

David Pannett's history of Bicton - No 24
The Editor's House

After two years of reading about various other parts of Bicton, the editor asked 'What about my house', Roselea' in Church Lane"? So here we go!

Today, 'Roselea' stands amid a group of varied houses opposite the end of Church Close, which must be familiar to visitors to the village hall. The story of this whole group illustrates well the changes which have taken place in the village and the evidence which we can use to study them.

Their site was once one of the many small encroachments around the edge of the heath, which, until 1768, stretched from here to the Welshpool Road. At 'enclosure' it was therefore granted to John Mytton of Halston, who claimed to be the 'Lord of the manor'. By 1812, this 3/4 acre was the site of a small cottage occupied by Anne Randles (perhaps a relation of John Randles, Blacksmith at Montford Bridge for many years (Mar 09)).

Then, thanks to the wild behaviour of the later 'Jack' Mytton, much of the local Mytton property had to be sold in 1824. The new landlord was Sir Richard Jenkins of Bicton Hall, whose tenant at this cottage in 1843 was Robert Thomas, an agricultural labourer. The 1851 census also recorded his wife Elizabeth and their two sons and two daughters.

Following the death of Sir Richard Jenkins in 1853 (Nov 08), the Bicton Hall estate passed to John Wingfield of Onslow, who was steadily expanding his holdings in Bicton, including many of the cottages around the former heath.

At a time of low wages, cottages with large gardens provided some element of self sufficiency by way of compensation. Three quarters of an acre, ^{too small} for a cow, but certainly enough for a small orchard, vegetable patch and pigsty.

The traditional cottage pig would not only provide many meals from its varied parts (except the squeal!), but also help recycle domestic waste before 'green bins' were even dreamt of. Large families meant many mouths to feed, but also extra labour on the home plot.

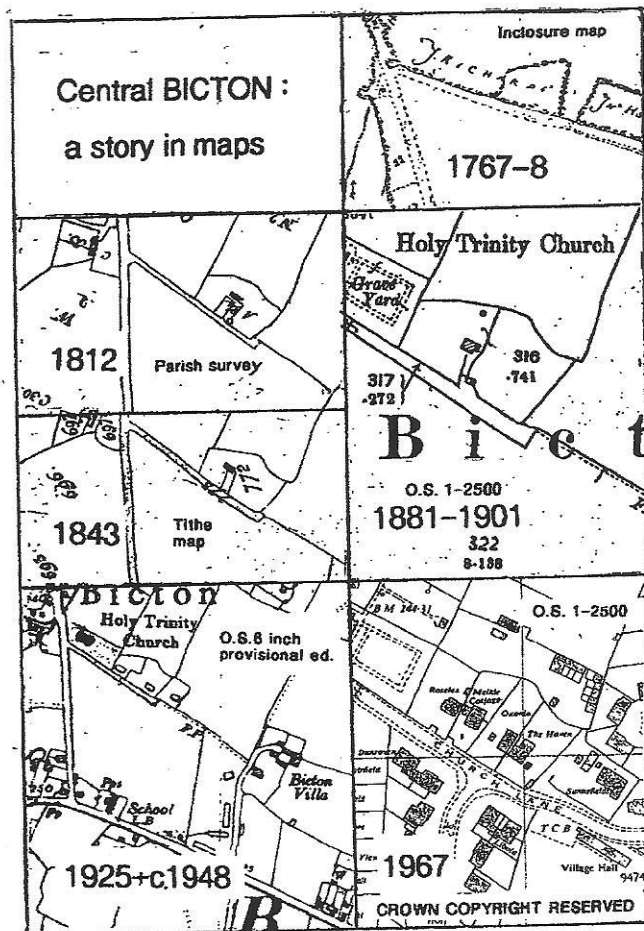
Since agricultural labourers tended to move their employment as well as homes tied to it, there is no surprise to find Mary Pritchard (69) and her friend occupying the cottage in 1881. By this time the story of this site is well recorded by successive ordnance survey maps.

The 1881 editions of 'Six inch to one mile' and 'twenty five inch' maps confirm what had already been shown by the Tithe map. Likewise, the revision of the 1901-2 showed no significant change, except the building of the new church on the adjacent plot. The next revision was delayed by the first world war until about 1925 and then only for the east side of Shrewsbury. While little change was shown to our cottage, there was now a new cottage by the Blacksmith's shop and others by Oxon Farm in Shepherd's Lane.

This post-war period saw many estates shedding land and in this way changes came to our plot, although map markers were slow to catch up, since a second war disrupted their work yet again. In an attempt to catch up, the ordnance survey published a 'provisional edition' of the six inch map in the 1950's in which new features were sketched in with the help of aerial photographs. The technology had been developed during the war to photograph Germany, but was now turned towards Britain before being demobilised. In this way the new post-1925 houses appeared as ghostly outlines in approximately the right places, including on our plot, where two now replaced the original one and another appeared in the adjacent field.

A close look at the original photographs suggest that the former had been there some time, while the latter was really new.

Architectural appearance of Roselea confirms this and reveals some similarities with those other new cottages which had already appeared by 1925.



They all have the same 'conservative; cottage style, pre-dating the more typical 'suburban semi' style of the 1930's, so well seen in Shrewsbury. They were in fact built by John Paddock a local carpenter and builder during the latter years of his career. From now on, the ordnance survey abandoned regular revision for rural areas in order to keep pace with the expanding towns and therefore did not return to this area until 1967. By this time, the original plot contained four houses, while all around, Church Close and The Oval had been developed with such high density, with no room for orchards or vegetables, just at a time when we need them again.