

This month the members produced their own version of the BBC programme, **“A House thro Time”**

The 5 members who lived in the oldest houses; researched the history of the house and its occupants.

Starting with the oldest house, in Comberton road built in 1871.

Originally occupied by Alphonse Bouet and his wife Antoinette. The building built to his design showed that his French roots influenced the architectural design. He started off by working for Brinton Carpets and later working for the loom engineers Crabtrees. On returning to Kidderminster Alphonse started a carpet design workshop in Church St. His son Alfred also became a notable carpet designer. Alphonse Bouet died in 1877 and is buried in St George's churchyard.

No information available until, Henry Humphries and wife Ethel bought the house in 1934. He was manager of a carpet sales department. One of their sons Gerald born in 1908 went on to play cricket for Worcestershire, as did another son, Cedric born 1913, who was an Army Captain. Another son, Norman born in 1917, who also played for the same county and also for Devon.

The house was then sold in 1951 to Francis and Elaine Taylor with their 2 children. The family shared the house with Florence Starr who was Elaine's widowed mother, and her 2 daughters. Florence was the retired headmistress of Hume Street school; her daughter Elaine became Head of PE at Harry Cheshire school.

Francis Taylor had joined the Royal Navy when WW2 began, on being demobbed he returned to Brinton Carpets working as a Foreman tuner on Wilton looms. His son also worked as a rep' for Brintons.

The house changed hands again in 1971, when it was bought by Sheila Hodges and her husband Francis.

The house was then sold in 1997 to Richard Riddell and with his 2nd wife Philippe who were directors of a property development and letting company. Daughter Clair worked in Holmwood Care home, and by coincidence cared for Liz's mom Elaine Taylor.

In 2008 the present owners moved in, a director of several meat wholesale companies.

Next came a house in Leswell Lane built in 1881. Leswell Lane was originally called Back Lane. No information about the residents until 1891, when Arthur Cooper aged 48 was living in the house with his wife Ann aged 41, born in Mitton, Stourport. Arthur born in Kidderminster was a carpet weaver and they had a daughter Sarah. On the 1901 census it shows that Arthur, Ann and Sarah were still living there but had been joined by Wilfred Field age 27 and his son Donald aged 3. Wilfred born in Birmingham worked as a miller. No connection could be found between the residents.

The 1911 census now shows that Leonard Bowen born in 1876, a builder from Madeley in Shropshire, was living there with his wife Mary Elizabeth, born 1875 in Kidderminster. They had married in St John the Baptist Church. At this time, they had 2 children. Mary died in 1935, and it appears that she never worked as she is recorded as a housewife.

In 1938 Leonard Bowen was married to Emily Bowen who was born in 1888, classed as a housewife and died in 1972.

There is also a lodger, Frank Matthews born 1885 who worked as an electrical stores clerk.

From 1973 the house saw many occupiers come and go, about 8 different families until 2006 when the present occupier our member moved in.

Pauline also told us the history of Leswell House, built about 1835. Henry Woodward, carpet manufacturer lived there from 1848 until 1860. Then for the next 20 years until 1881, Thomas Banks, Iron Master, J.P. and magistrate was the occupier.

Following many residents, the grounds were broken up and the house turned into 2 residences; the grounds had contained tennis and croquet lawns, kitchen garden and paddock. All now built on by houses.

1883 the next house was built in Sutton road, the land was once part of the Caldwell Hall deer park, later the land was owned by George Talbot. As a small Victorian terraced house, it had, one main living room including the open stairs, with a kitchen at the back. Upstairs are 2 bedrooms with a third now being used as a bathroom. On the floor above is an attic bedroom that spans the house. Downstairs under the carpet is entry into a cellar which has an outside front opening where the coal would be tipped. There is access to the back garden through an entry alleyway 2 doors up. Most of the houses in this row, would have had an outbuilding between the house and the back-passage way.

These houses had long thin gardens with fertile soil, at the bottom of the garden would be a brick-built pig sty.

In the 1881 census, it shows that Giles Hudson, a drysalter, his wife and 4 children resided here, with his wife's brother, George Toon, a carpet wool

sorter living here as a lodger.

The census of 1901 shows William and Anne Hemming and 7 children living here. William was a carpet weaver and the 3 eldest children were all carpet workers.

In 1911 the residents were John born 1880 and Amelia, born 1882 Whitmore. They had married in 1910, John from Stourport aged 31 and Amelia from Kidderminster aged 29. He worked as a Furier Enameller and Amelia was a carpet weaver.

It is a shame that the local history records for this area appear not to have been preserved.

Our next house built in 1889 in Sutton Park road. This house was built after the land known as Sutton Park Building Estate was sold to Clarissa Strudwick by the Worcester Land & Investment Co. The plot described as Plot 56, with a frontage of 33 feet to be on a new road, Sutton Park Road. Conditions of the sale of land expressed that a dwelling be built with costs not to exceed £200; with no business or trade to be carried out on the plot. The Worcestershire Surveyor would have access to the building to inspect water mains, gas mains and provision of artificial light. Gas pipes and gas mantels could be seen in the rooms when decorating in the 1950's. Clarissa Strudwick and her sister Eliza lived in the house until her death in 1939, then after Eliza died in 1945 the house was put up for sale. In 1946 the house sold for £1,000 to Mr. Charles George Rogers of Chester Road, Kidderminster.

The member's parents bought the house in 1953, and the family with 5 children moved in, eventually the family grew to 9 children.

Our member can remember the lovely coloured fireplaces and the Minton tiled floors, all of which have survived. The bedrooms were heated by coal fires. The garden was huge, where all the children could play, learning to ride their bikes. There were apple and plum trees growing alongside greenhouses which were used to grow salad vegetables. There was always holly to cut and use at Christmas time. After 62 years the house was sold in 2015 following the death of our member's mother.

In 1849 the Kidderminster Land Society had bought a plot of land originally owned by a Mr. Talbot. This led to the creation of four streets, Talbot Street, Holman Street, Hume Street and Franchise Street. Talbot, Hume and Holman were local dignitaries and well known Liberals. Their motivation for this land buying action was "Franchise". Local Liberals hoped that working people would be able to buy small plots of land and build their family homes. That would make them householders and give them the right to vote, hopefully for the Liberals. But most of the plots were bought up by business men who held onto the land in the hope of making a profit, and so the number of voters hardly increased at all.

For a long time, there were only 6 houses built in Holman street. The first four built in a terrace were called Coronation Cottages built around 1901. Next came a pair of semidetached houses built in 1903 towards the top of the street, numbers 5 & 6 which included Sue's present house, but later to change its number.

No. 6 was sold for the first time in 1905 by William Henry Talbot and Henry Dixon to Jane Stone, born in Far Forest 1869, married to Reuben Stone, a fruiterer. At that time the house had a cellar, 2 ground floor rooms, 2 first floor bedrooms and an attic. In the 1911 census number 6 was occupied by Jane, her husband and their 4 children who all worked in the families fruit merchants business.

Jane sold the house to William Joseph Bell an ironworker of 51 Oxford Street in 1923 for £275. The house was rented out, until in 1928 Mr Bell sold the house to a retired butcher Walter Abraham Taylor of Wychbold for £360. The house sold again after Mr Taylor's death in 1933 again for £360 to Percy William Barker, a wood turner of 61 Peel st. House prices at this time were static probably because of the Depression. Mr Barker paid a deposit of £100 and took out a mortgage for £260 with Kidderminster Permanent Building Society.

Finally the house was sold in 1938 to Harry Broadfield, for £390, deposit of £90 and a mortgage of £300 with Kidderminster Industrial Cooperative Society, monthly repayments 39 shillings

At this time Holman Street went up to 39 houses and a further 20 more were built. Mr Broadfield lived in the house for 33 years, during which a flat roofed extension was built on the rear to provide a kitchen and a bathroom. When Harry died in 1971 the house sold for £3000, there was still no central heating only open fires in the 2 downstairs rooms. The buyers in 1971 were Raymond Hyde and wife Joyce. Joyce had returned to her childhood street and was now living next door to her sister and brother in law. Joyce died in Oct 2010 and it became Sue's home. By then central heating had been installed and the large attic room had been partitioned to provide another room. The typical very steep stairs remain to this day.