

A History of Sunny Cottage



Sunny Cottage, which stands on the corner of Lower Luton Road and Rose Lane, is Grade II listed. The entry on the Historic England website states that it was built in 1840, this date being confirmed by a dated brick on the chimney stack.

The 1840/41 Tithe Map and Index appear to show that the small area of land (plots 56 and 57) now occupied by Sunny Cottage and the houses between there and Lamer Lane was owned by Widow deFleur and J. I. House and was occupied by George Browne (carpenter), John Lines, and others.

The 1841 census lists the occupants of the households in this area but without giving each individual location. George Browne is listed, with his family, as a carpenter.

The 1851 census is equally imprecise as to location ('Village') but again lists George Browne and his family in this location, this time as a builder. He is listed again, in the same location, in the 1861 and 1871 censuses.

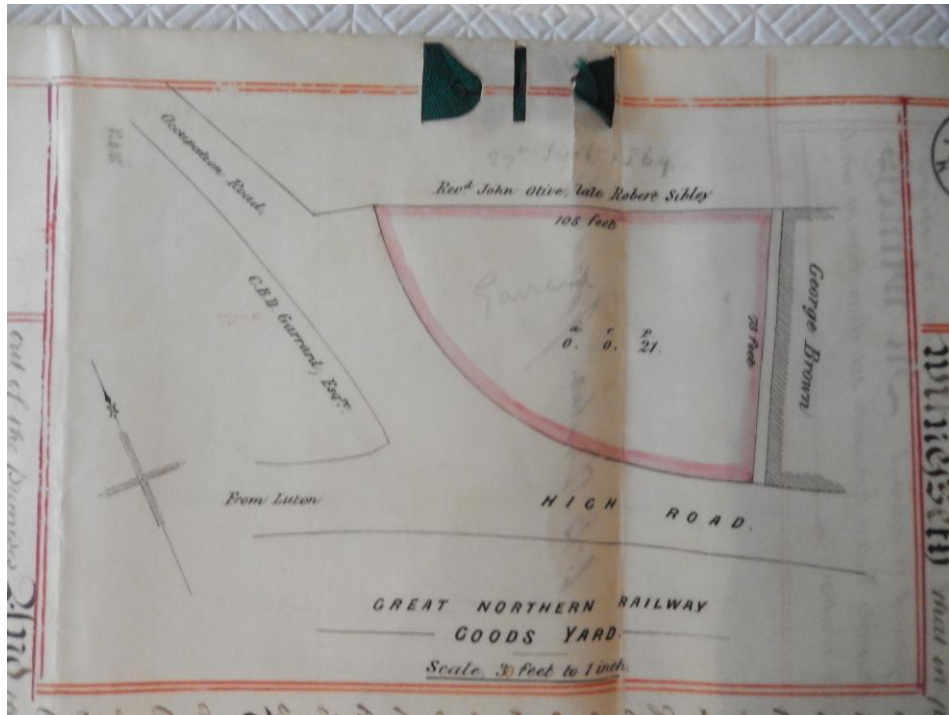
In 1871, John Olive bought Lot 2 in the auction of J. I. House's estate. The auction brochure shows that the Lot comprised the house in which Mr Browne lived, three other buildings, and a small area of surrounding land similar to but not identical with plots 56 and 57 in the tithe map.

18 December 1872

The will of the Reverend John Olive, rector of Ayot St Lawrence, shows that he was the owner of Wheathampstead House. He bequeathed it to his wife Ellen, together with "all the land and cottages" on the east side of what is now Lamer Lane. His daughter Mary Sneade Olive (born 1846) had married the 8th Viscount Kilcourse (later the 9th Earl of Cavan) in 1863.

21 December 1872

Charles Benet Drake Garrard of Lamer sold the 21 perches of land outlined in pink on this map to the Rev. John Olive at the cost of £60.00.



This appears to be the land that is now the garden of Sunny Cottage. Note that George Brown (sic) is listed as neighbour on the land to the east which is now Sunny Cottage. There is no indication of whether he was the owner or tenant, though the evidence suggests that he was a tenant of John Olive. Note also the names of the neighbouring roads (High Road, Occupation Road) at that date, and the Great Northern Railway and Goods Yard opposite, which had opened in 1860.

3 January 1874

John Olive died, leaving all his property to his wife Ellen.

1881 census

George Browne, 81 years old, still lived at the house, now named "Sunny Villa". with his wife Mary and a domestic servant.

1887

The 8th Earl of Cavan died so the 8th Viscount Kilcourse became the 9th Earl of Cavan.

16 January 1888

Ellen Olive died, leaving her property to her son-in-law the 9th Earl of Cavan.

1891 census

Edward Lockhart, a 55-year-old coal merchant, lived at Sunny Villa with his wife Harriet.

14 July 1900

The 9th Earl of Cavan died, leaving his property in Wheathampstead to his son, the 10th Earl.

1901

The census does not name Sunny Villa but there is a household in the right location made up of William Alston (33), a Doctor of Medicine born in Australia, his wife Clara, two infant daughters and two housemaids. It seems likely that this was Sunny Villa.

1902

The 10th Earl built the laundry and other outbuildings behind Sunny Cottage (see photo).

11 August 1908

The 10th Earl granted the freehold in Sunny Cottage to Charles Frederick Ingram.

5 September 1908

This advertisement appeared in the Country Gentlemen's Newspaper on 5 September 1908.



1911 census

Sunny Cottage was occupied by Mrs Olive Mackenzie, 45, who had private means, with a cook and a ladies' maid.

1921 census

The census lists the occupants as 69-year-old widow Cecilia Hutchinson, Professor of Music at the Royal College of Music. She was born in the North West Provinces of India (the Cavans had links with India and the empire). She lived with her stepdaughter Charlotte, servant Florence Carpenter (33), and Florence's two daughters, aged 7 and 4. There was also a visitor, Joyce Simons (19). It seems likely that Joyce was related to the Simons family of butchers who had lived nearby until they moved to Leaside House in the village in about 1871 and opened a new shop there.

1924

The 10th Earl put all his property in Wheathampstead up for auction.

Lot 1, Sunny Cottage and the garden, was bought pre-sale on 4 February 1925 by the tenants, Mrs Cecilia Mary Hutchinson and her stepdaughter Charlotte Frances Isobelle Hutchinson, for £1000. They had been tenants since 1920 and now shared ownership in the proportion 9/25 and 16/25. The vendor disentailed Charles Frederick Ingram.

From this date onward, every transaction of Sunny Cottage reserves a right of way between Sunny Cottage and Inez Cottage, with access to a well, to the owner of Inez Cottage for a payment of £2 per year.

Lot 2, the laundry and outbuildings, was sold at auction on 30 June 1924 to Messrs Owens and George, builders. They also bought Wheathampstead House and the properties between Sunny Cottage and Lamer Lane for a total of £10,500.

29 April 1925

Mrs Hutchinson died, leaving her 9/25 share in Sunny Cottage to her stepdaughter, Miss Hutchinson, who therefore became the outright owner.

1927

It became apparent that the 1924 auction sale particulars had been ambiguous as to the ownership of two of the three sheds that adjoin the back of Sunny Cottage. Both Miss Hutchinson and Messrs Owens and George claimed ownership. Having taken written advice from Counsel, and partly in the light of a written statement from Miss Hepzibah Carter, former secretary to Lord Cavan, Lord Cavan paid Messrs Owens and George £10 in exchange for their withdrawing their claim to the two sheds (5 December 1927).

24 November 1936

Miss Hutchinson mortgaged Sunny Cottage to the St Albans Building Society for £580.10s. 0d.

30 December 1936

Messrs Owens and George sold the laundry and outbuildings to Major Arnold Graves for £225. On the same date, Major Graves mortgaged Sunny Cottage to St Albans Building Society for £201.14s.8d. It is described as being formerly in the occupation of David Williams and his wife Azile but now of Major Graves. There is no record of Miss Hutchinson's whereabouts at this time.

28 September 1939

Major Graves and the St Albans Building Society applied for a Search of the laundry etc at the Land Registry.

30 September 1939

St Albans Building Society sold Sunny Cottage, together with the laundry and outbuildings, to Tom Westwood, builder in Wheathampstead, for £850. This discharged both the outstanding mortgages.

From this date onwards, Sunny Cottage, the laundry and all the outbuildings are treated as a single property called Sunny Cottage. Every transaction continues to protect a right of way to the well behind Inez Cottage.

Documents of the same date clarify that a small strip of land behind Sunny Cottage, which had been omitted from the drawings of the two properties, is included in the sale to Tom Westwood.

22 February 1953

Tom Westwood died, leaving his property to his widow Sarah.

31 August 1953

Sarah Westwood, Charles Colville Parkinson and Charles Frederick Colville Parkinson (father and son) applied for a Land Registry Search for Sunny Cottage.

12 September 1953

Sarah Westwood sold Sunny Cottage to (Major) CC Parkinson and (Doctor) CFC Parkinson for £1800. It appears that Major Parkinson was already living in Sunny Cottage, presumably as a tenant of Tom Westwood. Dr Parkinson lived in Surrey.

6 July 1954

Major Parkinson died, leaving Sunny Cottage, valued at £3000, to Dr Parkinson, who by this time lived at The White Cottage, High Street, Wheathampstead.

4 March 1955

Dr Parkinson applied for a Land Registry Search.

14 March 1955

Dr Parkinson sold Sunny Cottage to Miss Viola Slater for £3250, with a covenant that it was not to be used as a doctor's surgery.

21 February 1985

Sunny Cottage was listed Grade II.

27 February 1985

Miss Slater gave half of Sunny Cottage to Miss JS Templeton.

17 March 2006

Miss Templeton died, leaving her half of Sunny Cottage to Miss Slater.

15 June 2012

A Land Registry Search confirmed that Miss Slater is the owner of Sunny Cottage.

16 October 2012

Ottaways Solicitors applied to register Sunny Cottage at the Land Registry.

Many thanks to the current owners of Sunny Cottage for lending me the documents on which most of this account is based.

Patrick McNeill
27 July 2026