

# A House Through 200 years

94 Meeting Street  
Quorn



*by*

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## 1 Location and origins

### The street

In the early part of the 19th century when this house was built, the street was variously referred to in different documents as Wood Gate, Wood Street, Chapel Street and Meeting Street. These names seem to have been used interchangeably throughout most of the century. By the 1880s the present name of Meeting Street had become established, and this house was given the number 14.

In 1951 the houses in Meeting Street were renumbered, and the few buildings on the south side were matched up with the numbers opposite on the north side where there were far more houses. As a result, 14 Meeting Street became 94 Meeting Street and has remained so to the present day.

### The listing

The house used to be a Grade II listed building, along with number 92 – on the left in this picture – the next-door cottage of roughly the same period. Number 94 was removed from the List during the 1980s after the national resurvey of listed buildings. 92 Meeting Street, which retains more original features, in particular the windows, remains on the Grade II list.



## The building

### 1816

This property map from 1816 is part of a much larger one produced for local landowner George Watkinson. The accompanying record book has been lost, so land ownership cannot be identified from it. All the buildings seem to have been drawn with great care, to reflect their sizes and shapes as accurately as possible. The current number 94 Meeting Street stands at the road end of the strip of land to the right of the vacant Plot 492. This



strip contains four plots, numbered 493, 494, 495 and 496. Plot 493 does not appear to have a building on it, but each of the other plots, situated in a row at right angles to the road, seems to contain one. So in 1816, it looks as if there were three buildings, possibly dwellings, going back from the road on this strip of land. The largest of these, on plot 495, is on the site of the present 94 Meeting Street but appears to have a very different shape. This suggests to me that it was probably an earlier dwelling which was demolished after 1816 to make way for the present house.

On the next-door plot to the right (numbered 498) the shape of the building seems close to that of the present number 92. That house has a distinctly Georgian-style frontage which would be consistent with a date in the early years of the 19th century, so I believe it could already have been there when this map was drawn up in 1816. The design and frontage of the present number 92 seem to have served loosely as a model for the present number 94 when that was built, although number 94 has broader and shallower windows. While it still has a characteristically Georgian symmetrical design at the front, the different window shape possibly points towards a slightly later date, closer to 1830.

So I would suggest that the previous number 94, shown here on plot 495, was probably demolished sometime during the 1820s and replaced by the first version of the present building. After that happened, other evidence suggests that the buildings behind it on plots 494 and 496 were used as outbuildings. They may or may not have been inhabited before then.

### 1883

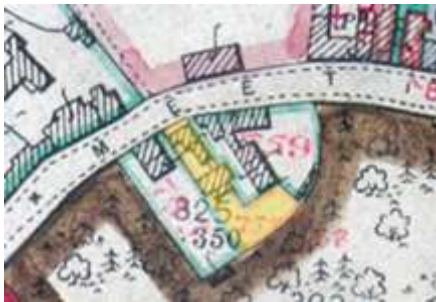
By 1883 the road name Meeting Street had been established. This house (number 14) and its next-door houses on each side are shown on this early ordnance survey map. Directly opposite this house is a footpath leading north-west through the fields towards Woodhouse Road. A large transverse outbuilding can be seen behind the house.



The building to the left of number 14 comprised two cottages at right angles to the road, numbered 16 and 18. A footpath running between these and number 14 can be seen, apparently leading into the woods behind. The building to the right of number 14 is the current number 92, then number 12. On this map it is almost swallowed up by a group of dwellings which had been built adjacent to it on the east side. These cottages, forming a large L-shape, were collectively known as Mee's Yard.

### 1909

This detail from a 1909 property map shows my house and nearby houses on Meeting Street. The properties and parcels of land are numbered in red. Plot 757 (shaded in yellow) is my house, then number 14. The smaller house next door (to the right on the image) is what is now number 92, then number 12. Here, it is included as part of Plot 759, the rest of which is occupied by Mee's Yard, a collection of several cottages alongside a large yard space. The Mee's Yard site is now occupied by number 82. To the left of my house, plot 755 contains two cottages (16 and 18) at right angles to the road; the present number 96 now occupies that site.



The map gives a detailed plan of the land and structures at number 14 Meeting Street, showing the house and its outbuildings. Behind the house there is a privy, and behind that a large outbuilding that stretches horizontally across the plot and intrudes slightly into the plot next door. A large area of land behind this extends across the back of both the next-door property (number 12) and the dwellings in Mee's Yard; all this land appears to be connected to number 14.

## 2 1830-1840s: First owners and the *Bird-in-Hand*

Evidence from the maps therefore indicates that the house next door, now 92 Meeting Street, was probably built in the first two decades of the 19th century, and that a few years later the present number 94 was built next to it, replacing a previous dwelling. It seems likely that during the 1820s someone bought the whole strip of land shown on the 1816 map, along with the three old buildings on it. The building nearest the road was then replaced with the first version of the present house. It was built in red brick like its neighbour; the rendering was added later. It had four rooms at the front and two more at the back in a two-storey rear section.

So I believe that the basic fabric of the house dates from the late 1820s. From that time onwards, the buildings behind the house functioned as outbuildings, whatever purpose they might have had before. These outbuildings remained in place in some form until they were demolished in 2001.

I am almost certain that, when the house was built in the late 1820s, its first owner-occupier was Richard Wilson, a frameworker who was born around 1763 in the next-door village of Woodhouse. In January 1785 he had married Sarah Elliott, who also lived in Woodhouse; later records indicate that she was about nine years older than him. Their marriage certificate records Richard Wilson's occupation as 'stocking maker', meaning that he worked a domestic knitting frame.



In the late 18th century, framework knitting was the primary cottage industry in Leicestershire and 90% of the 20,000 knitting/stocking frames in Great Britain were located in the East Midlands. The knitters worked in their own homes or in small workshops attached to their houses. Working a hand frame was a very demanding occupation requiring considerable strength, and was usually done by the man or men in the family. The knitter used both feet to operate the treadles, and both arms to move the heavy iron carriage on its wooden frame. The women would undertake the 'seaming' to produce

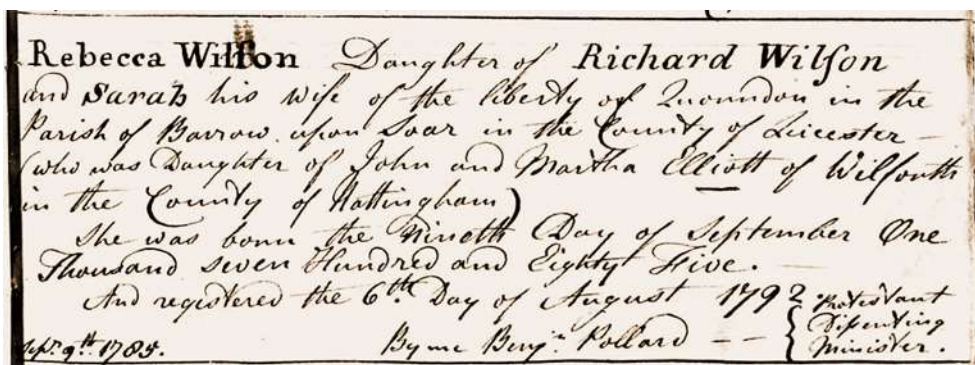
the stockings, and along with the children would transfer the yarn from hanks to bobbins for use on the frame. This photograph, which looks as if it probably dates from the late 19th century, shows a knitter working a typical frame. On the right is a bobbin winder, adapted from an old spinning wheel.



The yarn was obtained in hanks from the warehouse of a merchant or master hosier who also rented out the frames, since very few knitters could afford to buy their own. The frame knitter was a piece worker, paid by the dozen for the hose he produced, and entirely dependent for his wages on the master hosier and the work that he provided. The knitters mostly lived in villages around the towns where the warehouses were situated, and once a week they would travel into the town to take the hose they had made, and to collect their wages and a new supply of yarn. Framework knitting could be a precarious living, as rents for frames had to be paid even if work was not available.

At the time of his marriage in 1785, 22-year-old Richard Wilson would have wanted to set up on his own account as soon as possible. Sarah gave birth to their first child, a daughter called Rebecca, in September 1785, and sometime after that the family moved from Woodhouse to the larger village of Quorn, where there were a growing number of framework knitters.

The Wilsons were certainly living in Quorn by 1792 and appear to have been practising Baptists, since in that year Rebecca was registered by Quorn Baptist Church. The register states that she was seven years old and that the family lived in Quorn.



After Rebecca the Wilsons had another daughter, Sarah, who was born in 1795, and they also had four sons, all born in the 1790s and early 1800s. I have been unable to find any birth records for these other children.

In 1805, Rebecca married Thomas Barrowcliff of Quorn when she was 19. Four years later in 1809, her sister Sarah died at the age of 14. Sarah Wilson was buried at Quorn Baptist Church, and a memorial stone to her still stands against a wall there. Its inscription reads:

**An affectionate Memorial  
Of  
SARAH, Daughter of  
RICH<sup>d</sup>. and SAR<sup>t</sup>. WILSON  
she died  
September 13<sup>th</sup> 1809  
Aged 14 years  
Also  
Sarah Barrowcliff  
Niece of the above  
Who died in her infancy**



The Sarah Barrowcliff whose name was later added to the gravestone was one of Rebecca's children. There seem to be no other Wilson gravestones in the churchyard, but there is a Barrowcliff gravestone for another of Rebecca's children, a son called Richard Wilson Barrowcliff, obviously after his grandfather. The legible parts of that inscription read:

*Sacred to the Memory of Richard Wilson Ba..... Son of Thomas & Rebecca Barro.... Who died on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March .... In the 11<sup>th</sup> year of his age. Farewell dear Grandmother Grandfather....., You have dried my tears and soothed....., May God at last reward you.... for you, And land you safe on Heaven's eternal pl.....*

It seems clear from this that Richard and Sarah Wilson had erected the stone for their grandson; the inscription seems to be more about them than about the little boy.

The 1821 Census lists the Wilson family as living in Quorn with four sons still at home, two over 20 and two under 20; this would fit with two boys having been born to Richard and Sarah in the 1790s and two more in the early 1800s. In 1821 Richard was about 57 and Sarah about 66, and Richard had been a framework knitter for over 40 years.

Richard must either have been very successful at his trade or possibly have received an inheritance, because an 1830 poll book records him as being a freehold property owner in Quorn, and therefore entitled to vote. At that time less than 5% of the population had voting rights, and in 1830 he is listed among only 51 voters in Quorn out of a population of about 1,700.

Nine of those voters were framewokers, so it appears that at least some framewokers in Quorn were doing well financially.

An entry in another poll book for 1832 specifies that Richard Wilson owned freehold property on Wood Gate (Meeting Street), so it seems very likely that these entries in 1830 and 1832 refer to his ownership of this house. If that is the case, and he had owned it since before 1830, it is possible that he was the person who had bought the whole strip of land in the late 1820s and had the house built on it. Either that, or he had bought this newly-built house from whoever had owned or acquired the site and redeveloped it. Either way, at some point before 1830 Richard Wilson became the first owner and occupier of what is now 94 Meeting Street.

It seems, then, that by 1830 Richard Wilson was the freehold owner of this house, with its land and outbuildings. By that time, he was in his late 60s and his wife Sarah was well into her 70s. After a lifetime of working a knitting frame, perhaps Richard wanted to try an occupation that might be less physically demanding or more sociable. A new piece of government legislation opened up the opportunity for him to do this.

In 1830, the Tory government under the Duke of Wellington had pushed through the Beerhouse Act just before it was voted out of office. This Act liberalised the licensing laws in England and Wales, with the aims of increasing competition among brewers, lowering the price of ale, and encouraging people to drink beer instead of strong spirits. It enabled any ratepayer to brew and sell beer on payment of a licence costing just two guineas (£2.05p). The result of the Act was that thousands of new public alehouses were opened throughout the country in private houses. These new publicans brewed their beer on the premises, and sold it in their front rooms to the neighbours who constituted their regular clientele.

Quorn was no exception to this burgeoning of the brewing trade, and Pigot's Trade Directory for 1835 records nine public houses in the village. This house was one of them, with a sign outside declaring it to be the *Bird-in-Hand*. At around the age of 70, Richard Wilson had embarked on a new career as a 'beer retailer'.

The front door of the *Bird-in-Hand* opened into a small entry hall with a door going off on each side to a separate room, each cosy room having a chimney and an open fire. These two rooms would have been the public drinking areas, furnished with wooden benches and settles round the walls, and long wooden tables. The back room was the family's private living space and contained the kitchen. The outbuildings provided the necessary accommodation for the brewing of ale, which would have been decanted from the barrel into a pitcher, for pouring into the customers' tankards. The illustration below, by George Cruikshank, featuring a small early Victorian



beerhouse, perhaps suggests what one of my front rooms might have looked like in the 1830s.



Richard's venture into the brewing trade was short-lived. In 1839, after only a few years as a landlord, he decided he had had enough. Age might have been a factor, since by that time he was in his late 70s and Sarah was in her mid-80s. Perhaps the business had not been as profitable as they had hoped. At all events, Richard and Sarah decided to sell up and move to another house in Meeting Street.

The *Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire & Derbyshire TELEGRAPH and Advertiser* for the Midland Counties on Saturday 8th June 1839 published the following announcements:

*QUORNDON.*

*FREEHOLD PROPERTY, HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, &C.*

*TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,*

*BY MR. SIMPKIN,*

*On Monday next, June 10th, 1839, at Ten o'Clock in the Morning, on the Premises of Mr. RICHARD WILSON, sign of the Bird-in-Hand [sic], in Quorndon aforesaid,*

*ALL the Genteel HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, Brewing Vessels, and other Effects.*

*Also, at Six o'Clock in the Evening of that day, will be SOLD by AUCTION, by Mr. Simpkin, at the White Horse Inn Quorndon, subject to such Conditions as will be then and there produced, All that FREEHOLD HOUSE or TENEMENT, situate in Quorndon aforesaid, known by the sign of the "Bird-in-Hand" [sic], now in the occupation of Mr. Richard Wilson, the owner.*

*For further particulars, or to view the same, apply to Mr. THOS. RAVEN, Quorndon; to Mr. PARKER, Solicitor, Loughborough; or to the Auctioneer.*

Everything of substance was put up for sale, including the house, the land, the 'genteel household furniture' and the brewing equipment. For Richard Wilson, it was a pretty comprehensive and final act of retirement from the beer trade.

Two years later, the 1841 Census records Richard and Sarah living at another house in Meeting Street. Richard, now in his late 70s, is described as a frameworker, indicating that he had returned to his previous physically demanding occupation. This might suggest that his few years as a publican had left him in financial straits.

Richard and Sarah continued to live in Quorn until their deaths. Sarah died in June 1844, and the event was announced in the local newspaper:

Leicestershire Mercury - Saturday 22 June 1844

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Richard outlived her by only a few weeks, and was about 81 when he died. They do not appear in the burial records for either Quorn Baptist Church or St Bartholomew's.

When Richard Wilson sold up, it appears that the *Bird-in-Hand* was bought as a going concern by a Mr Webster, who continued to run the pub for a few more years into the 1840s. An article in the *Leicester Mercury* on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1841 about proceedings at the Magistrates' Court reads:

– Clarke, of Quorndon, was charged upon the information of the parish constable, with being drunk on Sunday last. The Rev. R. Stammers stated that on the evening of Sunday, he went to the *Bird-in-Hand* beer shop to find the defendant and discovered him there in a state of intoxication. The defendant admitted the offence and was fined 5s. and the costs.

– Webster, landlord of the *Bird-in-Hand*, was then charged by the constable with permitting drunkenness in his house. The rev. informer stated that when he went in for Clarke, he saw five or six others drinking and smoking. Clarke "showed all the habits and manners of a person who was intoxicated", the others "appeared" to be also intoxicated; and when he reproved them, one of them swore at him! The defendant denied that any were intoxicated except Clarke, who had come in drunk from another public house. The defendant was fined 40s. and the costs. It appeared that the complainant was more intent upon teaching submission to the defendant, than upon reforming the manners of those wicked inhabitants of Quorndon, for he repeatedly told him that if he would acknowledge himself wrong, he would not press the charge. Although he took lunch with the magistrate who afterwards heard his cases, he could hardly face it out, and appeared to be labouring under a choking sensation. But that he had held a *tete-a-tete* with Mr. Cresswell upon the subject was proved by that gentleman telling the defendant before he had heard the case, that he had better acknowledge the offence at once! The defendant replied that he would do nothing of the sort. Mr. Cresswell again urged him to it, when the defendant said – "I shall not do anything of the sort – would you have me tell a downright lie?" Very well! said the justice, and he then went on with the case.

The account reveals Webster, the landlord of the *Bird-in-Hand*, as outspoken and bullish, determined not to be cowed into submission by either the minister or the magistrate, and staunch in the defence of his own reputation and that of his beerhouse. The writer of the report even seems

to convey a sneaking admiration for the accused publican, through his implied criticism of the minister's unethical tactics and shifty behaviour in court. It sounds from this as if Mr Webster was quite a character, and one not prepared to be pushed around by establishment authority figures, including men of the cloth.

I have been unable to pin down the identity of this interesting man who seems to have lived in my house for a short time. Unfortunately, the 1841 Census gives no numbering for the 85 inhabited houses in Chapel Street (Meeting Street), and it is extremely difficult to work out the order in which the information was collected. Three male Websters in Chapel Street are listed as being 'First in household', but none of them is described as a publican: one (Charles) is a lace maker, one (Joseph) a glove maker, and the third (William) is recorded as a 'Lace Man?' (*sic*). That unexpected question mark might suggest an element of doubt about the occupation of William Webster. Perhaps he was not at home when the census taker visited the house, and whoever provided information on its inhabitants was not entirely clear on the matter? Perhaps he was a 'lace man' as well as running the *Bird-in-Hand*, but preferred to be registered as the former?

Whatever the explanation, I do think that William is the most likely candidate. The census details for him and his family are written on the same page as the information for nearby 'Quorndon House', and at 50, he is the right sort of age for a publican. Ten years later, the 1851 Census describes the same William Webster as a 'Manufacturer of hosiery, employing 12 men & 6 boys', so he had obviously done well for himself. It looks as though, during the 1840s, he had managed to establish himself as a successful businessman, a middle-man running 18 home-based knitters and selling on their work to retail outlets or larger distributors. This kind of drive and ambition seems to me to fit with the strong character of the defendant in the 1841 case outlined above.

This William Webster and his wife Elizabeth were originally from Shephed, and had married there in 1808. They moved to Quorn, where they produced eight children. By the 1841 Census their eldest child, Ann, had married and left home, but the other seven were still living with their parents. John, Caroline, Harriet, Frederic and William were in their twenties, Thomas and Lucy in their teens. If, as I believe, they were all living in my house when it was the *Bird-in-Hand*, it must have been somewhat cramped.

William did not remain a publican for very long, and at some point during the 1840s he seems to have sold up and moved his family to another house in Meeting Street, maybe in order to concentrate on his more profitable and expanding business as a 'manufacturer of hosiery'.

By the 1851 Census, I am fairly sure that William and Elizabeth Webster were no longer living in this house, although they were still in this road. They

were both over 60 by that time, and all their children had flown the nest apart from the unmarried Harriet (now 34) and Frederick (now 28 and a 'shirt maker'). However, two grandsons had moved in to live with the Websters – Thomas Wylde (19) and Samuel Wylde (17), the sons of William's eldest daughter Ann.

The following year, in July 1852, a death notice for William appeared in the *Leicester Journal and Midland Counties General Advertiser*: 'on the 27<sup>th</sup> ult. at Quorndon, Mr William Webster, aged 64.' Less than a year later, his wife Elizabeth also died.

By that time, the *Bird-in-Hand* was itself deceased, and ownership of this house had passed to Edward Basil Farnham of Quorn House, local squire and bigwig, who had bought it to add to his growing collection of properties in Quorn.

Despite its relatively short life as an alehouse, the *Bird-in-Hand* was not completely forgotten in the village. Over half a century later, its existence was mentioned by the Reverend Kelcey in an account of one of his village walks in 1908: "The house opposite, recently inhabited by Mr Miller, was once an Inn with the sign of *The Bird in the Hand*." Over the years, recollections of the pub's name seem to have been influenced by a well-known proverb, altering it and obscuring its original reference to hunting with birds of prey. The pub was also cited (with the same erroneous name) in an article about Quorn in the *Loughborough Echo* on 3rd August 1928:

*There are thirteen licensed houses; besides the house mentioned, there are certainly five others which in former times were licensed, including the Crown and Cushion, now the Factory House, the Blue Ball, now the Co-operative Stores, and the house now occupied by Mr C Tomlin, in Meeting Street, which was formerly The Bird in the Hand.*

There is no pictorial record of the *Bird-in-Hand*, but the photograph below from the early 1900s of *The Mill House Inn* on Leicester Road, Quorn shows another of these small taverns which sold only beer and operated alongside the larger coaching inns. *The Mill House* is the building to the left of the archway, and its sign can be seen jutting out above the door. The tall building in the background was part of Wright's factory. None of these buildings exist today.



### 3 1850s-1890s: The Whites

When E. B. Farnham bought the house sometime during the 1840s, he was adding to his rapidly growing property portfolio in Quorn, following his inheritance of the Farnham estates in 1835. The Farnhams were already major landowners in Quorn, having been the foremost family here since the 13th century. Their family seat, Quorndon House in Meeting Street, had been completely rebuilt in 1820 by Edward Farnham, and after his death in 1835 his son Edward Basil extended it and began to buy up other land and properties nearby. This house, on the edge of the Quorn House parkland, would have been an obvious target for acquisition, and by the beginning of the 1850s I am pretty sure it was owned by Farnham.

In July 1851, E. B. Farnham, then aged 51, married for the first time. His wife Gertrude was only 21, and he brought her to live at Quorndon House.



This grand mansion had been built by his father on the site of the Farnham family's previous residence Over Hall, but Edward Basil had not spent much time there since inheriting it in 1835. He had become the MP for North Leicestershire in 1837, and after that he would have lived mainly at his London home.

Quorndon House was occupied by his widowed mother and his two sisters, with a large domestic staff to serve them – there were 13 resident servants at the 1851 Census. The return of the master, with his young bride the new mistress, seems to have precipitated a shake-up of the establishment, including Farnham's decision that he needed a new butler.

At this time, one of the two resident footmen at Beaumanor Hall in the next-door village of Woodhouse was John White, who was 32, single and ambitious. John had been born in 1819 in Sweptstone, Leicestershire and had gone into service as a boy. By 1851 he had worked his way up to being the First Footman at Beaumanor, the home of William Herrick, a wealthy gentleman farmer who



employed about 30 agricultural labourers on his considerable landholdings. In 1851 Herrick (aged 56) was unmarried, and was sharing the mansion with his unmarried sister Mary Ann (aged 54). These two people were serviced by a resident staff of 13, which was run by a housekeeper.

John White was the most senior of the male servants, and as such would have fulfilled the roles of butler and valet for Herrick. By 1851 he was well qualified for the post of butler elsewhere, and such a promotion would increase his earnings significantly. This photograph, from the early 20th century, shows a domestic staff of roughly the same size as Herrick's and Farnham's. The butler and housekeeper are centre front, and the footmen, with their distinctive brass buttons, are at the sides.



The family of four that this particular staff served are pictured surveying them from above.

John White had a sweetheart back in Newton Burgoland, which was next to his native village of Swepstone: Mary Cuthbert, the local blacksmith's daughter, who was five years younger than him. Mary earned her living as a dressmaker, and had to mark time in her parents' home while John made his way in service and reached the point where he could both afford to marry her and obtain a post which allowed him to have a wife. Like all resident domestic staff at that time, butlers were usually expected to be single and therefore able to devote themselves entirely to the needs of their employers. It was not unknown for a butler to be dismissed if he married, and the few butlers who were married had to make separate housing arrangements for their families.

At 32 and 27, John White and Mary Cuthbert would have been keen to get married and start a family. In order to do so, John needed to find a post in which his employer would permit him to rent a private home near his place of work for Mary and the children they were hoping to have.

He was fortunate in that such an opportunity arose in the next-door village of Quorn, where Edward Basil Farnham was modernising at Quorndon House and looking for a new butler to reorganise the domestic staff there. It seems likely that Farnham was impressed by his neighbour Herrick's senior footman and decided to poach him. Farnham himself had married in June 1851 and perhaps his own newly-married state inclined him

to look sympathetically on John and Mary's situation and marital aspirations. Early in 1852, Edward Basil Farnham offered John White the post of butler, together with the tenancy of this house.

Once John finally had a home to offer Mary they did not want to wait for banns to be read, and on 2nd February 1852 they were married by licence in Sweptstone Church. Although John's place of employment was stated as Beaumanor, it seems likely that the wedding was planned to coincide with his change of job. They would then have moved into this house.

As Farnham's butler with 24/7 responsibility for ensuring the smooth running of the household and the impeccable conduct of the domestic staff, John would officially have had to live in at Quorn House, but his own home and his wife could hardly be closer. E. B. Farnham was still an MP, so he and his wife would be spending a fair amount of time in London, where Farnham's town house would have had its own permanent staff. John and Mary must have felt that this was the very best solution they could have hoped for.

The Whites started their family almost as soon as the dust had settled after John's promotion and their 1852 relocation to this house in the road which was called Wood Street in the census of the previous year. Their first child, Mary Elizabeth, was born here in 1853, followed in 1854 by their son George. After that they slowed down a bit: John junior was born in 1857 and Jessie Emily in 1860. They certainly took advantage of having a relatively spacious home, and quickly filled it.

The 1861 Census entry for this house records Mary White (37) as 'Head of the household' and a 'Butler's wife', living here with her four young children – Mary, George, John, and baby Jessie. Meanwhile, her husband John was in residence at Quorndon (*sic*) House as Butler. Farnham had slimmed down the staff, and there were now only eight resident servants; in addition, the coachman and grooms lived 'out', in rented accommodation owned by Farnham in this street. This domestic staff served a family of four: E. B. Farnham (60, 'Land Proprietor'), his wife Gertrude (30), and their sons William (5) and George (2). Farnham's dependent female relatives were no longer in residence; his mother had died, and his two sisters had moved to Norwood on the outskirts of London.

In the 1871 Census the road's name has changed yet again and is now Chapel Street, and the whole White family is listed at this address. John is 'Head of the household' and 'Butler to E. B. Farnham Esq'; Mary is a 'Butler's wife'; Mary Elizabeth (17), John (14) and Jessie (10) are all at school – Mary Elizabeth must have been a pupil-teacher by then; George (16) is a 'Solicitor's clerk'. At Quorn (*sic*) House, the Farnhams, now with three sons, are being supported by a staff of 12 live-in servants, and their coachman is

still located in a rented cottage in Chapel Street with his wife. There is also now an 'Under-butler' who could deputise for John White, which perhaps enabled him to spend more time in his own home.

As well as bringing up four children, Mary White had by this time returned to commercial dressmaking, which she did from home; she is listed as a dressmaker in trade directories for 1870 and 1875. Between them, she and John would have been making a comfortable living. They certainly managed to give all their children a good education, enabling them to enter respectable professions. The girls both seem to have stayed on at school as pupil teachers and then become governesses. John joined a civil engineering firm as a trainee surveyor. George became a solicitors' clerk at a Loughborough legal practice.

During the 1870s, the name of the road became more settled, and the names Wood Gate, Wood Street and Chapel Street gave way to Meeting Street. The last two of these names derived from the location in the road of the Primitive Methodist Chapel and the old Baptist Meeting House that had preceded the Baptist Church. Around this time the houses were probably numbered, and this house became number 14. The name Quorndon had for many years been shortened to Quorn by local people, and in 1889 the Postmaster General gave permission for the village to change its name officially to Quorn, following a successful petition by Quorn Local Board. This had been prompted by local businessmen who were finding it increasingly inconvenient that their post frequently went astray and landed in the Derbyshire village of Quarndon. So by the end of the century the identity of this house was established as being 14 Meeting Street, Quorn.

Edward Basil Farnham, John White's employer and the owner of what was now consistently called Quorn House, died in 1879. His entire estate passed to his eldest son William Edward John Basil Farnham, who was only 23. Two years later, at the 1881 Census, the position of John White (now 60) is puzzling: he does not feature in the entry for Quorn House, which lists a new butler and a new under-butler. On the face of it, this might suggest that John had either been sacked by the young squire or had decided that the new regime did not suit him. However, the 1881 Census entry for the White family at 14 Meeting Street still gives John's occupation as 'Butler to W. E. J. B. Farnham Esq', so it would appear that John was still in post but unable to do his job at that time for some reason. Maybe he was experiencing a period of illness and had been temporarily replaced at Quorn House while he recovered.

At that same census in 1881, George (26) and Jessie (20) are recorded as living with their parents. George is working as a solicitor's clerk at Woolley, Beardsley & Bosworth in Loughborough. Jessie is not recorded as having an occupation. The Whites' younger son John (24), by this time working as a



land surveyor, had for some reason moved into lodgings with the Dalby family who also lived in Meeting Street; William Dalby and his son George were carpenters. I can't find the Whites' eldest child Mary Elizabeth in the 1881 Census. I know she had not married, so I would assume she was living away somewhere as a governess.

The 1891 Census contains no such ambiguities about John White senior's employment position. Now 70 years old, he is recorded as the resident Butler in the entry for Quorn House. There is no under-butler, and John is in control of a staff of 13 to service the needs of William E. J. B. Farnham, his wife Catherine (affectionately known as Pussy) and their two small children. The photograph shows a butler in 1890, in the formal dress uniform of the period.



With no deputy, John would probably have needed to live in for much of the time, or at least whenever the master and mistress were in residence, and in 1891 Mary White is again recorded as 'Head of the household' at 14 Meeting Street. Also here with Mary are her two daughters Mary Elizabeth and Jessie, both now governesses. Perhaps they were working for local families on a daily basis, or just happened to be visiting their parents at the time of the census. The White sons are both still living in Quorn: George, 'Solicitor's clerk', with his wife and small son at Rose Cottage, New Quorn (on the Leicester Road), and John, 'Civil engineer's assistant', with his wife at Soar House, Barrow Road.

Soon after that, disaster engulfed the Farnham family. William Farnham, although by all accounts a kind and amiable man, was financially irresponsible: both a lavish spender and a speculator who made terrible investments, resulting in the accumulation of massive debts. When he was about 30 he had developed epilepsy which, together with his financial problems, might have contributed to a catastrophic breakdown in his mental health. In August 1893, at the age of 35, he was committed as a 'lunatic' and at about the same time was declared bankrupt. A trustee was appointed to liquidise his assets, and all his properties and possessions were sold – at least, those that could be traced. The appointed Trustee reportedly had a very difficult job trying to track down Farnham's assets and keep control of them. Many portable items of furniture and valuables at Quorn House disappeared before they could be sold, and the accusing finger was pointed at Farnham's wife Catherine.

The sale of Quorn House and dispersal of its staff was probably what precipitated John White into retiring from service altogether; he was over 70 by that time, and all his children were successfully established. I don't know exactly what happened to him and Mary during the rest of the decade

after William Farnham's fall. Theoretically, 14 Meeting Street should have been taken over by the Trustee of the Farnham estate and sold after the bankruptcy, but it's not clear when or whether that actually happened. John and Mary could possibly have stayed on in this house for a while after the Farnhams had left Quorn, but they might also have felt, given their ages, that it was a good time to retire from work and downsize.

They had certainly made the decision to do that by the turn of the century. By the 1901 Census John and Mary, now aged 81 and 76, had relocated to Farnham Street. The house they moved to was built on land previously owned by William Farnham which had been bought jointly by their son George White and his employer, the Loughborough solicitor Henry Wright Bosworth, at the time of Farnham's bankruptcy. White and Bosworth had then developed the land. This photograph, supplied by the White family to the Quorn On-line Museum, is believed to be of Mary White in the early 1900s, when she would have been in her 80s.



John and Mary White enjoyed a few years of retirement in Farnham Street before John died in 1908 at the age of 88. The 1911 Census finds Mary (aged 87) living at 4 Freehold Street with her unmarried daughter Jessie (aged 50). Mary died in 1914 at the age of 90.



John and Mary lie in the same grave at St Bartholomew's, Quorn. It is positioned very close to the church, almost next to the private entrance to the Farnham chapel, suggesting that the Farnham family probably had some influence in its location. George Farnham, William's younger brother and then the owner of Quorn House, might well have wished to show his respect and even perhaps affection for the man who had served the family faithfully for over 40 years, a period which included the whole of George's

own childhood. The grave is marked with a tasteful memorial stone, elegantly inscribed. It is decorated with a relief pattern of ivy leaves, the symbol of memory and friendship.

It has been challenging trying to track down what happened to the four White children who were born and brought up in this house. The daughters, Mary and Jessie, both started out as governesses and both seem to have remained single. The White sons, George and John, stayed in Quorn and both married, but they were not equally successful in their chosen paths.

Mary's work seems to have removed her permanently from Quorn and taken her around the country as she moved from governessing to become a teacher in small private schools. In 1901 she was working at a private day school in Beaminster, Dorset, and living on the premises with her employer, a 62-year-old woman who owned the school. By 1911 she had moved to Steyning, Sussex, and was the resident 'Superintendent' at a girls' boarding school called Claremont. By that time she was 57, and after that she disappears from the records.

Her younger sister Jessie seems to have given up working somewhat earlier and returned to Quorn. By 1911 she was back in the village, living with their widowed mother Mary White in Freehold Street. She is recorded as having 'domestic duties', which probably meant running the home for her 87-year-old mother and caring for her. Jessie attended her niece's wedding in Quorn in 1912, but after that she falls off the radar. I can find no record of what happened to her after her mother's death in 1914, and no death records for either her or her sister.

In the 1881 Census John White junior was a land surveyor for a civil engineering firm and lodging with the Dalby family in Meeting Street. This might have been a statement of independence, or it could possibly have signalled the beginnings of a rift with the rest of his family. In 1888 he married Eleanor Catherine Hall at St Saviour's Church in Leicester, when he was 31 and she was 24. At that time, John is recorded as living in Keythorpe Street in Leicester, and Eleanor's place of residence is Quorn. Eleanor came from County Durham, and her family seems to have moved around a bit. Her father Thomas Hall had been the coachman at a great house in Lancashire for a while when she was growing up, and by the time of her marriage he had become a 'horse dealer'. As such, he would have travelled the country attending horse fairs, and that might have been how Eleanor, if she was helping him, came to visit this area and meet John White. It seems strange that they married by licence in Leicester, when Eleanor was living in Quorn and John was a native of Quorn with a family and roots here. It is possible that Eleanor was pregnant and the Whites wanted to hush this up – John White senior was still Farnham's butler at this time and would certainly have wished to avoid any such scandal. Other possibilities are that John's family disapproved of his bride, or that he was already estranged from them. He and Eleanor did live in Quorn after their marriage, and in the 1891 Census they were at Soar House in Barrow Street.

At this point, their story becomes rather murky. Eleanor seems to have left both John and Quorn during the 1890s, and at the same time John's career as a land surveyor seems to have collapsed. In the 1901 Census he is working as a house painter and lodging with a family in High Street, Quorn. Ten years later, in 1911, he is living on his own in Meeting Street, presumably renting a small house, and still earning a living as a house painter. He states on the Census that he has been married for 22 years and has one child alive, but there is no sign of either wife or child in the census or any local records. In 1921 he is a boarder in Sarson Street, Quorn, described as a widower. He appears to have died in Quorn in 1929, but there is no burial record for him.

John White's unsuccessful marriage and the decline of his career stand in sharp contrast to the life of his older brother George, who became a notable, prosperous and well-respected Quorn figure.

In September 1882 George White, then an up-and-coming solicitor's clerk, married Mary Ann Kirbell at St Bartholomew's; he was 26 and she was



22. Mary Ann (named as Marion on the marriage certificate) was a farmer's daughter from Halstead in East Leicestershire. Their first child, Ethel Mary, was born in 1884, followed by Charles Kirbell (1886), George Cecil (1887), Muriel Hilda (1893) and Frank Cuthbert (1894). The 1891 Census finds George, Mary Ann and their first three children living at Rose Cottage, a large house on the main road through Quorn. They have a 14-year-old maid of all work living in to do the domestic labour.

In 1901, the Census finds the White family still at Rose Cottage. George (46) is now described as 'Solicitors Clerk and Clerk to Urban District Council'. Mary Ann is 41, Ethel 17, Charles 15, George 14, Muriel 8 and Frank 6. There are now two female servants living in – a 20-year-old cook and a 19-year-old housemaid. George was obviously doing very well for himself. His main job for over 50 years was as a solicitor's clerk at Woolley, Beardsley & Bosworth Solicitors in Loughborough. In addition, he held several other paid positions including Clerk to Quorndon Urban District Council and Secretary to Quorndon Building Society. Alongside all this he ran his own business as a house agent and property developer, owning and managing a considerable amount of property in Quorn.

George and his wife Mary Ann lived at Rose Cottage, Loughborough Road (pictured here) for over 30 years. It was situated on a plot now occupied by houses numbered 21, 21a and 21b, next-door to the present Co-op. In the 1911 Census all their children were still at home and unmarried. Charles (25) was working as a clerk at Alliance Assurance in Leicester, and George (24) was a bank clerk. Frank (16 at the time), was away at boarding school.



When war broke out in September 1914, George and Mary Ann White's youngest son Frank left his job as an articled clerk at Warner Sheppard & Wade, auctioneers and estate agents in Leicester, and volunteered for the Leicestershire Yeomanry. He soon found himself fighting in France, and was only 20 when he was killed in action in May 1915.

By the beginning of 1916 it was clear that conscription was imminent, and the first to be called up would be young single men. This may have been why Charles, the Whites' oldest child, decided to join up in February. Charles was very well thought of in Quorn, and an active member of the community. Since 1905 he had been both organist and choirmaster at St Bartholomew's, and he was also a stalwart of the village cricket team. After a period of fighting in France he came back to England for officer training, and then returned to France as a Second Lieutenant. He was killed in action in September 1918 at the age of 33, just 10 weeks before the Armistice. The photo shows Charles outside Rose Cottage.



The names of Charles Kirbell White and Frank Cuthbert White can be seen on both the village war memorial and the Roll of Honour at Rawlins. George and Mary Ann White also joined with another Quorn couple, William and Ann Moore, who had lost three sons in the conflict, to donate a stained-glass window to Quorn church in memory of the five young men.

The inscription on this memorial window reads:

*To the Glory of God and in proud and loving memory of Charles Kirbell White, Frank Cuthbert White, Daniel Moore, William Moore, Hubert Mason Moore, who together with many comrades from this village, fell in the Great War, this window is erected by their Parents, George White and Mary Ann his wife; and William Moore and Ann Mary his wife.*

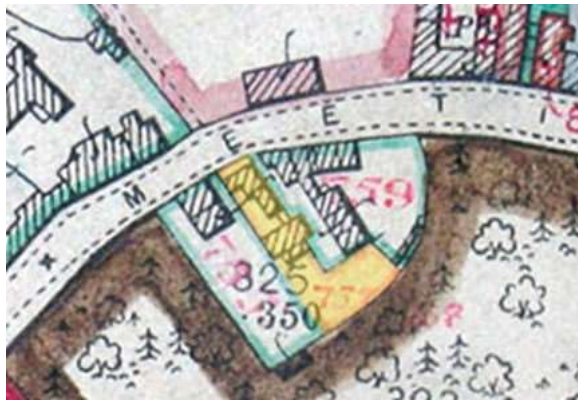


George White died in 1929 at the age of 75 and is buried in Quorn churchyard quite close to his parents. In recognition of his significance as a Quorn resident, White Street, a residential cul-de-sac off Barrow Road, was later named after him.

## 4 1890s-1910: Tenancies and question marks

It's not clear who owned this house from the time of W.E.J.B. Farnham's bankruptcy in 1893. In theory, all his properties should then have been sold in order to realise his assets and provide some recompense to his creditors. However, a financial document dated 1910, more than 15 years after his bankruptcy, records several houses in Meeting Street as belonging to him. The images below are taken from 1909/1910 Inland Revenue Finance Act records; the map was used in conjunction with the ledger entries to identify the ownership of every scrap of land in England and Wales.

This detail from the map shows my house and nearby houses on Meeting Street. The properties and parcels of land are numbered in red. Plot 757 (shaded in yellow) is my house, then number 14. The smaller house next door (to the right on the image)



door (to the right on the image) is what is now number 92, then number 12. Here, it is included as part of Plot 759, the rest of which is occupied by Mee's Yard, a collection of several cottages alongside a large yard space. The Mee's Yard site is now occupied by number 82. To the left of my house, plot 755

contains two cottages at right angles to the road; the present number 96 now occupies that site.

The map gives a detailed plan of the land and structures at number 14 Meeting Street, showing the house and its outbuildings. Behind the house there is a privy, and behind that a large outbuilding in two sections that stretches horizontally across the plot and intrudes slightly into the plot next door. A large area of land behind this extends across the back of both the next-door property (number 12) and the dwellings in Mee's Yard; all this land appears to be connected to number 14. The accompanying ledger lists the tenants at these properties, recording the tenant here at plot 757 as G. Main. The next column gives the name of the owner, which is W. E. J. B. Farnham. As this record

Plot	Tenant Name	Owner Name
757	Ray Clark	W. E. J. B. Farnham
758	J. H. Gillham	W. E. J. B. Farnham
759	G. Main	W. E. J. B. Farnham
760	John Vandy	W. E. J. B. Farnham
761	Wm. Spence	W. E. J. B. Farnham
762	Frank Lambton	W. E. J. B. Farnham
763	Joe Goring	W. E. J. B. Farnham
764	Edmund Parker	W. E. J. B. Farnham
765	John Scott	W. E. J. B. Farnham
766	Wm. White	W. E. J. B. Farnham

was officially produced in 1909 this is very puzzling, given that all Farnham's assets were supposed to have been sold in the aftermath of his bankruptcy in 1893.

William Farnham died in July 1910, only a few months after the date of this ledger, and the Probate record gives the total value of his estate as £97.7s. It therefore appears impossible that he could still have owned all these properties in Quorn a few months before he died, and the logical conclusion must be that this document is wrong. Perhaps this is not surprising. The land survey and valuation carried out by the Inland Revenue in 1909 in preparation for the 1910 Finance Act was an immense undertaking, involving the compilation of field books and maps listing every scrap of property and every detail of ownership in England and Wales. The final records filled 94 volumes, and were dubbed the 1910 Domesday Books. This massive project was carried out speedily, by thousands of clerks across the country who must have been relying heavily on existing and possibly not always up-to-date records relating to land ownership. The crossings-out in the Quorn records above indicate that this ledger had originally been a list of tenants, and was adjusted later to give only plot numbers in line with the plot numbers on the map.

One possible explanation for the anomaly is that George Francis Farnham, William's younger brother, had bought back these houses in Meeting Street some time after they had been sold following the bankruptcy and associated scandal. George was a London stockbroker and wealthy in his own right. He wanted to restore the Farnham family to their ancestral seat, and in 1895 he did buy back Quorn House which had been bought in 1893 by the Mountsorrel Granite Company, doubtless at a knockdown price. Maybe he had also set about repurchasing some of the more modest properties nearby, and the 1909/10 ledger had erroneously copied his brother's name from some previous record, failing to update it to George's name. I don't know.

William E. J. B. Farnham's official lunacy was relatively short-lived. Five years later in 1898, the *Herald* reported that "*Lord Justice Rigby, after a careful examination, was satisfied that he was in a condition to have complete control of himself and his affairs*", and the Court of Lunacy gave him a full discharge. The next year he was also discharged from bankruptcy.

Unsurprisingly, given the scandal and disgrace of his fall, William did not return to live in Quorn or anywhere nearby. After swiftly repurchasing Quorn House, George Farnham moved his widowed mother back there in 1899 and officially took up residence there himself. There was reportedly great satisfaction among Quorn residents that the Farnham family had been restored to their rightful home. Meanwhile, William Farnham lived out his days in exile, initially as a lodger in the Leamington home of his doctor, and later in London. He did not reunite with his wife, although it would appear



that they kept in touch. He died in July 1910 at the relatively young age of 55, while on holiday in Brighton. His executor was his brother George, and since William's entire estate amounted to less than £100 it seems clear that someone – either George or possibly William's estranged wife – must have been supporting him financially during the last 15 years of his life.

I therefore believe that all of William Farnham's smaller properties in Quorn, including this house, were sold after his bankruptcy in 1893, but I can find no record of who bought them. One likely candidate might have been the Quorn Land Syndicate, of which George White was the clerk. Formed in the 1890s by a group of local gentry and businessmen, the Syndicate was buying up plenty of land in Quorn at that time and building property on it. Another might have been William Henry Fewkes, a Quorn builder with a thriving business. Fewkes built a number of houses in Quorn, and also public buildings including the Village Hall and the War Memorial. I'm fairly sure that Fewkes did own this house in 1920, so he could have acquired it at any time between 1893 and then. It's also possible that George Farnham repurchased some of these properties, including those in Meeting Street, as part of his drive to restore the Farnham estate, and that he owned them in 1910.

Whatever might have happened to the ownership of this house after William Farnham's bankruptcy in 1893, what is certain is that John White lost his job as butler at Quorn House, and he and Mary moved out around that time or soon afterwards. This house was then let to new tenants by whoever had acquired it – perhaps George Farnham, perhaps the Quorn Land Syndicate, perhaps William Henry Fewkes, perhaps more than one of these over the course of the next 25 years, or perhaps someone else entirely.

The next family that I know of who lived in the house were the Millers, who appear in the 1901 Census as the occupants of 14 Meeting Street: James Miller (32), a painter and decorator, his wife Mary (35) and their daughter Elsie (4 months).

James Miller had been born in Normanton-on-Soar in 1869, one of several children of Harley and Christina Miller. At that time, Harley Miller had a small farm and employed one man to help him work it, but during the 1870s he gave up farming and moved the family back to his birthplace of Loughborough. In 1881 he was living in Bridge Street, Loughborough, and earning his living as a gardener. His two oldest daughters, aged 16 and 14, were outworkers in the hosiery industry; the four youngest children, including James, were at school.

James became a painter and decorator, and in 1893 he married Mary Till at All Saints Church in Loughborough. Mary was the eldest child of John Till, a Leicester butcher, and his wife Mary. James and Mary Miller's first recorded child, Elsie, was born in 1900, by which time they had moved from Loughborough to Quorn and were living in this house. They went on to have

three more children, but by the time the last one was born in 1910 they had moved to New Spinney Cottages in Meeting Street. The Millers stayed in Quorn for the rest of their lives, James continuing to work as a house painter until he retired, which he had done before the 1939 Register. Like the Whites before them, the Millers had long lives: James died in 1952 aged 83, and Mary in 1955 aged 86. Both are buried in Quorn churchyard.

The Millers probably moved out of this house around 1907, since in 1908 the Reverend Kelcey, on one of his local walks, referred to it as having been 'recently inhabited by Mr Miller'. There could be an implication here that the house was temporarily uninhabited, or maybe there was a new tenant whose name Kelcey did not know.

At some point after the Millers left, it appears that the tenancy was taken over briefly by a G. Main, whose name features as the tenant of this house in the 1909/10 Inland Revenue Finance Act records discussed earlier. I have been unable to find out anything about him or his family, and they did not stay for long.

They had definitely gone before the electoral roll canvass in 1910, which recorded Charles Tomblin as an elector by virtue of his residence in a qualifying property in Meeting Street. His qualifying property was this house, so he must have taken over the tenancy sometime between 1907 and 1910.

## 5 1910-1950s: The Tomblins

Charles Tomblin was born in 1872 in Barrowden, Rutland, one of the five illegitimate children of Emma Tomblin. The 1881 Census shows Emma (44) living with her widowed mother Mary (83) and the five children: Mary (20), William (14), Charles (9), Abraham (7) and Elizabeth (2). At that time Emma was taking in laundry, and her eldest son William was working as an agricultural labourer. Twenty years later, William (34) and Abraham (27) were still living with their mother and working on the land, but Charles (known as Charlie) had long since left home in search of better things.

The 1891 Census finds 19-year-old Charlie in Duddington, a few miles from his birthplace, working as a 'farm servant' and lodging in the home of a farm bailiff. But Charlie was looking for a way out of poorly-paid agricultural work, and during the 1890s he left Rutland to join the gangs of men constructing the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway's

extension to London. Charlie seems to have ended up working on the railway line between Loughborough and Leicester.



In 1897 the company's name was changed to the Great Central Railway, and in 1899 Quorn and Woodhouse Station was opened. Charlie secured a steady job working directly for the GCR as a foreman platelayer or 'ganger' based at Quorn Station. As

such, it was his responsibility to continually inspect a particular section of the track, and he was in charge of a team ('gang') working to maintain that section. The photograph shows one of these gangs at about that time.

Charlie Tomblin had a sweetheart. Her name was Eliza Hunt, and she came from Dunsby in Lincolnshire. Eliza was born in 1877, one of the six children of Jacob Hunt, a farm labourer, and his wife Elizabeth. I don't know how Charlie and Eliza met, but it seems very likely that Eliza had gone into service in her early teens, and that they probably met when Charlie was employed as a farm servant in the early 1890s. As soon as he had landed a stable job with the GCR and a regular wage, he married Eliza in Dunsby in May 1899 when he was 27 and she was 22, and brought her to live in Quorn. They rented a house in Barrow Lane (now Barrow Road), where their first

child, Nellie May (Nellie), was born in April 1900. The following year a second daughter, Winifred Elizabeth (Winnie), was born. Two sons followed: Charles Frederick (Fred) in 1904 and Leonard George (Len) in 1906. I can find no record of Nellie's baptism, but the three younger children were all baptised at St Bartholomew's, Quorn.

With four young children, perhaps the Tomblins' accommodation in Barrow Lane was becoming a bit cramped. Charlie was in steady employment and maybe looked for a home with a bit more space for his family. By 1910 he had become the new tenant of this house, then 14 Meeting Street. The 1911 Census finds the Tomblin family living here, and records Charles (39), his wife Eliza (33), and their children Nellie (10), Winnie (8), Fred (7) and Len (4).

When the Tomblins were living in Barrow Road, Charles Tomblin had not featured on the electoral register. However, the move to a larger property in Meeting Street gave him the necessary property qualification as a tenant or 'occupational elector', and he appears on the 1910 electoral roll. By 1920, following the 1918 extension of the franchise to some women over 30, Eliza Tomblin is appearing on the electoral roll as well. She was qualified to vote in both local and parliamentary elections by virtue of her husband's residence qualification.

During the decade from 1910 to 1920, all the Tomblin children left school and went to work. The minimum school leaving age was 12 until 1918 when it was raised to 14, but most children seem to have left when they were 13. Nellie would have left school around 1914, Winnie around 1916, and Fred around 1917. Len, the youngest, was caught by the hike in the leaving age, and would have been at school until 1920. When he left, and all four of the young Tomblins were bringing wages home, Charlie Tomblin made a big decision: to take out a mortgage loan and start buying the house that he and his family had occupied as tenants for 10 years.

My Deeds record two related transactions: on 28th July 1920, an 'INDENTURE between William Henry Fewkes of the one part and Charles Tomblin of the other part', and on 29th July 1920 'an INDENTURE made between the said Charles Tomblin of the one part and Walter Slater and Arthur Richards of the other part'. From this, it would appear that Tomblin had entered into a legal agreement to buy the house from Fewkes the builder, and was financing his purchase with a mortgage loan from Slater and Richards. This seems to indicate that William Henry Fewkes was the owner of the house at this time, whoever might have owned it during the years since 1893.

The 1921 Census records the Tomblin family as all still at home, with five of them earning money and contributing to the family's budget. Charles (49) is still a foreman platelayer, Eliza (43) is occupied with 'household duties',

Fred (17) is a 'shoe hand' at a boot manufacturer's, and Len (14), who had just left school, is working for as a 'farm hand'. Nellie (20) and Winnie (18), having both worked as domestic servants in houses in Chaveney Road when they first left school, had found jobs as weavers at Wright's elastic webbing factory in the village. This photograph from the early 1920s shows the weaving rooms at the factory, where Nellie and Winnie were employed at the time.



On 30th December 1922 a further legal agreement is recorded in the Deeds: 'INDENTURE made between the said Arthur Richards, Frederick Henry Brunton and Richard Webster of the one part and the said Charles Tomblin of the other part.' This suggests that Arthur Richards's original financial partner Walter Slater had died or retired, and Richards had acquired two new partners in his loan business – Frederick Brunton and Richard Webster. Just over a year later on 26th January 1924,



there was a further 'INDENTURE made between the said Arthur Richards, Frederick Henry Brunton and Richard Webster on the one part and the said Charles Tomblin of the other part', which was followed almost immediately on 29th January by an 'INDENTURE made between the said Charles Tomblin of the one part and Quorndon and Neighbourhood Freehold Benefit Building Society of the other part.' It looks from this as if, in January 1924, Tomblin's mortgage was transferred from Richards, Brunton and Webster to the Quorndon and Neighbourhood Building Society, which by coincidence was at that time run by John White's son George.

I believe that the photograph above was taken in the early 1920s, Charlie Tomblin, in his railway uniform, stands on the footpath opposite the house which would soon be developed and become Spinney Drive. The original Georgian windows and unrendered brick front of the house can be seen.

In 1924 the Tomblin household was enlarged when 8-year-old Kathleen Cragg came to live with them. Kathleen was the daughter of Eliza's younger sister Alice, who had married George Cragg, a Quorn man, in 1908; maybe they had met when Alice was visiting the Tomblins. The Craggs had settled in Melton, where they had three children: Laura (b.1908), Kathleen (b.1916) and Stanley (b.1920). In September 1924 Alice Cragg died at the age of 38. The photograph shows the three Cragg children at that time. Their father George decided to keep 16-year-old Laura at home to look after 4-year-old Stanley. He sent Kathleen, a shy little girl of 8, grieving the loss of her mother, to live with his late wife's sister, Eliza Tomblin, in Quorn. From that time onwards, Kathleen lived with the Tomblins until she married in 1938. She never returned to the family home in Melton and rarely saw her father again.



It must have been very difficult for little Kathleen to be separated from her own family and deposited in a busy, noisy house among six fully-grown Tomblins. Nellie and Winnie were working girls in their early twenties, Fred was 20 and Len 17. They had their own lives, and probably had little in common with their young cousin and little time for her. As a reserved, shell-shocked girl, she would have struggled to make friends in a strange new school. Kathleen later told her daughter that 'Uncle Charlie' was always particularly kind to her, but her position as the youngest, smallest and newest person in the house and the one who did not really 'belong' must have been hard for her to deal with.

During the 1920s the four Tomblin children all grew to adulthood. The



Tomblin boys both followed their father and went to work as Quorn-based platelayers on what in 1923 became the LNER. The photograph shows a gang of platelayers engaged in track maintenance at about that time. The Tomblin girls both continued to work at Wright's factory.

At the end of the decade, all four of the Tomblin children got married within the space of two years. In 1928 Winnie (26) married Herbert Taylor (32) at St Bartholomew's. Herbert's family lived in Wood Lane and his father



was a farm labourer. Their marriage certificate describes Herbert as an 'engineer', a general term for a railway maintenance worker – in practice he was a platelayer like the Tomblin men. Their wedding photograph (above) shows Herbert and Winnie seated, with Len Tomblin on the left. On the right are Charlie Tomblin and 12-year-old Kathleen Cragg in her role as one of the bridesmaids.

The following year, Fred Tomblin married Gertrude Horner of Ashby when they were both 25. Their wedding photograph shows Len Tomblin on the left



next to Fred, and Kathleen again doing duty as bridesmaid, in the same outfit. The happy couple went to live in Beacon Avenue, Quorn, which had been recently developed by the Quorn building firm of Thompson and Gamble.

A year later, in July 1930, Nellie Tomblin (30) followed her sister to the altar at St Bartholomew's; her husband was George Marson (32). His family



came from Melton, although at that time he was temporarily living and working in Donisthorpe. This wedding photo shows Nellie to advantage, with Kathleen again doing her turn as bridesmaid. At 14, she is looking more poised and grown-up, and at least has a new dress for the event. George is described on their marriage certificate as a 'watchmaker and jeweller', and he mended clocks and

watches from home, which was in Loughborough Road, Quorn.

Six months later Len, the youngest of the Tomblins, went to the altar with Winifred Ivy Hill of Mountsorrel (known as Ivy). They were both 25, and they settled in Mountsorrel. Ivy worked in hosiery, seaming and mending stockings. I assume she was a home-based outworker.



It must have been a whirlwind couple of years for Charlie and Eliza Tomblin, as one after another their children got married. But they still had their niece Kathleen Cragg at home, who by this time was 16. And it looks as if Winnie and her husband Herbert Taylor were also still in residence, since the 1931 electoral roll lists both the Tomblins and the Taylors at this address. It wasn't long, though, before Winnie and Herbert moved across the village to set up home in Barrow Road.

Charlie was now in his 60s and Eliza her late 50s. Their children were all married and settled in their own homes, and Eliza's domestic work must have been considerably reduced. Kathleen had followed the path of her female cousins and gone to work at Wright's, where she became a machinist.



For a few years, life at 14 Meeting Street might have been relatively peaceful. However, all that came to a sudden and shocking end in September 1936, when Charlie Tomblin was killed by a train while working on the track near Quorn Station.

His death was reported in the local press, albeit with an incorrect address in the piece below:

***Nottingham Evening Post, Thursday 3rd September 1936***

QUORN PLATELAYER KILLED. TERRIBLE ACCIDENT ON L.N.E.R.

*An elderly man, believed to be Charles Tomblin, 65, a foreman platelayer, of Main Street, Quorn, was killed on the L.N.E. Railway, near Quorn Station, yesterday. The body was mutilated beyond recognition, and the only clues to identity were the clothing, a torn diary, and battered spectacle case.*



The event was recorded more respectfully in the LNER's in-house publication:

*Ganger Charles Tomblin, Quorn, was fatally injured on September 2. He entered the service in July 1899, after previous experience with the contractors who constructed the railway. He was well known in the Leicester district and was held in high esteem by his colleagues.*

The subsequent inquest returned a verdict of accidental death. Charles was buried in the churchyard at St Bartholomew's, the first of several members of the family.

Eliza Tomblin was now a widow at the age of 59. In the space of eight years, her children had all left home and her husband had died. She still had her niece Kathleen Cragg, but by that time Kathleen was courting a young man from Sileby called Clarence Martin (known as Clarry). Eliza needed to secure her own future, and she seems to have decided to do so by maintaining her independence, staying put at 14 Meeting Street, and taking on the rest of the mortgage.

On 12th November 1936, two months after Charlie's death, the Deeds record an 'ASSENT made by the said Eliza Tomblin'. This would indicate the transfer of ownership of the house to Eliza, and her agreement to continue paying off what remained of the mortgage loan.

The 1938 electoral roll records Eliza Tomblin and Kathleen Cragg as the residents of 14 Meeting Street, but in July of that year Kathleen married



Clarry Martin. She did not invite her father to the wedding, and was given away by Len Tomblin. Kathleen never fully reconciled with her father, although she did enjoy a close relationship with her older sister Laura for the rest of their lives.

Clarence Beresford Martin had been born in Sileby in 1913, the son of Edward and Kate Martin. Edward Martin was a hosiery manufacturer specialising in golf hose and children's socks, but Clarry decided to train in one of the up-and-coming, modern trades. He completed an apprenticeship as an electrician, qualifying around 1934, and by the time of his marriage he was working for the electricity company as an overhead linesman. Kathleen was a machinist at Wright's elastic webbing factory in Quorn. She would have given up her job on marriage, although it would not be long before she was called back for wartime service.

After their wedding in July 1938, the couple went to live in Barrow on Soar, leaving Eliza Tomblin as the sole occupant of 14 Meeting Street. The 1939 Register records her as living here alone. My Deeds show that on November 7th 1939 the Quorndon Building Society endorsed a receipt; I would assume this meant that the mortgage on the house had been paid off, and Eliza Tomblin now owned the house outright.

The 1939 Register also reveals that at least three of Eliza's children were living nearby. I can't find her eldest child Nellie and her husband George Marson in it, although I believe they were living in Loughborough Road, Quorn, with their 4-year-old daughter Betty. Eliza's other daughter Winnie was still living at 31 Barrow Road, Quorn. Her husband Herbert Taylor was working for the LNER as a 'lengthman', and their 7-year-old son Maurice was at school. The two Tomblin sons were both still working on the railway. Fred is described as 'Railway engineering maintenance and repair staff', and was living with his wife Gertrude at 21 Beacon Avenue, Quorn. Len and his wife Ivy were living at 4 Bond Lane, Mountsorrel; Len was a railway shunter, and Ivy worked as a 'hosiery mender of stockings'.

My Deeds record that in 1945, when she was 68, Eliza Tomblin gave Power of Attorney to her son Leonard, with the stipulation that he was empowered to sell this house for a minimum sum of £600. Eliza moved out, and I would guess that she went to live with Len and Ivy in Mountsorrel.

Perhaps there were no offers above £600 for this house, since the 1947 electoral roll shows that tenants were living here. The adults named on the roll were Ernest and Henrietta Harness. I have not been able to find out anything about them.

On 13th November 1949 Eliza Tomblin died at the age of 71. Len Tomblin, as her executor, did not sell the house but continued to rent it out. Perhaps his siblings had agreed on this course of action rather than putting up the house for sale immediately. Maybe they felt that their mother's wish to get at least £600 for the house should be respected, regardless of the fact that this condition would no longer apply after her death.



In 1951 the houses in Meeting Street were renumbered and this house became number 94. The electoral roll for 1953 records the tenants here as Edward O'Sullivan and Pauline O'Sullivan. Ned O'Sullivan was the cowman at Mill Farm, just up the road from this house, so it probably would have been during his tenancy in the 1950s that 94 Meeting Street came to be known as the 'Cowman's Cottage'.

In 1956, seven years after his mother's death, Leonard Tomblin finally sold 94 Meeting Street for the sum of £625 to William Parker, who owned a number of large farms and other properties in Leicestershire and London, including Mill Farm in Meeting Street. Ned O'Sullivan, the cowman at Mill Farm, was already living here as the tenant. His occupation of this house might well have been a factor in Parkers Farms becoming aware of the property and interested in acquiring it as accommodation for their employees.

This sale ended the Tomblin family's 46-year connection with this house as its tenants and owners. Ownership then passed to Parkers Farms for the next 44 years.

The Tomblin children all had long lives. Fred's wife Gertrude died in 1948 and was buried in Quorn churchyard; some time after that Fred moved to Leicester, where he died in 1974, aged 70. Len died in Mountsorrel in 1983, aged 77, and his wife Ivy in 1996 at the age of 91. After Herbert Taylor died in 1953, Winnie survived as his widow for another 34 years, dying in 1987 at the age of 86. George Marson died here in 1964, and Nellie in 1987 at the age of 87; both are buried in St Bartholomew's churchyard.

Kathleen Cragg, the little girl who was brought up by her Aunt Eliza and Uncle Charlie and was married from this house in 1938 to Clarence Martin, went on to have a daughter of her own in 1947. Kathleen and Clarence died within weeks of each other in 1983. Their daughter Janet still lives in Quorn.

## 6 1950s-2002: Tenants of the 'Cowman's Cottage'

After the house was bought from the Tomblins by Parkers Farms in 1956, it was rented out to tenants for the next 44 years. The earlier tenants were farm employees or ex-employees.

In the 1950s, Edward (Ned) O'Sullivan, the cowman at Mill Farm, lived here with his wife Pauline. The O'Sullivans were already here, renting from Leonard Tomblin, when Parkers Farms bought the house from him, presumably because they saw its utility as a tied cottage. It would have been during this period that the house came to be known as the 'Cowman's Cottage'.

By 1961 the O'Sullivans had left, and the electoral roll shows Francis James W. Gathercole and Doreen Gathercole (née Muffett) in this house. They were from Huntingdonshire and in 1939 had been living next door to each other, with Frank working as a cowman. They married in Ely in 1943. It seems fairly likely that sometime around 1960 Frank Gathercole had replaced Ned O'Sullivan as the Mill Farm cowman, and that this house had gone with the job.

The Gathercoles moved out in 1963; perhaps Frank was transferred to another of the local farms owned by Parkers. The house then seems to have been unoccupied for a year or two, until in 1965 it was let to James and Minnie Wattam, who were in their seventies. Although no longer working, James Wattam (known as Jim) had previously been employed in this area for many years by Parkers Farms.

Jim Wattam had been born into a farming family in Lincolnshire in 1890. In 1919 he had married a local woman, Minnie Osborn (born 1894), and during the 1920s they had three children: George, Gertrude (known as Cissie or Ciss) and Ernest. The Wattams seem to have moved to this area while the children were growing up, probably during the 1930s, and Jim came to work for Parkers Farms. His grandson Andy Wattam, George's son, has confirmed this: 'My Grandfather did indeed work for Parkers Farms, as did my Father and my Aunt Ciss too, and they worked Lodge Farm Quorn Fields, Mill Farm on Chaveney Road, and also Woodthorpe Farm, together with Blackhill Farm at Woodhouse Eaves (where I was brought up).'

At Lodge Farm Quorn Fields, James and Minnie would have lived in the main farmhouse, and when Jim finally retired in the 1960s they would have had to move out and find somewhere else to live. Perhaps in recognition of his loyal service and the status that Jim had attained as a farm manager, Parkers offered him the tenancy of this unoccupied cottage.

Four years after the Wattams moved in, the 1969 electoral roll shows that they had been joined by their daughter and son-in-law, Gertrude and Albert Horry. Gertrude, or Ciss as everyone called her, was born in 1924 and had married Albert Horry in 1947 after his demobilisation. By the time they came to live here Albert was suffering from a debilitating illness and was almost certainly unable to work. He died in 1971, aged only 50, and was buried in Quorn churchyard.

Ciss Horry continued to live here with her parents, but the following year (1972) Minnie Wattam died at the age of 78. That left Jim, aged 83, and his daughter Ciss, aged 48.

I've been told that during this period Ciss was working at the Co-op in Quorn, which then occupied the premises now owned by Bradley's. The shop manager was Joe Needham, a local man who had been managing small grocery shops around this area since at least 1939. Joe had been married, but by the 1970s his wife was no longer on the scene. Working together every day, it seems that he and Ciss developed an increasingly close relationship in the years after she was widowed.

In 1976 the Co-op closed when the premises were bought by the Bradley family. Joe and Ciss lost their jobs. At that time Joe was 64 and Ciss was 52, so Joe was on the verge of retirement and about to qualify for his old age pension. Ciss, who was much younger, got a job cleaning at Rawlins, which she continued to do for at least the next 10 years.

With the change in their circumstances, Ciss and Joe seem to have decided that Joe should move in here, and the 1976 electoral roll shows Joe Needham living with Ciss Horry and her father Jim Wattam at 94 Meeting Street. Whatever the nature of their relationship, I am sure that officially Joe would have been a lodger, since a couple living together outside wedlock would certainly have raised eyebrows in Quorn in the 1970s. If by any chance they were in a relationship, then it seems likely that there must have been some obstacle to marriage, such as Joe's wife being alive.

In 1981 Jim Wattam died at the age of 92 and joined his wife in Quorn churchyard. Ciss Horry took over the tenancy, and the 1984 telephone directory shows an entry for this address under her name. Joe was still here, and their names are on every electoral roll as residents here until 1989.

In 1985 William Parker, the owner of the house through his company Parkers Farms, died. His very large estate and collection of properties across several counties was not liquidised, and a board of trustees continued to administer it for the benefit of his heirs. This house was not sold, and Ciss Horry's tenancy continued.

By 1989 Ciss was 65 and Joe was 77, and perhaps they felt it was time to move somewhere smaller and more convenient. They acquired a council flat near the centre of the village at 36 The Mills, and lived there together for almost 10 years until Joe died at the end of 1998, aged 86. Ciss continued to live in the flat until her own death five years later at the age of 79. A memorial vase in St Bartholomew's Garden of Remembrance, presumably placed there by one of the Wattam family, bears the names of Minnie Wattam, James Wattam, Albert Horry and Cissie Horry.

After Ciss and Joe moved out in 1989 this house remained unoccupied for a couple of years until 1991 when the Vickerstaffe family moved in as the new tenants. John and Jackie Vickerstaffe were both born in Leicester, John in 1952 and Jackie in 1955. They had married in Loughborough in 1973 when John was 21 and Jackie was 18. They had three children: Matthew (born 1976), Jamie Ian (born 1978) and Elizabeth (born 1988).

When the Vickerstaffes moved in, just before Christmas in 1991, John was 39 and Jackie 36. Their children were 15, 13 and 3. The family lived here for less than four years, moving out in 1995.

As soon as the Vickerstaffes left, Jill and Michael Dawson moved in. Jill (née Weaver) was born in Loughborough in 1965 and had married Michael Dawson in 1988. They were both here on the electoral rolls for 1996, 1997 and 1998, but then Michael moved out. Jill stayed here on her own for two more years, and then in 2000 she moved across the village to another house.

While Jill Dawson was here she seems to have tried to revive the house's unofficial name of the 'Cowman's Cottage', as after I moved in a few free catalogues continued to arrive here for her bearing that address. However, the cowmen were long gone, and Jill was the last tenant of Parkers Farms.

## 7 2000–2023: My home

When this house became vacant in 2000, John Bennett who lived nextdoor-but-one at 82 Meeting Street, saw an opportunity. He and his partner were happy living in their modern 4-bedroom bungalow occupying the plot previously known as Mee's Yard, but the garden behind it was small. Now that John was about to retire, he wanted more space for growing vegetables, and he also fancied the idea of having his own private wood, specifically the wide strip of woodland running westwards behind my house and several other buildings for about 200 metres. This is an attractive wooded area full of mature trees, with the Buddon Brook babbling through it, and it provides a habitat for birds and other wildlife including badgers, otters, squirrels, muntjacs and many species of birds.

This stretch of woodland was on the edge of the Quorn House parkland, and in 1993 Quorn House had been purchased from the Farnham family by Rosemary Conley, the diet and fitness guru. Conley had been running slimming clubs in Leicestershire since 1972, but reached the peak of her career in the 1990s after publishing *The Hip and Thigh Diet* in 1988. This was a huge best-seller, bringing her national and international fame. The book's success enabled her to establish a franchised national network of clubs, which quickly became one of the 'big three' networks alongside Slimming World and Weight Watchers. The distinguishing feature of Conley's clubs was that they did not just give slimming and diet advice. In addition, these weekly classes offered a 45-minute aerobic workout with a trained instructor, providing a fitness club for people wanting a cheaper alternative to gym membership.

Apart from a short blip in the 1890s, the Farnham family had owned and lived at Quorn House ever since the first manor house was built there around 1350. The last Farnham to live there was Edward George Adrian Farnham (known as George), grandson of the William Farnham who had gone bankrupt and been declared insane in the 1890s. George had inherited it from his great-uncle, George Francis Farnham, in 1933 when he was only six years old. George married in 1948 and he and his wife Barbara brought up their family at Quorn House, but in the end they had to accept that they could not afford its upkeep. In 1992 they gave up the unequal struggle and moved to Scotland. Rosemary Conley purchased the property for use as the corporate headquarters of what was by that time her multi-million-pound empire. The house was in a poor state of repair and had to be completely renovated.

Around the year 2000, Rosemary Conley was nearing the peak of her career. She had been appointed a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire



in 1999, and in 2001 would become the first woman to be granted the Freedom of the City of Leicester. Over 50 people were employed at Quorn House, most of them involved in Rosemary's production and marketing teams. There was a TV studio and a media centre, and classes were held in the grand rooms. The property was also a residential training centre for people running the franchised diet and fitness classes around the country. At its peak, in 2004, this franchise extended to 180 clubs with 80,000 members.

So in 2000 Rosemary Conley was one of the biggest celebrities in Leicestershire and was busy running a multi-million-pound business. She didn't need that narrow strip of woodland at the edge of her estate, and readily agreed to sell it to John Bennett. Perhaps it was also a goodwill gesture to a neighbour from the *de facto* lady of the manor in Quorn.

The problem for John Bennett was that his own garden was not quite adjacent to the woodland that Rosemary had agreed to sell to him. In order to be able to access it from his own property, he needed to acquire the very small piece of land that stood between them, which at that time formed the end of the gardens at 92 Meeting Street and 94 Meeting Street.

There was no difficulty about number 92, the old cottage next door to John Bennett's bungalow. The owner, Pauline Gwilt, an elderly lady who lived there with her cousin Geoff Mee, was willing to sell him the bottom third of her garden. The problem with number 94 had been its occupation by a sitting tenant, but when Jill Dawson moved out in 2000 John saw the chance to do a deal with Parkers Farms and buy the far end of that garden. It seems that Parkers were not prepared to sell him a tiny patch of land, but they were prepared to sell him the whole property.

John had no desire to acquire a 200-year-old house, but he did know someone who might be interested in doing so. He approached his neighbour and friend Arthur Prince, who lived a few doors away at 74 Meeting Street. Prince had made his fortune as a used car dealer in Loughborough, and had diversified into other businesses including property development. He owned a company called Fairmile Developments which specialised in buying up land with disused buildings on it, demolishing them, and building new houses. Between them, Bennett and Prince devised a plan which would benefit them both: Bennett would gain access to the woodland he wanted to buy from Rosemary Conley, and Prince would make a quick profit doing up the shabby property at 94 Meeting Street and selling it on.

It was quite a complicated plan. Bennett would buy 94 Meeting Street from Parkers Farms and then immediately sell it to Fairmile Developments minus the end of the garden. He would also buy the end of the garden at 92 Meeting Street from its owner-occupier Pauline Gwilt. The land thus

acquired would give him the necessary access to the woodland, which he would buy from Rosemary Conley. Meanwhile, Prince's lieutenant David Armes, who ran Fairmile Developments for him, would supervise a speedy refurbishment of 94 Meeting Street and get it on the market swiftly.

John Bennett's series of purchases all worked out as planned. He told me later that he owned 94 Meeting Street for 'about 20 minutes' in November 2000. It was sold on immediately to Fairmile in a 'back-to-back deal' with a slightly smaller garden, John having retained the section behind the outbuildings.

An unexpected drawback emerged for Fairmile when they took a proper look at their purchase. During almost half a century of tenancy this house had not been well maintained by Parkers, and David Armes discovered that it was not going to be a quick and simple refurbishment. It needed far more work than anticipated, and the initial estimate of six weeks eventually extended to become six months. The rear two-storey section of the house was found to be in such a bad state that it had to be completely demolished down to the foundations. In view of this, Fairmile decided to do a serious rebuilding job and significantly upgrade the whole property.

The company's architect was called in to redesign the whole of the house's interior, as well as creating the new rear section. Downstairs, the front section was remodelled, getting rid of the small front entrance hall with doors off it to each side into two separate rooms, and replacing part of the remaining dividing wall with double glass doors to open up the whole downstairs space. The kitchen, stairs and back entrance were all relocated, and a toilet was installed under the stairs. The new rear section featured a dining room leading into a small L-shaped conservatory. The outside lavatory and fuel store were removed, and a paved area was laid around the back and side of the house. Upstairs, a new landing gave separate access to the two front bedrooms, previously linked together, and also to a new bathroom; the old bathroom had been right at the back of the house and accessible only by going through the rear bedroom. Above the dining room, a new rear bedroom was created with its own ensuite shower room.

Outside, the character of the house itself was retained as far as possible. The outbuildings at the back were demolished and turf was laid on top of their remains; the result was a raised garden area accessed by two steps. The new roofing required for the whole of the back of the house was done in slate, to blend in with the old Swithland slate roof at the front. The small space between the front of the building and the pavement had previously been cultivated as a flower garden, with a waist-high wall along the front. The wall and the garden were removed, and block paving was laid between the house and the pavement, with a raised bed inside a low retaining wall on each side. A cottage porch in keeping with the style of the house was

installed outside the front door; I don't know whether or not this replaced an older one. All the windows were replaced with UPVC surrounds and large double-glazed panes.

In September 2001, the newly rebuilt house was put up for sale. A temporary tenant moved in, a friend of the developers who needed short-term accommodation. The agreement was that she could stay until the house was sold.

Over the course of the next few months the house remained unsold, the main sticking point for potential buyers apparently being the lack of off-road parking. So it was still on the market in March 2002, when I began to think about downsizing from my house on the Forest side of Loughborough. I saw 94 Meeting Street advertised in the Loughborough Echo, was enchanted by the photograph, and immediately went to view it. Within a week I had agreed to buy it from Fairmile Developments and had accepted an offer on my own house. Six weeks later I moved in as the new owner-occupier, and I have now lived here for 21 years.

The biggest change I've made has been in the back garden. When I moved in, it was just an oblong of poor-quality turf which had been hastily laid by the builders to cover up the remaining rubble from the outbuildings. The advantage of this was that I had a blank canvas to work on and could start designing my ideal garden from scratch, which is what I did with some professional help. This is the result.



Over its lifetime of almost 200 years my house has been located in Wood Gate, Wood Street, Chapel Street and Meeting Street, and has been known as the *Bird-in-Hand*, No. 14, No. 94 and the 'Cowman's Cottage'. At the moment it's called 94 Meeting Street, but who knows what the future might hold for it?'

*March 2023*