

Former Brimington Labour Party Rooms, John Street, Brimington

A short note on the site's history

Philip Cousins

Introduction

The wooden building and the land on which numbers 37A and 37B John Street stand, was for many years known as the Brimington Spiritualist Church, but was actually latterly owned by the trustees of the Brimington Labour Party.

Established on the site at one time was a short-lived working men's club. Known as the 'Brimington Working Men's Club and Institute', this was an entirely separate undertaking to the Brimington Club on High Street. Prior to this the site had been open land. It was acquired in 1876, as part of a much larger plot by the Brimington Freehold Land Society. The whole plot we are concerned with comprised 460 square yards, bounded on the north by John Street.

This short note outlines the history of the site and the building(s) which have stood on it.

Simplified time-line of property¹

- 1876 – Plot 11 of the Brimington Freehold Land Society's estate. Prior to this it was open land presumably in agricultural use.
- July 1893 – Purchased by E Eastwood (proprietor of wagon repair works, Tapton).
- September 1894 – Sold by Eastwood to Mr E Haywood.
- March 1898 – Sold Haywood to Stevenson.
- February 1904 – Second annual meeting of the 'Working Men's Club and Institute held.' G Stevenson president (i.e. sometime in 1902 or 1903 a working men's club had been established. This is separate to the present Brimington Club on High Street).
- 1905 April – The plot is conveyed from Thomas Stevenson (of John Street, a miner) to Trustees of Brimington Working Men's Club and Institute. Trustees were Alexander Mitchell, Thomas Francis Wilson, David Branson, all of Brimington. Cost was £50.
- December 1905 – Mortgage agreement: trustees to John Smiths Tadcaster Brewery Co. Ltd.
- February 1921 – Transfer of mortgage to Mr JLT Burdett.
- August 1923 – Stated that a notice was to be placed in the *London Gazette* and local newspaper that Brimington Working Men's Club and Institute was to be dissolved. The undertakers to pay creditors by the sale of fittings and furniture. Mrs M Burdett listed as communicant.
- October/November 1923 – London Gazette notice that Brimington Working Men's Club and Institute 'held at Club House, John Street...' is dissolved by instrument registered 29 October 1923.

¹ Source for this time line are Title deeds and documents relating to a corrugated iron and wood building and land in John Street, Brimington, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, [list] prepared by Elliot Mathers Solicitors for the Trustees of The Brimington Branch of the Chesterfield Constituency Labour Party, February 2005; Deed of gift Ann Cresswell to trustees of the Brimington Branch of the Chesterfield Constituency Labour Party, 12 January 1986; *Derbyshire Times*, 6 February 1904 and 27 March 1958; *London Gazette*, 30 November 1923, p. 8380.

- 1942 – Headquarters of the number 1082 Air Training Corps opened at their John Street premises.
- 1943 – Conveyance – representatives of Mrs MA Burdett (deceased), presumably to representatives of the ATC. (This indicates that the property was seemingly in the possession of the Burdett family from February 1921 until 1943).
- 1952 – Building and plot purchased by Cllr Walter Everett for use of the Brimington Labour Party, who used it as their headquarters and, during elections, committee rooms. It was later rented to the Brimington Spiritualist Church who held regular Sunday evening meetings at the premises, though it was never owned by them. (Conveyance was Mr H Wilson Reed, presumably of the ATC, to Mr W Everett).
- [1958 – John Street (George Street and King Street) adopted by Derbyshire County Council – until this date the street was unmade and not repairable by the highway authority].
- 1986 – Gift of building and land to the trustees of the Brimington Branch of the Chesterfield Constituency Labour Party (by the daughter of the late Walter Everett, OBE).
- 2005 – Land and building sold by trustees of the Brimington Branch of the Chesterfield Constituency Labour Party. Building demolished spring 2006. Two semi-detached, three storey houses subsequently built on the site.

Description of building and plot²

The plot, when sold in 2005, comprised a wooden building with front door onto John Street, down some steps. The building occupied approximately a quarter of the total plot. To the right (looking from John Street) was a drive-way which led to some garages to the rear of the plot.

The building's interior was wooden lined, including the under-drawn ceiling. It was heated by wall-mounted gas heaters, but these were disconnected in the 1980s when they were deemed unsafe. At the same time mains gas was removed from the premises. Portable gas heaters were then used. Mains electricity and water were installed. A sink and small wash-up area were situated in the south/south west corner of the building. A back door in the south-east of the rear elevation, enabled a single brick-built water closet to be accessed. This was a very short distance actually out-side of the main building, (between the south elevation and the first garage).

In the 1980s Brimington Labour Party purchased a small off-set lithography printing press. This was situated immediately inside the front door to the left (north-east corner). The printing press saw use for newsletters, etc. It was still in-situ when the premises were sold by the trustees of the Brimington Labour Party, though had not operated for some years.

The rooms were used by the Labour Party once a month, in the evening, for their branch meetings, much more during elections, when the building was used as the committee rooms. The Brimington Spiritualist Church held 'divine worship' each week on Sundays from 6pm, with other services on a Monday and Wednesday evenings. Rent was payable to the Brimington Labour Party.

In the south-west corner was access to the cellar, which was gained by lifting a trap door. This cellar extended to roughly one-half to two thirds of the building. It was not used by the 1980s.

In the late Peter Harrison's 'Kid from Cott Lane' he describes the building as being;

² Where statements in this section are not referenced they are the personal recollections of the author.

...much larger in my days [the Second World War] with the ATC. The right-hand side had another bay, almost covering the drive and grass to the right [from John Street]. There was a path – not very wide and to the right – which led to the rear. We had an aeroplane in this rear yard (a Westland Wapiti), which came in about three pieces. This was assembled by the people who brought it. We stepped in to install the smaller items, such as the controls.³

The late county councillor Walter Burrows was sure that the building was basically unaltered when sold in 2005, as to when he joined the ATC in 1948. The aeroplane, mentioned by Peter Harrison, was situated in the cellar when Walter was a member of the ATC.⁴

Given Ordnance Survey mapping evidence,⁵ which does seem to confirm that the building was originally bigger, there must be some conjecture as to whether the building originally erected for the Club House of the Brimington Working Men's Club and Institute, was that surviving into the 2000s. Perhaps the ATC needed to replace the building at some stage. They would, of course, have had access to surplus Ministry of Defence buildings.

Outside were a few garages, arranged longitudinally down the east side. These were accessed from John Street by an unmade drive which ran to the west side of the plot. The garages were let to local people; the rent being paid to the Brimington Labour Party. The garage structures were the responsibility of the leasers.

The site was generally enclosed by a brick wall, made from Wheeldon Mill bricks. This wall became troublesome in the latter years of Labour Party ownership. The sloping nature of the original ground and the fact that it had been levelled out, resulted the wall being very high towards the rear of the plot. There were concerns over the structural stability in some areas. This also included part of the wall fronting the actual rooms and that adjoining 37 John Street. Part of the latter had to be rebuilt a few years before the Labour Party finally parted company with the building and land.

It is interesting that some Brimington people thought it necessary to establish a separate working men's club around the same time that the High Street based Brimington Club was opened in the February of 1903. Perhaps this was this some form of reaction to the power that local industrialist Charles Paxton Markham undoubtedly wielded in the area. For it was principally he, managing director and Chairman of the Staveley Coal and Iron Company, the principle employer in the area, who established the Brimington Club.⁶ For whatever reason the John Street, Brimington Working Men's Club and Institute, was short-lived.

The Brimington Freehold Land Society

The land on which the Labour Rooms stood was part of the Brimington Freehold Land Society's estate. More remains to be documented about the Brimington society, but these organisations were not unusual in the 19th century.

³ P. Harrison, 'A kid from "Cott Lane" – growing up in Brimington during the 1930s and the war years, *Brimington and Tupton Miscellany*, 4, (2012), p. 46.

⁴ W Burrows '1082 Squadron of the ATC [a brief note]', *Brimington and Tupton Miscellany*, 4, (2012), pp. 66-67.

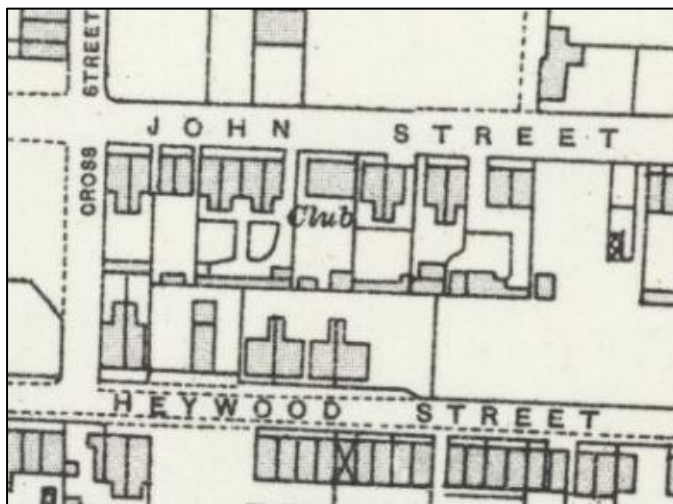
⁵ Ordnance Survey Derbyshire Sheet XVIII.15; 25-inch to one-mile, editions of 1918 and 1938.

⁶ PJ Cousins, *Brimington Club: a short history* (2003), p. 1. Markham effectively owned the club on High Street, but placed it in the hands of two trustees, the establishment figures of the rector of Brimington and the Staveley company general manager. It was run by a committee. In March 1903 Brimington Club had 200 members, with applications for over 100 refused. In 1905 the original corrugated iron structure was swept away by a brick-built building, which still stands, though much extended, on High Street.

They usually had a membership drawn from the lower-middle and working classes. The society would purchase land, using the combined funds of the members, who made payments over many years. It was expected that decent quality houses would be built by the individual members, who were themselves financed by the land society.⁷

The Brimington Freehold Land Society was formed in February 1876. Its original aim was to purchase 7 acres and 3 perches of land in Brimington, 'and to divide the estate... into lots, and apportion the same among the members.' The affairs were run by a committee comprising a president and eight committee-men, chosen by the shareholders. The society could also borrow money to fund its activities and drive roads, sink wells, erect fences and walls on its property. No property could be erected on the site less than £80 in value; the plans having to be approved by the committee. Only dressed stone or pressed bricks were allowed for the frontages.⁸

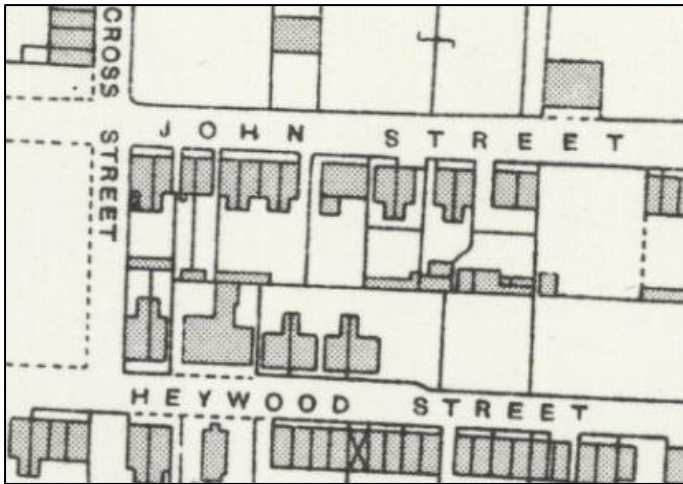
That John Street was divided into plots, which were generally separately developed, has resulted in a different style of housing in this street to some in Brimington. In John Street there is little in the way of the type of 19th century terraced housing prevalent on Foljambe Road and on parts of Heywood Street, where much bigger plots would have been developed, more suited to terraces. At one time increasing the number of freeholders had another advantage; they were able to vote in elections.



This 1918 edition the large-scale Ordnance Survey map, shows the Brimington Working Men's Club and Institute clearly marked as 'CLUB' on John Street. Note the extent of the property, much larger than when the building and its plot were in use by the Labour Party and Spiritualist Church. (Ordnance Survey Derbyshire Sheet XVIII.15; 25-inch to one-mile (altered scale))

⁷ D Hey, *Oxford companion to local and family history* (1998), p. 193,

⁸ Abstract of title to a freehold estate called the Brimington Freehold Land Society's estate situate at Brimington in the county of Derby (printed – no date but presumably 1876). I am grateful to a former resident, Mr S Blakemore for allowing me to photocopy this abstract a number of years ago.



The building's foot-print remains unaltered, save for a small rear extension, in this 1938 revision of the same large-scale map. (Ordnance Survey Derbyshire Sheet XVIII.15 (altered scale))



Don't try to date this photograph by the vintage Triumph motor car; it was taken in 2005! In this view the driveway can be seen to the right. The end of the brick-built water closet can just be seen to rear right of the building, with one of the garage structures beyond. Steps led up from John Street to the central door. The brick wall was constructed from 'Wheeldon Mill' bricks. (Brimington and Tapton Labour Party).



Inside the building, looking out towards John Street, during the final stage of clear-out by the Labour Party. The end of the printing press can just be discerned to the right. (Brimington and Tapton Labour Party).



The plot looking north towards John Street, in October 2005. By this time the grounds had become overgrown. The small brick-built WC and a remaining garage can be seen. (Philip Cousins)



John Street looking east in October 2005, with the wooden Labour Rooms and Spiritualist church, now the site of numbers 37A and 37B, prominent. (Philip Cousins)

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