

PARK ROAD - EARLY HISTORY

The compilation of the story of our street has been a difficult task, brought together by listening to older residents' memories and by studying the few maps, wills, census records and title deeds which are still available, not to mention also making our own educated guesses. The first census didn't appear till 1841 when it was known for a time as "*Victoria Street*" but before then, it was just "*Mill Lane*" or "*Watery Lane*". As survivors of the 2007 flood, when some of our homes were under several feet of water, we can well understand how apt that name has proved to be.



The road we now know as Park Road has a very long history and probably started as the track to the mill at Westington, which was already in existence at the time of the Domesday survey of 1086. Campden had 73 households listed and had two mills, but another is mentioned later in the middle ages: Percy Rushen refers to one "*Geoffry the miller*" probably running the mill there in the mid 14th century – one of three in town, the others being "*Middle or Haydon's Mill*" and "*Birton*" or Berrington Mill. Rushen also refers to a deed of 1625 concerning Sir Baptist Hicks's mill there, and a century later, we see the first reference to the road itself: in a record of the leases granted by lords of Campden Manor from 1708 there is mention of a John and Mary Yeates and their son, William, occupying a cottage in "*Mill-lane*". In 1799, when the lands of Campden were being enclosed, the town's roads were also defined, and the street is already being described as "*an old road*". A map of the Gainsborough estate from 1722 (see over) shows that the east end of the street was quite built up but there were far fewer cottages further along nearer the mill – this land was covered by orchards till well into the 20th century.

It was apparent, however, that the mill land was prone to flooding, as 18th century references already show: in the codicil of his will, dated 28th June 1777, John Fletcher includes the house he has "*belonging to ye late Thomas Smith & his wife, being in ye Watery Lane in this Town of twenty Pounds*"; and in the 1844 will of farmer Richard Keen, he says: "*I give and devise unto my son Henry William Keen ... All that my Cottage or Tenement with the appurtenances thereto belonging situate at Watery Lane in Chipping Campden aforesaid and now in the occupation of William Goodson*". We know from the 1841 census that William Keen was a 71

conversational use and on the name plate of “Water Lane Cottage”, today occupied by Nick Holt and family.

In May 1858, both ends of the town suffered following the worst storm Campden had seen since the legendary one on the night King George IV had died on 26th June 1830. Newspaper reports from November 1872 say that there had been bad flooding once again and that residents had got up during the night to rescue their pigs from the styes at the bottom of their gardens and take them upstairs to their bedrooms to safety. In January 1901, following prolonged heavy rainfall, there was flooding in the street reckoned to be almost as severe as the so-called “*King’s Flood*” of 70 years before.

There were floods - again in the summertime – in June 1955, which prompted the Chairman of the Parish Council, Mr. Coles, to send a telegram in desperation to the Speaker of the Houses of Parliament asking for help since they had neither power nor money to do anything and the District Council would not help. The following year, the local doctor, Dr D. E. Olliff, said that repeated flooding in Park Road was having an adverse effect on the health of those people living there and that the houses were damp. He placed emphasis on the mental impact of living with the worry of it happening again and again.



1955



1955: The clean-up operation in Park Road

But more floods followed, especially in July 1982, and then on 20th July 2007, St Margaret's Day. Some of the cottages were under 3 or 4 feet of water, particularly the oldest ones which lie below street level. Indeed, evidence of that day can still be seen in salt deposits on the old stone walls. It was bad enough then, with the use of dehumidifiers and fans to help dry the houses out, but it must have been dreadful to have to cope with in bygone days without these: the only consolation being that perhaps residents didn't have all the clutter we do today to ruin.

Cottage Characteristics

It is very hard to interpret the 1722 Gainsborough estate map, which may or may not be an accurate depiction of the buildings then standing. Some houses certainly have features which look much earlier than this – “Brooklyn” for example, – while others such as “Daphne Cottage” and “Rushen Cottage” are set lower than the present pavement with steps down into them, which suggests they may be even older, built when the ground was lower. “Julia's Cottage”, which is also low-set, has what appears to be the date 1611 etched on a beam in the kitchen.



In "Daphne Cottage", there are joist holes in the stonework downstairs which suggest the original ceiling was lower than the present beam allows. In fact, the beams in the hall look almost mediaeval, though even if the house is 17th century, the front was faced with better quality stone in the 19th century so the true age is disguised. When a builder was renovating the fireplace there recently, he had to remove one of two very big stones on either side of the chimney 36" x 4^{1/2}" x 6" thick, and it was so heavy (he reckoned 3 hundred-

weight, ie 336 lbs) and of such good quality dressed stone, he reckoned it might have come originally from the ruins of old Campden House, where many of the local builders are said to have got their supply of stone.

A number, though not all, of the houses are listed, with a conservative date of "late 17th century" at the earliest, but they have features of older building styles – "Brooklyn" has a curved "cruck" roof, and "Binary" has an unusual "queen" beam, with two rather than just one "king" or vertical post holding up the rafters.



These two wonderful old photos of the renovation of "Pavement Cottage" clearly show the ancient "A" frame roof beams. It was partially rebuilt in 1902 in what is described as "Cotswold revival style", with a Tudor style arched door.



Others, also smartened up long after they were originally built, have deep mullion windows – “St. Catherine’s Cottage”, “Robin’s Cottage”, and “Rushen”.

“Rivers Cottage” has “R. S.” and the date 1818 on the front wall, but so far, no one has been identified from the initials. Next door but one, “Rundle Cottage” has a strange little stone decoration on the front wall which looks as if it might have come from the long-lost mediaeval chapel of St Katherine. It looks as if it has been there a very long time, but we need to be cautious of getting carried away with our ideas – the Tudor style arch above the front door of “Water Lane Cottage” turned out to have been put there by the current owner after finding it in a reclamation yard.

A stone plaque is set on the back wall of “Binary Cottage” beside a pair of un-cottagey-looking arched windows.



There are vague conjectures that this was once a chapel, but this seems very improbable, and far more likely that stonework from a reclamation yard or elsewhere was incorporated for aesthetic reasons.



Today, “Brooklyn” is the only thatched property left in the street, but up till it suffered a fire in 1954, “Robin’s Cottage” was also thatched – it was actually known as “The Thatched Cottage” up till the 1960s – and up until the war, at the end of the street was a row of 3 little thatched cottages known as “Deben Cottages”.



“Rushen Cottage” was also thatched this times.

The road itself was not made up till enough cars appeared to merit the building of it, which wasn’t till either the 1920s or early 30s.



“Daintree” was built on the site of another very old thatched cottage (next to the Volunteer Inn) which was demolished c1900.

Although we cannot associate the early residents with particular houses, we can look through the records and see that the same names appear over the decades as families intermarried and moved up and down the street, renting them on quarterly, monthly, or weekly terms. It is easy to overlook how humble the early cottages were, with one room downstairs containing an open fire or later a range for cooking simple meals in a large pot and boiling water in a hanging kettle; the room upstairs was the bedroom and somehow everyone must have squashed in there together. Where two cottages were knocked together to make one property, there were sometimes odd arrangements as regards access to the upper rooms. The

breakthrough at “Daphne”” was quite crude and the floor had to be dropped between the bedrooms of the former two cottages, and it still entails a ducking of the head under the attic stairs to get in. Apparently at one time, *“there was a gap at the side of the drop where you could see a little of the kitchen and more than one generation enjoyed posting letters through this gap”* (Bill Buckland)



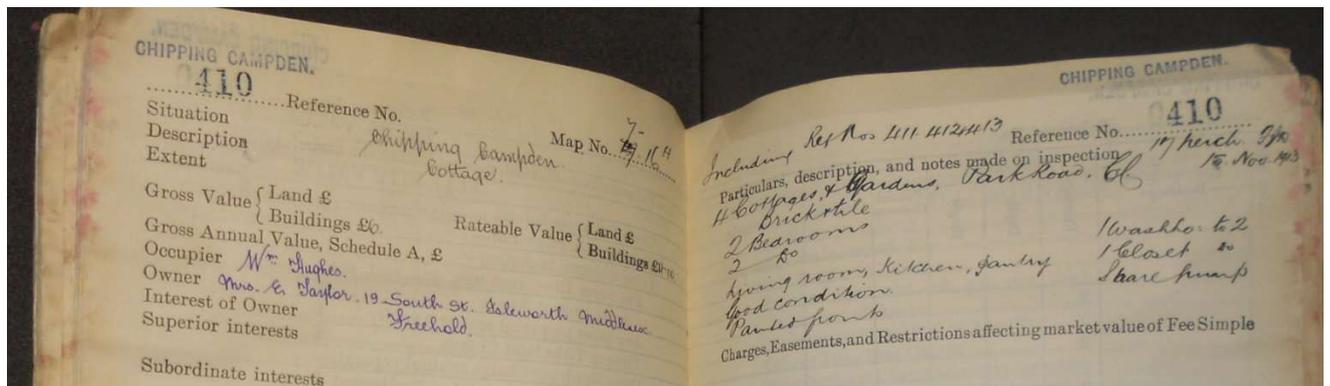
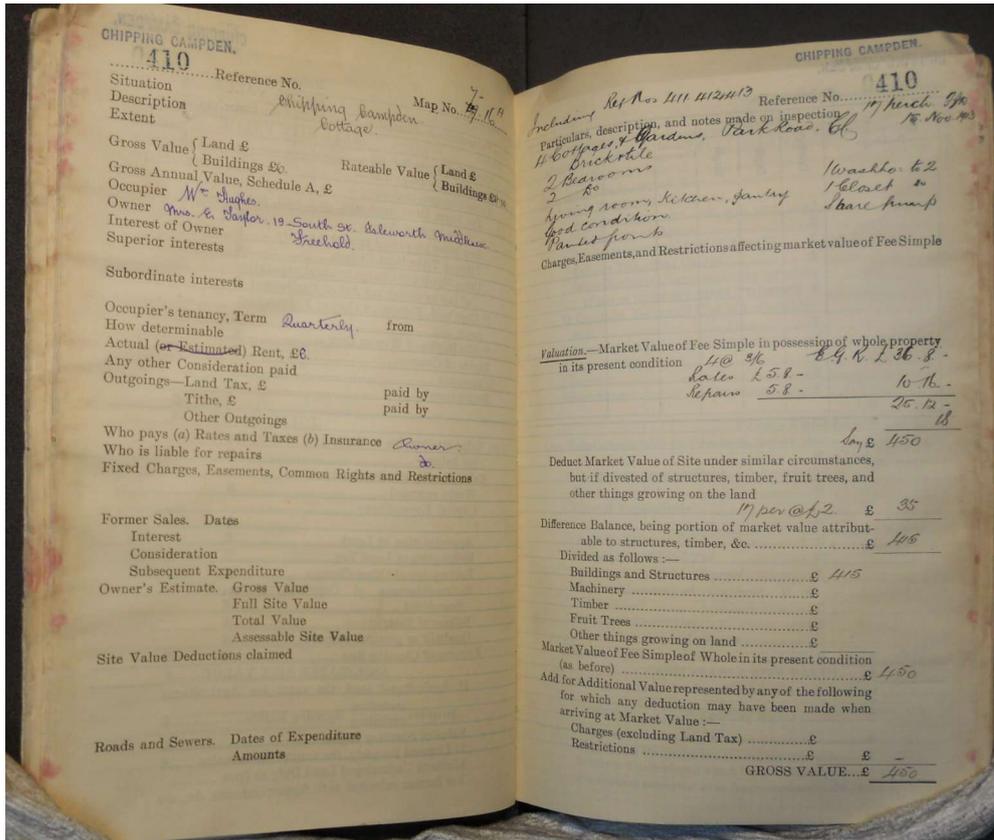
Some had attics above the sleeping chamber where meat was hung to cure. At “Daphne Cottage”, the Bucklands stored the mumming costumes in a chest in one half of the attic, while in the other, schoolboy Bill had his bedroom in the 1940s. He recalls one special advantage of being so high up above the neighbouring houses:

“My attic had the advantage of isolating me somewhat and the height meant that I could run a terrific aerial from my skylight to a pole on the shed at the bottom of the garden. I got terrific recep-

tion on my first crystal set, built by Commander Payne from Catbrook, and I picked up stations from all over.”

None had indoor bathrooms but earth closets at the bottom of the garden. They had communal washhouses with coal fired “coppers” inside, and pig styes too, for many people kept pigs and slaughtered them in the back garden. Access to these from the street was via narrow passages, now mostly incorporated into modernised house layouts but still extant behind outer doors. This poses a problem for some residents to this day as deliveries of wood and coal and also the garden and rubbish bins have to be taken right through the house. This nuisance, the lack of guaranteed parking space outside, and the near complete lack of storage space are the main problems facing homeowners in the Park Road community, but it is accepted as just the downside of living in such wonderful old buildings for a time. Nowadays, at least nine of the houses are Grade II listed, their quirky features preserved for the future.

The 1910 Valuation Survey. Under the 1910 Finance Act, a valuation was made of all properties in England and Wales. The revenue books give a brief description of each property, the names of its owner and occupier and a note of its value (this is sometimes called the Domesday Survey). (National Archives). In Campden the survey was done in 1913.



This entry is for Brick Kiln Cottages.

They are described as:

- 4 Cottages & Gardens, Brick Tile
- 2 bedrooms, 2 bedrooms [top floor?]
- Living room, kitchen, pantry
- Good condition, Painted front
- 1 washroom to 2 [cottages]
- 1 closet to 2
- Share pump.

These descriptions give us a good idea of life in Park Road 100 years ago, sharing the facilities that we take for granted today.