

History of Jack House by Peter Clarke

The original conveyance of land from John Badcock to George Talbot took place in 1908.

Jack House was built as a retirement home by George Talbot in 1910-11. He died there in 1921.

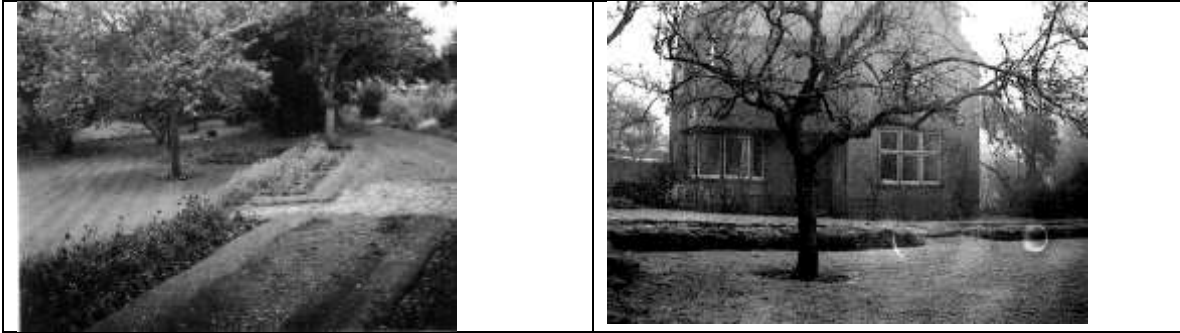
The Grid Reference of the house is 4614 1914 (previously SU614 914). An initial village by-pass on the north side of the house was built in 1932, (*St Helen's Avenue*) but was later cut off by the need to lengthen the RAF Benson runway in the war. A new by-pass was then built in 1942 passing on the southern side of the house, thereby leaving Jack House in a wedge between the two roads. It cut through the garden, leaving the part of the property on the Thames riverbank.

George Talbot in 1888 became the licensee of a pub located at the intersection of London Road and Kings Road, Reading, known at the time as the Jack, later retitled the Jack of Both Sides. He prospered as the landlord and eventually retired to Benson in 1910, handing over to his son Herbert (Todger) Talbot. It is currently (2019) a restaurant called the Hope and Bear.

In 1921, on George Talbot's death, Jack House was given in trust to Elizabeth, his third wife, until her death, when it passed to his son Herbert (Todger) Talbot.

During World War II, it housed officers from RAF Benson.

In 1945, Herbert and Lilian moved to Jack House with their son James. He remembers the duck pond and apple and walnut trees where the tennis court is now. There was a large double garage and Jim used the door to practice his tennis. In the garage were many bound copies of the Illustrated London News and the Sphere. Below is a photo of the front garden, and a shot of the house from that front garden



Jim spent most of his time on the Thames riverfront, fishing and swimming. A boathouse astride the Benson Brook as it enters the Thames had a 12 foot flat bottomed fishing boat called the Linnet. Fishing gear lined the walls. Here is a picture by an unknown artist painted from the Lock Island, showing the boathouse



In 1954 Jim migrated to Canada. Lilian died in 1959, and Herbert died in 1961. The house was sold then.

Todger's son-in-law, Sydney Morris, handled the estate and enquired of the Planning Authorities whether the part of the property on the Thames could be built on. The answer was never!

Well, just three years later, permission was given for three houses on the river meadow between the brook and the mill, then in 1962 two more, and more still in 1965. Lucky for those home owners, but it does in fact represent the loss and desecration of a lovely water meadow.

Present owners Stephen and Liz Bowles continue the story.

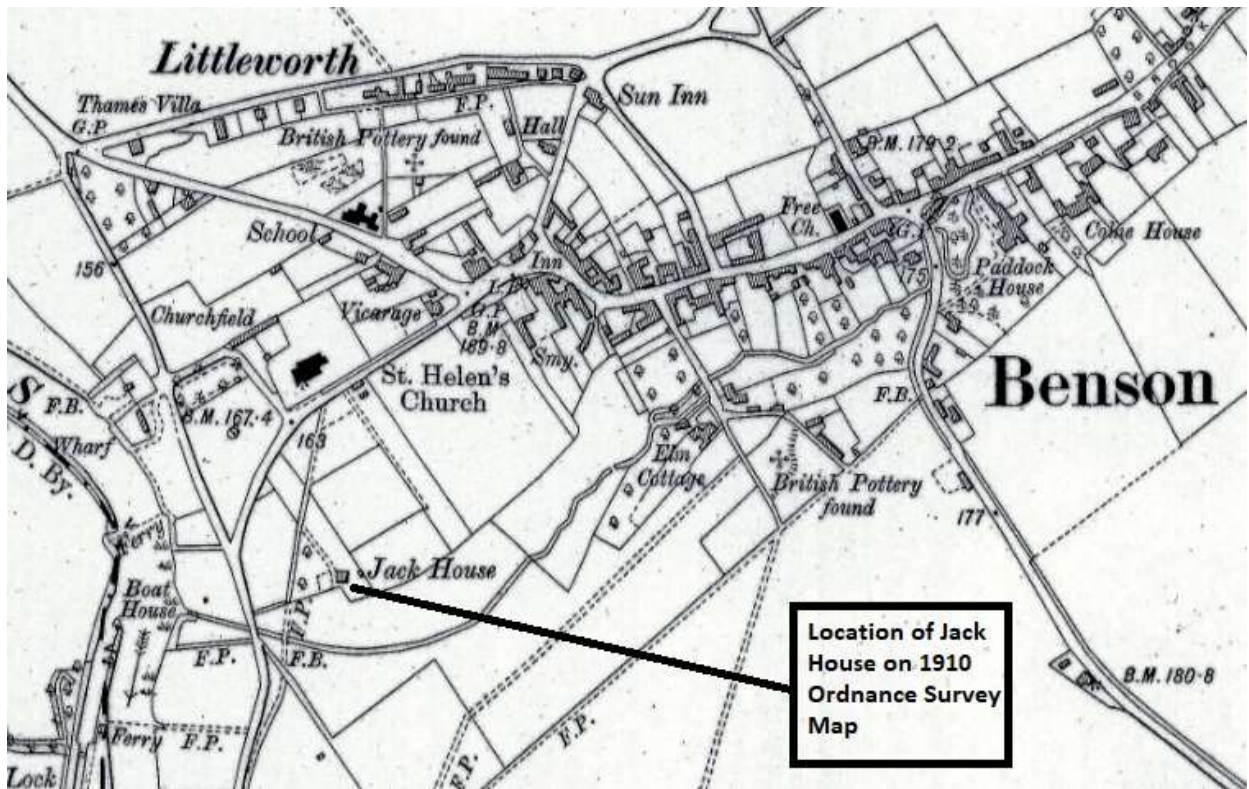
In 1966 the property passed from Anacut Developments Ltd to Arthur Reed of Dragon Hotel Didcot. There is no information as to why Anacut Developments was the owner at this time.

In 1969 it was sold to Rowland and Lillian Hewison of Grange Farm, Marsh Gibbon, and then in 1972 it passed to Janet and Colin Smith previously of Heswall, Cheshire. There seems to be some confusion over the address during this transaction, and Bullingdon Rural DC had to confirm in a letter to the vendors' solicitor that Jack House, 2 St Helens Ave is the same property as Jack House, Old London Road, Benson. (*St Helen's Avenue was built in 1932.*)

Colin Smith died in 1993 and Mrs Smith sold to us (Elizabeth and Stephen Bowles), the present owners, in 1996.

The photo below shows the apple tree and original front door.





Location of Jack House on 1910 Ordnance Survey Map