

SHAMLEY GREEN MATTERS

Michael Harding's Meander – Sweetwater Lane

These are Michael's personal notes and reflections. If you own any of the properties mentioned and would like to add, delete or amend any information, please advise Valerie Esplen. With thanks to Jan Cooper, who undertook the original recording of what Michael said in June 2015, updated 2021.

MICHAEL'S MEANDER 10 JUNE 2015 – SWEETWATER LANE FROM SWEETWATER CLOSE TO THE GREEN

Tithes

Churches were supported by the payment of Tithes which were a tax of one tenth of everyone's crops or gainful employment.

Originally, tithes were payments in kind (crops, wool, milk etc.) comprising an agreed proportion of the yearly profits from farming, and made by parishioners for the support of their parish church and its clergy. In theory, tithes were payable on all things arising from the ground and subject to annual increase - grain, wood, vegetables etc.; all things nourished by the ground - the young of cattle, sheep etc., and animal produce such as milk, eggs and wool; and the produce of man's labour, particularly the profits from mills and fishing. Performing tasks could sometimes reduce the amount someone had to pay. Clearing forest might be one such task. The payment of most tithes was not completely phased out until October 1996. The process had commenced with the 1841 Tithe Redemption Act. Its apportionment documents are rich source of research for local historians.

In some parts of the country a few old properties still have Church Chancel repair cost obligations. When such properties changes hands, it is good practice for solicitors make searches to ensure that their clients have no such liabilities and sometimes put insurance in place to cover such unlikely eventualities.

The 1841 Tithe Redemption Map showed the sharp corner at the top of in the Lane for the first time. This abuts Longacre now the site of a private school. Hugh de Longacres is mentioned in the Muster Rolls of 1300s.

Land Holdings

Most Shamley Green villagers lived around the Green or close to individual farms. These were divided by banks which often had hedges growing on them. Sweetwater Lane, or Stonnards Lane as it was originally called, was bounded by a bank on the side nearest the Green. This bank, now in part a designated conservation feature was the border between land cleared for cultivation and the extensive area of forested Weald administered by the King's Verderer for use of the King and his nobleman for game hunting and exercise. Anyone who obtained permission to clear forest had a remission from paying tithes for an extensive period to help offset the costs of clearing and fencing, hence the reason for marking it as what had been the edge of the Wealden Forest on the 1841 Tithe Redemption map.

Old Stonnards was one of the first houses built outside those which clustered round the Green. It was located on one of the original Medieval Open Field Strips and was built around 1550. To its rear was an orchard, which was sold off and on it Orchard Cottage was built (1880s). Stonnards owned the fields opposite, which extended all the way to Hullbrook Lane, on which Parsons build houses in the late 1920s. In part of another orchard a bungalow was erected in the late 1920s which was demolished in 1990s and replaced by three chalet bungalows.

In the early 1900s four sets of semi-detached houses were built on the right side of the lane below Old Stonnards. They are called **Southview Cottages**. The set nearest Old Stonnards was demolished to allow access to Sweetwater Close in 1976 and the houses in the Close were built with bungalows at end of the cul-de-sac.

Most houses on the left of Sweetwater Lane were built in 1932/4. Sweetwater Lane was changed from a rough lane to a tarmaced road in 1932 after electricity and sewers were introduced to the village. In 1968 the lower part of the lane was widened by eight feet.

The next two properties originally extended all the way to Hulbrook Lane.

Nostra, now called **Lavender House** and much enlarged, was lived in by Dr L. Collison-Morley, an historian and literary person, who wrote the book 'Companion in Surrey'. (1930s– 48).



Greenways, next to Nostra, had its back entrance into Sweetwater Lane. Rev Mertons lived there with his spinster sisters when they first came to the village in 1936. They had refused to live in the Vicarage deeming it to be too large. When the new vicarage was built they moved into it in 1938. It then became the home to Mr & Mrs G. Hallett. George worked in West Africa for Cable & Wireless. His wife, Emma, was Sunday School Superintendent. Post 1960s the Blower family lived here for many years.

In 1965 the lower parts of both Nostra and Greenways plots bordering Hullbrook Lane were sold off for house infills. Later another infill called **Pooh Corner** was erected on another part of the Nostra curtilage between Lavender House and **Elmbank**. It was built for Philida Strong, a keen fan of A.A. Milne and local resident E.H. Shepard. She was a knowledgeable gardener.

Potters a 14th Century house, the third oldest in the village borders the south corner of the Green but the rear boundary of the original plot extends down the lower side of the lane bounded by the ancient conservation hedge/bank which its owners are supposed to trim. It has a large plane tree in the garden. One lady owner lived there with 116 cats!!!

A copse in which nightingales lived was lost in 1970s to make way for another house, initially called **Chalton House**, when the owners were the Altons. It is now renamed **Green Hill House**.

In 2002 adjacent to **No 1 Southview Cottages**, **Green Grove** was built as an infill bungalow, the attic was converted into living space.

Ramrath was built as a bungalow in 1946 and later changed to a chalet bungalow. Three generations of the Wood family have lived here. Its name is derived from a south Rhineland village in Germany where the late G. Wood served during post war occupation after WW1

Below Ramrath five houses were built on long thin strips of land by Mr A Goff. Each had different aspects and features. Initially they were all intended to be occupied by members of the Goff family and their friends.

The Cottage for many years was owned and let by one of Mr Goff's sisters. Current owners are Mr & Mrs G Webb

Manelhe, Michael's home, was built with a narrow driveway up the side, just wide enough to allow a Ford T to drive up to the garage. The house name derives from alternating the first letters of his parents' names, Marion Nancy Lucy Elliott and Albert Edward Harding. His parents were married in 1930 and Michael born in 1933.

Cherry Tree Cottage is owned by Mr & Mrs P Brodwin and has recently been extended to the side and rear.

Pilgrim Cottage is home of Mr & Mrs D Harris.

Wayside Cottage had badgers in the bank behind the property and is still owned by Mr Goff's Dutch daughter-in-law Tina.

Shawfields was erected on land that originally belonged to **Green Close** so is an early pre-war example of an infill.

Green Close, self-built by two brothers who were pig farmers, is the second oldest house in the lane. It was re-modeled and extended when the pig sties were knocked down. In the 40s and 50s it was home of local builder Reg Marchant.

On the right, each house bordering the Green had a well in which water was always fresh, maybe how name Sweetwater arose. Another theory is the privies at the back of the houses on left of the lane may have leaked into the lane making it 'not very sweet'.

Mistley Cottage was built for a Mr Dickens of Dickens and Jones who married Miss Young, daughter of the Red Lion's Licensee. A later occupant was Colonel Duncombe who served with the Queens Regiment and had been a Japanese Prisoner of war. He extended it into the roof area. He moved to a Grace and Favour house in Windsor Castle to become a Knight of Windsor, he was heir to the earldom of Feversham in Yorkshire. Following the death of his younger twin brother, his nephew was able to get the Earldom reinstated.

There are two semi detached house at the lower end of road. No 2 was the police house for many years. No 1 had a large block garage in front of it where the owner a local carrier Mr Avenell kept his large carrier's van. This was later demolished and the breeze blocks were recycled to construct the boundary between Farley and the public footpath

The occupants of **Arthurs** sold off the kitchen garden as the site on which the present **Sweetwater Cottage** stands. It was owned by Hugh Riley one of Surrey's Deputy Lord Lieutenants; but has recently changed hands.

The original road from Sweetwater Lane extended across the Green to the road junction close to the village shop. In dry summers the grass above it dries out and shows its course across to the bus shelter.

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