

Holybourne House, Church Lane



Ellis Farm from the West estimated in the 1920's, before conversion.



Holybourne House from the West in 2004.

The Ellis family inherited this building in the middle of the eighteenth century and it was known in the nineteenth century as Ellis's Farm. The house probably dated from the late sixteenth or seventeenth century and by the time of the First World War, it had become two very run-down tied cottages and two 'flats'. It was then purchased by Mr Mortimer Pechell (1869-1943), an architect brought up in Alton and practising in London, who converted it into a single large house and laid out the attractive gardens and re-named it Chilbrook, after one of the Ellis's farm fields.

An old Holybourne resident, Mrs May Gates, used to work there occasionally when the other servant was ill. She remembers Mrs Pechell being a bit of a stickler to work for. She would insist on May polishing the new and beautifully polished oak stairs with beeswax and linseed oil, cleaning the silver with red rouge and the baths with paraffin. Mrs Winifred Cotterell, who used to live in Holybourne and now lives in Manor Estate, Alton, also worked for Mrs Pechell after the Second World War and her husband Bill was their valet/gardener.

As a local architect Mr Pechell may have worked on alterations not only to his home, but also Thorne Cottage, 93 Anstey Road and Claines, 1 London Road, Holybourne and some cottages by the church in Holybourne.

During the Second World War, Mrs Pechell organised cricket matches on the field behind the house with military personnel stationed at Fisher's Camp, which was on the site of Complins Estate. These matches were followed by tea for all in the garden. Guest players at various times, included British, Australian, Royal Canadian Mounted Police and also German prisoners of war. Mrs Pechell also organised her staff to make up bandages and knit things on behalf of the Red Cross and St John's Ambulance Brigade.

After the Pechells left, the house was called Holybourne House. The name Chilbrook was subsequently re-used by COG Smith when he had a house built in its garden.

Edward Hepper

This is an extract from a longer article due to appear in Alton Papers, to be published by the Curtis Museum later this year.