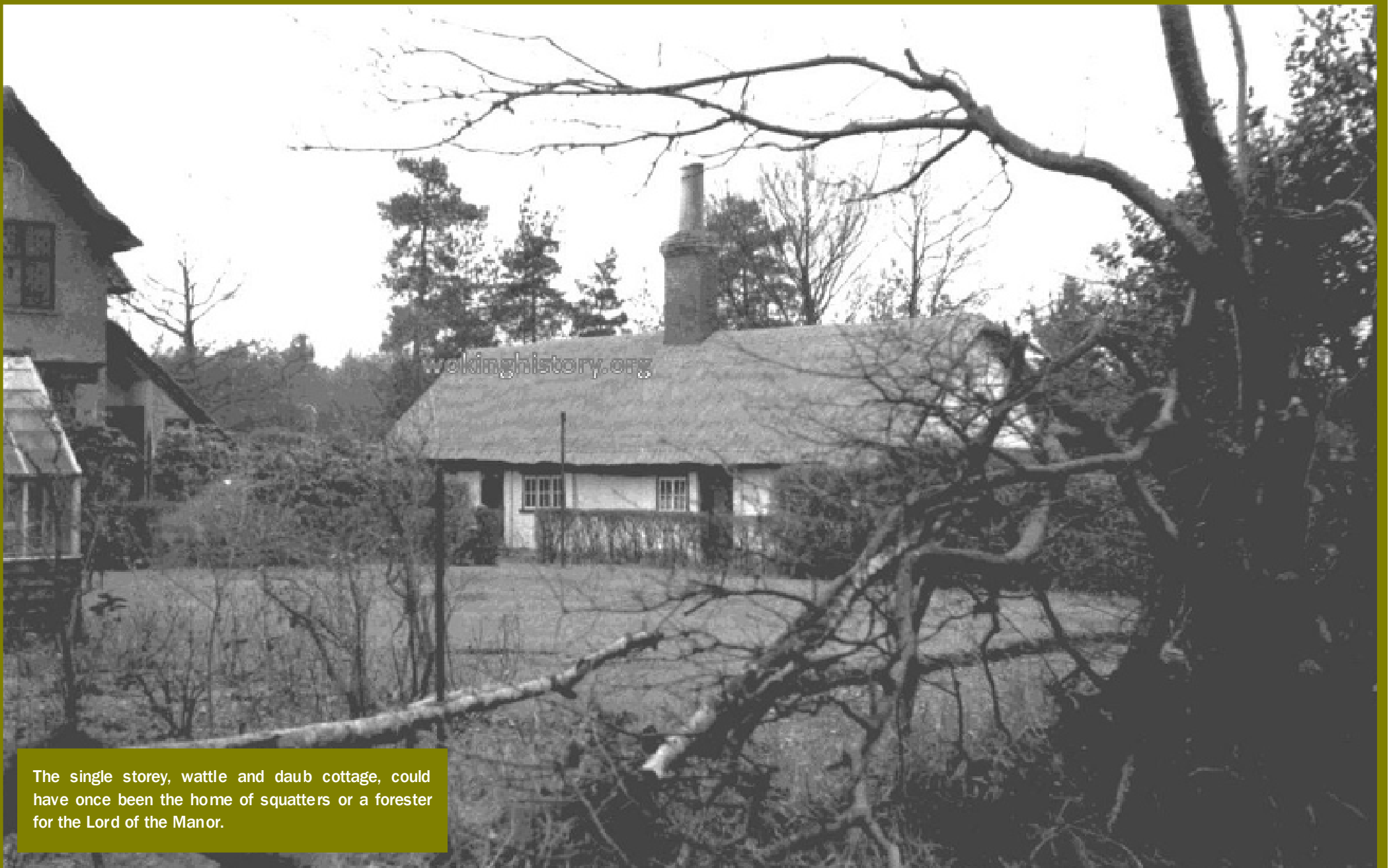


THE HOUSE NO LONGER IN THE WOOD

Iain Wakeford 2019



The single storey, wattle and daub cottage, could have once been the home of squatters or a forester for the Lord of the Manor.

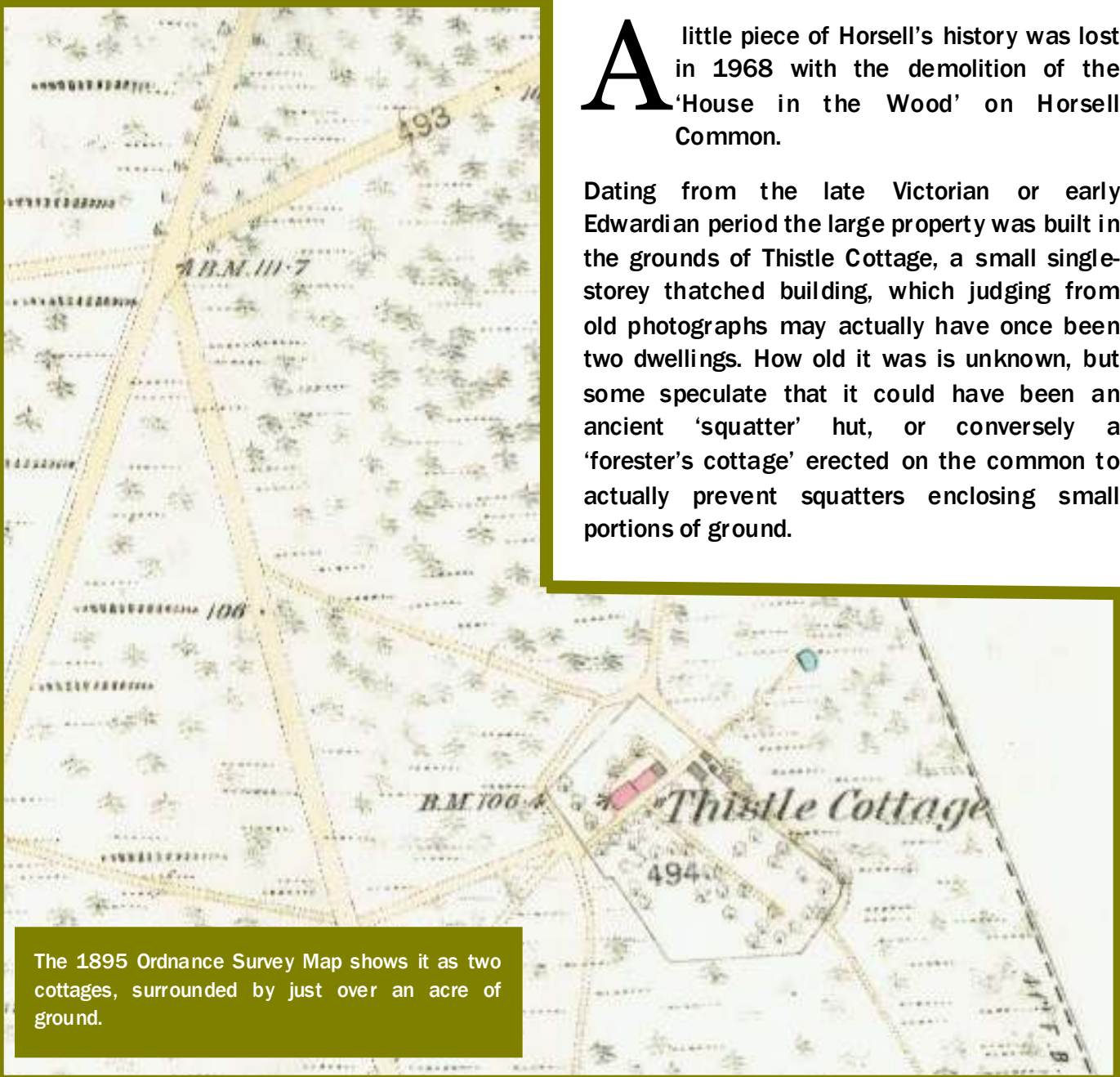
A little piece of Horsell's history was lost in 1968 with the demolition of the 'House in the Wood' on Horsell Common.

Dating from the late Victorian or early Edwardian period the large property was built in the grounds of Thistle Cottage, a small single-storey thatched building, which judging from old photographs may actually have once been two dwellings. How old it was is unknown, but some speculate that it could have been an ancient 'squatter' hut, or conversely a 'forester's cottage' erected on the common to actually prevent squatters enclosing small portions of ground.

Whatever its early history we know that in the 1830's it was the home of an agricultural labourer by the name of Henry Martin, passing to his son, also called Henry, in 1862 when Henry senior died. Henry junior was described as a 'thatcher and pork butcher' in the 1871 census – the pigs presumably allowed to roam the common looking for food just as they would undoubtedly have done in this area for centuries.

By 1879 Thistle Cottage appears to have passed to Charles John Worthington of Cowley House in Chertsey, as in September that year there was an agreement between him and Sarah Ann Creuze of Penge for the sale of the cottage and an acre of land for £300 - 'formerly in the occupation of Henry Martin and now of Henry Martin the younger'.

Subsequent to that the site was evidently sold to a man called John Brown who on the 2nd February 1910 sold it to a Mrs Beatrice Margaret Anna Bellin for £650 – the wife of Arthur Bellin, an artist, who in the 1911 census is shown as living at 'The House in Wood' at Horsell, aged 58, of 'independent means', along with Beatrice, aged 51, and a nineteen year old house parlour maid called Ella Drillot, who had been born on the Isle of Sark in the Channel Isles



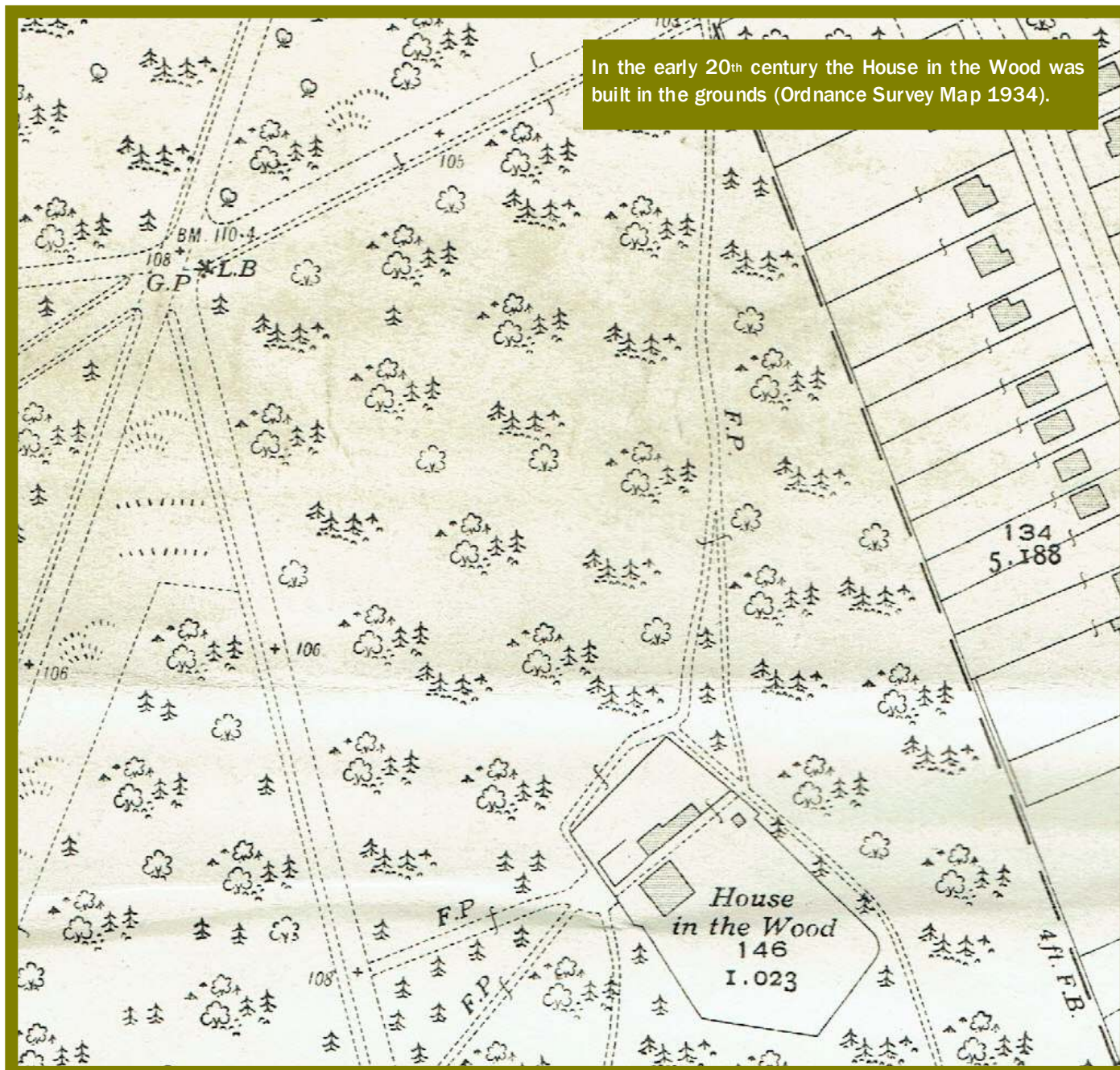
The 1895 Ordnance Survey Map shows it as two cottages, surrounded by just over an acre of ground.

Interestingly a painting titled 'The Lobsterers Landing Place, Sark' was painted by Arthur Bellin in 1887 – Ella, instead of the fisherman, perhaps catching his eye on a later visit to the island!

Whether John Brown or the Bellin's built the house is not known, but the green-glazed pantiles on the roof are said to have been collected by the Bellin's - with delft tiles for the fireplace surrounds, heavy wrought-iron door fittings and other ornate craftwork, the product of numerous travels by the couple in Europe.

Beatrice died in 1919, followed by Arthur in 1925, after which the property passed to their nephew Leslie Bellin-Carte. After that a housekeeper (a Miss Leach) apparently lived in Thistle Cottage, running the main property as a guest house, before it was rented and then finally sold in 1957 for £5,350 to a Mr Edward Douglas Money of Buckstone Farm at Chobham.

By the late 1960's both properties were in a ruinous condition, with vandals breaking in and setting light to the buildings. Quite why they were both abandoned by Mr Money is a mystery, with various stories speculating about the property originally being bought for a son who died abroad (some say in an accident). Whatever the reasons, by the autumn of 1967 there was serious concern that someone would eventually be injured or worse if the House in the Wood was not demolished, and eventually Woking and Surrey County Council's agreed to



purchase the property from Mr Money for £5,350 (exactly what he had originally paid), so

that the buildings could be knocked down and the land returned to the common once more.

