

Kirby Muxloe Local History Group, January 18th 2007

John Blenkin on 'The Poplars'

John, a Local History Group member, was baptised, confirmed and married in St.Bartholomew's Parish Church, Kirby Muxloe and until he was married in 1960, lived at 'The Poplars'. His mother, Mrs. K.M.Blenkin, lived in the house until shortly before her death in 1999.

'The Poplars' is one of the oldest houses in Kirby Muxloe (Grade II listed). The house was built as a canister shape, starting at the bottom where there is a cellar consisting of three rooms with vaulted ceilings. It was suggested by an amateur historian that the cellar was there before the house was built. I do remember clearly sheltering there during the war when the air raid siren sounded. Then the cellars were quite dry, now they are very damp, perhaps due to the rise in the water table.

The ground floor has a hallway from south to north with a tiled floor; the staircase leads off from the hallway as well as the four ground floor rooms. Three of the rooms have timber floors and fireplaces the fourth room had a Swithland slate slab floor, used as a dairy.

The first floor has a timber floor landing with four bedrooms and a staircase leading to the attic. The master bedroom has a timber floor and the other three rooms have lime ash mortar floors, which are terribly cold to the touch in the wintertime. Three of the bedrooms have fireplaces.

The second floor (attic) comprises of four rooms plus a sweeps room. This is where all the chimneys meet and on the wall there is a diagonal chimney breast about 12' long and 2.1/2' wide with three metal doors for the sweep to use when sweeping the chimney. After the sweep left the smell of soot remained in the house for about a week. The whole floor of the attic is of lime ash mortar. The slates of the roof were replaced after the war in 1947, the reason for this being that the original Swithland slates were extremely heavy and the bombs dropped on Kirby Muxloe in 1940 had dislodged them. Benjamin Shipman builders of Ratby replaced the slates.

The house was built between 1705 and 1710 and is described as a Queen Anne farmhouse. The occupier was the Reverend Timothy Orton and the name of the house was 'Orton's House'. After the Orton's left there came a number of families and in 1827 the Roby Burgin family of Shardlow, Derbyshire bought the house. The first Roby Burgin was Thomas. He was followed by Bradshaw Roby Burgin and subsequently by the Reverend William Roby Burgin. It was William who in 1879 built the front porch and also the additional four rooms on the back of the property. He also planted the four poplar trees in the garden on the front of the house and named the house 'The Poplars'. The poplar trees were felled in the late 1950's for safety reasons. William Roby Burgin died in 1897 leaving no heirs, and during the 70 years that the Roby Burgin's owned the house it appears they never lived there. They must have let the house out to tenants during this time.

The two cottages just below 'The Poplars' Nos. 84 and 86 Main Street were built we believe in the late 1800's and were originally a cottage with stables and a grain store.

My Great Uncle (by marriage), Mr. William Ladkin, a farmer from Thurlaston bought 'The Poplars' in 1900 and the house remained in my family until 2003 when it was decided to sell after 103 Years