

THE FIRS 64 High Street

The cottage at 64 High Street is of mid to late C17 origin, with C19 alterations. It is a listed grade II building cited as a former farmhouse. It has variously, since the time of parliamentary enclosure, been titled 'The Firs', or 'Firs Farm'. There is little in the available evidence to suggest farming operations ever took place on the scale of the three main village farmyards at Farmers End. Landholdings associated with The Firs, until recently, do not seem to have been above 5 acres. In the C19 and previously in the history of Toft, a number of cottages were involved with small-scale husbandry, forming farmsteads. South View farm on Hardwick Road was one instance; the landlord of the Black Bull public house also had land and engaged in small scale farming as a complementary occupation. Early Ordnance Survey maps show a small farmyard with stables and barns and other buildings, adjacent to the cottage. The deeds of The Firs indicate that the property was leased to tenants who presumably were responsible for any farming operations. The first Post Office in the village was housed in the cottage before WW1, moving to its present location between 1945 and 1947. There was also a general stores housed in the building at this period. The cottage was subdivided into separate tenancies until 1965. The property currently provides a home for its owners and although most of the farmyard was demolished at an earlier date, the land currently attaching to The Firs is in use for stabling and grazing meadows.

Timeline

- 1812 The cottage and close, with adjacent plot (9 and 14 1912 Inclosure map) in ownership of John Nutt
- 1845 James Smith, owner of cottage and close (35 1845 tythe map) occupier Thomas Harlock
- 1879 The first post office has opened in Toft by this date, housed in Firs Cottage and run by Alfred Bodger.
- 1883 Thomas Bolton runs the post office.

- 1892 Frederick Dixon is postmaster
- 1908 William Harrup is postmaster
- 1902 Ordnance Survey map 1902 shows the Post Office housed in the Firs
- 1912 Daniel Creek is postmaster
- 1915 David Creek noted in Kelly's as grocer
- 1916 Daniel Creek sub postmaster
- 24.6.19 Conveyance of The Firs from Miss Elisabeth Rungay Banks to Edith Margaret Clark (tenant) and land adjoining 4a1r7p with barns, stables and houses and other buildings in occupation of Joseph Worboys as tenant
- 3.2.24 Death of Edith Margaret Clark - wills The Firs to her husband James Clark
- 1.5.33 Vesting assent by representatives of James Clark (dcd. 22.3.33) husband of Edith Margaret Clark, of freehold house and garden, The Firs to Florence Hamilton Cossar
- 30.12.33 Agreement Florence Hamilton Cossar (wife of Rev Horace James Cossar) to Walter Alden to lease the Firs (plot 77 only) or known as Post Office and general stores, with garden and timber store until 25.3.34 and thereon
- 2.4.35 Eugene Gruche de la Mare (dcd 6.6.48) purchased plot 87 OS 1887
- 1937 Walter Alden was recorded in Kelly's as grocer and post master.
- 1939-45 Mr and Mrs Allden tenants of Firs Farm. The post office transferred from Firs Cottage to the Toft Shop at around 1945/47. It is possible the store in Firs Cottage closed in the same period.
- 27.11.50 Conveyance of plot 87 OS 1887 by Eugene Gruche de la Mare to Clifford Tebbitt
- 19.11.54 The Firs and land adjoining conveyance by Florence Hamilton Cossar to Eileen Joan Hartley (73, 77 and 78 OS 1877)

- 16.12.55 Conveyance by Eileen Joan Hartley of The Firs and other buildings, to Howard Jordan Hine (0.501 acres) and 4a1r7p of adjoining land with barn, stables and other buildings as described in conveyance between Florence Hamilton Cossar to vendor
- 8.1.65 Clifford Tebbitt conveyed land (OS no. 79 [87 on 1887 OS]) to Howard Jordan Hine (excluding playground) 90' frontage to High Street 1.765 acres
- 31.8.65 Conveyance between JS Farrow and Agricultural Mortgaging Co to Howard Jordan Hine parcel 74 OS 1903 0.456 acres (between 76 and 79 OS 1887) and Bourn Brook [Howard Jordan Hine, Fellow Trinity College, agricultural engineer, dcd. 4.7.90 Winifred Joan Hine dcd 5.1.0.92]
- 10.11.92 Unadministered estate of Firs Farm 64 High Street passed to William Douglas Hine, Dorset
- 26.2.93 Transfer of freehold dwellinghouse from WD Hine to Nicholas John and Rebecca Melanie Harris, including land of approximately 11 acres, known as Firs Farm, 64 High Street.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The information in this historical note is collated from material from the property deeds and maps provided by Nicholas and Rebecca Harris. The post card view of The Firs is by an unknown photographer. The other main photograph of the cottage is from an original by Paul Jacobs. The smaller black and white photograph of the Firs is reproduced by courtesy of the Royal Commission for Historic Monuments (English Heritage). The map is an extract of the Ordnance Survey map of 1903.

Research by Colen Lumley