



Look back at the early black and white photographs of the Estate and witness the passing of time. Our memories fade, photographs take a little longer.

A special thanks to Dr Christine Hodgetts for her research into the History of the Woodcote Estate.

Woodcote House was rebuilt in 1861 as a former Victorian mansion built in an Elizabethan style.

The estate was purchased from Lady Waller by the Warwickshire County Council in 1948 as the County Police Headquarters. Its legal title was transferred to the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner in the 1990's.

The House and its curtilage buildings were granted Grade 2 listed building status in January 1987. The parkland is over 200 years old and as a result has many veteran trees, hedgerows provides irreplaceable habitat too many species.

It is probably the most important heritage and ecologically sensitive site in the village and one of a number of such rare sites in the county. The house and parkland are indivisible and need to be retained as a single entity to maintain their status.

It is important to note the slow and continual deterioration of the estate since the 1960s

Prior to the granting of the Grade 2 status in 1987 we have witnessed

- The removal of the truncated chimneys, a notable feature of the house.
- The loss of the formal gardens
- The destruction of the 200 year old walled garden now a car park
- The demolition of part of the house to accommodate the new Admin block
- The formal 200 year old walled kitchen garden converted into a carpark
- The erection of “highly inappropriate buildings”, ie the Training block, garages, a residential block, a Comms building and workshops

Then after the Grade 2 listed status;

- The proposed demolition of the curtilage stable block to the front of the house granted in the 2008 new Police HQ development.
- The lack of effective management of the woodland and lakes since 1948
- The continuing deterioration of The North Lodge
- Additional tarmac parking areas



Small thatched cottage in Leek Wootton. 1900s



Cottages in Warwick Road, Leek Wootton. 1900s



Woodcote seen from the park from the North West c 1895 Waller album



Flower garden walk facing west, continuing from previous. (Smith album, private collection)



“The fruit house” c1895. (Waller album)

“The Lost Gardens of Woodcote”

The bothy was clearly the building named by Wathen Waller as the fruit house in around 1895. (See above) this decorative little building seems unlikely as a fruit house, with its bay window. It is shown as a single-celled building in 1886 and 1905, doubled in size by 1925.

The garden was disposed of quite soon after the county’s purchase.

The walled garden was rapidly leased to a market gardener in 1948, a situation which probably continued until the space was required for car parking, its current use. The 1983 Ordnance Survey shows the glass houses and the bothy demolished and the central part of the walled garden paved for parking. Grade 2 listing was served in 1987.



Flower garden at Woodcote, c 1950 looking south. (Smith album, Private collection)

The most intriguing feature of the walled garden is the pair of wrought iron gates which would have formed the entrance used by the owner and his guests. The bottom right photo is that of the Flower garden by Priory gates, c1950. (Private collection)

The gates are clearly older than the walled garden



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Photo 1886 - The walled Garden built in 1800 approx - now a parking lot





Entrance front c 1925.



The house from the north-west, c. 1910. Postcard, private collection - note the truncated chimneys removed before 1987

Sports days

In the 1890's and 1900's there are frequent newspaper accounts of cricket matches being played at Woodcote by the village side. At this date local sports teams received regular newspaper coverage, but in fact, there are occasional mentions of both football and cricket at Woodcote as far back as the 1860's.

After the end of World War I Leek Wootton acquired its own sports ground and pavilion as a war memorial, and sport may have stopped here. The acquisition of the estate as a police headquarters saw a drive to make the most of a recreation opportunity. The early deliberations of the council committee show the discussion on facilities to be provided.

The first cricket match at Woodcote is reported in 1951. This was followed by regular reports of sporting fixtures.

There were proposals for tennis and bowls too. There was already a tennis court, whose location is unknown. In 1948 it was decided that for economy a bowling green should be constructed on the existing tennis court. New tennis courts should be built when they could be afforded.

The tennis courts are now used for parking.

Woodcote Drive

The East Lodge was built in 1855. Woodcote Drive follows the line of the former public road. Older photographs show that its avenue still contained some trees which may have lined the old road. These appear to have been augmented with younger specimens, forming a close avenue by 1886. The avenue is enclosed by 19th c cast iron estate fencing.

The area around the lodge seems to have had a dense shrubbery planting from an early time, preventing clear views into the park. Much of this is rhododendron bushes dating back to the 1900s enabling the drive to achieve its present form. An article narrating a visit to Woodcote in 1953 reports that the rhododendrons were in bloom.



The west terrace looking towards the lake, c1895. (Waller album, private collection)



Woodcote Drive c 1895 Waller Album



The main entrance to the Woodcote Estate 1914 showing the East Lodge built in 1855



East Lodge built in 1855, Photo 1895



Photo 2015 (North Lodge) was built in 1867 on the North Road

3 Chronology

1702	Woodcote bought by John Mallory	CR26/1/13/26
1713	Death John Mallory; son John succeeds	
1732	Death John Mallory son Robert inherits	
1759	Death of Robert Mallory, son Robert Harvey Mallory succeeds	
1792-3	Re-fronting of Woodcote House	CR.1709/313 and 317
1797-1808	Creation of original walled garden	Map evidence
1797	Diversion of Woodcote Lane	CR.1709/318
1808	Woodcote leased to John Eardley Wilmot	CR.1709/302-303
1830	Death of Henry Mallory. Woodcote passes to his sister Mrs Ricardo.	
1830	Woodcote leased to Henry Christopher Wise	CR1709/307
1850	Henry Christopher Wise inherits Warwick Priory	
1851	HC Wise sells Warwick Priory and buys Woodcote (179 ac) for £31,273.16s 10d	
1852	Diversion of Woodcote Lane	Q532/2 Mids 1852
1855	Planting begins Terrace Hill Wood, Long Meadow Spinney, the Lunch	Woodcote catalogue
1856	Front (east) lodge built	Waller catalogue
1861-3	Rebuilding of Woodcote house	
1861-3	Parts of park taken to enlarge gardens	Waller catalogue
	Reservoir built to supply water to house near where lower pool now is	Waller catalogue
1867	Back (North) Lodge built	Waller catalogue
After 1877	Upper and lower pools made	Waller catalogue
1883	HC Wise dies; son George inherits	
1884	George Wise	Directory
1888	George Wise dies; his cousin Maj Gen GH Waller inher.	Directory
1892	GH Waller d; his son Francis Waller inher.	
1892	Lady Waller	Directory
1896	Lady Waller	Directory

1900	FE Waller (minor)	1900 directory
1902	Woodcote leased to J Marrow	
1903-4	Garden enlarged towards pools, plants Dicksons of Chester, planting Mr Goldring of Kew Gardens	Waller catalogue
1904	John Marrow Esq.	Directory
1908	Property and residence of Sir FE Waller	Directory
1914	Death of FE Waller; his brother Wathen Arthur inherits	
1916	Property and residence of Sir Wathen Arthur Waller	Directory
1916	Home farm let and stock sold	LC 1916 Nov 3
1940-45	Woodcote becomes Red Cross Hospital	LC 1940 Oct 11
1946	Sale of some of Woodcote plate	LC 1946 Jan 4
1946	Sale of Woodloes and Middle Woodloes Farms; North Woodloes unsold	LC 1946 March 29
1947	Death of Sir Wathen Waller	Obituary LC 1947 May 2
1948	Woodcote and 77 acres bought as County Police Headquarters	CR2247 PI
1951	First cricket match played on sports ground	WA July 13
1951-3	<u>Four pairs police houses built on Woodcote Drive</u>	LC 1951 July 6; WA 1953 June 26
1960's	<u>Additional police houses and house for Chief Constable at Broome Close</u>	
1994	<u>Creation Of "The Warwickshire" Golf Course, Centred On Wootton Court and North Woodloes</u>	

Pleasure Grounds



The rebuilding of the mansion on an adjacent site in 1861-3, together with the moving of the public road in 1852 enabled the creation of the pleasure grounds in their present form. Some of the landscape features date from soon after that: the terrace around the house, the ha-ha's and the pools. The planting continued to evolve in the twentieth century. The gardens appear to have been well-known.

Although grateful beneficiaries might be expected to give public praise to the beautiful grounds where their picnic or garden party was held, the gardens were regularly opened from 1929 for the Gardens Scheme.

In 1934 the Garden Scheme contributed the second largest sum in the county. £30 at a shilling a head would be considered an achievement even by today's standards.



Top left - View up the lower lake to the bridge, c 1920

Bottom left - The upper lake, c 1895 from north west. (Waller album, private collection)

The Second World War

Soon after the outbreak of the Second World War, Woodcote became a Red Cross Hospital. The family then moved into Stone House in the village.

In December 1945 Sir Wathen Waller's architect placed a request with the Rural District Council to close off part of the house as it was too large for post-war conditions. Parts of the ground and first floors and the entire second floor were to be removed from use, two bedrooms were to be divided and hand basins put in all the bedrooms, and some of the worn stone floors in the kitchens and passages were to be replaced.

The total cost of the work was estimated to be £1050, about a quarter of that being for redecoration of the many rooms which had become soiled and damaged by the war occupation. In order to direct resources into post-war reconstruction Ministry approval had to be obtained for any building work. Although it was said that no controlled materials were to be used apart from a small amount of metal pipe work, **approval was not given for this work** to be done and it has to be supposed that Sir Wathen remained at the Stone House.

In April 1947 Sir Wathen Waller unexpectedly died.

The County Council's Education Committee was already in negotiation for the purchase of the house as a residential boarding school for partially sighted children and had approached the Ministry of Education for permission to purchase. This had been granted.

In August there followed a newspaper announcement that Woodcote was to be sold, and shortly afterwards there was a sale of the contents of the house.

At this point the Police Committee discovered the availability of the house, for which the District Valuer was already negotiating a price.

And the rest as they say, is history.

In 1948 Woodcote house, two lodges and four cottages and 77 acres were bought for £24,500. The County Council file on the purchase also contains information on the numbers of police, civilian staff and housekeeping staff, and some requests from the Chief Constable for accommodation for his chauffeur and other domestic issues.

Possession was taken in March 1948, and the complex seems to have come gradually into use during the later part of that year.

One of the arguments for obtaining Woodcote as a Police Headquarters was that **the provision of sports and social facilities would improve morale.**

Behind the shrubbery is Woodcote Drive, a service road along which the County Council built a series of police houses. When Woodcote was first acquired, in 1948. It was intended that four pairs of houses were to be built, though it was recognised that post-war constraints might cause a delay.

The first pair of these, for superintendents, were about to be started in 1951 when the cost of almost £3,000 each was challenged in the Council, since ordinary citizens were restricted to £2,400 for building a new house.

The four pairs of houses appeared to have been completed by the summer of 1953. By the time of the survey of the 1960's a further three detached houses had been built. Also Broome Close, north of the drive, for the Chief Constable.

In the 1980s the police houses on Woodcote Drive and Waller Close were sold off.

11 Sept 1947 Letter from Kemble to the Home Office -

“Lady Waller can think of no better purpose for which this property can be used than as our Police Headquarters as she knows that the estate would be well looked after.”

17 March 1948 Letter from the Chief Constable -

“I would like if the Sub-Committee agree, to lease during the time I am Chief Constable, at a rent to be agreed, the South Entrance Lodge, and the vegetable and fruit garden plus a small strip surrounding other cultivated area.

I am particularly anxious that the lease should be drawn in a manner that, in the event of the services of my present chauffeur - gardener - handyman being dispense with, I can obtain vacant possession on the Lodge for another chauffeur - gardener - handyman.

I should also be glad if I could lease, for the purpose of having, so to speak, a ‘quiet’ corner for myself and or Mrs Kemble the sunken garden surrounded by wire netting enclosing rhododendrons, azaleas, etc with a rose bed in the centre, fairly close to the smaller of the two lakes.

I suggest that the rent of the latter might be nominal say **one shilling per annum** as my servant will, in the main, do what little cultivation is required”.

Yours faithfully

Chief Constable.



Between 1970 and 1983 the service ranges were removed and replaced by a modern block as a communications centre. The communications mast was moved from its earlier position further north to be outside the former kitchen window. Further blocks were built at the foot of the hill. Another large block was built between 1983 and 2000.

Land south of the drive and south west of the pools shrubbery passed into separate ownership and is now occupied by the Warwickshire golf Course, which opened in 1994.





Detailed plans were drawn up in 2016 as part of the GVA Warwick Police Masterplan to convert the House into 12 apartments - 4 on each floor and the Stable Block into 3 apartments.

The formal lawns were to be restored

The removal of the unsympathetic extensions to the former stable range and the restoration of the formal kitchen garden.

A development was to be created that reflected the greenhouses that historically stood on the site, set within a formal garden

The parking areas were to be reduced and the lawns reinstated to the forecourt of Woodcote House improving the views on the approach to, and from the east of, the House.

The telecommunications mast and the “highly inappropriate buildings”, ie the Training block, garages, a residential block, a Comms building and workshops were to be removed.

All to be replaced by modest dwellings, increasing the dominance of Woodcote House.



Surprisingly there is very little information about the removal of the buildings to the North of the house, removed after the amalgamation of the Coventry City Police and the Warwickshire Police in 1969 to make way for the current administration block.

In the County Records Office there is a photograph album ref PH 1301 that requires further investigation. See you there.

Again a special thanks to

Dr Christine Hodgetts

The Leek Wootton History Group

The Staff at the Warwickshire County Records Office

