

Yew Tree House (Site)

Claypits Lane, Shrivenham

The history so far – By Neil B. Maw

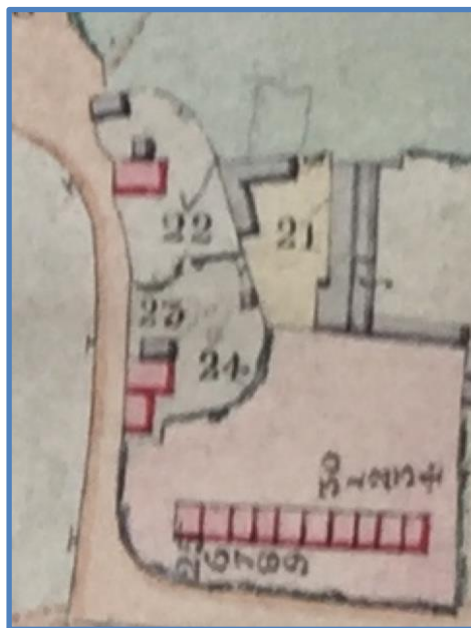


The reason that we have put the title of this property in brackets (Site) is because in historical terms, Yew Tree House is not particularly old. There is no mistaking when it was built as the builders were very obliging. (Below).



But let's have a look at the site in general as it is interesting. It will be useful here to first start at a known point and search backwards. The map below is an extract from the Barrington Estate Map of 1866. No 21 is listed as, '*Farm buildings and Yard.*' It was owned by the Barrington Estate but occupied by the late George Canfield, who had died the year

previous. George had been the Landlord of the Barrington Arms since 1835, and was a successful man. He built up the trade of the Barrington Arms Inn and also ran a Posting House. This was similar to a modern-day taxi service. Horses and Post Chaises were always ready and available to take customers wherever they needed to go. He was also very aware of the importance of the Great Western Railway when Shrivvenham Station opened in 1841. Not only did he have a Post Chaise ready to meet every train he also built the Victoria Hotel at the station, that opened in October 1842. This premises would go on as a public house, the Victoria Inn, for 170 years, being converted to a domestic dwelling in 2015. The farm buildings and yard at Claypits Lane were used by George Canfield for the preparation of meat and dairy that he used in both his premises. His father William was a successful farmer and eventually purchased Fern House in Manor Lane. We know from the letters of George Merryweather that William rented a house from the Barrington Estate, and it's possible that it may have been the house that formerly stood on the site of Yew Tree House, but we have no evidence to confirm that yet.



The house (No 22), was owned by the Barrington Estate but occupied by George Bush and called a, '*Cottage and Garden.*' The description of a cottage at this period would tend to be much larger than we might call the same today. Unfortunately, we have no description of what the previous house looked like. It is very likely that a mistake had been made with his first name on the estate map as the census for 1861 named him as James with no mention of

George in his family at all. He was a professional man, a Sub-Surveyor of Roads and if we go back to the census of 1851 he was still in the same house with the same job. He appeared on the Tithe Map of 1844 but his name was not listed in the 1841 census. Therefore, it is likely he came to Shrivenham in 1842 from Seend in Wiltshire, but we know nothing more about him at the moment. James Bush was still in his house in 1871 and was listed on the census as a, 'Foreman of Roads.' So, by this time he had been at the same house for 30 years. He died in 1875 and was buried in St Andrew's churchyard on 30th November. His wife Hannah was still living there with their daughter Elizabeth according to the census of 1881, but must have left soon after in order for the house to be demolished and a new one built in its stead; the Yew Tree House we see today dated 1885. Hannah moved to the Barrington Arms, the home of her daughter Martha who had married the landlord Thomas Phipps at Shrivenham on 3rd June 1871. Hannah passed away a few years later and was buried in St Andrew's churchyard on 6th February 1892. Thomas Phipps seems to have had a substantial involvement with Yew Tree House at that time. The Kelly's Directory of 1887 listed him as the occupier, which invites the question of whether he owned the lease on the new house. It also brings up the thought of whether there were still connections with the Barrington Arms and the farmyard to the rear.

Bush	James	50	Sub Surveyor of Roads
Bush	Hannah	41	Wife of James
Bush	Mary	19	Daughter of James. Servant
Bush	John	17	Son of James. Road Labourer
Bush	Martha	13	Daughter of James.
Bush	Elizabeth	11	Daughter of James
Bush	Louisa	6	Daughter of James.
Bush	Alice	3	Daughter of James.

Census 1861

Nos. 23 & 24, on the Estate Map above of 1866 represents two cottages. No. 23 was occupied by Henry Knapp and family and No. 24 by William Cook and his family. Neither family were listed on the census of 1861 so we assume that they had not been in the cottages very long. Henry Knapp and his family were still in the northern of the two cottages in 1871 and the census listed that his son Alfred was 6 years old. This fits in closely with the memories of the late Bill Knapp who was interviewed by Shrivenham History Society in 1980, when

he stated that, *'his father was Alfred Knapp who was born in a cottage that stood on the site where Yew Tree House now stands in 1864.'* (SHS N661).

Knapp	Henry	33	Bricklayer
Knapp	Sarah	35	Wife of Henry
Knapp	Amelia	10	Daughter of Henry
Knapp	Frederick	9	Son of Henry
Knapp	Louisa	8	Daughter of Henry
Knapp	Alfred	6	Son of Henry
Knapp	Henry	5	Son of Henry
Knapp	Leonard	3	Son of Henry

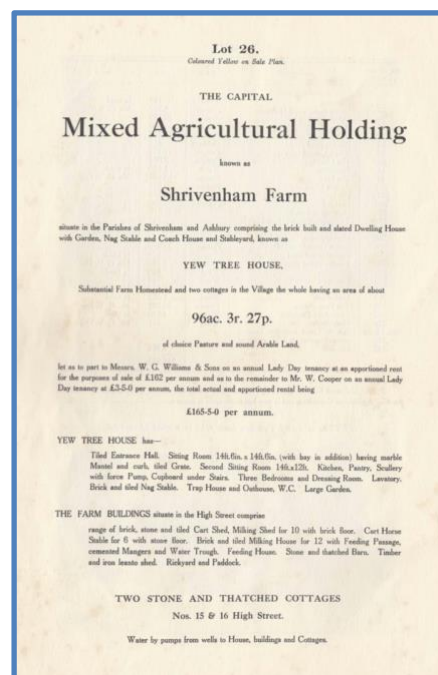
Census 1871

We have very little information on a Dr Wride. He was a medical doctor and came from Swindon. In 1892 a newspaper advert announced he was leaving and therefore Yew Tree House would be to let. The person to contact was T. Phipps of the Barrington Arms. (Swindon Adver 2nd April 1892). And then an unusual advertisement appeared later the same year under the headline of, *'Cheap Farm to Let – 600 acres,'* with the contact given as T., Yew Tree House. (Swindon Adver 23 July 1892). The Kelly's Directory of 1895 listed that Yew Tree House was occupied by a Mrs Allaway. A newspaper article in August 1893 contained the details of the sale of the estate of the late John Allaway of Bourton. (Wilts & Glos Standard 26th August 1893). Did his widow then rent Yew Tree House? She stayed at the house for many years until an advert appeared in the local newspaper announcing the sale of her household furniture and effects that would be sold from Yew Tree House on 7th May 1908. (Faringdon Adver 2nd May 1908).

It is difficult to draw any conclusion when studying the census of 1911. None of the listings specify the house by name, and none of the people in that area of the listings, bear any likeness in status to previous occupiers. An article in the local newspaper informed that for a brief period in 1913, the occupier was Walter Lawrence. (Faringdon Adver 22nd April 1916). The same article confirmed that the house was rented through an agency. We know that the property was still owned by the Barrington Estate, therefore, it is a strong possibility as mentioned above, that the leaseholder was Thomas Phipps of the Barrington Arms. The newspaper article of 1916 was a report of a court case where a farmer from Ashbury sued

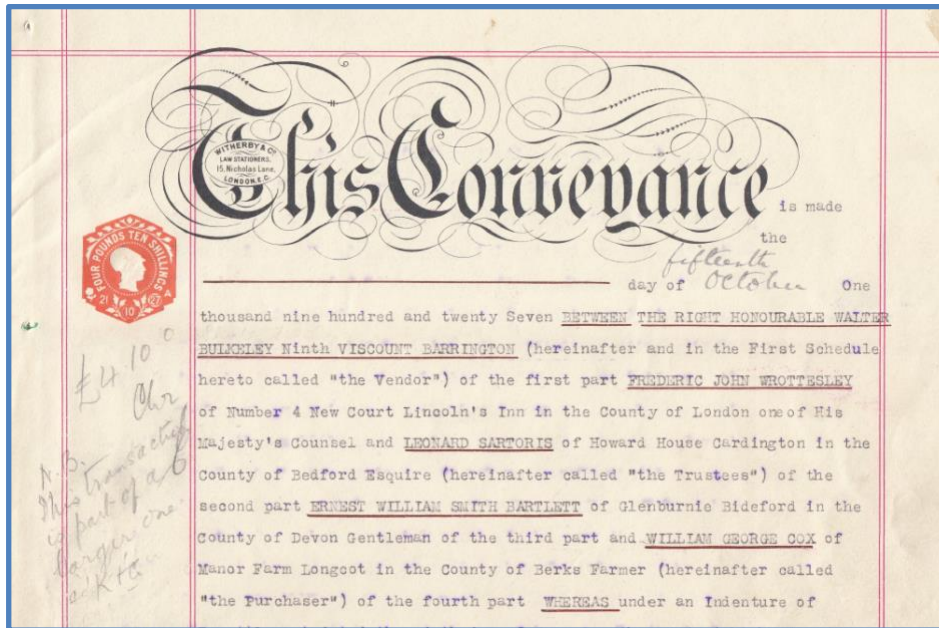
the tenant of Yew Tree House, a Mr H.K. Saunders, farmer, over a cooking range that he had loaned to his son-in-law Walter Lawrence mentioned above, and had been left in the house.

By 1922 it was becoming more urgent for the Barrington family to liquidate the assets that were contained within the estate. A previous sale of the principal farms and associated buildings in 1917, although not completely successful, had cleared away a considerable amount of property. It was the sale of 1922 that offered Yew Tree House as Lot No 26 in the catalogue, along with Shrivenham Farm, located around the corner at the Longcott road turning of the High Street (Present day Catherine Close); described as a, 'Mixed Agricultural Holding,' and part let to W.G. Williams & Sons. It is likely that they occupied the old farmyard to the rear, but at the moment we don't know who occupied the house. However, Yew Tree House failed to sell at the auction and it was not until five years later that it left the Barrington Estate.

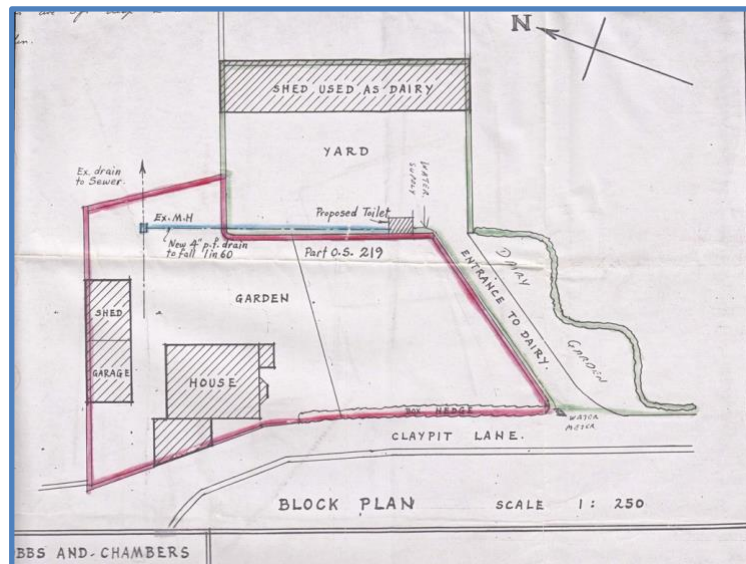


The top of the conveyance below shows Yew Tree House leaving the estate and into the hands of William Cox of Manor Farm, Longcott. The price he paid was £450. And it seems that William Cox and family held on to it for just over 20 years. A small newspaper article provided the information that a, 'F.R. Cox of Yew Tree House, Shrivenham, was fined 7s 6d for

driving a car without a licence.' (North Wilts Herald 16th Feb 1940). However, the Kelly's Directory for 1927, listed a R. Mitcham as the occupier, who was likely to have been the tenant when it was sold.

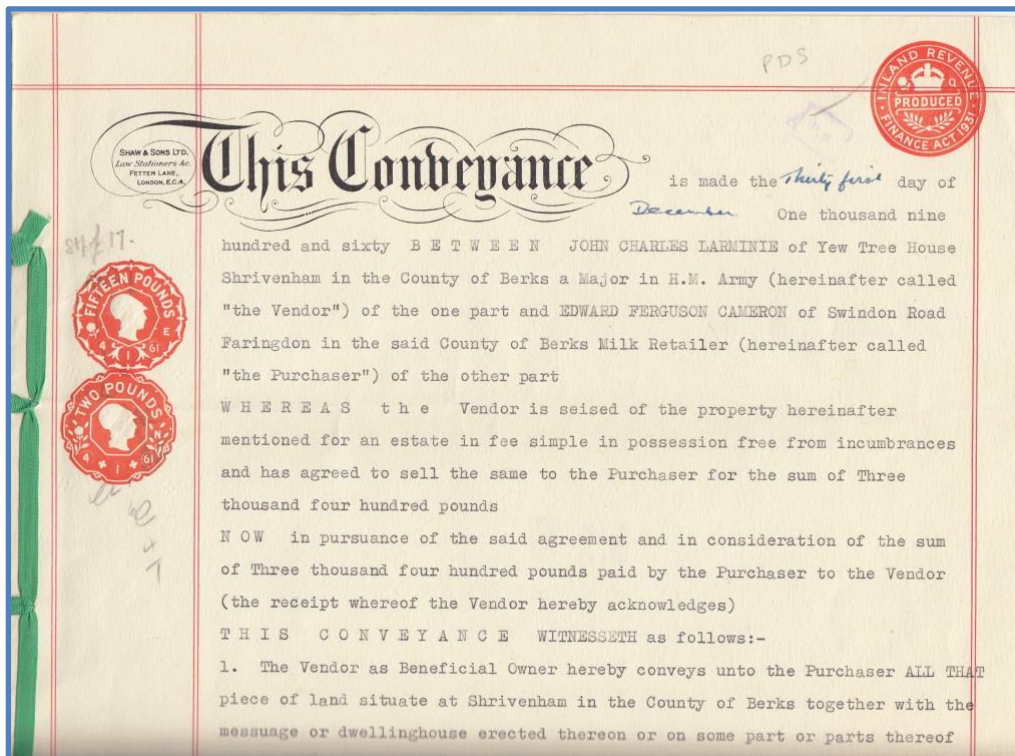


A schedule of deeds within the papers of current owners (2021), provided the rest of the history of the house and the site in general and may be thus briefly explained.

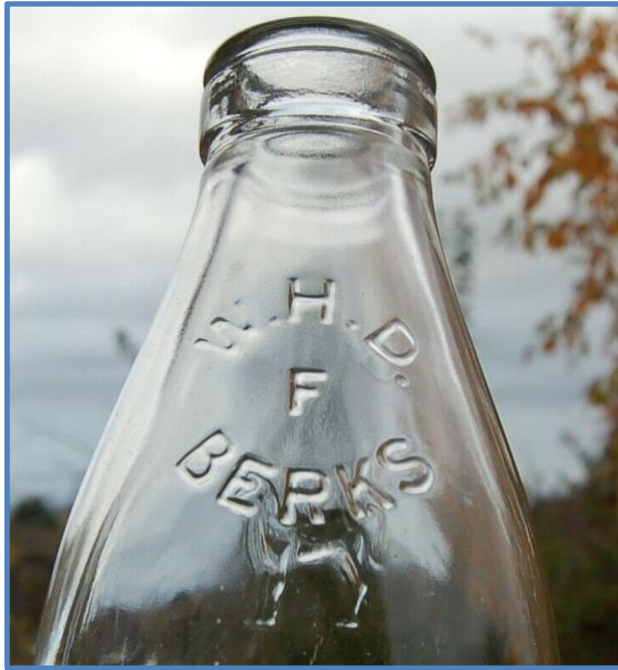


Sketch map from the Hughes documents that show the house, land & yard

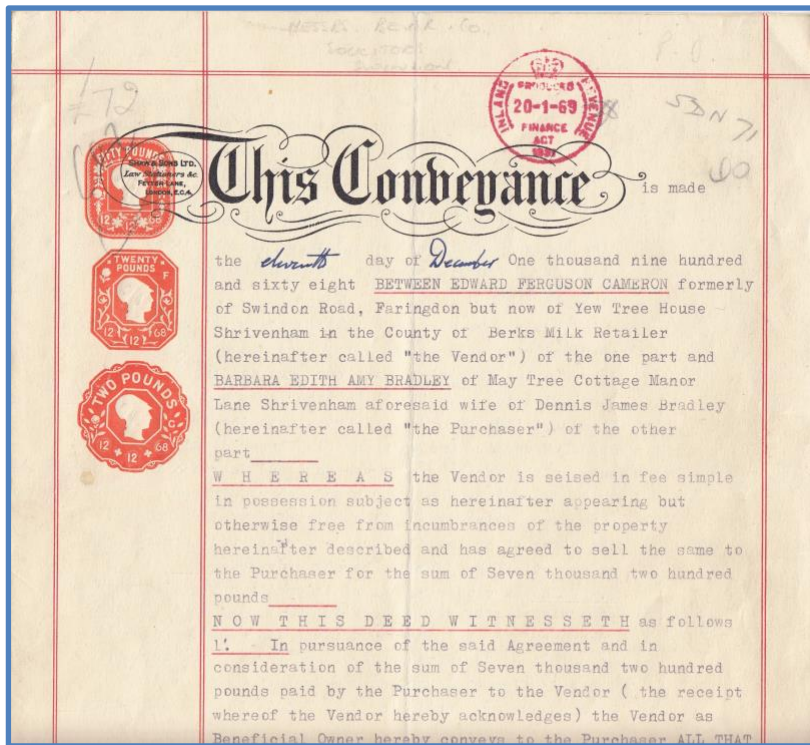
Mr W.G. Cox sold the premises to Mr Percy W. Harris on 27th January 1951 for £2300. The purchase of the land next door to Yew Tree House, where two cottages formerly stood (Nos 23 & 24 on the 1866 Estate Map above) was also by Percy Harris from the War Dept on 28th May 1951. He also purchased the yard that was used historically as a farmyard by George Canfield, (No 21 on same map), on 21st May 1955. Three years later, Percy Harris sold all of it to Major John Charles Larminie of Andover by a conveyance dated 1st September 1958, price £3600. On the last day of December 1960, the Major sold the house and piece of land next door to the south to Edward Ferguson Cameron of Faringdon for £4500.



It was during this period that Edward (Eddie) Cameron established the Shrivenham Depot of the Faringdon based, White Horse Dairy. The milk was processed in the dairy behind the house, (now converted into a Bungalow known as The Old Dairy, No 26 Claypits Lane.) The milk floats were loaded at the back of the house and exited alongside it to the main road via the narrow Claypits lane. Eight years later Eddie Cameron sold the house to Barbara Bradley of May Tree Cottage, Dodds Lane, Shrivenham for £7200.



Above: A White Horse Dairy milk bottle. Below: Top of the conveyance selling Yew Tree House to Barbara Bradley in 1968



Bryan and Suzanne Bowen next took possession of the house from the Bradley's but we have no firm date for when this occurred, but thought to be circa 1975. And lastly, in 1999, owners Samuel Gordon and Elizabeth Mary Hughes, the current owners (2021), purchased the property and have enhanced it with numerous additions.

Shrivenham Heritage Society would like to thank Gordon & Elizabeth Hughes and David & Cecilia Peters, for allowing access to their property documents. If any reader has further information that will enhance this listing, please get in touch with us:

info@shrivenhamheritagesociety.co.uk

