

## The Old Poor House (80 High Street)

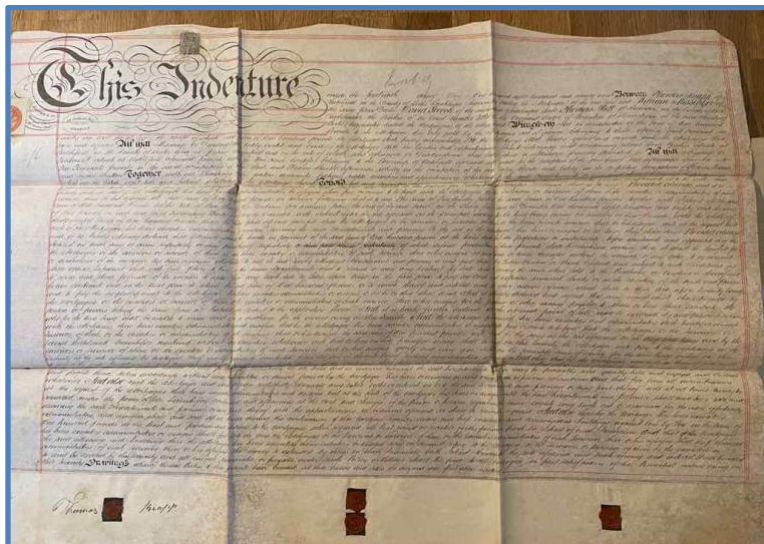
By Neil B. Maw



The sight of the documents kindly allowed by property owner Ian Pearson, begins with an Indenture of 1879. But we do have earlier evidence of what was on the site in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. The survey map of 1758 drawn by Francis Willington (extract below) shows the animal pound in which the school was built in 1862, (red rectangle) and there is a building butted up to the wall of the pound at the side and one to the rear. The one to the side is highly likely to have been what was the Poor House that is referred to in later documents.

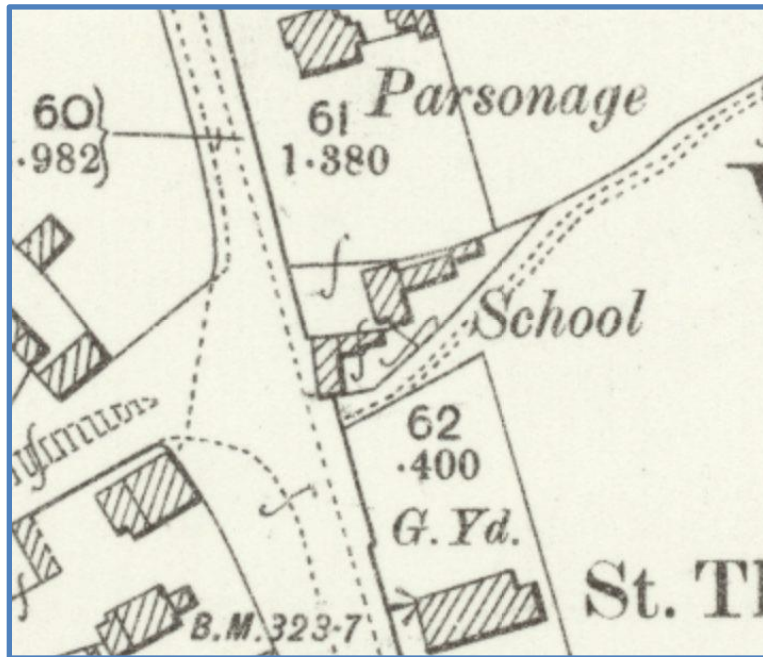


The Indenture dated 14<sup>th</sup> May 1879 is between Thomas Knapp who is a Watchfield Bricklayer by trade, and the trustees of Court No 2161 of the Ancient Order of Foresters of Shrivenham. The Foresters was an organisation with similar aims of a trade union. Members paid into a fund that would be used to assist in times of need such as illness or accident preventing the ability to work. Also similar to trade unions today, they put their funds to work by loaning money to earn interest. And such was the arrangement in this instance. Thomas Knapp borrowed two amounts from the Foresters, £100 and £30, as a mortgage in order to build a new house, the one we see today.



The Indenture stated that the mortgage was secured on property which was described as *'All that Messuage or Dwellinghouse lately erected and built by the Mortgager'* (Thomas Knapp). It also gives the information that the ground in which the property stands was four Perches in size. (One Perch contained 25 square metres). It further described that, *'on the site of which said Messuage or Dwellinghouse, there lately stood a Messuage formerly described as, all that Messuage or Tenement formerly called the Poor House heretofore belonging to the Township of Watchfield.'*

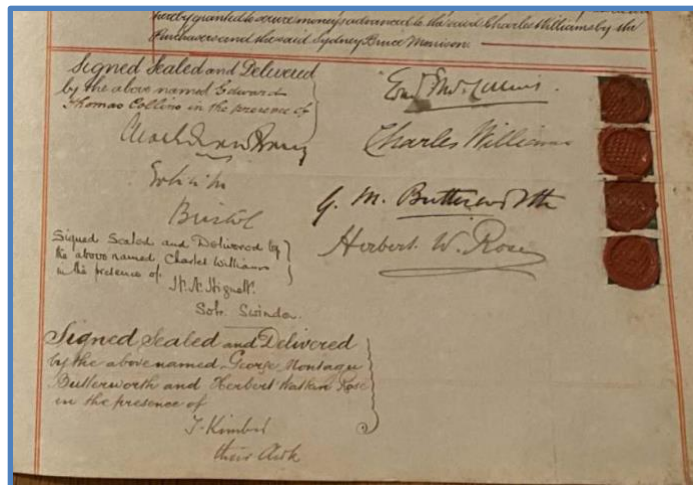
From the above description we can surmise that the premises that was the poor house had either been incorporated into the new dwellinghouse or, more likely, had been taken down. The size of the whole ground being four Perches suggest that it was the entire ground to rear that led up to the lane.



A decade later Thomas Knapp decided to sell the new house he had built to one of the Trustees of the Shrivenham Court of Foresters; David Pocock who had been the landlord of the Royal Oak Inn at Watchfield until 1884, when he decided to embark on a new career as a shopkeeper. There seems to have been money left to be paid to the Foresters on the original loans that amounted to £130, but it concluded with David Pocock paying Thomas £80.

A few years later, David Pocock sold the property on to a man called Charles Williams of New Swindon, described as a Builder; the price was £180. It was still being described in the Indenture as having a garden and appurtenances containing about four perches. On the 24<sup>th</sup> December 1890, the day after the purchase of the

property, Charles Williams borrowed £140 from two gentleman lenders secured on the same. A decade later, the problems encountered in the life of Charles Williams brought him to point when in May 1903 he was declared bankrupt. The following month an administrator was appointed to handle the affairs of his estate and the house was purchased by Alfred Knapp of Shrivenham for £150 in 1905. (sale document signatures below)



We have evidence in the form of a photograph dated 1905 to show that at the time of this sale, the property was called *Lilemore Cottage*, but we have no documentary evidence to confirm it. (Below courtesy of Paul Williams).

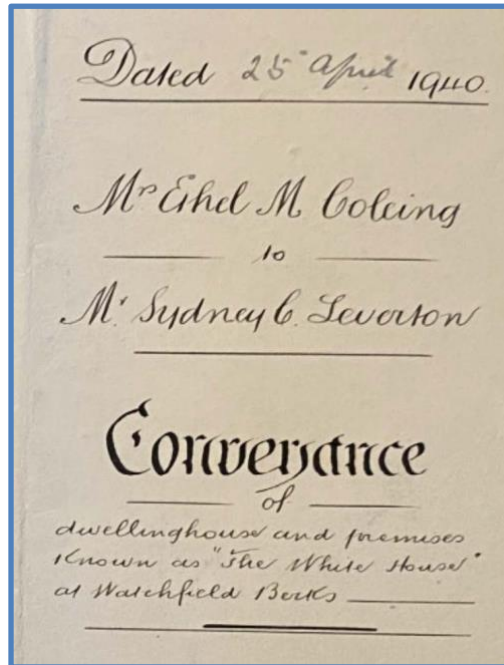


The electoral register for 1912 recorded that the occupier was Alfred Cook. It's likely that Alfred Knapp rented out the property rather than occupy it himself. He sold it in 1929 to George Wilson of The Grange in Bourton for £300 and the Indenture recorded that the property was unoccupied at that time. However, the electoral register for 1938 recorded that the property was occupied by Dennis and Gladys Taylor. We have a photo from circa 1935 showing the gable end of the property. (Below courtesy of Paul Williams).



Farmer George Wilson kept the property for seven years before selling it to Ethel Coleiny of Faringdon for £350 in October 1936. In April 1940, Ethel sold the property for £450 to Sydney Leverton, a Gentleman's Outfitter in Faringdon. This document listed the property being called the '*White House*.' Sydney Leverton seems to have purchased the property as a long-term investment as he leased it to Thomas Goodman for a term of 21 years for £58.10 shillings per annum but payable on a weekly basis. During the term of the lease, he borrowed £700 in February 1952 using the property as collateral and he continued to own the property until May 1973 when

he sold it for £3000. It was purchased by Stanley and Gay Goodman who were likely to have been related to Thomas who had taken out the lease previously. It was during this time that one of the front rooms facing the high street was turned into a Barber's shop by Stan Goodman.



The 1970s was a time when house prices were rising rapidly and in June 1976, Stan and Gay Goodman sold the White House to Charles and Jane Naylor from Tamworth for £8,500. In three years, the Goodmans had nearly tripled their money.

The current occupiers, Ian Pearson and his wife, purchased the property in 1980 and are still there today. Once again, we thank them for allowing us sight of their documents.

If you have any more information that could be added to this article, please get in touch with us at

[info@shrivenhamheritagesociety.co.uk](mailto:info@shrivenhamheritagesociety.co.uk)



A photograph from 1905 showing the White House and the church in 1905.

(Photo from the Hooper Collection courtesy of Paul Williams).