



Local History Collection

13 - The History of STEWART CLOSE, Fifield

Winter 2022

Researched & written by Sarah Grace

In previous OGAFCA magazines I have written about the history of New Lodge, Drift Road and one of its owners, Jean-Sylvain Van De Weyer the 1st Belgian Ambassador who died in 1874. His eldest grandson, Major William John Bates Van De Weyer, inherited the estate upon the death of his father (Lt.Col. Victor William Bates Van De Weyer) in 1915. As Major William had married in 1908 and moved to Smedmore near Corfe Castle in Dorset (where he hybridised a species of Buddleia named Weyeriana) he sold parts of the New Lodge estate in 1916.



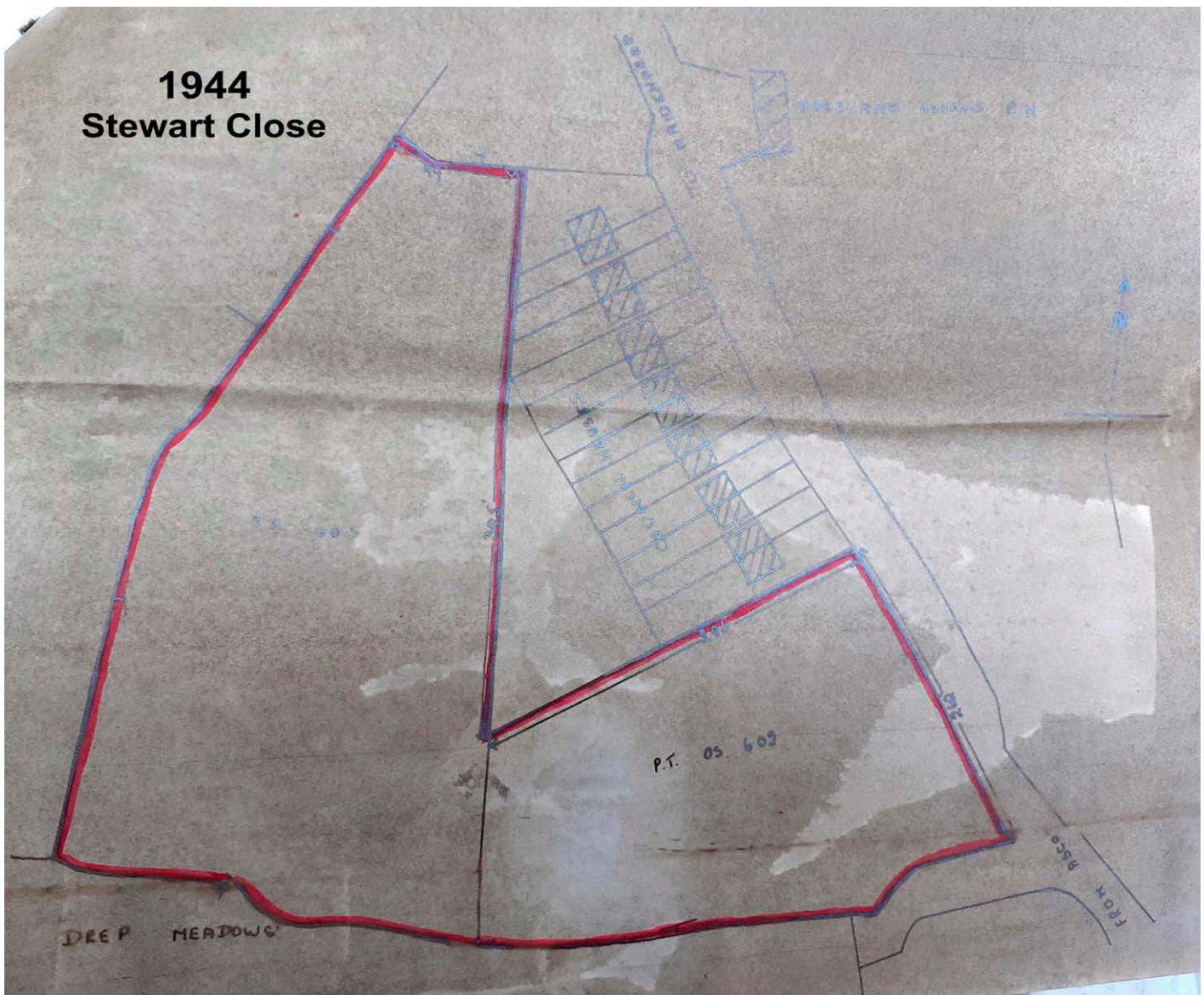
In the 'Abstract of Title' (working summary of deeds) of 1 lot from this sale, it shows that 192 acres of freehold land at Grove Farm, Coningsby Lane was sold for £6,080 to Job, Joseph, Richard and George Edward Good from the Parish of Bray. The Good family were dairymen and farmers who traded under the firm of J. Good and sons. This was bought with a mortgage of £4,256 from William Van De Weyer family that was eventually paid off in full, with interest, in 1934.

Job Good retired in 1918 but the remaining family continued as dairymen and farmers and paid Job Good a settlement of £2,350 for his interest in the land.

It appears that the land was used as pasture and orchards for several years until 1944,

when part of the land (fields 602 and 603) now known as Stewart Close, was sold to Ronald Albert and Sidney Arnold Woodhouse (Engineers of 2 Windsor Road, Bray) for £450, with a mortgage of £200 from the Good's.

This parcel of land was sold again in 1948 for £500 to Alfred Jack Treacher and Kenneth George Cecil Willis; farmers, both of 3 Pantile Row, Langley, with Ronald and Sydney Woodhouse loaning £175 for the purchase. And in August 1949 the land was sold once again to Thomas Gwilliam Stewart (paper merchant) of 8 Devon Avenue, Slough for £525 and he purchased another small plot of land in 1953 (0.347 acres area 6026).



Mr. Stewart applied for permission to site movable dwellings on the land in 1950, which was refused as: 'The proposal is likely to cause injury to the rural amenities of the locality and the district is adequately served by existing sites for movable dwellings.' By July 1952 Mr. Stewart had an application approved to erect 3 pairs of semi-detached bungalows and later in the same year he was granted consent to put a caravan on the land bordering Deep Meadows up until December 1953 when the re-instatement of the land was to be completed to the satisfaction of the council (Cookham Rural District Council, Castle Hill, Maidenhead).

In December 1954 Mr. Stewart was granted permission for a pair of houses (No's 1 and 2) and a road (16' wide with 2 x 6' footpaths with turning facilities at the end of the cul-de-sac), later to be named Stewart Close as well as approval for another pair of houses to be shops. By 1956 he had paid £25 to have the Church Tithe removed from the land, this ensured that he could sell the properties for a good price (the Church Tithe on a property would reduce the overall value).

Mr. Stewart built himself a bungalow in what was the middle of a field on this land, it still exists as the first bungalow on the left-hand side in Stewart Close.

Two local builders were chosen to build all but 4 of the properties in Stewart Close, Percy Stanley Kimber (carpenter) and his brother Sidney Maurice Kimber (bricklayer). Percy had lived at Bramcote, Oakley Green, Windsor since 1934, one of the semi-detached houses opposite the army estate on the Dedworth Road. The architect for the houses was Mr. Beer of Hurley.

The 1st house to be completed was No.1 Stewart Close in December 1957 followed by No.2 then the 2 shops on the North side of the entrance to Stewart Close. Mr. Stewart sold the properties from plan at an agreed price, but this was difficult for the Kimber brothers as the price of materials went up and as properties were sold, they found themselves building houses for less than the selling price. Percy Kimber then had a clause added to the contracts to cover increases in material costs.

Percy Kimber wanted to buy several plots from Mr. Stewart but was only allowed to buy 2 plots of 2, these were to be known as No's 18, 20, 22 and 24 and purchased for £4,500 in 1962. There were several things listed in the sale schedule covenant which included:

- Not to use the houses for any purpose other than private dwellings (but so that the profession of a Doctor, Solicitor or Dentist may be carried out therein).
- Not to keep pigs or chickens on the said land or part thereof.
- Not to station any caravan or house on wheels or similar movable structure whether used for living accommodation or not upon said land.

Percy Kimber's daughter, Anne Speadbury still lives in the village with her husband Paul on the Fifield Road, Fifield. All the houses in Stewart Close were completed by the end of the 1960's.

There are a number of residents in Stewart Close who have lived in the road for several years. I spoke to John Foulger who has lived in Stewart Close since his house was first built in the early 1960's. He told me that his house was built on a piece of land that had been used to farm pigs and he remembered Mr. Stewart, who kept pigeons, which is why there were no telegraph poles/wires at the end of Stewart Close, to ensure his birds had a clear flight path! These telegraph poles on the 1st half of Stewart Close are the ones that were raised by 1.8 metres (approximately) on an EU directive, so large vehicles could drive underneath! John told me that Stewart Close was originally a private rough track as Mr. Stewart would not pay the council for the road to be adopted as their responsibility, eventually this road has been adopted. There is also an original stream at the back of the houses which goes under the road and connects to the ditches that run past the old Fifield Chapel on the Fifield Road. The 2 shops which were built included a Post Office which was also a newsagent, confectioners, tobacconist and a General Grocery store. Both were an asset but there was not enough trade and the Post Office closed in 1991. For a while the other shop ran as a Fancy Dress shop then dog groomers but also eventually closed. John served as a Parish Councillor for 26 years and can't believe that he has lived in Stewart Close for nearly 60 years, he commented that the local walks are one of the reasons for him staying so long.