

OGDEN-SMITH – THE FIRST LANDLADY OF BUTT’S COTTAGES

According to the documents held at the Surrey History Centre¹, in December 1910 ‘Butts Cottages’ (the original name of the terrace where we live) were bought by Elizabeth Kate Ogden-Smith, who in January 1911 took out a fifteen year mortgage with Walter Charles Slocock - the conveyance noting it being paid off in 1925.

Elizabeth was the wife of Frank William Ogden-Smith, who in the 1911 census was living at Beech House in Loop Road, Kingfield².

She was 31, originally from Portsmouth, he fourteen years her senior (born in Cheltenham), with the couple being married eight years with no offspring by that date. Also at the property on census night were two visitors and a domestic servant.

He was a ‘company director’ in an ‘electric theatre’ - evidently a pioneer in the relatively new business of moving pictures, opening the ‘Bolingbroke Hall’ at Clapham Junction in 1907 and founding the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association³.

Previously he operated ‘automatic machines’ (which I initially thought were some kind of ‘vending machine’, but later found out to be ‘electric shock machines’ similar to the one illustrated here), owning 6,000 such devices ‘on almost every railway station in Britain and Ireland’,⁴ before his interest in cinema took him in that direction.

By 1910 he operated cinemas in Brighton, Bristol, Croydon and elsewhere⁵ which he sold as the ‘Standard Electric Theatres Ltd’ for £12,000 and ‘after paying all his debts out of this sum he was left with about £4,000 of which he gave £2,000 to his wife’⁶.

Some of this money she appears to have invested in property - the nearly new Butt’s Cottages in Old Woking, being part of her new ‘estate’. This also included land and cottages in Kingfield also bought from W. C. Slocock and other property, such as the Market Cottages in Old Woking and a pair of semi-detached cottages in Kingfield, which she had acquired in June 1910 on a mortgage from Messrs Barclay & Co⁷, paying off that mortgage in March 1916 and re-mortgaging them the following day to Slocock.

The Ogden Smith’s also owned a number of other properties in Kingfield which Frank Ogden Smith had bought from Walter Charles Slocock, partially with cash but also it seems with shares in the Standard Electric Theatres Ltd (two share certificates being in Slocock’s name⁸).

The gift to his wife was evidently a wise move. In 1913 his Counterslip Hall in Bristol went bust. Apparently ‘as the craze for this class of amusement increased and grew, he found the halls he possessed were too small’.



Despite the loss of the Bristol venue, Mr Ogden Smith continued to trade as ‘Ogden’s Films’ ‘film proprietor and renter’, but it seems wartime restrictions (amongst other pressures), brought the business to an end and eventually in 1916 he was declared bankrupt⁹.



I suspect with his wife’s investments in property they managed to struggle on. The bankruptcy certainly does not appear to have affected his membership of the ‘Anima Lodge, 3634’ of the Freemasons, as their records show subscriptions from him until at least 1921¹⁰, although in 1920 Mrs Ogden Smith did sell off part of her Kingfield estate, namely the Kingfield Stores and Williams’ Cottages to a Mr Alfred Smith¹¹.

¹ SHC 3468/4

² RG14/3038/10

³ The Era, 1st April, 1936

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Some of the others being the King’s Hall in Reading, the King’s Hall at Margate and the Trinity Hall in London - according to the prospectus of the company published in the *Daily News*, 16th March 1910.

⁶ The Bioscope, 19th October, 1916

⁷ SHC 3468/4/5

⁸ SHC 3468/4/3

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ United Grand Lodge of England Freemason Membership Register: Anima Lodge, No 3634, London (1912-1921). The lodge was evidently established by and for members of the film-projection industry

¹¹ SHC 3468/4/6

OGDEN-SMITH – THE FIRST LANDLADY OF BUTT’S COTTAGES



New Forest Cottages and the Kingfield Stores (above) with the Market Cottage in Old Woking High Street (below), once part of the local property portfolio of Mrs Elizabeth Kate Ogden Smith



By then the couple appear to have moved to Guildford High Street (according to the electoral registers), where in 1918 she was eligible to vote because of her husband's occupation¹². Later still they retired to Herstmonseux in Sussex, where Elizabeth was a prominent member of the local Women's Institute¹³.

I do not know for certain, but I suspect she continued to own the former 'Butts Cottages' until at least 1946.

As I have related before, in the autumn of 1945 the cottages (and the rest of her Woking 'estate') were put up for sale, some advertisements noting the five cottages 164-172, produced '£134.19s per annum'.

In November 1945 the auction was postponed until January 1946, but it is possible that the sale did not go ahead at all, as the abstract of title for some of the New Forrest Cottages at Kingfield, shows that they were owned by E K Ogden Smith in 1948 – and sold (long after her death on the 17th April 1951) to Mr D G Bayliss in 1958¹⁴. This, of course, is David Goliath Bayliss recorded in my previous article.

¹² SHC CC802/27/5

¹³ The Sussex Agricultural Express on Friday 8th August 1930 (page 8) noting that she was Hon. Sec. of the East Sussex Federation of Women's Institutes; on Friday 10th June 1932 (page 8) that she was the Herstmonseux Group Hon. Secretary; and on Friday 7th July 1933 (page 16) that she was Vice-President with that month's 'Garden Meeting' held in the garden of "Sundial House, the home of Mr & Mrs F.W. Ogden-Smith". The last reference I can find for her is in the Sussex Agricultural Express of Friday 11th November 1949 (page 7) when she was evidently the President of the W.I.Group.

¹⁴ SHC 3468/4/18