingham for £475. One was void and the other was in the occupation of 'one Purcell'. Mrs Cotterill made a good profit. In 1952 she was able to sell no. 5 Woodward Road alone to Ronald Elijah Draper of 104 Bromsgrove Street, Post Office Linesman, for £500. He quickly sold it on and in June 1956 it was sold again to Christopher Jess Larner, bricklayer of Cleobury Mortimer, for £550.

The name of Purcell has been mentioned twice in the deeds. According to Reg Harris, Bertie Purcell lived next door at number 6 for about 90 years from about 1900. He fought in the Great War aged about 15. He was a labourer at Sutton Farm when the area was still mostly corn fields. He cultivated an allotment afterwards and sold plants.



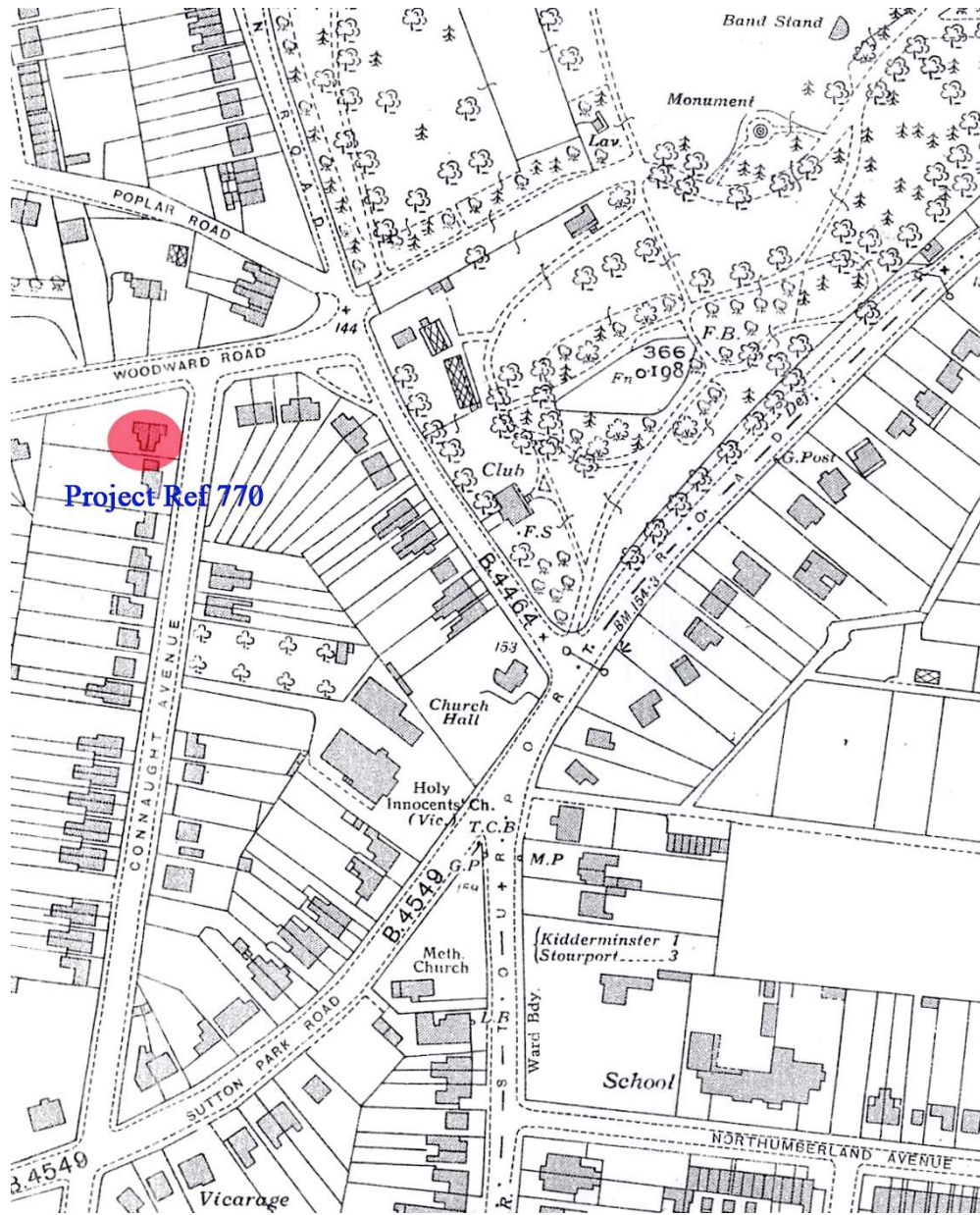
5 & 6 Woodward Road showing the complex extensions which conceal the old cottages

Description

Since purchasing no. 5 from Mr Larner in 1970, Reg Harris has considerably extended the property so it is unrecognisable as a little old cottage. In its original state from front to back it would have been little more than 12 feet. Bertie Purcell told Mr Harris that he remembered there being no staircases in the cottages. You just pulled up a

ladder behind you. By the time Mr Harris purchased number 5 there were 'rickety staircases'. There was a toilet in no. 5 put in by Lerner. Prior to that the occupier of number 5 had the right to 'access to and egress from' toilets and wash house behind number 6, which were still there when Mr Purcell died ten years ago. They were pulled down by a new owner.

Number 5 has a ceiling timber in the front room taken from Oldington Farm, which was being demolished in 1970. The whole cottage was built with small bricks, possibly Elizabethan, all now concealed by rendering.



**The cottages in 1938 now fronting the completed Woodward Road
OS Ref SO 823756**