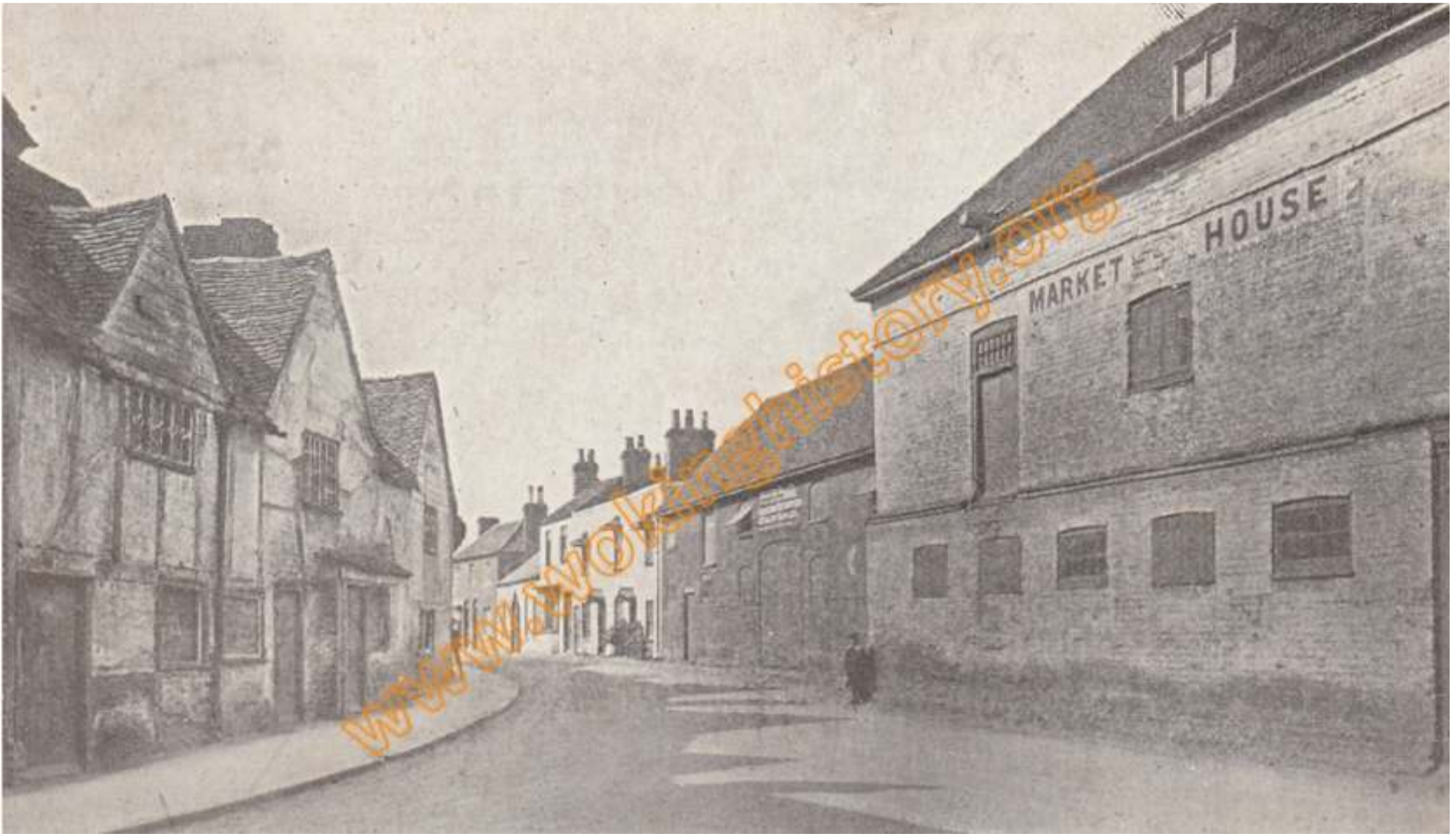


CLAMP'S COTTAGES



As I have noted before, the deeds to our property appear to go back to 1897 with the sale by Ridley Thomas Hilder, Charlotte Elizabeth Hilder and Edmund Wright Brooks (the executors of the will of Edward Hilder) of 'five messuages' on the corner of the High Street and Church Street to Robert Clamp, for £250¹.

From the photographs of the time it is clear that the cottages were of some age – possibly going back as far as the 16th or 17th century. If they had survived and been renovated they would probably be listed buildings by now (and so beyond the means of ourselves), but I doubt that that was what Robert Clamp had in mind for them. I suspect he originally intended to replace them with buildings of his own design (which if he had we would again undoubtedly have been unable to afford), so why he did not, will probably remain a mystery.

What I do know is that in 1901 he was probably given the ideal opportunity to redevelop the site, when on the evening of Friday 6th December, a fire broke out in the roof of one of the cottages. We are fortunate that the West Surrey Times reported the event², as it not only gives us some details of the state of the buildings, but also mentions one of the occupants.

There were two fires that weekend (apparently unrelated), the second of which was at Mr Carter's Farm in Carters Lane on the Sunday evening, but 'the first occurred on Friday evening at Clamp's Cottages, a block of very old-fashioned buildings'. The fire 'originated in the roof, owing it is supposed, to a stray spark falling on the straw padding which is placed underneath the tiles. The house in which the fire broke out was occupied by Mrs Russell. The village section of the Fire Brigade were quickly called and were soon on the spot, dealing so effectively with the outbreak that it was not long before they had it completely under their control'.

As I say, we are fortunate that the newspaper reported the incident, as it allows us to go back a few months to the census of 1901³ and positively identify not just Mrs Sarah Russell, but also her 'boarder' (Percival Worsfold, aged 30, a Bus Driver) and her neighbours.

If you have read my previous posts, you will already be familiar with Sarah Russell – the mother of 'our' Alfred and of Kate Russell, who married Percy (Percival) Worsfold in 1898 (although where Kate was on census night, I have no idea)

After Sarah Russell, the census enumerator visited Henry J Bedford, a shoeing and general smith aged 47 (on the site now occupied by Trinity House), whilst before Sarah, was Martha Harris, a 77 year old widow who worked as a laundress, who lived here along with her daughter, Emily (also a laundress) and her son, Arthur (37) who was a 'corn porter'. Next to the Harris' was James Pullen, aged 40, a general labourer with his wife Ellen (43) and five children, James (19) a butcher's assistant, Henry (17) a general labourer, William (15), Albert (10) and Gladis (2).

Again, if you have read the previous articles you will know that James Pullen was the first occupant of our property, 4 Butts Cottages (although as I said before, I cannot be 100% certain that we are really talking about the same man).

Before the Pullen family the enumerator⁴ visited Samuel A Budd (24) a 'milkman at dairy', with his wife Elsie (24) and sons Samuel (1) and William (10 months), with Albert Miles (33) a 'general labourer' and his wife Mary R (33), and daughter Mary Smith (8) and son John Miles (6 months). Immediately before them on the census was George Harris (90) a retired tailor 'living on own means' listed as living in Church Street – so we can be reasonably certain that the above (Messrs Russell, Harris, Pullen, Budd and Miles) were the occupiers of Clamps Cottages.

¹ SHC 3468/2/1

² West Surrey Times, Friday 13th December 1901, page 7

³ TNA RG13/597/9/10

⁴ TNA RG13/597/9/9

CLAMP'S COTTAGES

The fire in December 1901 evidently highlighted the state of the old buildings as just a few weeks later the West Surrey Times was again reporting on the buildings.

Under the heading 'A Batch of Insanitary Dwellings', it was reported that the 'Medical Officer reported to the Sanitary Committee that he had visited, with the inspector, five cottages In Woking Village, owned by Mrs Clamp. They were very old and dilapidated, and there was no drainage whatever. He suggested that the owner be called upon to provide proper drainage and connect with the sewer. The committee recommended that the necessary notice be given.'⁵

Returning to the names on the 1901 census, I was able to trace some of the occupiers of Clamps Cottages through the electoral registers.

Albert Miles appear in the electoral registers in 1900⁶ and 1902⁷ confirming that he was qualified as a voter as one of the occupiers of Clamps Cottages, but after that he is no longer listed in the local registers.

Samuel Budd is unfortunately not recorded in the electoral registers until 1903⁸ when he is simply listed as living at Westfield, with the nature of his qualification to vote being 'dwelling house (successive)' in 'Woking Village and Highland Cottage, Westfield'. The 'Woking Village' property could be one of Clamp's Cottages, but because other entries specifically record that name, I am inclined to believe that his dwelling house was by then elsewhere.

The 1900⁹ and 1902¹⁰ electoral registers confirm that James Pullen was qualified as a voter as one of the occupiers of Clamps Cottages, but after that he is no longer listed in the local registers until he shows up again (if it is the same man) at Butts Cottages in 1909¹¹.

Martha Harris was not recorded in the electoral register of 1902, but in 1903¹² she is recorded as living in 'The Street', and qualifying as a voter in County and Parochial elections only for 'dwelling house (successive)' at 'Clamp's cottages, and The Street, village'. The 1904¹³ register notes her as qualifying for just one dwelling house in The Street, Village (no mention of 'Clamp's Cottages' being made), with her place of abode and qualifying property in 1905¹⁴ being listed as 'Church Street'.

In 1900¹⁵ Sarah Russell's husband, James, appeared in the electoral register at Clamp's Cottage. There was also a Henry Smith recorded at Clamp's Cottages, but which of the cottages he was in (and who replaced him) I do not know.

From the above I concluded that the properties could have been uninhabited by 1905, which may account for why Robert Clamp sold the property in 1906 to Walter Charles Slocock at a £100 loss¹⁶ - his interest in designing grand new 'villas' for the site having waned (if it had ever waxed)!

⁵ West Surrey Times, 10th January 1902, page 2

⁶ SHC CC802/11/4

⁷ SHC CC802/13/4

⁸ SHC CC802/14/4

⁹ SHC CC802/11/4

¹⁰ SHC CC802/13/4

¹¹ SHC CC802/20/4

¹² SHC CC802/14/4

¹³ SHC CC802/15/4

¹⁴ SHC CC802/16/4

¹⁵ SHC CC802/11/4

¹⁶ SHC 3468/2/2