

The Gate Lodge, Tilgate Forest Lodge

Also known as "The Bungalow" during the period 1936 to 1988, at least.

The octagonal room, with three windows, two doors and a fireplace was originally a toll house. There must have been strong beams to support the extended central chimney, which used to "smoke".

There was a similar toll house south of the Bolney crossroads, and another at Handcross near the Balcombe corner. I wonder what tokens were given and how did they cope with security of takings and collection?

In 1929 my father, newly married Bill Shopland, worked for Mr Charles Nix at Tilgate Forest Lodge and my brother and I were born in one of his houses in Tilgate Forest Row.

Mr Oliver T. Norris succeeded Charles Nix in 1936 and immediately made changes. Two new semi-detached houses were built behind the Bungalow away from the forecasted A23 road expansion! A drainage filter system was placed on the north side of the drive entrance to receive soil drains from the new houses, the bungalow, and the "big house".

The mains electricity was extended from the Hyde Estate for these properties.

The head gardener, William Arnold, his wife and three sons were offered one of the new houses and Mr. Scutt, a second gardener, with wife and young daughter occupied the other. This was how dad was offered the Bungalow in 1937 and I can remember, as a four-year-old, seeing over the property with mother asking for a bay window for the living room (all the vogue at the time).

I imagine this 29-year-old young mum charmed Mr. Norris because a kitchen range with back boiler and a hot tank in the bedroom behind was plumbed in. This supplied the sink at the end of the dark passage from the back door, and a bath in the second bedroom; a great advantage. A spare door was placed over the bath to double up for a bed. Electric lights were fitted and the outside toilet had a WC. There was never any kitchen as such and, with a grant allowance in the 1950s, the second bedroom was used for a separate kitchen, and the bathroom with the toilet was brought just inside the back door. The second bedroom was an added extension, later damaged by a falling beech tree. My father died in 1972 and my mother moved to a flat in Handcross in 1978.

Regarding the archive photograph, is that the bay window? The roof could be concealing the semi-detached houses.

The distinctive sign with the letters of Tilgate Forest Lodge enhanced with minute reflecting glass beads has been removed from the post, which may indicate war years!

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