

WELFORD-ON-AVON · HIGH STREET, WEST SIDE

Sefton Cottage

A seventeenth-century timber-framed house beside The Hollies: a pair of working cottages in 1911, the Boraston sisters' carefully modernised home between the wars, and the Hastings family's house for a generation after.

Drawn from the Welford and Weston Local History Society archive (folder/page references in grey) and the Historic England list entry. Links that the documents do not state outright are marked **INFERRED**.

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The streetc.1900–1920

Sefton Cottage stands on the west side of Welford's High Street, called Main Street until the twentieth century, on the stretch between the maypole green to the south and the Bell Inn at the Binton Road corner to the north. 13/02 (Main → High Street amendments) In 1911 the census enumerator walked this side of the street in the order The Ashes, Cress Farm, The Hollies, Sefton Cottage, The Firs, Rose Cottage, Well House, The Limes and Weston House, and only then reached Virginia Cottage and the Bell. 48/09 p.3



"Street view with maypole, Welford-on-Avon", a W. A. Smith photograph of about 1900–1920, catalogued as a view south down the High Street to the maypole. This is the street Sefton Cottage stands on. The photograph does not show enough to say whether the cottage is in shot. 46/01–12, photo 46/09 (PDF p.17)

The 1992 Conservation Area study traces how the village grew from several separate nuclei: the church group, a farm cluster, and the maypole green, joined over the centuries by houses strung along the roads between them. The High Street houses near Sefton Cottage are part of that older strand, with council estates and bungalows added behind them after the war. 15/08 p.12; 20/06



"Settlement Analysis – Historical Growth", from the 1992 Conservation Area study. Hatched circles mark the old nuclei, including the maypole green; arrows mark twentieth-century expansion. 15/08 p.12

The house17th century onwards

The 1967 statutory list describes Sefton Cottage as "C17 with small modern similar addition on north. Timber frame, whitewashed brick, tiled roof. 2 storeys, roof gabled above each 1st floor window. 4 modern lattice casements. Weatherboarded closed porch", and adds that "Sefton Cottage, The Hollies Cottage and The Hollies form a group". 13/02 p.176; copy 30/07

It was formally listed at Grade II on 2 August 1972 (Historic England list entry 1382851). The revised text, amended in 2000, describes a seventeenth-century house "with C19 and C20 additions and rear range": a timber frame with painted brick infill, brick to the left end, a double-gabled renewed tile roof with three brick stacks, and a double-depth plan. The front has four windows, leaded casements with iron opening lights, gablets over the attic

windows, and square framing to the right of the entrance and in small panels in the attic. 47/40

Local opinion has always pitched it older. The Society's 1983 review of buildings worth protecting called it "Elizabethan. Wealth of exterior & interior old timbers", and the 1940 sale particulars had already advertised a "Freehold Elizabethan Property". 10/32 p.7; 30/06; 11/30 p.44 The 1992 study gives it Map Ref 50 ("C17 with modern addition, timber frame, tile roof, two storey") and singles out its cedar, ref 89, as one of the trees "important for the future amenity of the village". 15/08 PDF pp.30, 61

HIGH STREET			
17/39	II	Tudor Vale (formerly Tudor Ogle)	
17/40	II	The Limes	
17/41	II	Four Gables	
	III	The Ashes	Genuine old half timber extended in 1930's. Elizabethan. Wealth of exterior Georgian. James Mills once c industries here - including Gramp valve
	III	Sefton Cottage	
	III	The Hollies	
	III	Holly Cottage	
17/42	II	Maggie Cottage	

The Society's 1983 list. Sefton Cottage sits between The Ashes and The Hollies, graded III on the Society's own local scale, with the note "Elizabethan. Wealth of exterior & interior old timbers". The note for The Hollies reads "Georgian. James Mills once carried on local industries here – including needle making". 10/32 p.7

The neighbours 1790s to c.1910

The plot's earliest recorded history belongs to the houses on either side. The Hollies was the Holtom family's house from 1539, rebuilt in brick for Harper Holtom, who wrote that "the first night me & my family slept in the new house was April 6 1795". About 1800 Mary Holtom married James Mills of Crabbs Cross, who turned the place into "such a hive of industry as was never known before or since": malting and brewing, winnowing machines and ploughs, papier-mâché, the first iron perambulators, and stone blocks for the Stratford and Moreton tramway. 21/22–66, item 21/66

Gilda Gray's house notes of about 1970 say that "the tiny house known as Hollies cottage between the Hollies & Sefton cottage was a needle factory". A surviving invoice records a case of 409,000

Whitechapel sharps shipped for James Mills on the sailing ship *Frolic* to Rio de Janeiro. 21/66 The two buildings next door to Sefton Cottage were therefore a works yard for much of the nineteenth century.

On the other side, two cottages "used to stand" between Four Gables and Sefton Cottage until Miss Rogers bought the land when she modernised Four Gables about 1910. A separate history of Four Gables places those two cottages on the ground running up to "Mrs Hastings' hedge" and names one tenant, George Radburn. 21/64; 09/13-17, item 09/16 In 1911 Caroline and Lucy Rogers, both "private means", were living at The Firs, the house after Sefton Cottage in the census order. 48/10 p.20

No document in the archive names Sefton Cottage or its occupiers before 1911.



The Hollies, Welford

The Hollies, Welford, in an undated newspaper property feature, probably early 1980s. The house was then three flats and offered "for those seeking a house in need of a bit of tender loving care". 14/02 (PDF p.3)

Two households1911

On census night, 2 April 1911, the enumerator entered "Sefton Cottage" as a cottage, not a private house, and as two schedules. His neighbours on either side were W. M. Woodward, a retired engineer living alone at The Hollies, and the Rogers sisters at The Firs. 48/09 p.6

SC H.	HOUSEHOLD	ROOM S
67	Ernest Howell , 44, born Barton, Warwickshire, an employer on his own account (the trade is hard to read; the transcription gives "Gutter Iles [?] Manufacturer", and the Society's note says "oils manufacturer"); wife Ellen , 37, married 18 years, five children born and four living; daughters Mildred Evelyn , 16, a domestic servant, and Gertrude Ellen , 15; son William Thomas , 9.	6
68	Archie Wright , 37, coal dealer on his own account, working from home, born Thakeham, 5 Sussex; wife Bessie , 30, born Bromyard, Herefordshire, married one year, no children.	5

48/10 pp.19–20; summary 48/09 pp.6–7

Eleven rooms between two families suggests the building was then divided into two dwellings **INFERRED**. Ernest Howell wrote his postal address as something the transcriber read as "Hilton Cottage [?]". It may be a misreading of "Sefton", or an older name for his half **INFERRED**. Other Howell households lived along the same side of the street: Mary Ann Howell, a 73-year-old widow, at schedule 54, and Mary Harriett Howell, 76, at schedule 64, beside Thorn Cottage. The archive does not say whether they were related to Ernest. 48/10 pp.13, 18

"Sefton House" and the Borastonsc. 1911–1940

A Herald cutting pasted into the Society's scrapbook reports an auction of "a pleasantly-situated residence, known as 'Sefton House'", by Mr E. A. Deer of Hutchings & Deer, Stratford:

There was a large attendance, and although the initial bid was £300 only, it eventually reached £960, at which Mr. Boraston, of Handsworth, Birmingham, became the purchaser. Mr. R. Lunn, of Stratford-on-Avon, was the vendor's solicitor.

Stratford Herald, undated 23/91–96 p.2 (PDF pp.10–15)

The cutting is undated, but the scrapbook covers about 1895–1924. "Sefton House" is very likely Sefton Cottage, since the Borastons are the only family of that name in the archive and they are later recorded living there **INFERRED**. The house was still two working households in 1911, so the sale probably fell between 1911 and 1924 **INFERRED**. Mr Boraston was probably the father of the two Misses Boraston who lived there afterwards, but no document says so **INFERRED**. The Borastons are typical of the newcomers who bought Welford houses between the wars: the Society's notes on the sale particulars describe a village changing from fruit-growing

smallholdings and cottages let weekly to commuter and weekend homes. 11/30 p.1

The sisters were Cathleen May Evelyn Boraston, called May, and Alicia Doris Mary Boraston, called Doris. A "Miss Boraston" dressed as Britannia for the fancy-dress parade at the dedication of the new maypole on Empire Day 1927, alongside Mrs R. Harris as a Sunflower and Mr Edgington as a Clown. The report does not say which sister it was. 01/75-89, item 01/77

A woman who grew up in Welford in the 1930s recalled them in 2012 among the village's many single women:

There were a lot of single women in the village - presumably the result of the 14-18 war - Miss Bixby the headmistress of the school and her friend Miss Humphreys = known as Bix and Humph; Miss Boraston who lived, I think, in your house rather formidable and a strong smell of mothballs.

Email to Brad Plimmer, 31 March 2012 49/20 p.1

She was writing to the Society's Brad Plimmer, so "your house" may mean a different house from Sefton Cottage.

The playing-field trust 1934-1940

The sisters come most clearly into view through the village's long campaign for a children's playing field. Two public meetings in 1934 adopted a scheme drawn up by H. M. Woodward so that fête money would go only to purposes "of permanent value to the Village". When trustees were suggested in May, "Miss May Boraston" was the only woman among the six names. She signed the trust agreement as Cathleen May Evelyn Boraston, alongside Capt. Walter Leslie Dingley, Edgar Mills Davis, Vincent Mainwaring, Arthur Montague, Herbert Setten and Holtham Mills Woodward. 60/01 p.C; 06/14 Woodward lived at Hollies Cottage, the old needle factory next door, and he was a great-grandson of James Mills. 21/66 notes; 57/12 in 57/06-15

The first meeting of the Welford-on-Avon Trustees was held at Sefton Cottage, Welford-on-Avon, by kind permission of Miss Boraston, on Wednesday November 14th 1934.

Trust Fund minute book 60/01 p.1

May was one of the three cheque-signers, and the 1935 bank mandate names "Mrs [sic] Boraston" as Trustee. 60/01; 57/12 The trustees spent the next five years hunting for land: Keyter Close, land behind Cross Farm whose owner "declined to sell", Fool's Close, the Cinder Meadow, and a site of Mrs Meinhardt's. In March 1937 Miss Boraston suggested that other village organisations should be asked to help in future fund-raising. 60/01 pp.11-12

May died in 1937. At the fête committee on 18 June the chairman recorded "the earnest work Miss Boraston had done in connection with the Trust Fund", and a letter of sympathy went to her sister. 57/01 The trustees then elected "Miss Alicia Doris Mary Boraston of Sefton Cottage" in her place. Doris ran the fête's surprise stall from 1938, sat with the trustees as they agreed to fund the Parish Council's purchase of a field, and in March 1939 was authorised to countersign the cheques for the ten per cent deposit. 60/01 pp.21-24; 57/01; 54/02 War stopped the scheme. The grants were suspended in December 1939, no fête was held in 1940, and the fund lay largely dormant for decades. In March 1984 the Parish Council exchanged contracts on about eight acres at the Meadows, the old football field, for £18,000. 60/01 summary

The 1940 sales August 1940

Doris Boraston died in 1940. Walker Barnard & Son offered "Miss A. D. M. Boraston's Estate" at the Bell Inn on 16 August 1940, and the Society's transcript of the particulars shows what the sisters had made of the place. 11/30 pp.44-45 (SBT DR 137/139)

The House has been very carefully modernised and the profusion of exterior & interior old timbers is a pleasing feature of this old world property.

Sale particulars, 16 August 1940 11/30 p.44

ROOM	SIZE AND FITTINGS
Dining room	15'6" × 15'0"; oak parquet floor, inglenook fireplace, bay window
Lounge	L-shaped, 15' × 14'10"; oak parquet; door to a heated conservatory, 15'0" × 10'9"
Kitchen	15'6" × 13'9"; red quarry floor, Eagle range, fittings for an electric cooker
Scullery	11'0" × 9'0"; Beeston boiler, hot and cold water, semi-rotary hand pump
Bathroom	9'0" × 7'0"; pedestal WC, chromium-plated electric wall fire
Under stairs	Permutit water softener and BTH electric motor pumping the house's own water
Bedrooms	Four, the largest 16'0" × 15'3", reached by two staircases

ROOM	SIZE AND FITTINGS
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Outside	Wooden garage 18' × 12'; coal and wood stores; septic tank; mains electricity; telephone
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The garden covered 0.842 acre, or 3 roods 14 perches. The front was laid out with formal beds inside lavender and privet hedges, and the house was "clad with Wisteria, Honeysuckle and Rose trees". Behind were herbaceous borders, a rose garden, rockeries and crazy-paved walks, and lawns "studded with" walnut, apple, pear, plum, damson and hazel trees. The particulars added, in the summer of the Battle of Britain, that "Welford on Avon & district can be regarded as a very safe area." The house sold for £1,775 to Mr John M. Marrin of Moseley. 11/30 p.45

The next day the contents were sold on the premises "by direction of the Exors. & Trustee of Miss A. D. M. Boraston decd.", 416 lots in all. Among them were: 11/30 pp.71–72 (SBT DR 137/150)

- a "Richly Carved Chinese Chest"
- numerous silver items
- a Louis XVI cabinet 7'8" wide
- 15 bottles of 1887 vintage port
- 5 dozen bottles of "old Crusted Port"
- a dozen bottles of 1834 Solera sherry
- 18 bottles of damson gin
- 2 bottles of marrow rum
- 2 bottles of cowslip wine
- a 1938 Lanchester 11 h.p. saloon, "for trial runs apply the gardener on Welford 244"

The trustees did not record the vacancy until their meeting of 29 March 1941, when Miss Mabel Basson of The Orchards took her place. That is why the minute book's own summary gives her death as 1941. The executors' sale shows she had died by August 1940. 60/01 pp.29–30

Later residents 1950–1987

The Society's notebook "People in Welford 1950" lists "Mr & Mrs Moran – Sefton Cottage", between Miss Dorothy Hawkins at The Hollies and the Blundells at The Yews. 01/56 p.2 "Moran" is probably the 1940 buyer John M. Marrin, with the name written down from memory INFERRED.

By about 1960 the house belonged to the Hastings family. The survey "Houses in Welford about 1960" lists "Mrs Hastings, Sefton

cottage" as one house, next to Miss Hawkins at Hollies Cottage and four furnished flats at The Hollies. 20/06 By then The Hollies had been left to the church after the last of the family died in 1948, sold, and turned into flats. 21/66 The Four Gables history refers to "Mrs Hastings' hedge" as the boundary of the old cottage plot. 09/16 The 1987 electoral register still has two Hastings electors at Sefton Cottage, Helen C. and Patricia, between Ian and Ann Edwards at Froswick and Peter and Penelope Howard at Sherbourne Cottage. 30/05 pp.16–17 They were probably the Mrs Hastings of 1960 and a daughter **INFERRED**.



The Hollies, 1992. The Conservation Area study uses this photograph for both The Hollies and Sefton Cottage. Sefton Cottage is the next house along, largely hidden behind the trees on the right **INFERRED**. The archive has no clear photograph of Sefton Cottage itself. 15/08 fig 59, PDF p.58

At a glance

DATE	EVENT	SOURCE
C17	Timber-framed house built; local tradition calls it Elizabethan	47/40; 10/32
1795	The Hollies next door rebuilt for Harper Holtom	21/66
c.1800– 1830s	Hollies Cottage used as James Mills's needle factory	21/66
by c.1910	Two cottages between Four Gables and Sefton Cottage gone	21/64; 09/16
1911	Two households: Ernest Howell's family and Archie and Bessie Wright	48/09;

DATE	EVENT	SOURCE
		48/10
1911–24?	"Sefton House" sold at auction for £960 to Mr Boraston of Handsworth	23/91–96
1927	A Miss Boraston appears as Britannia at the maypole dedication	01/77
1934	First meeting of the playing-field trustees held at Sefton Cottage	60/01
1937	Death of Miss May Boraston; Doris becomes trustee	57/01; 60/01
1940	Death of Miss Doris Boraston; house sold for £1,775 to John M. Marrin	11/30
1950	Mr and Mrs Moran	01/56
c.1960	Mrs Hastings	20/06
1967	Described in the statutory list	13/02
1972	Listed Grade II (list entry 1382851)	47/40
1983	Society list: "Elizabethan. Wealth of exterior & interior old timbers"	10/32
1987	Helen C. and Patricia Hastings on the electoral register	30/05
1992	Conservation Area study, Map Ref 50; cedar noted	15/08

What is inferred, and what is missing

- No document names the house or its occupiers before 1911.
- "Sefton House" in the undated cutting is taken to be Sefton Cottage, and Mr Boraston to be the sisters' father. Both are inferences.
- "Moran" (1950) and "Marrin" (1940 buyer) are taken to be the same family.
- The 1983 Society list grades it III on its own local scale. The statutory grade is II.
- The 1967 list says two storeys and the 2000 revision says single storey plus attic. Both describe the same building.
- The archive has no clear photograph of Sefton Cottage itself. The pictures here show its street, its neighbour and its place in the village.
- Web searches found the Historic England list entry and nothing else on the house or the Borastons.

Sources

- 01/56 People in Welford 1950 · 01/75–89 (01/77 maypole dedication, 1927)
- 06/14 Trust agreement 1934 · 06/20, 13/31, 19/37 SBT catalogue listings (DR 137/150)
- 09/13–17 (09/16 Four Gables history) · 10/32 Society list of buildings 1983 (copy 30/06)
- 11/30 Welford sale particulars 1815–1956 (DR 137/139, DR 137/150)
- 13/02 Listed buildings 1952/1967 (copy 30/07) · 14/02 property feature, early 1980s
- 15/08 Conservation Area Study 1992 · 20/06 Houses in Welford about 1960
- 21/22–66 H. M. Woodward anecdotes and Gilda Gray house notes c.1970
- 23/91–96 Herald cuttings c.1895–1924 · 30/05 Register of electors 1987

- 46/01–12 W. A. Smith photographs (46/09) · 47/40 listing text
- 48/09–10 1911 census · 49/20 memoir email 2012
- 54/02, 57/01, 57/06–15, 60/01 playing-field fête and Trust Fund records
- [Historic England list entry 1382851](#)