

## **THE EARLY RESIDENTS OF**

### **SIMS COTTAGES,**

### **THE GREEN, CLAYGATE**

John Sims was a Weybridge-born brickmaker, who lived between 1835 and 1931. He was a Claygate resident by 1867, when he married Bertha Ede In St George's Church, Esher. It is assumed that Sims Cottages are named for John Sims, but the origins of the Cottages are something of a mystery. In 1891, there were four Sims Cottages, but interestingly, almost the same families in the 1891 cottages were living side by side in 1881, which suggests that these cottages may not have been built by Mr Sims, but could already have been in existence and were bought, or otherwise taken over by John Sims .

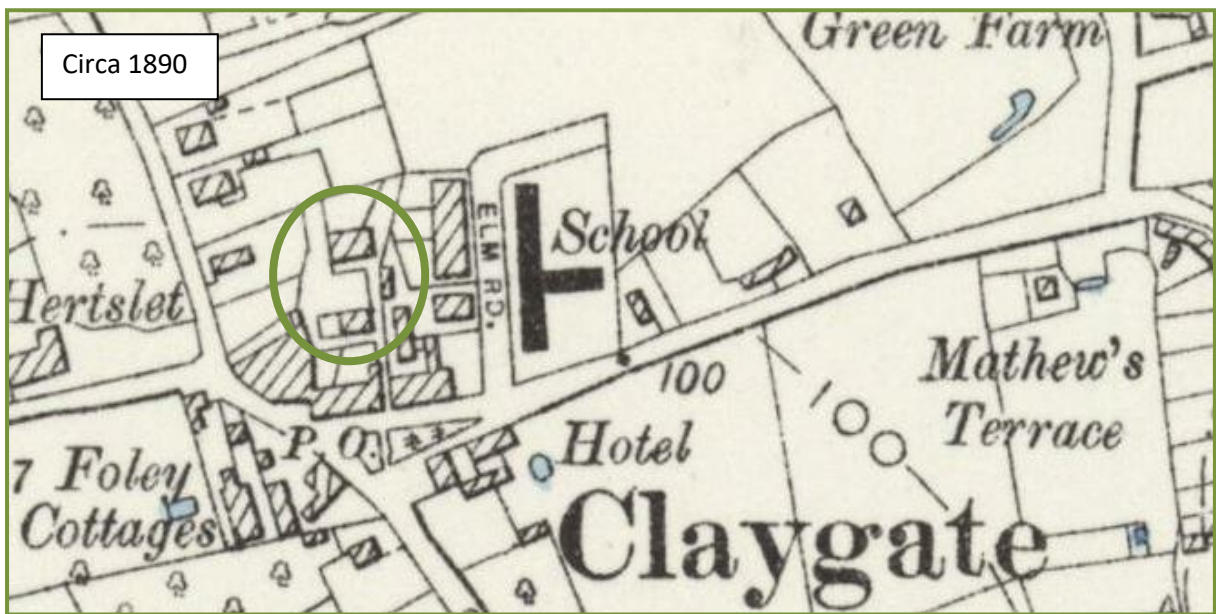
By the mid-1890s, John Sims was a builder and brickmaker, with his own brickfield and was almost certainly responsible for building a further pair of cottages, as well as two more over the next decade. By 1911 there were eight Sims cottages, set in three blocks. From census information, it is difficult to tell where Sidney Cottages end and Sims Cottages begin, or vice versa, but for the purposes of this research, I have concentrated only on property specifically titled "Sims Cottages".

The first assumption would be that Sims Cottages were built for the workers and families of brickfield employees, and although several of their residents over the years had been employed in the brickfields, just as many had no immediate connection with brickmaking.

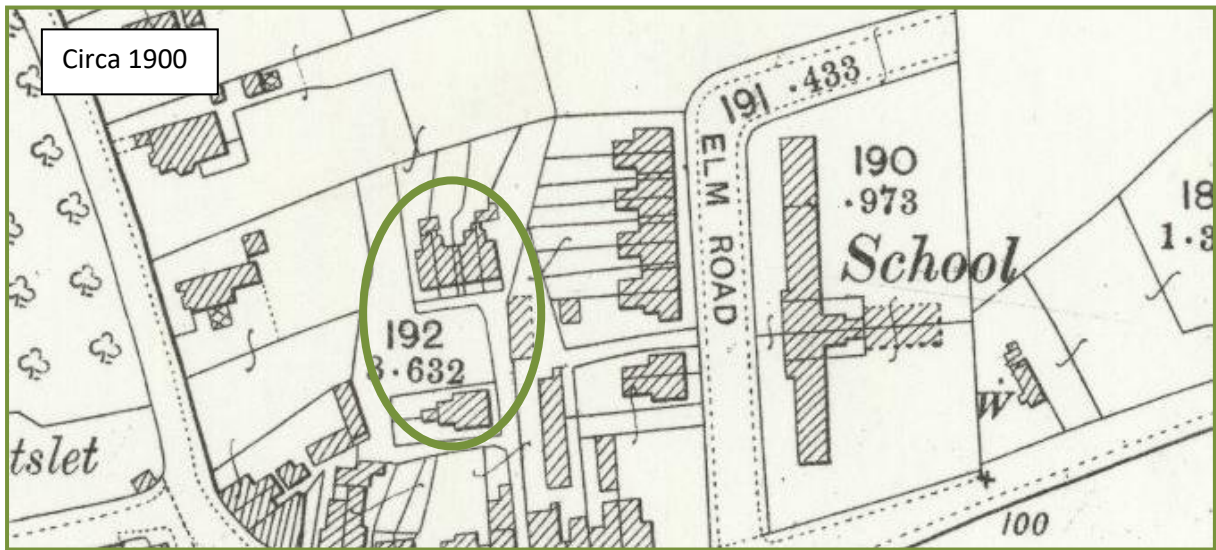
Tucked away behind The Green and the High Street, Sims Cottages became a close-knit community, with inter-linked marital ties that have lasted for over 50 years.



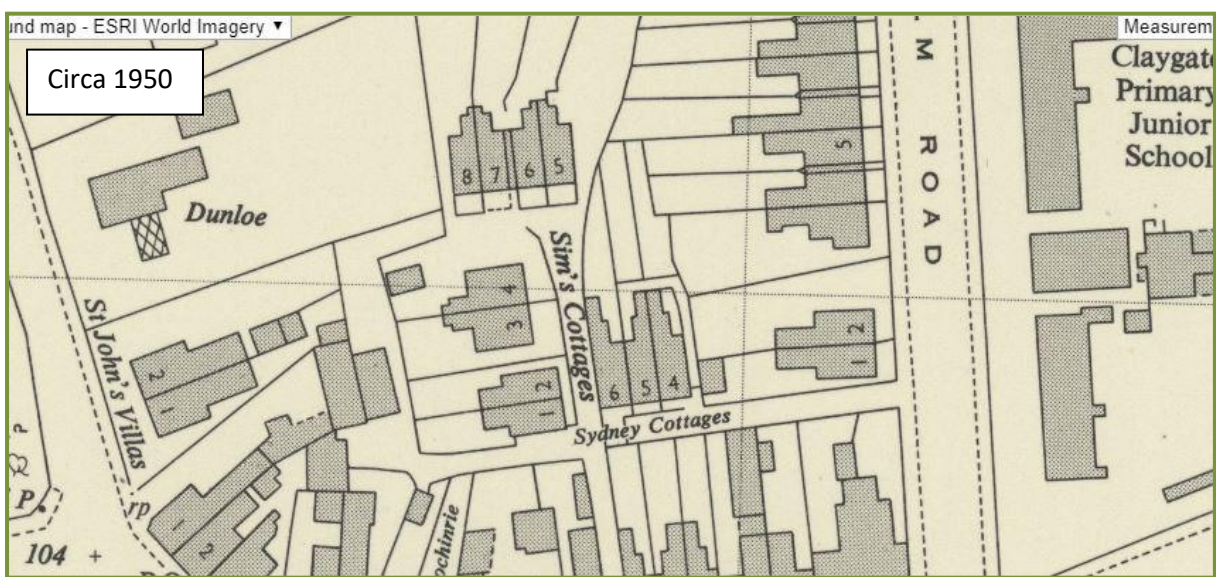
Circa 1890



Circa 1900



Circa 1950



THOMAS WORSFOLD and family were stalwarts of Sims Cottages. The Worsfolds were living in Claygate in the 1881 census, in what may have been Sims Cottages or their precursors; he was still there in 1911 and presumably remained there until his death in 1914 at the age of 70. For at least 80 years, members of the Worsfold family resided in Sims Cottages.

With his wife Emma, Thomas brought up 12 children in their cottage (4 rooms according to the 1911 census) with every one of them surviving to adulthood. Quite an achievement for those days.

Thomas wasn't a native of Claygate but was born in Capel in 1844, to parents James Worsfold and Sarah Francis.

By 1871, Thomas had left home, to board with his brother John in Capel and was already describing himself as a "brickmaker", though on his East Horsley marriage to 22 year old Emma Ayling on 15<sup>th</sup> June 1872, he is said to be a Labourer.

In 1881 Thomas is a brickmaker's labourer, living in Claygate, between James Stone and his family who was another brickmaker's labourer on one side, and general labourer James Saunders and family on the other side. The widowed Eliza Smallpeice is the neighbour of her son in law James Saunders, along with her lodger and future son in law, Thomas James Munday. So the close-knit Sims Cottage community is already becoming established.

Thomas and Emma already have six children, though the eldest, Roseanna, at 10 years old, and mysteriously having been born in Teddington, was born out of wedlock, though she uses the Worsfold name throughout her entire life. With son Charles having been born in East Horsley in 1876 and daughter Edith born in Claygate in 1878, it is possible to date the Worsfold family's arrival in the village to approximately 1877.

Still a bricklayer's labourer in 1891, and living at number 3 Sims Cottages, Thomas has eight children at home, the two eldest girls having left. Slightly too many children at home – two years earlier, Thomas was fined one shilling for not sending his children to school. The neighbourhood arrangement has changed slightly also, with bricklayer Arthur Brooks and his wife, sharing with Thomas and Harriet Scott on one side, but with James Stone remaining as his other neighbour.

In 1901 and by the age of 56, Thomas Worsfold is now promoted to brickmaker. In place of the Brooks is the younger generation Randall family, headed by William Arthur, while James Stone remains, and as he and Thomas are almost the same age, one hopes they are, by now, the very best of friends! The youngest Worsfold child is nine years old and eight have left home, so presumably the cottage is a lot less crowded.

Apparently having reached the end of his working life in the brickfields, in 1911 Thomas is a road labourer, sharing the cottage with Emma, his two youngest children Francis and Emily, though both are adults aged 21 and 19, and also his widowed brother in law, 72 year old Frederick Ayling.

It is most likely that Thomas died in 1914, while Emma outlived him by more than 20 years, dying in 1937 at the age of 87.

*Any genealogists who have Worsfolds in their family tree, in particular, the seemingly several million of them whose roots are in the Surrey Hills area, will know from bitter experience that trying to pin individuals down – with absolute certainty – is like trying to herd cats. But, I am as sure as I can be that the above Thomas Worsford and his immediate family have no earlier connection with the Claygate or Esher Worsfolds.*

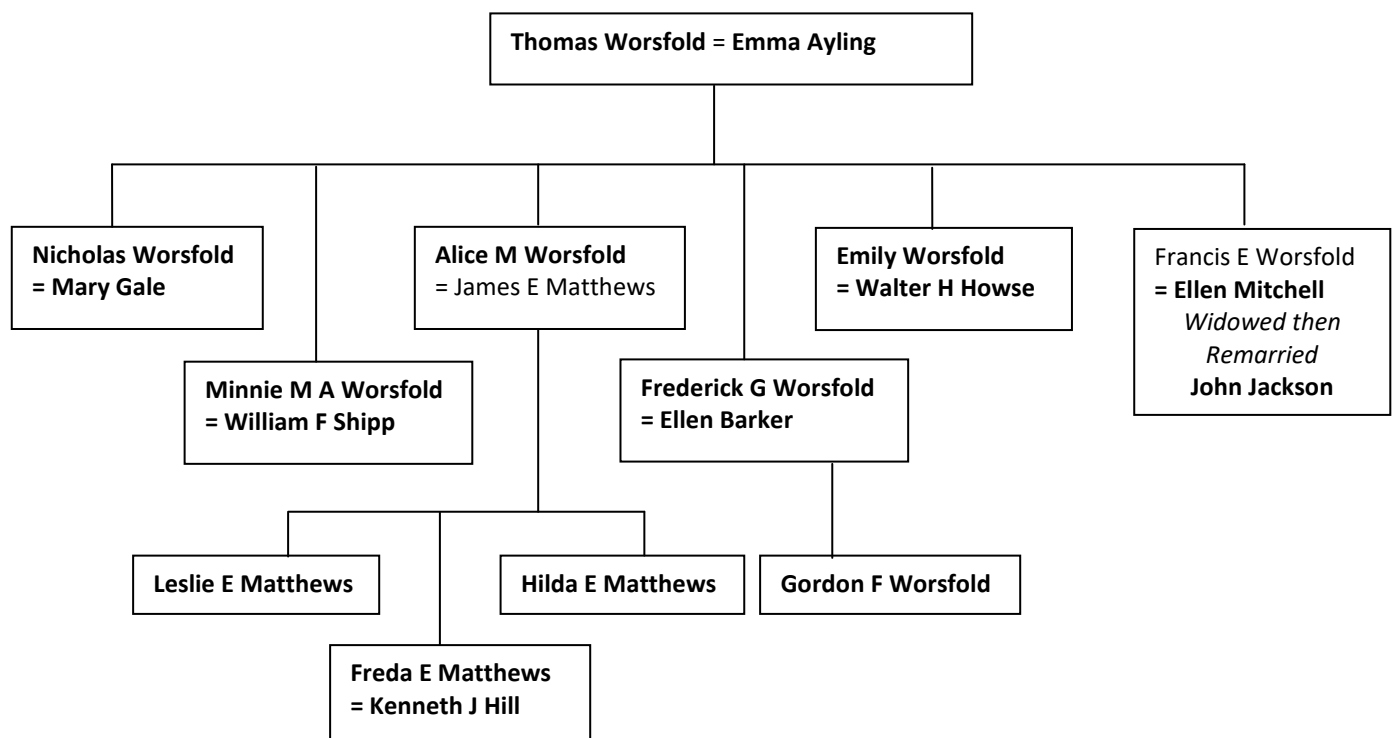
Various members of the Worsfold family continued in Sims Cottages over the decades. Son Frederick and family were resident at number 8, after his sister Minnie Mary, wife of William Shipp, while Nicholas and his wife were temporary residents at number 2. The Worsfold daughters; Emily, wife of Walter Henry Howse lived at numbers 6 until 1934, while War Widow Alice Emma Matthews lived at number 7, along with children Hilda and Leslie, until her death in 1948. Between 1935 and 1937, cottage number 6 was home to Esher born Kenneth John Edward Hill and his wife Freda Emily Matthews, who was the daughter of James Edgar Matthews and Alice Emma.

Private James Edgar Matthews died 10<sup>th</sup> April 1918  
The Queen's (Royal Surrey Regiment) transferred to 138<sup>th</sup>  
Company Labour Corps.  
Husband of Alice E Matthews of 7 Sims Cottages, Claygate  
*Remembered with Honour Asnieres-Sur-Oise Communal  
Cemetery*

Similarly unlucky was Ellen Worsfold, wife of Thomas and Emily's son Francis Edward, who survived the First World War only to die shortly afterwards in 1917, after only five years of marriage. A year later, Ellen married John Jackson of the Royal Engineers and they lived at 2 Sims Cottages until 1923.

### **The Sims Cottages WORSFOLD family**

Names in bold being known residents of Sims Cottages





JAMES STONE was resident in Sims Cottages for nearly as long as Thomas Worsfold and they were next door neighbours throughout.

James was born in Surbiton in 1849 to James Stone and Emma Elizabeth Meads and he was born into brickmaking. His father was a brickmaker, as were his two brothers. In 1841, James's father is already labouring in the Surbiton brickfields.

Between 1859 and 1863, the family move from Surbiton (via Battersea) to Claygate, obviously drawn to the Claygate brickfields, where James Stone senior sets up home just a few doors away from John Sims himself.

James Stone junior marries Caroline Challis in 1873, and in 1881, James, a brickmaker's labourer, Caroline and their three eldest children are next door to the Worsfolds. Lodging with them is 22 year old Frederick Strudwick, brickmaker, who was nephew-by-marriage to near neighbour Eliza Smallpeice.

Life then must have become difficult for the Stone family. By 1891, James Stone is blind, and is presumably relying on the income of his son, James Joseph Stone who at 16, is working as a brickmaker, to keep the family, which included his seven siblings, afloat. James's blindness was a double calamity; his wife Caroline had been deaf since 1881.

In 1901, his 19 year old son Stephen is now also a brickmaker and all but four of his children have left home. James's eldest son James Joseph married Lilly Pattison in 1901 and they are living next door to James senior and Caroline, so undoubtedly, the family remain close.

By 1911, James Stone senior has died and Caroline, his widow, is living at 6 Sims Cottages with her daughter Elizabeth, who has married railway labourer, George Pickett. There is only one death registered in this period, so it appears that James died in the infirmary at Kingston in December 1906 at the age of 57. Caroline survives for another 6 years, dying in 1912.

After the death of her husband George in 1937, Elizabeth Pickett returns to the cottages to briefly live with Alice Matthews.

Frederick Strudwick, nephew of Eliza Smallpeice's deceased husband, John, was lodging with the Stone family in 1881. He has left the cottages and is working in the Cobham brickfields at Heathfield in 1891, while boarding with the Gray family. He disappears from the censuses after that, but a 37 year old Frederick Strudwick dies in Lambeth in 1895 – this particular man is however, buried at Holy Trinity Church, Claygate.

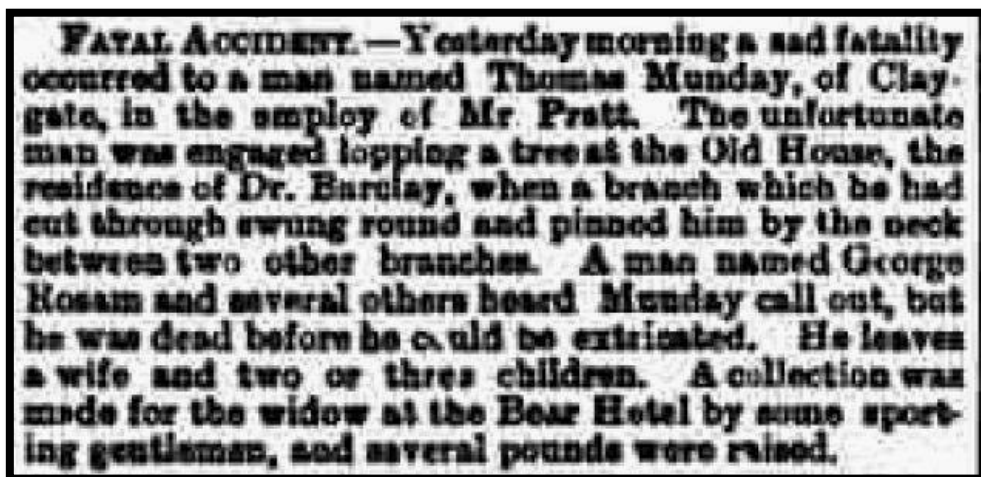
*We have no idea how James Stone lost his sight or why he and James Strudwick died at relatively young ages. The deaths may have been through "natural causes", a brickfield accident, or related ill health. It was a dangerous profession, not just because of the risks associated with the heavy, physical work and dangers associated with a working claypit, but the crushing and grinding of the clay produced dust which contained high levels of silica. This meant that respiratory diseases such as silicosis and lung cancer were common among brickworkers.*

ELIZA SMALLPEICE was the oldest resident of Sims Cottages, born in Claygate in 1825. Eliza was already 56, the mother of nine children and a widow when the Sims Cottage community came into being around 1881.

Eliza (nee Smith) married John Smallpeice in 1844. John died in 1880, leaving Eliza with three children still at home, Thomas, George and the youngest, Ida, only nine years old.

Neither were the family associated with brickmaking. Eliza's husband was an agricultural labourer; her sons Thomas Smith Smallpeice and his brother George were gardeners and the lodger Thomas James Munday was a carpenter's labourer. In 1881, the second eldest Smallpeice daughter, Esther, is married to general labourer James Saunders and is living next door with their five children. By the end of that year, daughter Annie Smallpeice has married the lodger, Thomas James Munday

In 1891, Eliza has temporarily left the neighbourhood and has found herself a little live-in job as the Claygate Church Caretaker, while her daughter Annie was tragically widowed in 1889 and is a laundress at 1 Sims Cottage with her two children, and two boarders, Alfred Perry and Charles Bennett, both bakers.



**FATAL ACCIDENT.**—Yesterday morning a sad fatality occurred to a man named Thomas Munday, of Claygate, in the employ of Mr. Pratt. The unfortunate man was engaged lopping a tree at the Old House, the residence of Dr. Barclay, when a branch which he had cut through swung round and pinned him by the neck between two other branches. A man named George Rosam and several others heard Munday call out, but he was dead before he could be extricated. He leaves a wife and two or three children. A collection was made for the widow at the Bear Hotel by some sporting gentlemen, and several pounds were raised.

Now 73 years old, Eliza is back in Sims Cottages in 1901, living with her daughter Annie Munday and youngest grandchild, Elsie. The little family are presumably financially secure; Annie is still a laundress, but is an employer, and Eliza is "living on own means".

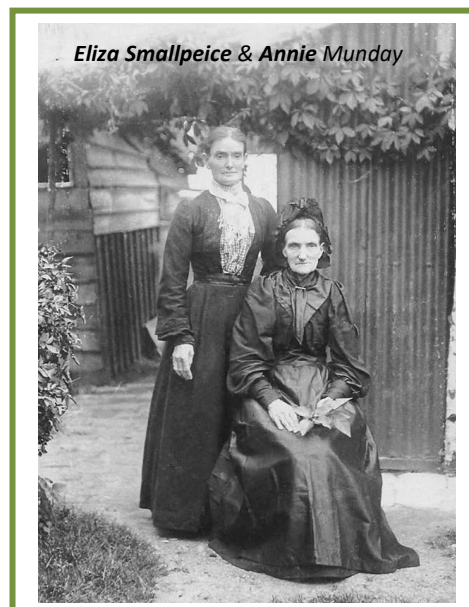
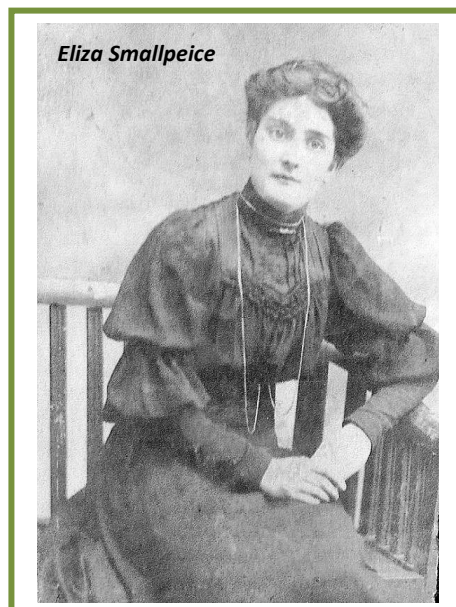
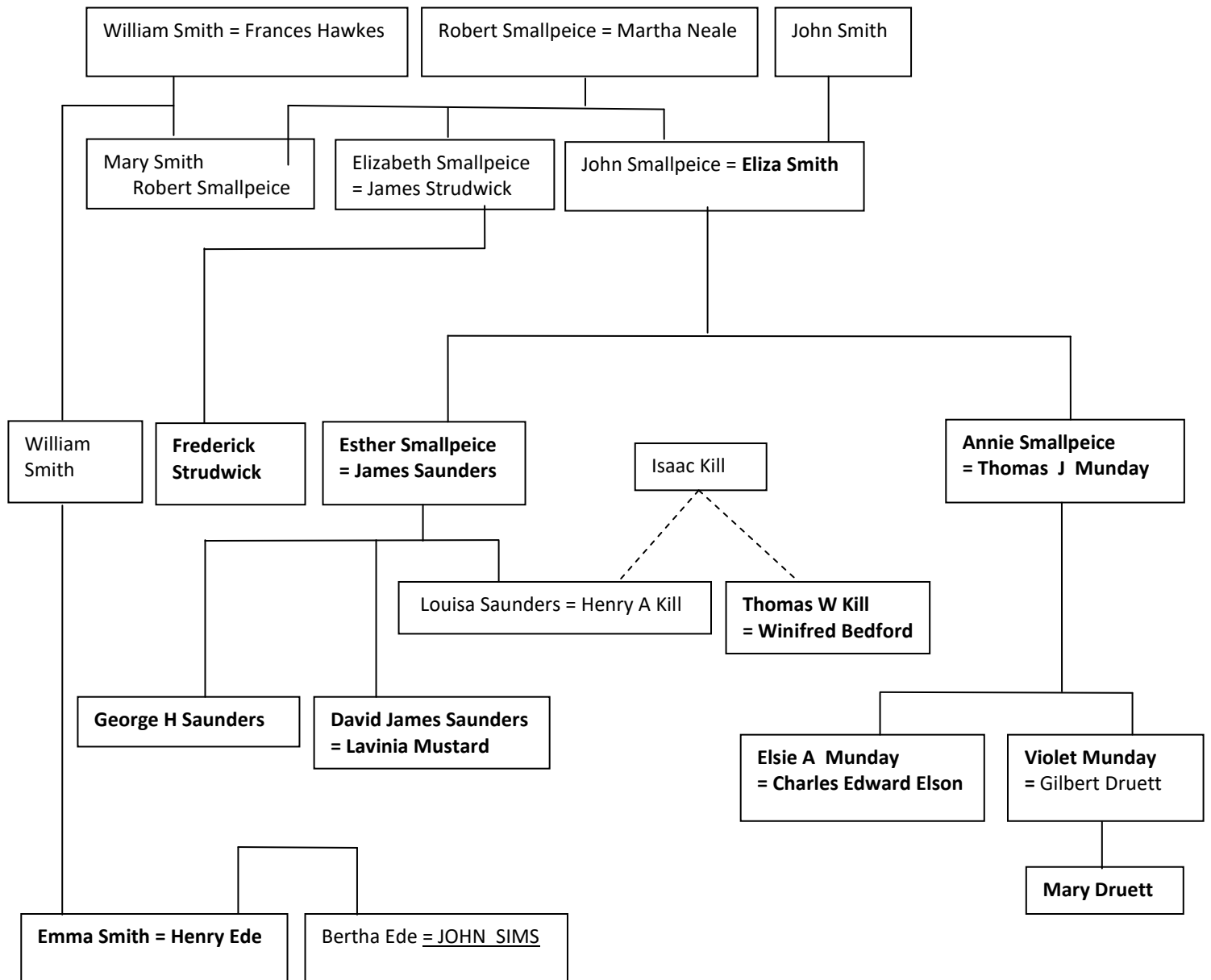
Eliza Smallpeice dies in 1907 and is buried in St. Nicholas Church, Thames Ditton. Her abode on the burial register is "The Green, Claygate".

In 1911, 57 year old Annie Munday is still a laundress, at 5 Sims Cottages, with her daughter Elsie Annie and gardener son in law Charles Edward Elson who married Elsie in 1907.

By 1918, Annie's daughter, Violet Druett, who was widowed in 1917, after just 9 years of marriage, has taken over 5 Sims Cottages and in the company of various members of her family, remains in the cottage until at least 1960. Violet died in 1972.

# **The Sims Cottages SMALLPEICE family**

Names in bold being known residents of Sims Cottages



Photos courtesy of Jennifer James

## WILLIAM ARTHUR RANDALL

Sometime between 1891 and 1901, William A Randall and family set up home in 6 Sims Cottages; the end cottage and possibly the newest cottage – next door to Thomas Worsfold.

William was born in Thames Ditton in 1870 to parents Edmund and Catherine, Edmund Randall being a man of many talents: gardener, carpenter and publican of the Beaufort Arms in Claygate.

William Arthur married Kingston girl Mary Ann Neat in 1894 and by 1901, William was a carpenter, with four children and the family were sharing their home with younger brother Edmund Randall, a painter journeyman.

In 1911, William and Mary Ann's family appears to be complete at seven children, all of which are living in their 5 roomed cottage. William is still a carpenter, while brother Edmund is two doors away at number 2 Sims Cottage.

Edmund John Randall is a house painter and widower. He married Ada Elizabeth Godfrey in 1906, but she died in 1908, tragically in the same quarter as the birth of their son, Stanley Edmund Randall. Stanley is alive in 1911 and is living with Edmund and William's brother Benjamin and his wife Alice on Vale Road Claygate.

Fast forward to 1939: Carpenter William and Mary Randall are living at 4 Sims Cottages, next door to Eliza Smallpeice's granddaughter, Violet Druett. Living with them is daughter in law, Ellen, the widow of Sydney Lester Randall, who died just a few months earlier. William dies in 1956, outliving his wife by just over two years.

Edmund Randall's fate is uncertain. He remarried in June 1911, to Jessie Amelia Fuller but does not appear to have had any further children. Neither Edmund nor Jessie reliably appear on the 1939 Register, so it is likely that Edmund John Randall died in Greenwich in 1931.

## HENRY EDE

Henry Ede and his family are resident at 1 Sims Cottages by 1899 and Henry remains there until his death in 1918. He was born in Esher in 1857 to parents William Ede and Mary Ann Saker. Henry is the brother in law of *The* John Sims, who married Henry's elder sister Bertha.

Henry married Emma Smith in 1881, with John Sims being a witness to their wedding. By 1901, their family is complete with seven children; six daughters and one son. Emma Smith is the granddaughter of William and Frances Smith, and therefore by their son in law, Robert Smallpeice, Emma also has a family connection to Eliza Smallpeice and Annie Munday.

Two of Henry and Emma's daughters made some interesting marriages: Daisy, who in 1914 married William Robert Wall, a professional billiard player at the Foley Arms Hotel, and Eva, who in 1915 married one Frederick Rhudolph Hunt, a musician.



THE SAUNDERS FAMILY James Saunders was an agricultural labourer born in Buckinghamshire who in 1868, married Esther, the daughter of Eliza Smallpeice. The family lived next to Eliza Smallpeice and the Worsfolds in 1881, but by 1891, they had moved to Covers Road.

It isn't until around 1921 that a Saunders returns to Sims Cottages, when David James Saunders, son of James senior and a gardener sets up home in the first cottage with his wife Lavinia Mustard whom he married in Carnostie, Scotland in 1904. David was enlisted in the Royal Scots Lothian Regiment during WW1. His widowed brother George Henry Saunders is living with them until his death in 1940. David died in 1957.

The Saunders family had another connection to Sims Cottages. Between around 1924 and 1929, Thomas William Kill and his wife Winifred were living in number 2 Sims Cottages. They are connected to the Saunders family via Louisa Annie Saunders who married Henry Alfred Kill in 1903. The grandfathers of Henry Alfred and Thomas William Kill were brothers; their great grandfather being Isaac Kill.

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In between the decades, and probably unrelated to the established Sims Clan, other families resided in Sims Cottages.

The Benge family; William Richard and Emily were residents of cottage number 2 from around 1815 to 1818. Not a happy relationship – in July 1917, William was hauled before the courts for “desertion”, leaving Emily with only 7s to her name. William counterclaimed that he left because Emily took no care of the house or their two children. It was judged that William should pay his wife an extra 5s a week and presumably that was the end of their marriage!

William and Susannah Ford lived at number 3 from at least 1918 to 1936. Neither were native to the area; William was a bootmaker, born in Sussex in 1880, and Susannah was born in 1873 in Huntingdonshire. By 1911 the Ford family were living in Kingston, before moving to Claygate.

After the Fords, the cottage was occupied by Edward Charles Aldrich, a Weston Green bricklayer and his wife, Nora Bessie Harman, from Station Road, Claygate.

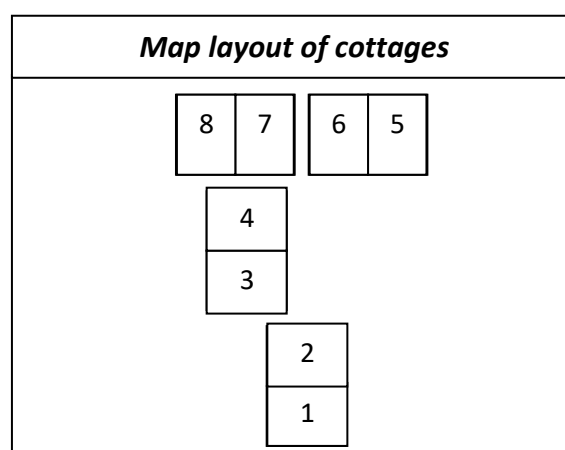
The Randall cottage at number 4 was taken over by Thomas Walter Biswell and his wife Eva. Thomas was a master bricklayer who was born in 1903 just around the corner in Elm Road, Claygate. His father died suddenly in 1923 as a result of breathing in tar fumes as a road worker. Jack Biswell, of the East Surrey Regiment and brother of Thomas, was killed by a shell in 1916.

Thomas and Alice Hawkins followed the Hills in cottage 6. Thomas was a plasterer, born on Vale Road; the son of Thomas senior, a brickmaker. Alice continued to live in the cottage after the death of Thomas junior in 1944.

## The Families of Sims Cottages circa 1880-1960

Cottage nos.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1959	Green	White	White	White	Orange	White	Blue	Blue
1949	Green	White	White	Purple	Orange	White	Blue	Blue
1939	Green	White	White	Purple	Orange	White	Blue	Blue
1931	Green	White	White	Purple	Orange	Blue	Blue	Blue
1921	Green	Blue	White	Purple	Orange	Blue	Blue	Blue
1911	Yellow	Purple	White	Purple	Orange	Brown	Blue	Blue
1901	Yellow	Blue	Orange	Brown	Blue	Purple		
1891	Orange	Brown	Blue	White				
1881	Brown	Blue	Green	Orange				

Colour Key to Families	
SMALLPEICE	STONE
WORSFOLD	SAUNDERS
RANDALL	EDE
White – no relationships found	



## ***The Residents of Sims Cottages***

*Years 1921-41, 1949-59 are taken from electoral registers and show adult residents only*

### **Number 1 Sims Cottages**

- 1881 James and Caroline Stone, with children James, Elizabeth and William.  
Lodger – Frederick Strudwick
- 1891 Annie Munday (nee Smallpeice) widow, with children Violet and Alice.  
Lodgers – Alfred J Percy and Charles W Bennett, both bakers.
- 1901 Henry and Emma Ede, with children Mary, Daisy, Herbert, Mabel, Kathleen and Eva
- 1911 Henry and Emma Ede and son Herbert
- 1921 David Saunders (son of James) and wife Lavinia.
- 1931 David and Lavinia Saunders, and brother George H Saunders
- 1939 David and Lavinia Saunders, with brother George H Saunders
- 1949 David and Lavinia Saunders, with Beatrice Woodfield
- 1959 Lavinia Saunders, widow

### **Number 2 Sims Cottages**

- 1881 Thomas and Emma Worsfold, with children Rose, Martha, Nicholas, Charles, Edith and Eliza.
- 1891 James and Caroline Stone, with children James Joseph, Elizabeth and William. Stephen,  
Emma, Thomas, Ellen and Caroline
- 1901 David and Elizabeth Tanner  
Nicholas and Mary Smallpeice
- 1911 Edmund Randall, widower
- 1921 John and Ellen Jackson – widow of Francis Edward Worsfold, son of Thomas
- 1931 Mary Ann Hearn, widow, and Vera Hughes
- 1939 Mary Ann Hearn, widow, with Vera Hughes and Mary C Campbell
- 1949 Esther and John R Gooding, with Vera Hughes
- 1959 Vera Hughes

### **Number 3 Sims Cottages**

- 1881 James and Eliza Saunders (nee Smallpeice), with children Gilbert, George, David, Kate and Louisa.
- 1891 Thomas and Emma Worsfold, with children Nicholas, Charles, Edith, Eliza, Minnie, Alice,  
Charlotte, Frederick and Francis
- 1901 Annie Munday, nee Smallpeice (widow), with daughter Elsie and mother Eliza Smallpeice.
- 1911 Harry and Clara Mowbray, both born Leicestershire, with daughter Clara and brother-in-law  
James Wardle.
- 1921 William and Susannah Ford, born Sussex and Huntingdonshire
- 1931 William and Susannah Ford, with son William.  
Stephen Freeman and Thomas Cleverdon
- 1939 Edward C Aldrich and wife Nora Bessie, with son Brian A Aldrich
- 1949 Edward C Aldrich and wife Nora Bessie
- 1959 Edward C Aldrich and wife Nora Bessie

#### **Number 4 Sims Cottages**

- 1881 Smallpeice (nee Smith), widow, with children Thomas Smith, George and John.  
Lodger – Thomas James Munday.
- 1891 Arthur and Lydia Brooks, both born in Suffolk.  
Thomas and Harriet Scott
- 1901 James Stone senior and wife Caroline, with children Stephen, Caroline, Thomas, Eleanor and nephew James Eldrith.  
James Stone junior and wife Lily.
- 1911 William and Mary Ann Randall, with children Arthur, Allen, Catherine, Lily, Sidney, Percy and Reginald
- 1921 William and Mary Ann Randall
- 1931 William and Mary Ann Randall
- 1939 William and Mary Ann Randall, with widowed daughter in law Mary Ellen, who married Sidney Lester Randall
- 1949 William and Mary Ann Randall  
Edgar W Wheeler and wife Jessie
- 1959 Walter and Eva R Biswell, with daughter Wendy

#### **Number 5 Sims Cottages**

- 1901 Thomas and Emma Worsfold, with children Charlotte, Frederick, Francis and Emily
- 1911 Annie Munday, nee Smallpeice (widow), with daughter Elsie Annie Elson, son in Charles Elson and grandson William James Elson.
- 1921 Violet Druett (widow) nee Munday and Leonard Coleman
- 1931 Violet Druett (widow) nee Munday
- 1939 Violet Druett (widow) nee Munday and daughter Mary Druett
- 1949 Violet Druett (widow) nee Munday and daughter Mary Druett
- 1959 Violet Druett (widow) nee Munday and daughter Mary Druett

#### **Number 6 Sims Cottages**

- 1901 William Arthur and Mary Ann Randall, with children Arthur, Allen, Catherine, Lilly and brother Edmund Randall
- 1911 George and Elizabeth Clara Pickett (nee Stone), with daughter Ruby and mother in law Caroline Stone
- 1921 Walter Henry Howse, born Berkshire
- 1931 Walter H Howse and wife Emily (nee Worsfold), daughter of Thomas
- 1939 Thomas F Hawkins and wife Alice
- 1949 Alice M Hawkins, widow
- 1959 Alice M Hawkins, widow

#### **Number 7 Sims Cottages**

- 1911 Thomas and Emma Worsfold, with children Francis Edward, Emily and widowed brother in law, Frederick Ayling.
- 1921 Alice E Matthews (widow), nee Worsfold, daughter of Thomas
- 1931 Alice E Matthews (widow), nee Worsfold, with children Leslie and Hilda
- 1939 Alice E Matthews, widow (nee Worsfold) with son Leslie  
Elizabeth Clara Pickett, widow (nee Stone)
- 1949 Leslie E Matthews
- 1959 Leslie E Matthews

### **Number 8 Sims Cottages**

- 1911 William Frederick Shipp and wife Minnie Mary Shipp (nee Worsfold) with children  
Ivy May and William Charles
- 1921 Frederick George and Ellen Worsfold, with Jessie E Wood
- 1931 Frederick George and Ellen Worsfold, with Jessie E Wood
- 1939 Frederick George and Ellen Worsfold, with May Beattie
- 1949 Ellen Worsfold, widow, with son Gordon F Worsfold
- 1959 Ellen Worsfold, widow, with son Gordon F Worsfold

*By Terri Last 2018*