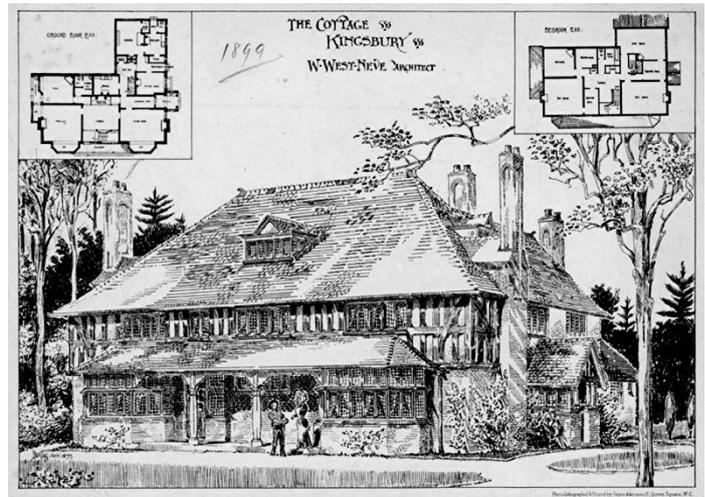


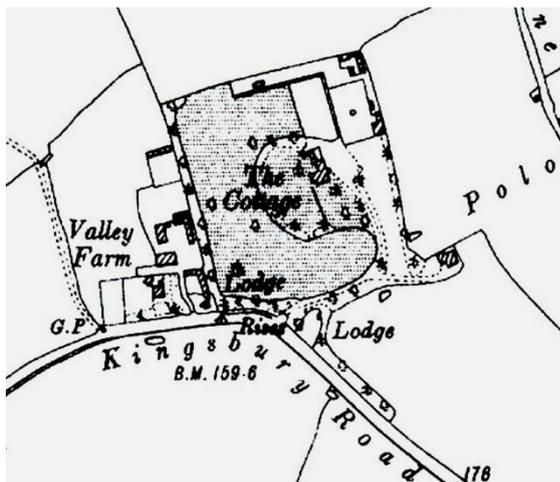
The History of "Kingsbury Manor", its Lodge and Coach House

1. The House: The building we now know as Kingsbury Manor was designed by W. West-Neve, and built in 1899. Its original name was "The Cottage", and it was constructed as a country house for the Duchess of Sutherland, in ten acre grounds next to Valley Farm, Kingsbury. Born Mary Caroline Mitchell, daughter of the Principal of an Oxford college, she inherited a large amount of money when the Duke (her second husband) died in 1892, just three years after their marriage. She had married again in 1896, and saw "The Cottage" as a useful rural retreat, still close to London, for herself and her third husband, Sir Albert Rollitt, a wealthy solicitor and MP for Islington.



1. West-Neve's drawing and plan for "The Cottage".

At the time of the 1901 census, the house was occupied by a Barrister-at-law and his family, looked after by a cook and three other female live-in servants. By 1903 "The Cottage" was



the home for the Duchess's daughter (from her first marriage), Irene, who had recently married Count Bubna. Before the First World War, the Countess was responsible for adding an orchard, a cowshed and pigsties to the property, presumably to increase self-sufficiency on an estate still surrounded by farms in a mainly rural area. This began to change in 1923, when Middlesex County Council carried out major improvements to Kingsbury Road.

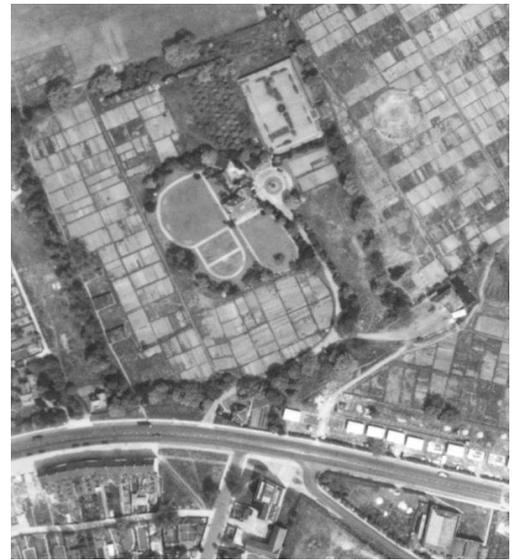
2. "The Cottage" as shown on the 1920 edition of the O.S. 6 inch to one mile map, surveyed in 1913.

In 1929 "The Cottage" was bought by George Cloke, a haulage contractor from Neasden who was branching out as a property developer. He renamed the house "Kingsbury Manor", and moved in to oversee the development of fields he had purchased from the owner of Valley Farm. As well as a housing estate, he built the parades of shops with flats above them on the south side of Kingsbury Road from the new station to Valley Drive. By 1933 Kingsbury U.D.C. was hoping to buy a six acre field from Cloke to create a park for the western side of its area, but he used it instead to build Manor Close, named after the house. The following year he offered to sell the Council two fields on the south side of Bacon Lane for their park, and the purchase of these twenty acres went ahead in 1935, the start of Roe Green Park.

By 1937 George Cloke was ready to move on, and the following year he sold "Kingsbury Manor" and its ten acres jointly to Middlesex C.C. and Wembley for around £35,000. The County Council used the main house and gardens as a maternity hostel for unmarried mothers, while the Borough Council planned to use the remaining grounds as part of the

park, apart from the land along the Kingsbury Road frontage which was to be sold off for shops. The outbreak of the Second World War saw these plans put on hold, with most of the land being used instead for allotments. The allotments had gone by 1948, when the grounds around the house finally became part of Roe Green Park's public open space.

3. "Kingsbury Manor" and the allotments around it in Roe Green Park, from a May 1946 aerial photograph.



By the 1950's "Kingsbury Manor" was being used as a Middlesex Aged Persons' Home, and this continued under Brent Council after the County Council was abolished in 1965. Wembley, then Brent, used land at the rear of the site as a Parks Depot, and the old kitchen garden as a training ground for Parks staff, but this was closed as part of spending cuts in the 1980's. The abandoned garden was put under the care of the Barn Hill Conservation Group in 1989, and is now open as a community garden.

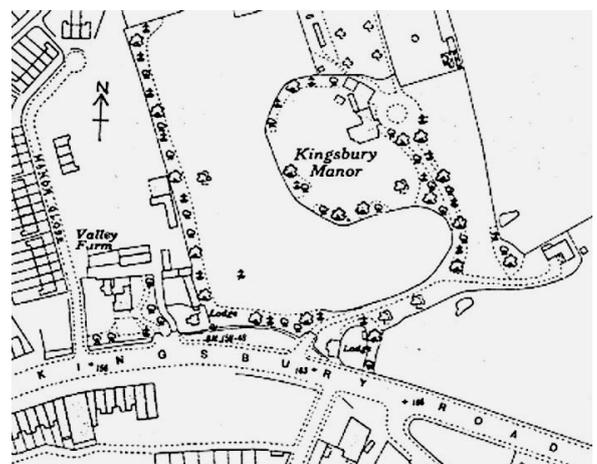
After the old peoples' home closed (probably also in the 1980's), "Kingsbury Manor" eventually became a day care centre for elderly members of the area's Asian communities.



4. "Kingsbury Manor" in 2010.

2. The Lodge: The Lodge, at the bottom of the drive to "The Cottage", was home in 1901 to the gardener and his family. He was responsible for both the ornamental grounds and for the walled kitchen garden which produced fruit, vegetables and flowers for the house. Two of his five children were a sub-gardener and a footman for the main house. The Lodge lost part of its own garden in 1923, when the improvements to Kingsbury Road included a new straight section across the fields from its junction with Roe Green, to by-pass the narrow winding stretch now called Old Kenton Lane.

5. "Kingsbury Manor" as it appears on the 1935 edition of the O.S. 25 inch to one mile map.



At the start of the Second World War a large underground air raid shelter was built in the grounds just behind the Lodge, but this had to be abandoned because it flooded. After the war, a row of twenty pre-fab homes was built along the edge of Roe Green Park between



the swimming pool and the Lodge (their white concrete bases can be seen on the 1946 aerial photograph at 3. above). The garden of the pre-fab nearest to the Lodge was always under water and sinking, because of the flooded shelter. Nothing of further interest is known about the history of this Lodge, which appears to have stood empty, and boarded-up, for many years.

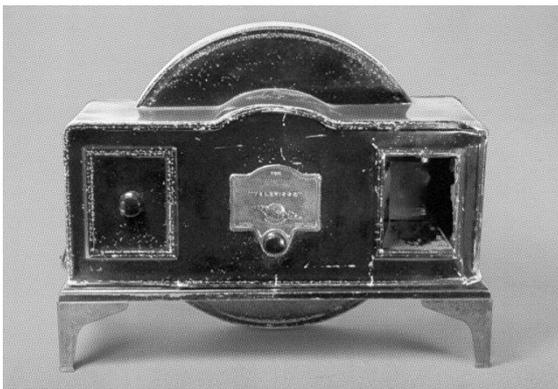
6. The Lodge, "Kingsbury Manor", 2011.

3. The Coach House: The 1901 census shows the house's coachman and groom living in cottages at the farm next door. By 1903 a coach house, stables and accommodation for a coachman had been added, on a spur of land to the east side of the grounds. By the 1920's, it was no longer needed and was available to let, as the owner had a motor car, and a garage had been built near the house. In the autumn of 1928 the disused coach house was rented by John Logie Baird, who employed a small team of engineers to work there on his invention, television. Eighty foot high masts were erected, and the first picture broadcast from the continent was received in 1929, with the first combined transmission of sound and pictures the following year.



7. The concrete base for one of Baird's TV masts, with the coach house in the background.

Prototype models of television receivers were also made and tested at what was by then



called the Kingsbury Manor Studio. Although Baird received planning permission in 1929 to build a small factory here, he eventually decided to subcontract making his receivers to another electrical company. These TV sets had a large case, but a screen size of 2¼ inches by 1 inch, and went on sale in 1930 for £25 each, just in time for the first experimental TV broadcasts in London.

8. A 1930 Baird "televisor" (television receiver).

Baird moved his operations from Kingsbury soon afterwards, and his masts were taken down at the start of the Second World War in case they provided a landmark for German bombers. Kingsbury Manor Studio was converted to a Casualty Medical Service Depot in May 1940, and in August the ambulance and stretcher party personnel there were put onto a 24-hour basis. The conditions were so cramped (with no hot water supply at first) that the local Medical Officer of Health complained: '*... two tier bunks are not a hygienic way of providing sleeping accommodation for so many people as 23 every night.*'

After the war, the need for temporary homes saw Middlesex C.C. grant Wembley Borough a lease on Kingsbury Manor Studio for seven years, so that it could be converted into three self-contained flats. The former coach house became the Kingsbury Veterans' Club in the 1950's, the name by which the building is still generally known. It is still possible to make out the doorway to the coach house, with its cobbled paving in front, and the gabled roof over the hoist to the former hay loft for the stables.



9. The Kingsbury Veterans' Club building, 2011.



Interest in Logie Baird's connection with the area was rekindled after the founding of the Wembley History Society in 1952, and a memorial stone to his experiments at Kingsbury was erected on the base for one of his TV masts the following year.

10. The W.H.S. Baird memorial unveiled in 1953.

The Council also put a plaque by the entrance door to the



Veterans' Club, to commemorate the use of the building by Baird.

11. The Borough of Wembley Baird plaque.



After the memorial stone had been damaged by vandals, it was moved to a safer position, by the wall in front of the bricked-up coach house doorway, where it still stands as a reminder of an important part in the history of Kingsbury and its "Manor" house. What had been a fairly isolated country house in a rural backwater became the location for key developments in one of the twentieth century's most famous inventions, a memory worth keeping for the future.

12. A close-up view of the W.H.S. memorial stone, with its frieze of eyes and ears symbolising the first international vision and sound transmissions which were received by John Logie Baird at Kingsbury Manor Studio in 1929 and 1930.

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Wembley History Society
May 2011

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