

Primrose Cottage Main Street



Listing Reference for Primrose Cottage

House. Late C17 with earlier origins. Partially rebuilt after a fire in 1666. Coursed ironstone rubble. Steeply pitched thatched roof. Repointed stone ridge and end stacks. 3-unit plan. 2 storeys plus attic and cellar. 2-window range.

C20 entrance to rear. Gable facing the street has renewed 2-and 3-light casement windows with stone flat arches and a 2-light stone mullioned cellar window (flat-splay mullions) with hood moulds and label stops. Right side has a C20 bow and C20 casements to ground and first floor. Interior has chamfered beams and an inglenook fireplace with stop-chamfered bressumer and bread oven.

As stated in the listing reference above, Primrose Cottage was partially rebuilt after the fire in Wroxton in 1666. The cellars though, indicate that the original house had been built much earlier and may well date back to medieval times.

According to research done on Primrose Cottage by Penny Olsen, a professional house historian, the house was occupied by different generations of the Hayes family until the early 1800s. There were certainly several branches of the Hayes family in Wroxton, all of whom were engaged in agriculture, with some farming many acres of land and employing

agricultural labourers and others less acres and relying on their children to provide the necessary help. They would have been tenant farmers as the land around Wroxton was owned by Trinity College Oxford. Trinity College leased the majority of the lands to Lord North, who then subleased farms to small local farmers such as those of the Hayes family. From archive material some fascinating snippets of information have emerged. For instance one Hayes supplied 'cabidge nets' to the Norths for a penny each, 21 home-reared chickens for nine shillings and some 'suitt and dripping' for one shilling and sixpence. It was not unknown for part of a rent to be paid in kind rather than in money particularly if it was of benefit to the leaseholder.

During the early 1800s, Primrose Cottage was divided in two with a member of the Hayes family living in one half and family called Cox in the other half. In 1820 there were 11 people living in the house – seven children and 2 adults in the back section and 2 adults in the front section. By 1861 there were 5 Coxes in the back section William aged 50, his wife Jane also 50 together with their children William junior 17, Sarah 14 and Jabez 9. Both William senior and William junior were agricultural labourers. Jabez Hayes 33 and his wife Bithia 30 lived in the front half with their son William of 3 months. Jabez Hayes farmed 18 acres and also employed one labourer but whether it was William Cox is unknown. The 1871 census shows that Sarah was still at home, unmarried, but with a child whose father is given as a steam engine maker. Sarah was not the first girl in Wroxton, nor the last, to be an unmarried mother. It would seem that these girls were often kept or

taken back into the parental home when they became pregnant and were unmarried.

In the 1880s, one of the Coxes was on the coal list meaning they were entitled to free fuel – the Victorian equivalent to income support. By the 1900s the property was noted to be dilapidated and in the 1901 census there appears to be just one Cox living there, a William who is 56. This could be the William junior of the 1861 census, who was 17 when that census was taken.

By 1924 there were no more Coxes living in Primrose Cottage and the lease had been taken on by Mr Popperwell, the village postman, and his family. The other half of the property, originally inhabited by the Hayes family, was standing empty by this time and remained so even when the Popperwells were replaced by the Grants.

Eventually the empty half of the cottage was rented out in 1946 to a Mr Pritchard, who was a retired Welsh miner. He lived there with his wife, and they were allegedly a convivial and popular couple. When the Pritchards left, the Grants took over the whole of the property, removing the dividing walls. Finally in 1971, Trinity College put the property up for auction and it was bought by Arthur and Nancy Pearson. Steven and Tracy Sampson bought the house from Nancy Pearson in the late 1990s and they subsequently sold it to the present owner.