

History of Winmill Farm

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The past met the future on February 2nd 2014 when Cyril Winfield came to Ewelme from his home in Suffolk and Louise Jaggard, the new owner of Winmill Farm, kindly showed him around the site prior to it being demolished. In May 1939 Cyril's father Edgar paid Benson builder Harry West £625 14s 9d for erecting the bungalow. (Edgar had married Rita Miller in 1928 - hence the name 'Winmill').



Left: Cyril Winfield in the arms of his mother and Right: The Old Cottage at Winmill Farm

There were already five bungalows on the site erected by grand-father Sidney, who owned farmland and other properties in and around Ewelme. His two sons, Reg and Edgar, had started farming together and developed "Winfield Bros" dairy behind Sidney's home 'Dormer Villa' (now developed as Nalay Close). Reg became the dairy manager whilst Edgar ran the dairy farming side of things at Fifield Farm and later at Winmill Farm - where he built the piggery and cow byers along The Pightles. In early 1942 the War was to change Winmill Farm when the airfield's runway was extended, making the site dangerously close to the flightpath. The four older bungalows facing The Pightles and one facing Eyres Lane (adjacent to the new bungalow, previously the home of Edgar and Rita and then occupied by Warrant Officer Tom Robinson) had to be demolished. This displaced the residents - Mr and Mrs Stroudley, Mr and Mrs Harry Keene, Mr and Mrs Dore Winfield with their lodgers Ruth Billing and her daughter Betty, and Mrs Hutchins next door. The new bungalow was not on the planners' 1938 maps and so escaped demolition!

Cyril was born in 1938 and lived at Winmill Farm throughout his boyhood until 1953 when the family moved away. (Rita had found the Royal Navy VR Sea Fury planes that flew into RAF Benson from Culham too intrusive, as they utilised the bungalow's chimney stack as a turning point for short finals onto the runway). So, after 60 years, Cyril was able to walk around his old home and explain the history of the site to Louise; to see that the old Blenheim apple tree was still standing, and particularly cherish a visit to his first bedroom, recalling happy memories of his upbringing with his two older brothers Ken and John.

Cyril believes his grandfather had an old cottage pulled down at the site. This could be the one shown built in the corner of The Pightles and Eyres lane on an old 1870's plan in the Archive. Then it was lived in by Richard Judge (obit 1880), described as a general dealer, and his wife Ann nee Mundy and their five children. The cottage was owned by Thomas, one of the Spyer family, who between them owned 27 properties in the village at that time. In Cyril's family tree we noted that Job Winfield (born 1847) married Mary Ann Spyers in 1872. Further research may clarify if that is how the land came to the Winfields.



The remains of old Winmill Farm 2014.

Fortunately, earlier families were more permanently domiciled than our present transient population, making it easier to trace how their fortunes waxed and waned over the generations. The Winfield/Wingfield/Wincot name has been prominent in Ewelme for centuries and, as an enthusiastic genealogical researcher, Cyril discovered that in 1861 there were 5 distinct Winfield/Wingfield family lines living in the village amounting to 75 persons in at least 20 households, producing lengthy and complex family relationships, but Cyril is endeavouring to untangle the skeins. (A few branches intermarried, including his own great-grandfather Moses Winfield who married Ellen Winfield in 1868).

By a stroke of good fortune this ancient union resulted in a fortuitous encounter for Cyril that weekend. At his Newbury hotel he overheard a person asking the barman if the 'Winfield table' was ready. He immediately introduced himself and found it was a family of Welsh Winfields headed by Simon. From his trusty laptop Cyril could show Simon that his ancestor, James Winfield, was born in Ewelme in 1845 and subsequently moved to Wales as a gardener. James proved to be the brother of Ellen Winfield, Cyril's great-grandmother! Thus, Cyril and Simon's father Peter (born in 1943) are 3rd cousins! Surprisingly, the Welsh branch had no knowledge of their Ewelme origins. They do now!



Cyril Winfield at Winmill Farm in 2014

Ewelme Village Archive