

TUDOR ROAD AN EARLY HISTORY

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Tudor Road -an early history

Introduction

The following is the result of research done some years ago in Sutton Coldfield Local History Library. I have now written up this work and circulate it to you in commemoration of the centenary of the building of our houses. I hope you find it interesting.

The Land

(This section describes the various ownerships for 7-14 Tudor Road. As far as I am aware, having seen other deeds, other sections of the Road have a similar history).

On 22/3/1899 a lease was signed between Thomas Hayward and Roger Henry Harley, for 99 years from 29/9/1898, the subject of which was land described as being 'bounded on the north east side by a road intended to be called Tudor Road', 1800 square yards, (the land now occupied by houses 7-14), at a ground rent of £18.50 per year.

Harley agreed to erect 8 dwelling houses at a cost of at least £250 each. I suspect that Hayward had bought the land from the London and North Western Railway Company in 1896 (there is a separate agreement between Hayward and L&NWR to maintain the drainage of the site until the road is adopted by a local authority). On 21/9/1900 Harley mortgaged the now built houses back to Hayward for £1,600. He probably used the money to build in Lyndon Road and Park Road. This mortgage was cleared on 16/9/26.

Thomas Hayward made a will in March 1899 and died on 22/10/1900. He is described as being buried in Sutton Coldfield. His will was proved by his brother William Hayward as sole surviving executor who inherited all the property (subject to a charge of £1,000 per year for the benefit of Thomas's wife Elizabeth), apart from various bequests.

William Hayward (described as living in Norfolk Lodge, Sutton Coldfield) died on 20/9/1901. His will appointed his wife and three sons as trustees of his property with power to sell the bequeathed property (now including the land in Tudor Road) or not, at their discretion.

Elizabeth Hayward (Thomas Hayward's wife) died in 1905. William Hayward's wife Amy died in 1917. His first son Herbert died in 1920.

Harley emigrated to Freeman's Reach New South Wales to become a farmer, where he died in 1919. His will, made in 1897, left all his property to his brother in law Henry Arthur Matthew of 75 Whitehead Road, Aston, clerk to a building society, upon trust to sell for the equal benefit of his (Harley's) wife Sarah and children. The will was not registered in England until 1926, letters of administration having been granted to Sarah in NSW in 1919. This was to enable Sarah to deal with the Australian property and Henry the property in England.

On 17/9/1926 Henry sold the lease for nos. 7-14 to Arthur Percy Johnson, accountant's clerk, of 188 Station Road, Wylde Green for £5,750. This price included other leases, possibly those in Tudor, Lyndon and Park Roads.

On 11/10 1926 the two surviving sons of William Hayward, Francis, of 57 Colmore Row, a solicitor and Sidney of 191 Newhall Street, a managing director sold the freehold of all the properties on Tudor Road to Johnson. These were described as 'no. 121 inclusive and Stanley House' (now 1 Upper Clifton Road). The price was £1 191. As Johnson was also to have the benefit of all the unexpired leases in Tudor Road he thus became the owner of the freeholds and leaseholds.

On the 15/12 1926 Johnson sold all the properties (that is nos. 1-21 and Stanley House) to Ernest Rowland Mason of 22 George Road Erdington for £7954. Subsequent to this Mason sold the freeholds on a piecemeal basis, around 1958.

The Houses

Tudor Road was laid out in 1899. Prior to that the land was open fields called Clifton's Hills. An 1870 map shows an unnamed path running from the station, along the line of Tudor Road, across Upper Clifton Road, along what is now the right of way up to the 'Tudor Hill building estate'. Park Road and Clifton Road are named, Railway Road is not. In November 1899 the Highways Committee resolved that ' . . . as Tudor Road has been satisfactorily completed under the Private Street Works Act 1892 and the apportionments have been paid ... the road be declared a Highway repairable by the inhabitants at large.'

On 14 March of that year a Building Notice was submitted by Roger H. Harley of 57 Colmore Road Birmingham for the construction of villa residences. The notice was signed by Harley as owner, agent, architect and builder. Doubtless this was speculative building for rental income. The notice outlines various structural and related matters including the materials to be used - brick and slate, the thickness of the external and party walls - 9 inches and the room heights for each floor - 9 feet 6 inches and 9 feet. The lowest floor was to be 8 inches above the footpath and the gardens 24 yards long. The reference library in Sutton holds floor plans and elevations submitted by Harley. A building plan was then deposited by Harley on 16 March of that year for 22 houses. This plan was approved subject to the drainage being to the satisfaction of the Borough Surveyor.

Building then proceeded. The library holds a communication between Harley and the Borough Surveyor (W A H Clarry) and a number of Notices which were signed off by a W J Bickford (probably assistant Surveyor) as work progressed. These notices related to foundations, drains, and damp courses. Generally the only comment is 'satisfactory'. The first of the notices dates from April 1899 and the last from July 1901. On them Harley is variously described as 'builder' 'architect' and 'owner'. The houses were built in groups but it has not been possible to determine in which order they were finished, although evidence from the Rate Books suggests they were built from Upper Clifton Road - that is from number one onward. This view is supported by the 1901 Census, taken on the 31st of March that year. Details exist only for house numbers 1-14, suggesting that the remaining houses were not in occupation. One unoccupied and unnumbered house (probably no. 15) is listed in Tudor Road.

In the early years some of the houses had names as well as numbers. Number one was 'Mount Pleasant', number two 'Park View', number five 'Deancroft', number 13 'Ellerslie', number 14 'Quenby', number 16 'Fernlea' and number 18 'Ivy Dene'. Of these only 'Fernlea' seems to have survived any length of time and appears in the 1920 Register of Electors.

During this time the address is variously given as 'Tudor Road' or 'New Road'. I have not been able to establish why Tudor Road was so named. The Tudor Hill district clearly predates Tudor Road, but Tudor Hill itself is not shown as being named as a road on the 1901 OS map. However the 1901 census lists a number of properties on 'Tudor Hill'.

In 1902 the Electric Lighting Committee resolved that 'public and private lighting be extended to Upper Clifton Road and Tudor Road'. The cost for Tudor Road was £63.00 (of which £55.00 related to private works) and the work was completed by September 1902.

The surrounding area

We are fortunate in that the 1886 Ordnance Survey map (which shows Tudor Road as a track leading up to what is now the station carpark) was revised in 1901. The map shows Tudor Road completed with the characteristic double back garden fences in evidence, along with alleys. The nearest houses shown on the map are three on Upper Clifton Road, a semi-detached (now numbers 14 and 16) and two detached houses further up the hill (of these two only number 8 survives). To the north, south and east are fields, Lyndon Road has not yet been established and the only houses on Park Road are those (now demolished) on the south side. There would thus have been an uninterrupted view of the Park and of the Royal Promenade Gardens (now the leisure centre) including its conservatory called the Crystal Palace. Much of what is now the station car park is given over to sidings, with Railway Road unnamed and gated at the Park Road end. There are very few trees in evidence in the vicinity - a few close to what is now the Constituency Office on Upper Clifton Road with more to the rear of the Council House.

By the time of the 1913 OS map the landscape is somewhat altered. Lyndon Road is complete, Park Road is built up on the north side from Railway Road to the Park. Upper Clifton Road has houses from the right of way to the junction with Lyndon Road. Railway Road is now named and un-gated whilst the station is largely unchanged.

The Builder

It has not been possible to find out much about Harley. He is listed in Kelly's Directory of Birmingham from 1890 to 1900, but disappears from the 1902 edition. His address starts out as 4 Cherry Street and also Witton Wharf where he is described as a coal merchant. From 1892 he has the Colmore Row address. During the building period his address is given as Signal Hayes, Walmley. His ownership of Tudor Road can be gleaned from the Rate Books. In 1901 he is shown as owning properties 1 to 8, the rest being owned by a William Parrott (listed in Kelly's as house agent, surveyor and insurance agent, also having offices on Colmore Row). From 1902 to 1907 he is shown as sole owner and is listed as living in number 21 from 1907 to 1909. Interestingly on the 1901 OS map this property is shown as slightly larger than others having a greater rearward extension. From 1908 onwards the 'owner' is Parrot and Antrobus (Agents) but given that the properties were left by Harley in his will they were doubtless only managing the properties for him. It must be about this time that Harley emigrated to Australia. The OS map of 1911 lists 'Parrott William and Antrobus, house agents' at number 19 Colmore Row but Harley has gone from number 57. The first indication that houses were being sold off (rather than rented) is in the 1920 Register of Electors which shows Florence Kimberley (shown as age 56 in the 1911 Census, along with her sister, age 61) at number 8 as owner occupier, although given the information above she could only have been a leaseholder.

The Residents

It has been suggested to me that the houses were built to house railway, police or other workers. I have been unable to find any supporting evidence and consider it unlikely. The railway had been in operation for nearly forty years when the houses were built and the high turnover of residents suggests against a relatively stable occupation like the police or fire service. The population of Sutton Coldfield increased from 8,685 in 1891 to 14,264 in 1901 (source VCH) so there was a demand for housing.

Names of residents, but little else, may be obtained from the Rate Books. The rateable value is also shown. This is generally 16 shillings 10 pence, although there are minor variations between the properties and evidence of appeals against over assessment. The amount payable was around £2 12 shillings. The Rate Books continue till 1914 and show the high turnover referred to above. For example of the 21 residents listed in 1902 (the first full year) only 3 remain in residence in 1909. In 1906 rates are shown as irrecoverable from nine properties due to their being unoccupied. By 1914 only one of the original residents (Charles Wilkes, number 16) is still in occupation and 12 properties are shown as unoccupied.

Some other information on the residents can be obtained from the Sutton Coldfield Erdington and District Directory. The 1900 edition shows occupants in numbers one to four. The 1901-2 edition, besides giving us the house names tells us that a Mrs Scott in number 18 gave banjo lessons and that Mrs Searle in number 21 ran the Cloverdale Registry Office — an employment agency. Both these businesses advertised in the Directory. In addition number 17 was the District Office of the Refuge Assurance Company, with Mr Murray as manager. Unfortunately no other such Directories exist. The 1912 Kelly's Directory of Warwickshire shows no commercial entries for Tudor Road but does list one teacher of music and two tea rooms in Park Road.

The Bowling Green and Tennis Courts

The Tennis Courts opened in late summer of 1925. Prior to this it was proposed 'to let off on building leases land fronting (Upper) Clifton Road and Tudor Road'. Advertisements were posted and applications received but the Council then decided to level the land and build tennis courts and a bowling green. At this time the site was used as a yard for the highways department and was evidently an eyesore. There was talk of 'putting it in order'.

The relevant minutes authorise the levelling of fields to the rear of the Council House. This work cost some £430, mainly in wages and horse hire and was funded by a 75% grant from the Unemployment Grants Committee so as to '... afford employment for the large number of local men who are at present unemployed'.

Three hard courts were laid by Stevenson & Allday with other firms supplying tapes, surrounds, a pavilion, cycle houses and mains water. The total cost was £562. In November the Borough Surveyor was instructed to proceed with the completion of the scheme and build one more hard court and a bowling green. Tenders for the groundwork were sent out in November of 1925. In January of 1926 it was resolved to use turf 'from the lawn near to the Fire Station' (then on its old site in King Edward Square) to surface the green. This is later reported in the Sutton Coldfield News as being 'turf from the old green abutting Upper Clifton Road'. (This may be the raised square platform still in existence by the Constituency Office buildings [edit 2017: now gone, replaced by housing]). In February tenders were invited for a pavilion - secured by J D Darlington with a bid of £138. The bowling green opened in May 1927. Total expenditure for the whole venture - courts and green, excluding the initial levelling, was £1224.

The opening of the green was marked by a ceremony with a match between teams chosen by the Mayor and the Chairman of the Parks Committee. Tea was served in the Town Hall, there were speeches and 'play continued until late evening'.

The income and expenditure accounts for the courts and green are available for a number of years. It is clear that they have always made a loss with expenditure typically of around £250, mostly wages, with income of around a hundred pounds. In 1928 a bowling green season ticket cost 15 shillings a season or five shillings a month. In 1929 a bowling club was formed. This was called the Tudor Road Bowling Club and its first match, against Little Aston was mentioned in the Sutton Coldfield News of 11 May of that year. In 1932 an advertisement in the Birmingham Post states that the courts have been renewed and can be booked by phoning the attendant on telephone number 2213.

The remaining item of interest is the proposal, in 1939, to use the site for a new fire station (the 1939 photograph mentioned above refers to this). The Mayor, J J Ogle was reported to be much in favour although there was opposition from Alderman Pearson (coincidentally the first President of the Bowling Club) who pointed out that 'hundreds of pounds have been spent putting it right and making it useful'. In May of 1939 the Fire Brigade and Hackney Carriage Committee requested the Borough Surveyor to 'proceed with presentation of plans for the erection of a fire station on the Anchorage Road site', so it seems that Alderman Pearson won the argument.

The 1901 Census (31st March 1901)

I have analysed the 1901 census return for numbers 1-14 plus Stanley House (no. 1 Upper Clifton Road). Of the sixteen households ten housed families with a husband, wife and between one and five children. Six households housed other relatives of the head of household. Numbers in residence vary between two and seven. Most adult residents are between thirty and forty years old. Occupations of the 'head of household' are split between blue collar, white collar and professional jobs and include coal carter, draper, coachman, police inspector, manager of a metal shaping company and bookstall clerk. Two heads are shown as lodging/boarding house keepers although neither house has lodgers. Two houses have servants (nos. 9 and 14). Most residents were born in the Midlands, although two children (at no. 3) were born in America.

House number	Number of occupants on census night	Head of household occupation	Head of household place of birth
Stanley House	5	*	
1	3	Own means	Walsall
2	2	Bookstall clerk	Wimbledon
3	5	Silver plate engineer	Birmingham
4	5	Coal carter	Birmingham
5	6*	Boarding House keeper	Birmingham
6	6	House decorator foreman	Sutton Coldfield
7	3	Wood and photo process engraver	Birmingham
8	2	Solicitor's clerk	Worcester
9	6	Manager metal shaping	Quarry Bank
10	4	Railway clerk	Birmingham
11	7	Draper	Northamp Maxey
12	2	Lodging house keeper	Oxford
13	6	Domestic coachman	Tamworth
14	5	Police inspector	Gloucester

*Stanley House: no head of household present

*no.5: includes 4 visitors

The 1911 Census (2nd April 1911)

I have analysed the 1911 census return for numbers 1-21 (Stanley House, no. 1 Upper Clifton Road no longer appears on a Tudor Road search). The most striking fact is that none of the residents shown in the 1901 census remain, although the Wilkes family are still at no. 16 having been shown in the 1902 Rate Book. (No. 16 was not yet built in 1901.) There are less occupants in total and approximately one less occupant per household compared to 1901. Of the seventeen households with records (I assume no record means that either the house was unoccupied on census evening or unlet) eight housed families with a husband, wife and between one and three children. Numbers in residence vary between two and five. Most adult residents are between forty and sixty years old — thus older on average than in 1901. Two houses still have servants (nos. 20 and 21). Most residents were born in the Midlands.

House number	Number of occupants on census night	Head of household occupation	Head of household place of birth
1	2	Private Means	Clifton Gloucester
2	3	Jeweller Maker	Birmingham
3	3*	None given	Ansley
4	4	Solicitor's Cashier	Birmingham
5	4	Auctioneer and Bailiff	Aston
6	6*	Gas Rate Collector	Chatham
7	2	Private Means	Bednall
8	2	Retired Private Schoolmistress	Edgbaston
9	2	Station Master	Hinckley
10	5	Accountant's clerk	Walsall
11	2	Private Means	Stafford
12	No record		
13	2	None given	Sutton Coldfield
14	5	Valuer Inland Revenue	Aston Manor
15	No record *		

16	5*	Jobbing Gardener	Welland
17	5	Asst Superintendent Assurance	Blackheath, Staffs
18	No record		
19	2	Drapery Shop Manageress	Birmingham
20	3	Salesman	Wednesbury
21	3	Cashier	Walsall

- * no.3 includes one tenant in separate flat (?) - an assistant works manager in a car factory
- * no.6 includes two visitors
- * no. 15: Sidney John Davis of this address is recorded as having been killed on 28/3/18 and buried at Etaples Military Cemetery.
- * no. 16 includes one boarder

Pictures

I know of only two early pictures relating to Tudor Road. The first is in 'Sutton Coldfield' by Marion Baxter (pub. Alan Sutton 1994) and shows a view of the back of the Council House taken from Tudor Road. The photograph is dated circa 1902 although there seems to be a bowling green in the foreground, which of course would make it much later. The second is in 'Sutton Coldfield A Pictorial History' by S. Bates (pub. Bibbles 1997) and shows a view taken from the Railway Road end. The caption suggests that the houses were built between 1882 and 1914 which is clearly wrong. There is a horse and cart on the road and no parked cars. No date is given but the absence of mature trees on the bowling green side suggests it is relatively early. The bowling green area is fenced with railings and there is only one lamppost visible. All houses still have the characteristic round headed gateposts, the last of which disappeared around 2001. In addition there is a picture in the Birmingham Mail of 7 March 1939 taken from high up behind the bowling green which shows a few of the houses.