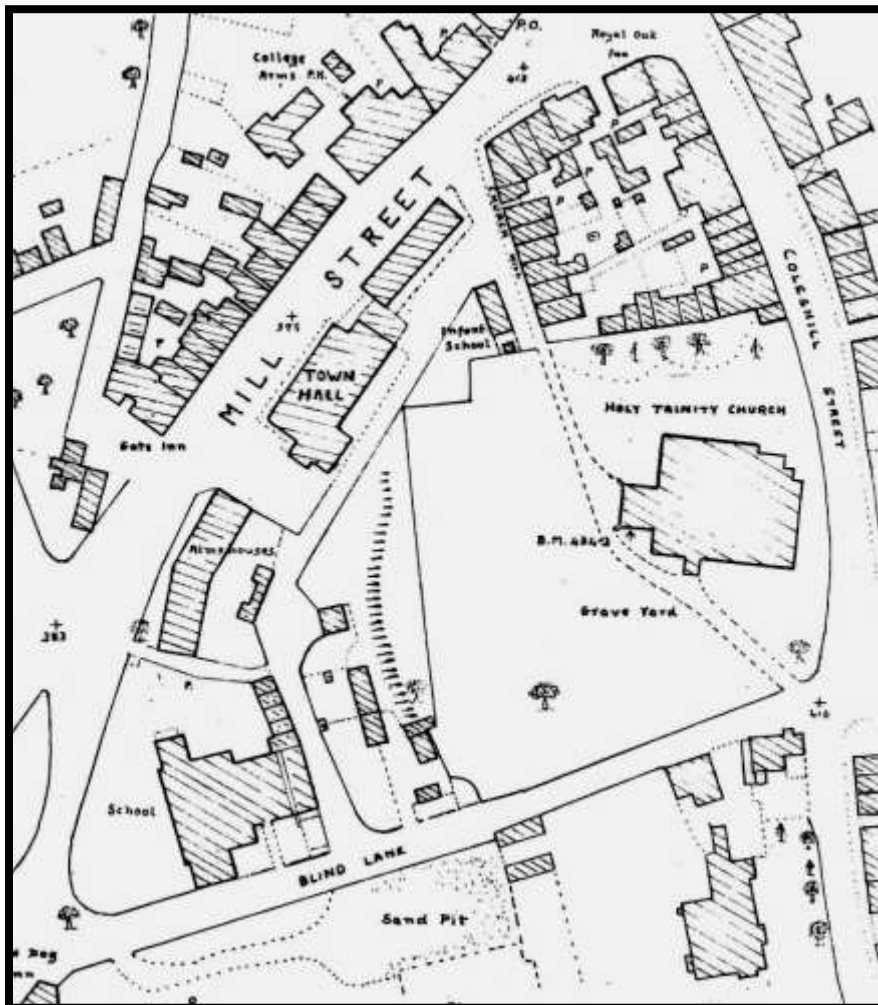


# Church Hill, Coleshill Street and Mill Street

## Part 5

### Church Hill



1886 Survey Map

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## **CHURCH HILL**

Church Hill leads up, via a steep cobbled approach, from Mill Street to the front of Holy Trinity Church. In its original format it also took a right turn and followed on a parallel path with Mill Street, behind the old School House and the Workhouse. It eventually joined up with Blind Lane (now Trinity Hill). This can be seen more clearly by examining the Ordnance Survey Map on the following page.

If you stand on the site of the Vesey Memorial Garden today and look in the direction of High Street, 800 years ago you would have been looking at the Earl of Warwick's newly-laid-out town, with its large triangular market place in front of you.

When researching the 'Old Sun' in Coleshill Street, it was found that some properties there dated back to the time of Charles I. The history of Church Hill does not go back quite that far but, it can certainly claim to be Georgian in origin. John Snape's map of 1765 clearly shows the triangle of land formed by Coleshill Street, Mill Street and Church Hill, so properties in Church Hill would have been in existence well before then and deeds held in Sutton Coldfield Library indicate that these houses were in existence in 1706. Their architecture is Georgian in style and many of the construction details of Church Hill, such as windows, brickwork in Flemish bond, raised courses of brickwork forming friezes and the formation of eaves and gables, can also now be seen on existing buildings in the High Street.



**Fig. 1 An example of brickwork built in Flemish bond.**

In places, evidence of massive stone foundations could be seen below the brickwork of the houses, indicating that they had been built on the site of earlier structures. Such stone foundations are a feature of other buildings in Sutton, for example the 'Three Tuns' public house. They were also found on the other side of Mill Street, prior to the Reddicroft office development in the 1990's.

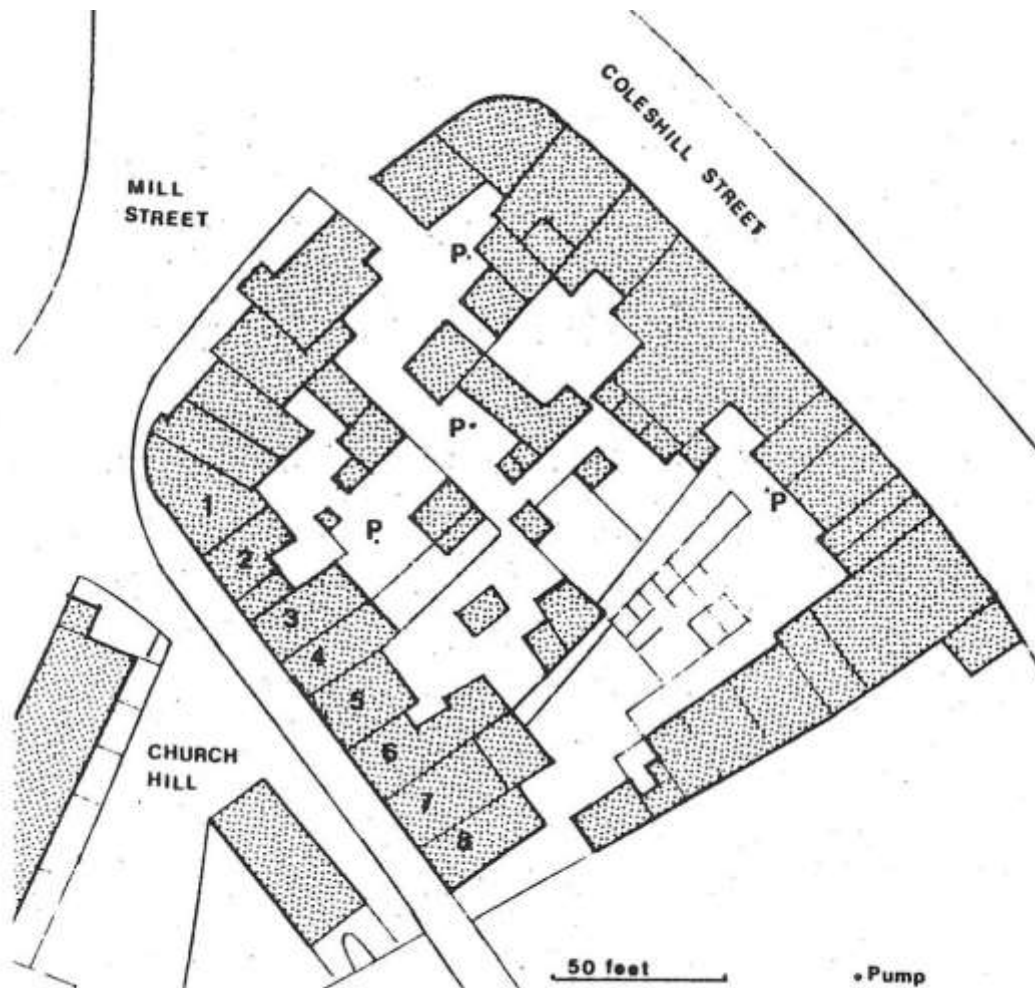
The houses were on approximately the same level as today's Vesey Memorial Garden, with a pavement at the height of the present Church Hill. The original cobbled street was at a much lower level, taking into account the steep slope of the hill and possibly made when the gradient of Mill Street was altered in 1824, the soil being taken from Church Hill to be used as infill for Mill Street.

Initially, there were only four houses in the street, handsome enough to be the subject of a painted fire-screen of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, which can still be viewed today at Maxstoke Castle. This was painted by James Bourne, whose headstone is in Holy Trinity churchyard. Although all the dwellings were three-storey, they were of differing construction, which suggests that the properties were built by separate contractors at various times. However, by examining the 1851 Census Return, it can

### **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

be seen that two of the properties had, by then, been converted into pairs and by 1881 all four houses had been similarly divided, making eight in total.

The Ordnance Survey Map of 1889, shown below, indicates that there were four water pumps situated behind the frontages of Church Street, Coleshill Street and Mill Street.



**Fig. 2 Ordnance Survey Map of 1889, showing the eight properties in Church Hill.**

Dwellings were not supplied with piped water, as is the case now. In the earlier part of the 1800's each house therefore had to have access to water supplied by alternative means. One such source was spring water. Establishing its presence was an important preliminary of construction work and sinking a well was usually the first building operation undertaken before foundations were laid. The circular shafts, with a minimum diameter of three feet, were lined with brickwork. Most were no deeper than thirty feet, the maximum depth at which a common iron suction pump could function efficiently. Spring water was, in theory at least, relatively pure and safe to drink, but it was usually hard water and not really suited for laundry purposes.

### CHURCH HILL (Continued)



Fig. 3 Family members around a water pump 1857.

Along with the absence of running water in the properties, amenities generally would have been fairly basic at that time. Chamber pots would probably have been used overnight to avoid a long, cold trip in the dark to the outside privy.

There was, however, some good news on the plus side. In '*A History of Sutton Coldfield by an Impartial Hand*', written in 1762, the good quality of the well water in Sutton was referred to and it was stated that wells only a few feet deep were needed to be sunk to reach the spring water.

However, this was tempered by the fact that later on the water table seemed to have been affected by the cuttings and tunnels built for the railways across the ridge to the north of the town in 1879 and 1884. Luckily, only a few years later in 1892, the South Staffordshire Waterworks Company completed the construction of its Shenstone Pumping Station, which provided Sutton Coldfield with its first tapped water supply.

## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

An employee of this Company is pictured below, in Church Hill. He has with him a portable water carrier, which he transports about by way of a wooden handcart.



**Fig. 4 Church Hill 1895, picturing a water carrier from the South Staffordshire Waterworks Co.**

Turning back now to events in Church Hill, Zachariah Twamley in his 'History of Sutton Coldfield' stated:-

*"The next place was the Old Poor House, purchased by the Corporation out of their reserves at a sum of £100. The expenses of altering it into a School House and premises for a schoolmaster to live in and take boarders into his house, with the cost of erection of the School on Church Hill, in the year 1835, [sic] purchase and altogether came to a sum of about £2,000, an excessive waste of Trust property, to gratify the whim, or unbounded assumption, of the late Mr Charles Barker and a few other supercilious folk."*

It would seem from Mr Twamley's tone that he did not approve of these transactions!

The Sutton Coldfield Trades Directory for 1900 mentions the school in Church Hill, which was then run by a Miss Alice Middleton and it indicated she was in charge of 81 pupils. It was situated opposite Nos. 6, 7 & 8, as can be seen from the 1889 Ordnance Survey Map. This was probably the school that was demolished in 1937/38 to make way for Vesey Memorial Gardens.

The front elevations to the houses in Church Street underwent many changes over the years. Some sash windows were changed to casement windows, a bay window was added here and there, some windows were enlarged, probably to gain extra light for use as a workroom. Doors were changed and extras added, as the properties were divided and even the cement rendering to a pair of houses was removed early in the 1900's.

On the wall close to No. 8 Church Hill was an illuminated sign in the shape of a lantern advertising the 'Old Sun' Inn. This was accessible along a passage way at the rear of the development.



## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

This must have been extremely useful for patrons of the public house, when they staggered home at closing time.

Mr Albert V Turfrey reminiscing in the Sutton News commented:-

*“The corner block, which was demolished to make way for Vesey Gardens, was a warren of alleys and passageways, where you could enter in Church Hill and emerge in Coleshill Street.”*

In the Sutton Coldfield Observer dated 26<sup>th</sup> February 1999, a reader stated:-

*“The corner bounded by Coleshill Street, Mill Street and Church Hill served as a small cottage industry and contained as many as 34 houses, in addition to two pubs.”*

Sarah Holbeche was also aware of Church Hill as, in her diary, an entry dated 31<sup>st</sup> December 1847 stated that:-

*“Our good old Nurse/Nanny died. She nursed me from the first and did her duty for five and twenty years of faithful service. I closed my eyes as the bells rang in the New Year. In lodgings on the Church Hill, illness and trouble in our own house made it desirable that she should be removed and she expressed her wish for the arrangement.”*



**Fig. 5 Church Hill circa early1900's.**

## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

The people living in Church Hill can begin to be identified, following the completion of the ***Census Return for 1841***, although no actual postal numbers were provided.

<b><u>Full Name</u></b>	<b><u>Age</u></b>	<b><u>Occupation</u></b>
<b><u>Beck</u></b> , John	55	Agricultural Labourer
Beck, Ann	55	
Beck, Jane	15	Female Servant
Beck, Maria	13	
<b><u>Himley</u></b> , William	30	Saddle Barr Maker
Himley, Jane	25	
<b><u>Pratt</u></b> , John	55	Bricklayer
Pratt, Mary	57	
Pratt, John	20	Bricklayer
<b><u>Yates</u></b> , Thomas	56	Shoe Maker
Yates, Hannah	56	
Yates, John	20	Shoe Makers Apprentice
Yates, Elizabeth	18	Bonnet Maker
Yates, Mary	15	
Yates, Harriet	12	
Yates, Catherine	91	Independent Means
<b><u>Higgs</u></b> , William	18	Shoe Makers Apprentice
<b><u>Turner</u></b> , Ann	20	Female Servant
<b><u>Willetts</u></b> , Ann	3	
<b><u>Grove</u></b> , Maria	55	
<b><u>Wilkins</u></b> , John	40	Agricultural Labourer
<b><u>Stewart</u></b> , William	25	Blacksmith
Stewart, Hester	22	
Stewart, Charles	8 months	
<b><u>Reeve</u></b> , Thomas	70	Spade Tree Turner
Reeve, Rebecca	40	
Reeve, Fanny	25	
<b><u>Whitehouse</u></b> , Mary	5	
<b><u>Harrison</u></b> , Elizabeth	60	Independent Means
<b><u>Roper</u></b> , Elizabeth	15	
<b><u>Wilkins</u></b> , Daniel	55	Cordwainer
Wilkins, Susannah	55	
Wilkins, Joseph	25	Carpenter
Wilkins, Mary	25	
<b><u>Mackintosh</u></b> , John	30	Excise Officer
Mackintosh, Mary	30	
Mackintosh, John	4	
Mackintosh, Elizabeth	2	
Mackintosh, Mary	9 months	
<b><u>Hearnshaw</u></b> , Sarah	40	Independent Means
<b><u>Thursfield</u></b> , James	20	Glazier
<b><u>Patrick</u></b> , Joseph	17	Blacksmiths Apprentice
Patrick, James	15	Agricultural Labourer
<b><u>Hope</u></b> , Thomas	15	Millers Apprentice

## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

<b><u>Full Name</u></b>	<b><u>Age</u></b>	<b><u>Occupation</u></b>
<b><u>Marlow</u></b> , William	75	Miller
Marlow, William	20	Cabinet Maker's Apprentice
<b><u>Waddams</u></b> , Daniel	30	Fellmonger
Williams, Elizabeth	27	
<b><u>Hollis</u></b> , William	40	Plumber
Hollis, Elizabeth	45	
<b><u>Robinson</u></b> , Elizabeth	60	
<b><u>Savill</u></b> , Harriet	9	
<b><u>Gainer</u></b> , John	64	Agricultural Labourer
Gainer, Elizabeth	49	
<b><u>Cliff</u></b> , Elizabeth	39	
<b><u>Kendall</u></b> , Sarah	18	
Kendall, Ann	17	
<b><u>Astbury</u></b> , Elizabeth	80	
<b><u>Brooke</u></b> , Charles	15	Agricultural Labourer
<b><u>Smith</u></b> , John	49	Postman
Smith, Mary	40	
Smith, Mary	10	
Smith, John	10	
Smith, Charles	9	
<b><u>Green</u></b> , Joseph	25	Male Servant
<b><u>Genders</u></b> , Thomas	32	Butcher
Genders, Mary	30	
Genders, Charles	3	
<b><u>Swinburn</u></b> , William	30	Male Servant
Swinburn, Louisa	36	
Swinburn, Samuel	4 months	

There were no fewer than 71 inhabitants in Church Hill at the time, living in relatively few dwellings, so overcrowding must have been severe. The majority appeared to be reputable working class families, the men having a trade or skill set such as bricklayer, carpenter, plumber, blacksmith, cordwainer and butcher. Mixed in with them were several agricultural labourers, which was to be expected, due to the rural nature of the town at the time.

One small exception to the rule was John Mackintosh, aged 30, who was an Excise Officer. He lived there with his wife Mary and their three young children.

Moving on now to the **1851 Census Return** some interesting points emerge, namely:-

- (a) John Beck and his wife Ann are still in residence. Their elder daughter, Jane, is now married and is earning a living as a dressmaker, in order to help provide for her two young children aged 4 and 7. She is probably using a room in the house and working long hours. There is no mention of her husband, but



## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

it could be he was away at the time the census was taken. The Becks have also taken in two lodgers, in order to assist with the family budget.

(b) John Pratt, now aged 65, appears to have been pretty successful. On the 1841 census he was described as being just a bricklayer but now, 10 years later, he was described as a builder employing six men. In modern times he would be looking forward to retirement. However, in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there were no such luxuries on offer and no pension plan to fall back on.

(c) The Yates family is also still residing in Church Hill. Their four children have all moved away and Thomas' old mother has died. Long term lodger, William Heggs/Higgs, is still living with them. He is now, however, a fully qualified Journeyman Shoemaker, whereas, before, he was only 18 and an apprentice just learning his trade.

(d) Then there is Maria Thursfield, already the head of her family at just 30 years of age, having recently been widowed. She has three young children to support, the youngest being only 7 months old. She has therefore been forced to seek lodgers in order to live and has been successful in this respect having attracted Maria Groves another widow, aged 64, presently working as a charwoman, two widowers one aged 55 with a steady trade as a shoemaker, the other a retired carpenter. The remaining tenant being Henry Morgan aged 36, a shoe-binder, who is still unmarried.

Nearly all the people living in Church Hill at this time were born locally, one of the few exceptions being Lorenzo Secker who resided at No. 1, which was situated at the corner with Mill Street. He hailed from Widford in Gloucestershire. He was also different from the others in that he was, what would be called today, a 'white-collar' worker. He was an articled clerk in the respected firm of Holbeche and Addenbrooke. He worked for Mr Henry Addenbrooke, who was an attorney, in addition to holding the position of Deputy Steward of the Warden and Society. In 1851, the same year the census return was taken, Henry Addenbrooke was also appointed Deputy Coroner.

This was an extremely good position for Lorenzo Secker to have and to add to this was the fact he could walk to work in a matter of minutes, as the solicitors' offices were just around the corner in Coleshill Street. The reason for him living there may have been due, in no small measure, to the fact the property was owned by a Mr Hollis in partnership with no other than his employer Henry Addenbrooke.

Although aged 37 Lorenzo was still single and could afford to employ a house-keeper to attend to his needs. She was Harriet Parkes, a 36 year old servant from Staffordshire.

In White's 1873 Directory of Birmingham, under the Sutton Coldfield Parish section, he was listed and his occupation described as a 'Solicitor's Managing Clerk'. He had therefore received promotions during the interim period and was now the most senior person in the firm behind the partners themselves.

## CHURCH HILL (Continued)

Because of the skills gained as a result of his profession, his services would have been in demand elsewhere and one of the jobs would have been as an auditor. The nearby Sutton Coldfield Working Men's Club and Institute was one such beneficiary. A Cash Account dated 11<sup>th</sup> March 1872 has his name at the bottom of their balance sheet.

SUTTON COLDFIELD WORKING MEN'S CLUB AND INSTITUTE.			
CASH ACCOUNT, 11TH MARCH, 1872.			
Dr.	RECEIPTS.		Cr.
To Donations	- - - -	£53 11 6	
„ Subscriptions	- - - -	22 12 2	
„ Admissions	- - - -	3 8 2	
„ Entertainments	- - - -	16 9 5	
„ Sale of Waste Paper	- - - -	0 5 7	
		<hr/>	
		£96 6 10	
	J. E. BIBBY,		
	Treasurer.		
<p>I hereby certify, that I have examined the Accounts of Receipts and Payments of the Institute from the formation thereof, and compared the Vouchers and find same to be correct.</p>			
<p>LORENZO SECKER,</p>			
<p>Auditor.</p>			
<p>11th March, 1872.</p>			

Fig. 6 Cash Account sheet dated 11<sup>th</sup> March 1872

In accordance with his more elevated status, Lorenzo had moved from Church Hill to Station Street. In Roger Lea's 'History Spot' in the Sutton Coldfield Observer dated 13<sup>th</sup> January 2012, he stated:-

*“Park Road ran across meadow land unsuitable for building, but the field lying between Park Road and the Reddicroft was on rising ground. This five acre field belonged to Mr F B Hackett of Moor Hall, but it was not until the 1850's that it was divided up into 23 plots suitable for building. This was served by a new road called Hackett Street, leading from Park Road near its junction with Mill Street. The first house to be built in Hackett Street was a big house with a rateable value of £30.0s 0d, for Lorenzo Secker, a solicitor's clerk.”*

Hackett Street was later re-named Station Street. He was still living there in 1876, as the Trade Directory for that year again mentions his name, together with the fact that the property in Station Street was named the 'Hawthorns'.

At some stage in his life he met and married his wife Ann, because she was mentioned in his Will after his death on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 1881, when he was aged 67.

## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

Other beneficiaries were his son Richard Secker, also a solicitor's clerk, and nephew Frank Connop of Blackheath, Rowley Regis, an iron merchant. He left an amount of £3,025 9s 6d, equivalent to approximately £370,000 today.

Ten years later, on the *1861 Census Return*, the following information can be gleaned:-

(a) Maria Thursfield can still be found living in Church Hill. However, instead of being described as a lodging house proprietor, her occupation is noted as a laundress. This would certainly not be viewed as an improvement in her lifestyle, the only advantage being she could work from home. She would have been occupied with washing and ironing from early morning to late at night. Her two sons James and Richard, however, were now teenagers and had been fortunate enough to obtain employment. They were in the same industry and were probably both employed by the same person in one of the mills, James being a fork handler and Richard a filer of spades. As wage earners, they would both have been able to make a valuable contribution to the family budget.

Maria's daughter, also named Maria, was now aged 10 and at school. There is then an anomaly, as Maria appears to have another daughter Emma, who is 8 years of age and also at school. One can only guess at who the father could have been!

Maria continues to take in lodgers and, at this juncture, there are no fewer than five of them adding their rent to the family purse. Three are described as excavators and these would have been employed on the construction of the railway line from Birmingham to Sutton Coldfield, which was due to open the following year in 1862. Two of the excavators were from the same family who came from Ashton in Lancashire. They were father and son, Thomas Doble who was aged only 34 but, somewhat tragically, already a widower, and his young son, a mere 12 years old, but still expected to work.

(b) Living next door was William Roberts and his wife Mary. William was a skilled bricklayer, who would not have been short of work. Like Maria Thursfield, they too had lodgers who were yet more excavators working on the railway extension. As was the norm, they came from all parts of the country and when they had finished the contract would have moved on to the next wherever it may have been. The three aforementioned were from Abbots Langley, Hertfordshire, Bristol, Gloucestershire and Ullesthorpe, Leicestershire respectively.

(c) Finally, there was another Solicitor's Clerk living in Church Hill, as Lorenzo Secker had been in 1851. He was Thomas Halbeard, aged 37, from Birmingham. His wife Mary came from Stretton, a small village near to Burton-on-Trent, in Staffordshire and they had 3 young children of ten and under. Like Lorenzo Secker, they too could afford a servant, she was

## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

Ann Jones a young 16 year old local girl from Sutton Coldfield. Who knows, it may have been that he too was employed by Holbeche and Attenbrooke.

In the next *Census Return for 1871*, I have highlighted the following points:-

(a) John Hollingshead is mentioned as a fancy steel toy maker, aged 53 years of age. He and his wife Rachel had only recently moved from Birmingham and they had two teenage daughters and a son at school. They lived at No. 1 Church Hill, a three-storey dwelling, which was the most superior house at the time, having a rateable value of £10 8s 0d.

(b) The Spencer family resided at No. 2. Richard Spencer was only 26 years old, the second husband of Jane, aged 42. Jane had two sons from her previous marriage to William Betts, the licensee of the 'Old Sun' Inn just around the corner in Coleshill Street, where he had been 'mine host' for over 10 years. William Betts died in April 1869, less than two years before the census was taken.

Sarah Holbeche mentioned his death in her diary with the comment:-

*"William Betts died at the 'Old Sun' Inn – a life wasted, abused and mis-used."*

With two young children at the time of his death, aged ten and seven respectively and only just turned forty himself, one can perhaps understand these sentiments. Without knowing the full facts, could it have been the case that, being the landlord of a popular public house, offered him too easy an access to alcohol, from which he eventually succumbed. Examination of the Death Certificate may well have given the cause of his death as 'cirrhosis of the liver'.

His wife Jane must have been devastated, having been made a widow with no job prospects, two children to feed and middle-age looming. To have found a young husband so quickly would have been a great relief. Richard Spencer was an agricultural labourer and, after working long hours in the fields, it would have been natural for him to call into the 'Old Sun' on his way home to 'lay the dust' and quench his thirst. As a regular customer therefore it was highly likely that he knew both William Betts and his wife very well.

Sometimes it can be enjoyable, when undertaking research, to move away from the cold, hard facts just once in a while and let the mind wander!

To supplement their income in their slightly more modest house, compared to the Hollingsheads (rateable value £7 4s 0d), the Spencers had taken in three lodgers, two of them being single men. The other was William Pimlott a married man aged 50, his occupation being a brewer and ostler.

## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**



**Fig. 7 Church Hill showing Nos. 1 & 2 where the families of John Hollingshead and Richard Spencer lived in the 1870's and earlier where Lorenzo Secker had resided. Circa 1930's.**

(c) Between the first pair of houses and Nos. 3 and 4 was an arched entry giving access to the rear, which can just be seen in the previous photograph. These properties had front gables and were also three-storey. No. 4 had a window enlargement on the second floor, the original lintel can still be seen, with an infill panel immediately beneath, possibly done to give more light for use as a workroom. No. 3, conversely, had a larger ground floor window and above the front door was a sign with the name '*Grove Cottage*' printed on it.

At the time of this census, the property was a lodging house run by William and Ann Owen. They were assisted by Ann's mother Sarah Matthews, a widow aged 58, together with her unmarried sister Charlotte. Ann's two brothers, a 16 year old basket maker and a schoolboy, also lived there.

Although running a lodging house Ann, her husband William and her mother, still had other jobs, all of which would have involved lots of hard work for very little pay. Ann and her mother were charwomen and William was an agricultural labourer. In total, with a young grandson and four lodgers, there were eleven people living in the premises and one can only imagine the overcrowding that had to be overcome, together with the unsanitary conditions, there being no running water or inside toilets.

The Breens, originally from Ireland, lived at No. 4, together with two lodgers. James Breen was an agricultural labourer, with the two lodgers having the same occupation. Nos. 3 and 4 both had a similar rateable value of £4 16s 8d.

## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

(d) Nos. 5 and 6 both had stone steps leading up to their front door. No. 5 had five steps and quite attractive wrought iron railings, whereas No. 3 only had three steps. The dwellings had small dormer windows in the roof and, at one time, the front elevation had been rendered. No. 5 was rated at £4 16 0d, whilst No. 6, which was a much larger property extending further back, had a rateable value of £6 8s 0d.

These properties were occupied by the Cannings and the Newells, young families with three children each. William Canning was a hotel post boy and John Newell was a plasterer. Neither were natives of Sutton Coldfield, William Canning hailed from Offenham in Worcestershire and John Newell was born in Stapleton, Shropshire.

(e) The last pair of houses in Church Hill, Nos. 7 and 8, was at the top of the street nearest to the parish church. No. 7 had a dormer window in the roof, a bay window and four stone steps leading up to the front door. It is this dwelling that clearly showed several courses of exposed stonework, mentioned earlier, which suggested they had been built on the site of an earlier structure.

Thomas Sperry, a 50 year old retired butcher from Heather in Leicestershire, lived at No. 7 with his wife Mary and four young daughters. This family must have been fairly affluent as they employed a 16 year old servant girl to assist with the household chores and to help with the children. The rateable value of this house was £10 0s 0d.

Finally, adjoining Holy Trinity was No. 8 where the Rabnett family lived. George Rabnett was born in London, his wife being from Birmingham. Their first child was born in Lambeth but, shortly afterwards, the couple moved to Birmingham. During their stay there they had two further sons. They finally settled in Sutton Coldfield, where they had Francis, who was aged just 12 months at the time the census was taken.

George Rabnett was a clerk in the Probate Registry. Also living with them was his younger brother James, who had a similar occupation, together with his other brother Henry, aged 16, who was a Solicitor's Clerk. The family was completed by his wife's widowed sister Ann Walsh. The rateable value of the property was £9 15s 0d.

Ten years later the next *Census Return in 1881* indicated that 66 individuals were living in Church Hill, just one or two more than previously. Only two of the occupants remained from before, they were George and Isabella Wilkins. George was a butcher and also living with them were their two children, Elizabeth aged 21 and George Wilkins aged 8, a schoolboy. In addition, there was Isabella's retired and widowed father aged 81, together with a lodger named Joseph Brooks.

Occupations, over the past 30 year period, had changed, particularly for men. Spademakers, wheelwrights and shoemakers had gone, replaced by the likes of platelayers and railway porters (the railway from Sutton Coldfield to Lichfield was



## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

under construction). The rural nature of the town had also changed, only three people describing themselves as agricultural labourers, two of those being in the same family. None of the households employed any servants, indicating the level of wages earned by the inhabitants of the street was uniformly low.



**Fig. 8 Church Hill looking in the direction of Mill Street, circa 1930's.**

Quite a large percentage of the people were still born locally, but an increasing number were now arriving from other areas confirming that the workforce was becoming more mobile, as can be seen from the following list:-

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Occupation</u></b>	<b><u>Where Born</u></b>
Anne Smallwood	Coffee House Proprietor	Stroud, Gloucestershire
James Curran	Commercial Traveller	Cornwall
George Preston	Teacher	Lancaster, Lancashire
Frances Preston	Teacher	Sowerby Bridge, Yorkshire
Matthew Preston	Wholesale Assistant	Warton, Lancashire
William Bromwich	Groom	Newbold, Warwickshire
Sarah Matthews	Charwoman	Nether Whitacre, Warwickshire
William Chapman	Agricultural Labourer	Kingsbury, Warwickshire
Joseph Horton	Platelayer	Sibson, Leicestershire
Harriett Horton	-	Coleshill, Warwickshire
John Goldingay	Platelayer	Marston Green, Warwickshire
Emily Roberts	Dressmaker	London
Polly Sinnett	Nurse Child	Atherstone, Warwickshire
John Whitehouse	Groom	Hednesford, Staffordshire
Allan White	Railway Porter	Stourbridge, Worcestershire
Thomas Brown	Servant	Canwell, Staffordshire
Thomas Welsh	Hawker	Ireland
William Walton	Painter	Kenilworth, Warwickshire
Emma Walton	-	Oxford, Oxfordshire
Mary Walton	-	Stone, Staffordshire
William Walton	-	Wednesbury, Staffordshire
Margaret Burwell	-	Birmingham
Frederick Spencer	-	Balsall, Warwickshire
Joseph Brookes	Queen's Messenger	Hereford, Herefordshire

Although more mobile, it seemed to be a gradual thing as the majority were still from the Midlands area.

## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

It is interesting to note that the properties in Church Hill were in the hands of only two owners, J T Hamblett owned Nos. 1 and 2, the remainder being held by J W Brown. They had also acquired additional sites in Mill Street and consolidation of the ownership of rented accommodation into fewer hands was well under way.

The rateable value of the houses was low by Sutton standards, varying from £4 15s 0d up to £11 5s 0d.

Turning now to the **1891 Census Return**, it can be seen by studying the names that, over the preceding ten years, there had been a little more stability in the street, with no fewer than five families still associated with the area.

(a) John Goldingay continued to live at No. 1 with his wife Emma and their adopted daughter May Sinnott. In the previous census she had been described as a nurse child or, in today's parlance, a foster child. They were obviously a very caring family, with a social conscience, because they had now taken on the responsibility of another nurse child named Ellen Francis, aged 8 years of age. John's occupation, previously described as a platelayer, had changed to an excavator, although still working for the railway.

(b) The Whorwood family also remained in Church Hill. However, before it was Thomas Whorwood, his wife Ellen and their three young children. Now it was Thomas Whorwood and his wife Sarah, aged 64 and 72 respectively, whom, it is thought, were his parents.

Jim Whorwood, who is presently the President of the Sutton Coldfield Local History Research Group stated, in the *History of the Whorwood family* in 'Proceedings' Volume 9, that:-

*"In the Victorian period there were Whorwoods living in Church Hill in the area now called Vesey Memorial Gardens. There were three generations of cordwainers (pronounced cordners) in the shoe-making trade."*

Jim also went to say that:-

*"My grandfather had a shoe-makers shop on Mill Street where he made 'medical' shoes. He died in 1902 aged 49. His eldest son George also became a shoe-maker, but the shop was abandoned and the business carried on in a small shop in the centre of town, now long since demolished."*

(c) Thomas Matthews, who previously was living with his widowed mother aged 69, was still there but now lodging with Francis Heath and his wife Charlotte. His occupation as a basket maker remained unaltered and he was still unmarried.

(d) Mary Ann Pratt, aged 69 a spinster, continued to reside in Church Hill, as did William Bromwich, his wife Sarah and grandson Frederick Shaw, who was noted as being an imbecile.

## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

(e) Finally, there was George Wilkins, a butcher now aged 60. Also living with him was lodger Arthur Richards, an engraver and embosser, together with Annie Pallett, aged 19, a domestic servant. His wife appears to have died and both his son and daughter seem to have moved away from the family home in the interim period.

As mentioned earlier, there was a move at the time from multiple owners of properties to fewer landlords and this is apparent from the following list. This was taken from the 1892 Sutton Coldfield Poor Rate Book which shows the main occupants of the various houses in Church Hill and Alexander Glenday now owns virtually all of them.

<b><u>House No.</u></b>	<b><u>Occupier</u></b>	<b><u>Owner</u></b>	<b><u>Description of Property</u></b>
No. 8	<u>McKnight</u> , Thomas	Glenday, Alexander	House and Garden
No. 7	<u>Taylor</u> , George	Glenday, Alexander	House and Garden
No. 6	<u>Hopkins</u> , Sara Ann	Glenday, Alexander	House and Garden
No. 5	<u>Bull</u> , James	Glenday, Alexander	House and Garden
No. 4	<u>Godfrey</u> , James	Glenday, Alexander	House and Garden
No. 3	<u>Whorwood</u> , Thomas	Horton, Mrs	House and Garden
No. 2	<u>Heath</u> , Thomas	Glenday, Alexander	House and Yard
No. 1	<u>Goldingay</u> , John	Glenday, Alexander	House and Yard

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(f) James Bull, living at No. 4, was described as a cabman and groom. He had a horse drawn cab and a board was affixed to the frontage of the house he rented which advertised his trade. His horse was probably stabled quite close by in the facilities offered by the 'Royal Oak', just around the corner in Mill Street. He was one of those who agreed to hire horses to the newly formed Sutton Coldfield Volunteer Fire Brigade to pull their engine in case of need.

(g) Mrs Mary McKnight, aged 62 and originally from Ireland, also ran a business from her home, at No. 8. She described herself as a dressmaker and in an advertisement in 'The Queen' ladies newspaper dated September 1890 she also stated:-

*Mrs McKnight of 'Jessamine Cottage', Church Hill a respectable purchaser of old clothes and gloves.*

Mrs McKnight seemed to have been a 'jack of all trades' as the Sutton Coldfield Directory for 1892 gives her occupation as a wardrobe dealer.

(h) Other inhabitants of Church Hill, running a business from home, were Thomas Heath, a shoe-maker, and Mrs Sarah Ann Hopkins, who was a dressmaker.

## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

The next *Census Return, taken in 1901*, just after the turn of the century, gave the main residents of the eight properties, as follows:-

<b><u>House No.</u></b>	<b><u>Occupier</u></b>	<b><u>Owner</u></b>	<b><u>Description of Property</u></b>
No. 8	<u>McKnight</u> , Thomas	Rigby, Rev. James	House and Garden
No. 7	<u>Taylor</u> , Mrs Elizabeth	Not known	House and Garden
No. 6	<u>Milward</u> , Charles	"	House and Garden
No. 5	<u>Turberville</u> , Miss Mary	"	House and Garden
No. 4	<u>Bull</u> , James	"	House and Garden
No. 3	<u>Howkins</u> , Mrs Elizabeth	"	House and Garden
No. 2	<u>Wilson</u> , Mrs Eunice	"	House and Yard
No. 1	<u>Goldingay</u> , John	Barton, George Albert	House and Yard

It can be seen that James Bull was still living in Church Hill, although he had moved next door, from No. 5 to No. 4. He was also involved in the same business as before and he continued to live there until his death between 1924 and 1925.



**Fig. 9 Church Hill 1906**

John Goldingay remained, as did the McKnight family.

There were, however, three new occupants who had decided to make Church Hill their home. They were, as follows:-

1. Elizabeth Howkins a widow, aged 42, together with her 7 children.
2. Charles Milward a head gardener, aged 40, from Bromsgrove, together with his wife and 8 children.
3. Sarah Taylor a charwoman, aged 50, together with her 5 children, her married daughter, her husband and their two very young children.

## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

Only three families with small budgets, but a total of 28 mouths to feed! They must have found life very challenging indeed. An example of how divided Victorian life could be, with some members of society living in great wealth, but the majority on or below the poverty line.

The ***Census Return, completed in 1911***, was the last one to be reviewed here. It was, however, far larger in size than previous returns, with each district running into many hundreds of pages. The Summary Books, however, indicated that the following individuals were residents in Church Hill at the time:-

<b><u>House No.</u></b>	<b><u>Occupier</u></b>	<b><u>Description of Property</u></b>
No. 8	<u>Horton</u> , Albert	Private House
No. 7	<u>Warrilow</u> , Mrs Elizabeth	Private House
No. 6	<u>Milward</u> , Albert Charles	Private House
No. 5	<u>Jones</u> , Horace	Private House
No. 4	<u>Bull</u> , James	Private House
No. 3	<u>Corbett</u> , Richard	Private House
No. 2	<u>Riley</u> , Arthur	Private House
No. 1	<u>Johnson</u> , William Thomas	Private House

In conclusion, only one set of property deeds has been discovered for the houses in Church Hill, these being for Nos. 1 and 2. In addition, a conveyance for No. 3 was found for the year 1814, when the residence was purchased by a Maria Grove. A later photograph shows that there was a '*Grove Cottage*' sign attached to the front elevation of the house in question.

A summary of the information obtained from the above mentioned deeds, is as follows:-

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Description of Transaction</u></b>	<b><u>House No.</u></b>
15 <sup>th</sup> April 1706	John Jackson, a baker from Sutton Coldfield, purchased the properties, together with No. 11 Mill Street from Witton and Prinsep.	1 and 2
1727-78	A fine was levied establishing that <b>John Jackson's</b> heirs owned the properties, subject to a mortgage taken out by <b>Joseph Collier</b> .	Nos. 1 and 2
25 <sup>th</sup> July 1732	The properties were settled on <b>Joseph Collier</b> and <b>Dorothy Manus</b> upon their marriage.	Nos. 1 and 2
26 <sup>th</sup> February 1748	Probate of <b>Joseph Collier-Manus'</b> Will, which divided the properties into three parts.	Nos. 1 and 2
14 <sup>th</sup> May 1763	<b>John Grange</b> purchased one part of the property from <b>Robert Fish</b> .	Nos. 1 and 2
5 <sup>th</sup> February 1763	<b>John Grange</b> purchased the other two parts from <b>Mr Winterton</b> and <b>Mr Plant</b> .	Nos. 1 and 2
1800	<b>John Grange</b> bequeathed the properties to his brother <b>Joseph Grange</b> .	Nos. 1 and 2
1808	<b>Joseph Grange</b> bequeathed the properties equally to a number of relatives.	Nos. 1 and 2

<u>Date</u>	<u>Description of Transaction</u>	<u>House No.</u>
24 <sup>th</sup> June 1817	The properties were again divided into three parts and sold The vendors were the heirs of <b>Richard Grange</b> and <b>David Stringer</b> , who were nephews of <b>Joseph Grange</b> .	Nos. 1 and 2
24 <sup>th</sup> June 1817	<b>Richard Grange jnr.</b> , a yeoman of Sutton Coldfield and his wife Elizabeth;  <b>Edward Floyd</b> , a spade tree turner of Birmingham and his wife Sarah;  <b>James Page</b> , a private soldier in the Welsh Fusileers with Wellington in France and his wife Margaret;  <b>Benjamin Sergeant</b> , a yeoman of Erdington and his wife Mary;  <b>Richard Stringer</b> , a hairdresser of 'Boll Court', Grays Inn Lane, London and his wife Sarah.  <b>Daniel Stringer</b> , a locksmith of Willenhall and his wife Phoebe;  <b>Charles Bagnall</b> , a metal roller of Sheffield and his wife Martha.	
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	<b>Joseph Hollis</b> purchased No. 1 Church Hill for £250. The property was described as:-  'A messuage or dwelling house and shop fronting towards Church Hill being the corner house and shop leading out of the street there lately occupied by <b>John Shardlow</b> and now by <b>William Bayliss</b> and also that privy in the yard at the back of the said dwelling house (being the largest privy in the yard), use of the brewhouse on Tuesdays and use of the well in the yard.	No. 1
	<b>Joseph Norris</b> purchased No. 2 Church Hill for £160. The property, was described as:-  'A messuage or dwelling house situated on the east side of Church Hill between No. 1 and a house occupied by <b>Francis Hearnshaw</b> and owned by Thomas Lea, the occupier of No. 4 was entitled to use the entry.	No. 2
15 <sup>th</sup> October 1834	<b>Sarah Drevey</b> purchased No. 2 for £130.	No. 2
6 <sup>th</sup> November 1865	<b>John Hollingshead</b> purchased No. 1 for £265.	No. 1
14 <sup>th</sup> August 1875	<b>J T Hamblett</b> , a grocer, purchased No.1 for £295.	No. 1
24 <sup>th</sup> December 1875	<b>J T Hamblett</b> purchased No. 2 for £165.	No. 2
7 <sup>th</sup> December 1878	<b>J W Brown</b> purchased No. 1 for £300.	No. 1
7 <sup>th</sup> December 1878	<b>J W Brown</b> purchased No. 2 for £200.	No. 2
14 <sup>th</sup> July 1881	<b>Mary Ann Maskell</b> purchased Nos. 1 & 2 Church Hill and No. 11 Mill Street for £500.	Nos. 1 & 2
30 <sup>th</sup> July 1896	<b>George Barton</b> purchased No. 1 & 2 Church Hill and No. 11 Mill Street for £695.	Nos. 1 & 2
7 <sup>th</sup> July 1937	The Corporation purchased Nos. 1 & 2 Church Hill and No. 11 Mill Street from the heirs of the <b>Barton</b> family for £2,000.	Nos. 1 & 2



### **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

The last entry in the property deeds brings this section of my research into Church Hill nicely to a close, as it can be seen the Corporation themselves purchased the properties. This was, in effect, a compulsory purchase, in order to facilitate the demolition of the complete run of houses in the street. Once this objective and been achieved, the construction of Vesey Memorial Gardens then began.



**Fig. 10 Properties in Church Hill and Mill Street in the course of demolition 1938.**

## **CHURCH HILL (Continued)**

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### **Photographs** (Keith Jordan’s Photographic Collection)

- Fig. 1 Example of brickwork built to Flemish Bond.
- Fig. 3 Family members around a water pump 1857.
- Fig. 4 Church Hill 1895.
- Fig. 5 Church Hill circa early 1900’s.
- Fig. 6 Cash Account sheet dated 11<sup>th</sup> March 1872.
- Fig. 7 Church Hill showing Nos. 1 & 2 where the families of John Hollingshead and Richard Spencer lived in the 1870’s and earlier where Lorenzo Secker had resided. circa 1930’s.
- Fig. 8 Church Hill looking in the direction of Mill Street, circa 1930’s.
- Fig. 9 Church Hill 1906.
- Fig. 10 Properties in Church Hill and Mill Street in the course of demolition 1938.

### **Maps**

- Fig. 2 25 inch Ordnance Survey Map 1889.