


## HOW SOUTH WILLESBOROUGH BEGAN

The Rev Stephan Barrett MA was the Master of the old Ashford Grammar School (which stands in the Ashford Churchyard) from 1749 to 1764 and again from 1766 to 1773. During his tenure of office he amassed considerable property which I believe included the land upon which South Willesborough now stands. Upon his death this descended through his daughter Mary who married Jeremiah Curteis Esq M.P. for Sussex.

An old Deed dated 30th April 1852 shows the land to be sold by a Curteis Norwood to a Thomas Morland and a Conrad Wilkinson. Involved was the National Freehold Society and the area was to be sold off in building plots and be known as The Ashford Estate.

There is mention of widening Canterbury Lane and new roads known as Mead Road, Cudworth Road, Water Lane and Back Lane. Strict rules were laid down governing the development of the area including one which reads - 'On no lot or lots shall any house be erected of less value than £80'.

The choice of this area for housing is surprising in view of the fact that it was part of the Ashford Marshes, therefore very low lying and water abounded in streams, dykes, ditches and ponds. The Albion Inn was most likely a part of the hamlet of Aylesford and we find mention of it in a county journal in 1853 which reports that the Ashford Races had been revived in a field adjoining the Railway Works and that 'The refreshments provided by Mr Coober of The Albion tavern were reported as giving the greatest satisfaction'.

In many parts of South Willesborough today can be seen those little early Victorian cottages which were first purchased by the skilled artisans of the South Eastern Railway Company's Works.

I have mentioned the origin of our street names before but for the benefit of new residents, repeat ... and extend this. CUDWORTH ROAD after the first S.E. Railway chief engineer. GLADSTONE ROAD after the famous Prime Minister. MEAD ROAD - Mead is the old English name for meadowland. CANTERBURY ROAD which lead to the Canterbury Land indicates land in the ownership of the Cathedral authorities. CURTIS ROAD - in view of the ownership of land here in 1852 one wonders if this should really be Curteis Road. CROWBRIDGE ROAD - leading to Crow Corner perhaps indicates tall trees at this point with nesting crows. SWALLOWFIELD perhaps means just that. HERBERT ROAD, HAMILTON ROAD and EARLSWORTH ROAD may well have been named after a subsequent landowner or builder. The origin of BATH ROAD and ROYDS ROAD remains to be explored.

And of course one might well ask - What became of Water lane and Back lane ? I am always interested in receiving comments from residents about these points.