

Little Pollards, its evolution and occupants.

Because we have no primary evidence from title deeds for the first appearance of the house or the existence of a separate plot of land, we must rely initially upon evidence from the records of Amersham Rural District Council held at the Centre for Bucks Studies in Aylesbury.

An initial look at the records indicate that the house appears to have been built between 1904 and 1907. On the surface it cannot have been any earlier than March 1904 when the Amersham RDC valuation book was first prepared and when there is no entry that could refer to Little Pollards. Nor can it be later than 3 July 1907 when the house first appears in the supplementary valuations with H W Kirby as the occupant and A Grove as the owner.

Prior to March 1904 the whole of Pollards Wood was one block of 194 acres of woodland owned by C W Raffety of High Wycombe estate agent and his brother John Raffety Vezey of London, Timber merchant.

By January 1905 Archibald Grove MP had acquired 88 acres of the woodland much of which became the land of Pollards Park House which was built 1906/7. He very soon acquired a further 9 acres and also entered into some complicated transactions with T A Allen who built Pollards House around at the same time.

Little Pollards appears to have been built around the same time or earlier.

Looking at the sequence of events on the Amersham Rural District Buildings committee meetings and the approvals granted, compared to the dates of first appearance on the rating listing it is possible that Little Pollards was the first house built (approved 8 Nov 1904 for A Grove). This could be a house in which Archibald Grove could live whilst Pollards Park was being built, he having sold his previous house, Berrydown Court in Hampshire, earlier the same year. Compared to Pollards Park, Little Pollards would be a simple build. Once Pollards Park was completed Little Pollards would not be needed and could be leased out, which it was, to Horace Woodburn Kirby. (Shown on the 3 July 1907 list as the occupier with Archibald Grove shown as the owner.)

The assumptions made to arrive at the above conclusions are that the valuation listing reflects the actual situation on the ground and that new house were included as soon as they were occupied. It also assume that approval for houses were not granted retrospectively. Although such assumptions would be valid today they are nowhere near so certain at the start of the 20th century. (See Appendix)

However there are other factors. It is said that Archibald Grove was in financial trouble at this time. Also there is a letter from Archibald Grove to W S Churchill dated 12 Sept. 1904 in the Churchill College Cambridge Archives (CHAR 2/19/50). The letter is sent from "Wharnecliffe" Chorleywood Herts and presumably Grove was living at this address at the time. That house still exists and is a Victorian, three storey, end of terrace building and is relatively modest.

We have more information from the records of the Inland Revenue who surveyed details of all property in England in 1915.

The record for Little Pollards says that H W Kirby was the leaseholder on a 15 year lease commencing 29 Sept 1904 at a rent of £225 p.a. and that the owner in 1915 is E A Grove of Redhill, Farnham. This owner must be Archibald Grove's elder brother General Edward Aickin Grove.

From all of the above I suggest that Little Pollards was built by A Grove in early 1904 and whatever his initial intention he leased it out in Sept 1904. He gained approval for Pollards Park probably in Oct 1905 and it was built 1907.

This uncertainty about the early history of houses in Pollards Wood around 1904 is common to neighbouring houses because early deeds and other documents are not available.

Little Pollards is described in the March 1915 IR Survey as in the following verbatim transcript:-

"Modern brick roughcast slated house. Drawing 26x18', Lounge Hall 18'x24', lobby and WC, Dining 26'x15', Housekeepers, pantry, Kitchen, Larder, etc.

1st Floor. Bed and dressing, WC, Bath, Cupboard.

3 Bed and dressing.

2nd Floor. 4 Bedrooms, Bath, Storeroom.

Detached stabling, 2 Loose boxes, Workroom and harness room.

4 Roomed Grooms cottage.

Walled kitchen garden. Garden. Woodland

Area 8 acres 1 rood.

Dormant easement over Pollards Park drive entrance.

Market Value £4500."

List of known occupants.

There are probably others who have not been traced.

Horace Woodburn Kirby was at the house until the end of the lease in 1919. (From the evidence of the valuation records, the 1911 census and Kelly's Directories). He was an eminent accountant born in 1853 and died in 1932. Between 1913 and 1916 he was the President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants and was Knighted in January 1916 for "the great assistance he gave to the Prince of Wales Fund and other War Objectives."

The house was next occupied by **Robert Pugh Rowlands** OBE FRCS Senior Surgeon to Guys Hospital (1874-1933) who lived there from 1920 until 1924. He was presumably a leaseholder as The Times of 21 February 1924 records that the house has been leased again.

The Times of 24 January 1925 has a notice of the birth at Little Pollards of a son to **Patrick Ashley Cooper** who must have taken over the lease. In 1928 the occupier is recorded in Kelly's Directory as Patrick Ashley Cooper who remained at least until 1935 according to Kelly's. The next available Kelly's edition is for 1939 when there is no entry for Little Pollards.

Patrick Ashley Cooper (1887-1961) had a very wide ranging and prestigious series of appointments including Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company and directorship of the Bank of England. (Obituary The Times 32 March 1961).

He was also a governor of Guy's Hospital from 1926 to 1931 which provides an interesting link to the previous occupant who was also at Guy's.

In 1938 Ashley Cooper was appointed to the Rhodesia-Nyasaland Royal Commission which may have taken him away from Little Pollards at this time and may account for the absence of a named occupant in 1939.

The rates book for 1947/8 records the ratepayer and presumably occupier as **Sir J Stanley Holmes**. Sir Joseph Stanley Holmes (1878-1961) was a Chartered Accountant and Liberal MP for Harwich from 1935 to 1954 when he was elevated to the peerage as Lord Dovercourt of Harwich.

There is an entry in the 1952/3 Amersham Directory which records the occupier as **H C Scott** but no more information about him is known.

In 1955 There was a planning application to convert the house into two dwellings and to separate the Gardeners Cottage as a separate hereditament. This was approved but not implemented except possibly the separation of the Cottage. (Is this Pollards Cottage?). (AM/18/55 and AM/19/55). Later the same year a plan to have two separate houses built was refused. (AM/402/55). (These applications are not in the archives but are referred to in the 1994 application. The name of the applicant is not recorded.)

In 1994 the property is owned by **John and Sharon Simpson** and they applied to install a mobile home whilst an extensive refurbishment is carried out. It is said that the previous owners had not carried out repairs or maintenance for 15-20 years and that replastering and new ceilings are required in the entire house. All work is internal. (CH/ 94/0290/FA)

2006 The Chiltern District Council record that they have no records of changes to the house prior to 2006 but they hold a series of photos of it at that time and before more recent changes. (CH/2006/2169/FA). The photos are available online through the Chiltern District Planning Portal.

So there are still a number of outstanding queries.

When was the land sold by Raffety to Grove; and what can be learnt about land transactions between 1902 and 1907 to clarify the history of the whole area?

When was ownership sold out of the Grove family?

Was Pollards Cottage originally part of the property?

Are there missing owners and who owned it in 1955?

Any title deeds, especially an Abstract of Title to Little Pollards would be very helpful in resolving these questions.

P.J.Dodd 5/1/2014

Appendix.

Although there had been legislation from before the second half of the 19th century requiring local authorities to have building control bylaws and a surveyor, this was primarily aimed at improving the health and standard of living and the availability of housing for the urban working class. In rural areas such as Chalfont St Giles there was great reluctance to use the complex standard urban model set of bylaws, the local authority could and did use their own bylaws or even opt out completely.

The 1894 Local Government Act enacted the formation of civil parishes in place of the previous vestry parishes and formation of Rural District councils including Amersham RDC which took over the role of the Local Boards of Health. This brought about greater stringency in the application of building control laws .

There was much continual controversy about what the bylaws for rural areas should include. In 1901, 1903 and 1905 the Local Authority Board, the central government department overseeing local authorities, issue a number of different versions of Rural model bylaws which rural authorities were pushed to adopt although they were still not mandatory.

The Public Health (Amendment Act) 1907. Introduced stricter control by RDCs on application of the latest bylaws.

Housing and Town Planning Act 1909. Introduce more centralised control and extra duties on local authorities.

National mandatory byelaws did not come into being until 1964

Source: A History of Building Control in England and Wales 1840-1990. By, A. J. Ley. RICS 2000

The Amersham RDC did not have a building committee prior to June 1904.

New buildings were occasionally mentioned in the minutes of the main council but only to the extent that a "water certificate" had been issued to say that a satisfactory supply of water was available.

They probably had a surveyor but his records from before 1915 do not survive.

They clearly had continual problems with enforcement and with houses being built without formal approval as they issued a public notice as late as 1914 saying it was mandatory to have plans approved prior to work commencing!

JD 21/12/2013