

WESTFIELD HOUSE

BARBY



BARBY LOCAL
HISTORY GROUP
OCTOBER
2021



INTRODUCTION

Westfield House lies on the west side of Rugby Road, at its junction with Elkington Lane. Although it faces Rugby Road and its address is 1 Rugby Road, both its front and back entrances are accessed from Elkington Lane.

The house is based on a set of four rooms, roughly equal in size, on the ground floor: two at the front, two at the back, one of each on either side of a narrow central hallway; the main upstairs rooms are similarly positioned and of similar proportions. This structure gives an impression of a solid square house when it is viewed from the front, from Rugby Road. But, in actuality, it is an L-shaped building: on the ground floor to the north is a fifth room (in line with the main back rooms), above which are two rooms of smaller proportions, resulting in a separate lower roof section. There are no usable attics, but there are cellars below the two front ground floor rooms. There are no windows in the north elevation other than one at ground level providing access to the cellars. Those windows facing east and south have large panes of glass; the west-facing (back) windows have smaller panes.

Viewed from outside, the house appears to be a relatively unadulterated Victorian property, but inside there is evidence of modification. The deeds date back no further than 1955. The house's history must, therefore, be deduced from what other clues remain. There is a range of sources that help to estimate the date when it was built, its original features and their modifications.



THE SITE

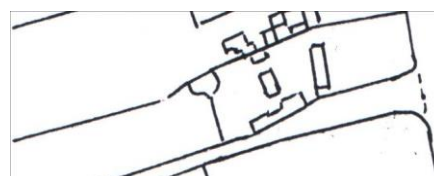
The house stands on a site that was previously occupied by a building with a smaller footprint.

The earliest extant map of Barby – the Enclosure map of 1778 – shows a building occupying roughly the area of the 'back half' of the existing house, the part without cellars, suggesting that the back part of the new house was literally built on the old house 'foundations'. As does the present house, the old one was attached to land amounting to about 5 acres beside Elkington Lane (Davis's Lane in 1778).¹ The field beyond the stream that, pre-Enclosure, marked the limit of land enclosed in earlier times, still retains the ridge and furrow of Wood Field, one of the three common fields of the village.

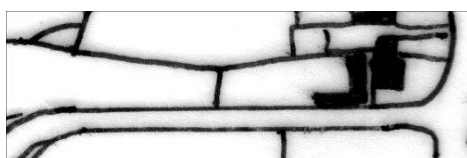


The village centre as shown on the 1778 Enclosure map

The map drawn up by Charles Oakley in 1840 for use in Poor Law tax assessments shows a similar building, but detached from *York Cottage*, its neighbour on the north side. There are also outbuildings, principally beside what has become Elkington's Road.²



A section of the 1840 map



Maps showing Westfield House: c1885 (left) & 1914 (right)

¹ Northamptonshire Record Office (NRO), 24P/211 and Map 5082

The Ordnance Survey maps of the later Nineteenth Century show a different set of buildings. The house is more substantial, protruding further towards Rugby Road and further towards *York Cottage*. The outbuildings are also more substantial and newly positioned. By 1914, at the time of the Evaluation Survey, the layout of the buildings approximates that of today.³

Thus the evidence from maps suggests rebuilding on the site between 1840 and 1885, and again between 1885 and 1910.

OWNERS

The earliest known owner of the site, named in the Enclosure Award of 1778, was Edward Elkington (1750-1813). Besides the land attached to his house, he was assigned a field of about 11 acres, accessed from the green lane running between Elkington Lane and Barby Mill. He also farmed 15 acres on Longdown Lane, owned by his brother, which he later inherited.⁴

Edward's father, also Edward (1711-1763), paid tax on nine windows in 1752, when he was living in a house on the site of *Lilac Cottage*.⁵ The Elkingtons were certainly not newcomers in the village: the earliest mention of an Elkington in the parish registers is the record of John Elkington's marriage in 1561.

Edward's son John was the owner listed by Oakley in 1840, farming a total of 50 acres. Of John's eight children, only one was a son, who died before he was 4 years old. His wife died in 1839. John himself died in 1842 before any of his daughters had married.⁶ At the time of the 1851 census only two unmarried daughters were living on the site. They were both described as 'annuitants'. This suggests that their father's land, apart from that attached to the house, had been sold and the proceeds invested to give them an income, rather than being rented out. The 11-acre field is known to have belonged to Thomas Bosworth in 1890.⁷

John's youngest daughter, Eliza, was the last to marry, in 1857; although her eldest three children were born in Coventry, she and her family were living in Barby in 1861, farming 120 acres at present-day Ivy House Farm. It is most probable that the Westfield House site was sold after Eliza married, so 1857 would be the earliest date for rebuilding, but an uninhabited property was listed there at the 1861 census.

² NRO, ZA 1431 & Map 4418

³ The National Archives (TNA), IR58/5910-12, IR126/5/125 & IR126/5/191

⁴ NRO, Will of William Elkington, proved 26.10.1783

⁵ NRO, D6330, Window Tax, 1752

⁶ Dates of births, marriages and deaths are from Barby parish registers unless otherwise stated and have not been individually referenced.

⁷ Barby LHG, Deeds of *Fairholme Farm*

⁸ NRO, Will of Richard Pittom, proved 6 April 1870

expenditure'. The whole property had a gross value of £1060 and Sidney was farming about 100 acres.⁹

In 1933 Sidney obtained a mortgage for £1800. Selina died in 1939. Sidney Thomas died intestate in 1954, when he was living at *Northfield House*, Barby. He had been an active member of the village community, serving as a churchwarden for 55 years and for many as chair of the parish council. He was known as Sid Pittom.

The property was let during and after World War II to the Burdett family, who were very active in the village. Harry organised the village football club and was a member of Barby Home Guard.



BARBY HOME GUARD

Harry Burdett (1911-1973), who lived in Westfield House during World War II, is on the extreme left in the front row. George Elkington (1898-1981), great-great-grandson of Edward Elkington (1750-1813), is second from the right middle row.

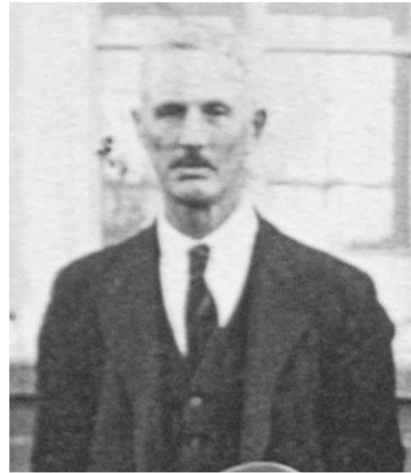
Sidney William, a farmer like his father, was living at *Foxley Lodge*, Towcester, when he arranged the sale of Westfield House to William Henson of Nortoft Lodge Farm in 1955, for the sum of £2250.¹⁰

William Henson lived in the house with his wife, a son and a daughter; his brother lived next door in York Cottage. When he died in 1973, the house (with 5 acres) was purchased by Colin and Daphne Rourke.¹¹

⁹ TNA, IR58/59150-52, IR126/5/125 & IR126/5/191

¹⁰ Barby LHG, Deeds of *Westfield House*

¹¹ See the Appendix for an account of life in William Henson's time.



Above: SID PITTOM as a member of Barby's 1937 Coronation Committee

Left: BILL HENSON in his youth with his sister Gladys

THE AGE OF THE HOUSE

The size and style of the Pittom household in 1881 implies that the building now known as Westfield House was built by William Pratt Pittom in the 1870s. The 'subsequent expenditure', of 5% of the value of the house before 1914, by a son of that household, suggests modifications were carried out during the first decade of the Twentieth Century.

There are further clues to the age of the house to be found in the buildings and garden.

- 1 Chimney pots on the main roof are dated 1868. They were manufactured by Henry Lumby at the St Martin's Terra Cotta Works in Stamford, Lincolnshire.



- 2 All the firegrates except that in the back sitting room are of the arch plate register design, which became popular in the 1850s.¹²
- 3 A garden wall coping brick is the product of Broadbent & Stanley of Nuneaton. This company existed for only four years, from 1867 to 1871.¹³



- 4 There are two Austrian pine trees in the front garden, but also a *Wellingtonia*, comparable in size with the one at Osborne House, IOW, known to have been planted by Prince Albert in 1855. These trees were first imported to Britain in 1853.¹⁴ The Copper Beech is of a similar age; it was also a mid-century import. The rose beneath the *Wellingtonia* is a moss rose, *William Lobb*, bred by Laffay in 1855.¹⁵

These clues suggest that the house was completed between 1868 and 1871, by someone who was keen to impress, not only with his grand modern house, but also with his fashionable garden stock. The sweeping driveway to the front elevation (now grassed over, but gravelly beneath) is another indication of aspiration to grandeur.

A legitimate conclusion is that the original house on the Westfield House site was replaced by a grander dwelling by William Pratt Pittom after he inherited and married in 1870.

THE HOUSE IN 1914

The list of ground floor rooms itemised in the 1914 survey report corresponds closely to the present-day layout. However, Sidney Pittom had spent £50 'subsequent expenditure' after moving into the house in the 1900s and others before him may have made alterations to the original 1870 building. There is nothing in either the 'Dining Rm' or the 'Drawing Rm' (both in

¹² David J Everleigh, *Firegrates and Kitchen Ranges* (Aylesbury: Shire, 1983), p 8

¹³ Warwickshire County Record Office, *Stanley Brothers Ltd of Nuneaton c1830-1896*, CR 2816

¹⁴ www.english-heritage.org.uk/discover/parks-and-gardens/trees-at-eh-sites/

¹⁵ David Austin, *Handbook of Roses 2010/11*, p 53

the front part of the house) to suggest change. The problematic area is the back 'service' area of the house, particularly the northern 'extension', occupied, in 1914 as now, by the kitchen. Indications are that this was not always so.



Section of the Valuation Survey map c1914

Even in 1911, the house required a live-in servant, and, in 1914, a servant's bedroom is listed. When the house was built there were probably more servants but not necessarily living in; indeed, there were two listed in 1881. On the ground floor, the front and back 'halves' of the house are separated by a door in the hallway, and, high on the wall in the back hall, there is a set of nine bells. The bell system was mechanical, the wire from each bell passing under floorboards and up and down walls to its own destination. Allowing for a bell at each of the front and back doors, there must have been seven rooms beyond the dividing door from which the family might call for service. The dining room, drawing room and four bedrooms account for six. The seventh could have been the 'Dress^g Rm' but is more likely to have been the 'Bath Rm (H&C)'.



Members of Barby Local History Group measuring the depth of the tank

Westfield House was built with Victorian 'mod cons'. There was neither gas nor electricity, but there was a running, hot and cold, water system. Outside, under the driveway at the back of the house, lies a large spherical brick water collection tank, about 15 feet in diameter, fed with rainwater by pipes from the roofs of the house and outbuildings. Inside, in the attic, lies a large iron water tank, too

large to have been installed there except during construction of the house. Between the two there would have been a pumping system. This accounts for the cold water. The 1914 survey report comments: 'no hard water only soft, a great draw back water gives out'.

Today, in Sidney Pittom's 'Sitting Rm' at the back of the house, there are large cupboards filling the alcoves on either side of the chimney breast; within one of these there are disused iron pipes. There is but a small open canopied fireplace, of late Nineteenth Century design, within a mock-marble surround.¹⁶ The cracks disguised in the surrounding wall suggest this was once a larger fireplace. It seems likely that the pipes were originally connected to a range, which provided, not only hot water, but heat for the room and cooking facilities. The presence of the cupboards and tiled floor emphasises that this was originally a service room, rather than a sitting room, suggesting that this was where Sidney spent most of his £50.

The fourth large square room on the ground floor is the 'Larder (Tile fl)', separated from the outside wall by a corridor giving access to the 'Back Stairs' and thus having no direct natural light. The tiling patterns in this back area of the house suggest that this arrangement is original. The larder is one of only four rooms in the house that had no fireplace in 1973, the others being the kitchen, the dressing room and the fourth large bedroom. In 1870, heating could have been via wood fires, since wood was grown on the land, but, in 1914, one of the listed outbuildings was a 'Coal H^{se}'.

Upstairs, in the main body of the house, there were three or four bedrooms and a 'WC' besides the dressing room and bathroom. But what was the status of Sidney Pittom's 'Kitchen (B fl)' (and its upper rooms) when the house was first built?

THE KITCHEN

Unlike the two other back rooms on the ground floor, which had (and still have) tiled floors, the kitchen has a brick floor. This categorises the room as an outhouse - the coalhouse, for example, had a brick floor – and not an integral part of the house, despite the appearance of the external brickwork. When the room was re-plastered in 2007, it was clear that the door between the kitchen and the service corridor (outside the Larder) was not part of the original design. Furthermore, the kitchen side of the dividing wall had originally been pointed to a high standard, and one of the outer doors had been moved (or inserted). This raises the possibility that originally the outbuilding and house were completely separate or separated by a narrow internal passageway. This would have given access from outdoors to the cellars at the front of the house without the need to pass through the front garden. The cellar window (at ground level) in the north wall provides access via steps, whereas that in the south wall is protected by a grill and serves merely for ventilation.

¹⁶ Everleigh, p 13

With or without the passageway, the 'kitchen' was part of the servicing facilities of the house – a dairy perhaps, close to the cellar where milk could be stored in a cool damp atmosphere. It probably also housed laundry facilities. In 1973, over the sink stood a hand-pump (subsequently moved outdoors). The room (or perhaps two rooms) certainly had at least one fireplace, indicated by the sooty deposits on the walls adjacent to the chimney-breast on the north wall (found in 2007).

The room would have needed a ladder or staircase to reach the two rooms above, probably both servants' rooms, as one still was in 1914.



A view from the north east showing all the house's chimney pots

THE OUTBUILDINGS

The brickwork of the outbuildings present today appears to be contemporaneous with that of the main house. The brick and slate buildings listed in 1914 were: 'Coal H^{se}, Harness R^m, 2 Loose Boxes (used for Pigstyes), 3 Tie Cow H^{se}, Barn'. In addition there were a 'Yard (dirty), Old Shed, Stable' and wood and corrugated iron '3 Bay Open Cart H^{se}'. All these, except the pigstyes, can be identified today.

Evidence for their age can be found on the walls of the Harness Room. The harness room is the only one of the outbuildings equipped with a fireplace: a simple hob grate of pre-1860 design (possibly salvaged from the earlier house on the site).¹⁷ It was also lined with wood planks.

¹⁷ Everleigh, p 4



An inscription dated 1891 describes the purchase of two sixteen-week-old pigs and pig food. This inscription thus implies that the house was occupied in 1891.

SIDNEY PITOM'S ALTERATIONS

Although Sidney Pittom was too young to occupy the house in 1891, he would surely have occupied it after his marriage in 1901, and begun alterations to accommodate his growing family.

Downstairs, it seems likely that when the back service room was converted into a 'Sitting Rm', with a modern fire grate, most of its previous functions were transferred to the old dairy/scullery. This would have necessitated the creation of a door through to the new kitchen, which in turn would have lost some of its old functions. There is, immediately adjoining, but not integrated with, the outside wall of the kitchen, a windowless brick outhouse. It contains a brick-surrounded copper, with (until recently) a bricked-in flue passing through the common wall to the kitchen chimney.



At the top of the back stairs, there is clear evidence that alterations were carried out, but precisely what remains in dispute. It seems likely that the space above the new kitchen was integrated with the main house at first floor level to provide a new bathroom, thus freeing up the original bathroom to provide either an enlarged, or completely new, fourth bedroom.

This fourth bedroom (at the back of the house) is the only bedroom to have no fireplace. Its window is of a slightly different style from that of the other seventeen; in 2010 a component part was found to be inscribed 'Pittam'; no other window parts were so inscribed. This suggests that an earlier window was replaced, possibly enlarged when the room's function was changed. The room's door is awkwardly positioned and the room lies directly below the original cold-water tank in the attic and adjacent to the back stairs. There are brass taps in the corridor outside; they bear a monogram indicating they were purchased from Stock Bros & Taylor, of Temple Street, Birmingham, one of the brassware companies belonging to Stock Bros known to have existed between 1851 and 1897.¹⁸



This fourth bedroom (or a part of it) is a strong candidate for the role of original bathroom. After his initial transformation of the house, from a servant-dependent mansion into a more family-friendly home, Sid Pittom appears to have made no major changes, although electricity and mains water could have been installed when these services arrived in the village in the 1930s.

However, Pittom was a serious farmer, and, in 1918, he repaired or replaced the 3-bay open carhouse with the outbuilding whose frame remains today. Whatever its original materials, by 1973 it was a wood and rusty corrugated iron construction.



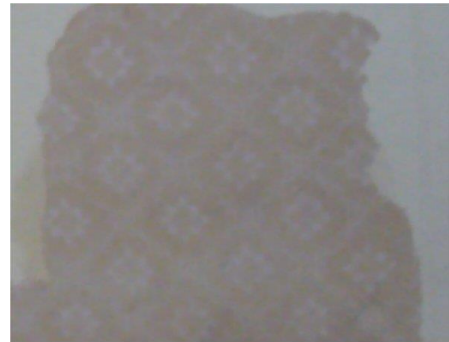
HENSON'S ALTERATIONS

The major modification made by William Henson was the installation of a ring-main electricity supply, or, possibly, the replacement of an earlier system, complete with brown bakelite light switches.

¹⁸1875 Birmingham Directory, p1000066

The Rayburn cooker positioned in the centre of the room in 1973 was of a 1950s design. It was probably a replacement for an older range cooker which occupied the large chimney-breast, but which was full of rubble in 1973.

Other alterations were probably confined to installation of a 1950s bathroom (over the eastern side of the kitchen) and slow-burning solid-fuel stoves in three bedrooms and the dining room. Also, a complete redecoration of the house appears to have been carried out in the 1950s. The wallpaper and chocolate brown paintwork from that time still survived in 1973.



Left: a typical wallpaper; right: a ceiling paper

The outbuildings appear to have been little altered. The flowerbeds contained roses, paeonies, irises, snowdrops and bluebells, but the garden was dominated then, as now, by trees, including a Williams pear and Victoria plum (no longer there). Whatever the original status of the area between the south wall of the house and Elkington Lane, in 1973 it nurtured a fine crop of Brussels sprouts. The group of trees bordering Rugby Road and Elkington Lane, including the copper beech, two pines and Wellingtonia, had been subjected to a Tree Preservation Order.

CHANGES SINCE 1973

Henson's solid-fuel stoves were removed in 1973 when an oil-fired boiler was installed to provide central heating and hot water in conjunction with the Rayburn. The house was partially rewired, although some of the bakelite switches remain. New plumbing was installed over several years and included connection of the outside WC to the mains water supply.

The two rooms over the kitchen, formerly a bedroom and a bathroom, have been converted into a bathroom and shower-room respectively. Both corner fireplaces have been boarded over.

When Mark Clare of Long Buckby (but born in Barby) redecorated the hall and stairs in 2005, he revealed an inscription made by another Long Buckby decorator in 1955. Mark added his own.

The kitchen has undergone several changes, beginning with the repositioning of the pump outside the back door. Excavation of the bricked-in fireplace revealed nothing of interest, but supplied a suitable place for an oil-fired Aga to replace the solid-fuel Rayburn. More recently, in 2007, the flue from the copper was removed and the uneven plaster stripped from the walls. The outside walls were relined with inch-thick foam-backed plasterboard, to improve insulation. The chimneybreast was adjusted to make way for a larger Aga. New cupboards, made by Russell Vessey, a local craftsman, have been installed and topped with green slate from the Honister Slate Mine. The redbrick floor survives.

Apart from removal of the stoves and redecoration, the main bedrooms, dining room, drawing room and sitting room were unchanged until 2010, when further attempts to improve insulation were made. All the windows in the house were refurbished, with rotten wood (mostly oak cills) replaced (with treated softwood) and draft-excluding strips added. The work was carried out by James Smith (Sash Window Specialist) of Shepshed; in January 2017 further minor adjustments to the windows were made. Most of the outside walls have been lined with a centimetre-thick foam-backed wallpaper (Sempatap). This has involved redecoration of (at least) the treated walls, again undertaken by Mark Clare (and Rick Pegler).

In 1999, the driveway access to the back doors of the house was relaid. The bricks outside the kitchen door and the cobbles beside the garden wall were lifted. The whole drive was repaved, with blue-brick supplementing the reclaimed material. A new stone slab was incorporated at the back kitchen door. More recently, a blue-brick path was laid to the front garden.

In 2006, the collapsing brick and slate fuel stores were rebuilt by Woodpecker Joinery using glass and cedar to create a potting shed to complement the 55-foot poly-tunnel erected in 1973. The brick floor in the larger section has been covered with loosely-laid terracotta tiles, providing drainage. The floor of the smaller section had been covered with concrete by previous owners.

Most of the original outbuildings have been given new doors. Pittom's corrugated barn was rebuilt in the 1970s using breeze-block, brick, slate and glass, but the main wooden uprights and roof trusses remain; more recently it has been restabilised, with corrugated plastic replacing the heavy roof glass.

The narrow strip of land (an orchard in 1914, but no longer in 1973) connecting the farmyard to the 5-acre field has been well cultivated. Two orchard areas were planted in the 1970s,

one of apples and pears, one of cherries and plums; there have been additions and subtractions since. The poly-tunnel's permanent plants today consist of a peach tree and a grape vine. Between the two orchards, the land has been well manured, and includes a soft fruit area, caged to keep out grey squirrels.

The field itself has been tidied by Hebridean sheep.

The front garden now sports a wider range of plants, including a black mulberry, two silver birches and several clematis.



APPENDIX

On 13 June 2016, **Kathleen Woodward**, granddaughter of William Henson, who lived in Westfield House from 1955 until his death in 1973, wrote:

'My sister Rosemary and I spent school holidays with Gran (Lucy), Pap, Uncle Jim and Auntie Bett, my Dad's family at Westfield House.

They mostly lived in the kitchen where there was a huge pine table. There was a TV in the breakfast room where there was another huge table. This is where Rosemary and I played cards etc and watched racing on the TV on wet afternoons.

We played houses having a flight of stairs each to walk down to answer the door. We lived in a bungalow so stairs were a novelty.

In the paddock there was a huge pile of tree trunks which we played all sorts of games on. I remember there was a branch sticking out at the back which was a rudder for our pretend barge.

Auntie Bett looked after the livestock. We helped her feed the calves, hens, ducks and geese, which we were very wary of. She milked the house cow by hand. In the evenings we went with her to shut the poultry up. It was quite scary in the dusk. We'd be showing the ducks into their hut but we were very nervous if we heard an owl hoot or a fox bark. We'd run and stay very close to Auntie Bett then.

We kept our toys in the dressing room between Uncle Jim and Gran's bedrooms. Pap slept in the room next to the bathroom in what had been the servants' quarters. We slept in Auntie Bett's bedroom.

I have such vivid happy memories of our holidays with Gran and Pap.'