

Fir Tree Cottage, Station Road, Newick



The cottage from the front - 2011

Fir Tree Cottage, Station Road, Newick

The first edition Ordnance Survey map extract below shows the locality in 1813. The village of Newick lies off the map to the east (right) and the crossroads at Chailey lie to the west. The site of the cottage, yet to be built, is circled in red.



1813 Ordnance Survey map

The property, in Chailey parish, lies within what was the old Manor of Allington which covered much of Newick village, parts of Chailey and other parishes. The old records of the Lord of the Manor, which still exist at the East Sussex Record Office (including ESRO: SAS/SH/386, 387 and 388), are most helpful in illustrating some of the history of the property.

A Lord of the Manor meeting on 18th September 1815 refers to spinster Ann Cronk coming into possession of a piece of land containing 27 perches, part of the waste of the Manor, at a yearly rent of two shillings and six pence. This is the plot which is now Fir Tree Cottage. There was no reference to a dwelling house. At that time there was a wide verge ('waste') along the southern side of the main

road at this point and this new single plot was provided on the verge. The rest of the verge to the east and west remained.

The next interesting document is an 1829 plan (extract shown below) indicating the land under the control of the right honourable the Earl of Liverpool, Lord of the Manor of Allington.



**Extract from 1829 plan showing the land of the Lord of the Manor
(East Sussex Record Office: SAS/SH/389)**

The plan clearly shows the plot with the number 27 but now showing a house on the plot. A schedule accompanying the plan states that plot 27 is in the possession of Ann Cronk paying yearly to the Lord of the Manor the sum of £0 2s 6d. It is coincidental that the number of the plot and its size in perches are the same. These above details indicate that the house appears to have been built between about 1815 and 1829.

The land to the south west with the numbers 28 and 29 was in the possession of George Cronk, part of a large 50 acre farm holding extending southwards towards Cinder Hill. That land was part of 'Sinder Common'. There is still a Cronks Wood shown on current Ordnance Survey maps.

On an 1830 hand-drawn plan, now at the East Sussex Record Office (ESRO: ACC 3412/3/183) the house and plot are shown in exactly the same manner as on the above 1829 plan, projecting into the verge or waste alongside the road. This plan is primarily to show the estate of 'Readings', on the opposite side of the road.

A few years later, in 1841, the Chailey tithe map (ESRO: TD/E 136) was prepared which shows the plot and the surrounding land in the same manner as the above-mentioned plans. On the tithe map the reference number is 620 with the accompanying schedule ('apportionments') stating that Ann Cronk was the owner and occupier of the 'house and garden'. At the same time the 1841 national population census shows the adjacent farm still in occupation by George Cronk and his family with 22 year-old Sarah Chatfield living as a lodger with the farmer.

Ann Cronk died in 1843 at the ripe old age of 87 years. Her will, proved in July 1843, disposed of the premises with the words "...give and devise to my great niece Sarah Cronk Chatfield all my copyhold messuage with the garden..." It appears that Sarah Cronk Chatfield became Sarah Cronk Ellis, wife of labourer John Ellis and she accordingly took possession of the property. The details of

the transactions appear in the Lord of the Manor court book entry for 1st December 1843. Details of the cost of presenting the matter to the Lord of the Manor are set out in an account shown below.

*Allington General Court
1st December 1843.*

	£ s d
presenting the Death of Ann Cronk	} 0.. 6.. 8
Inrolling	0.. 6.. 8
Heriot certain	0.. 2.. 6
proclamation	0.. 1.. 0
Reciting Will	1.. 0.. 0
Admission of Will Sarah Cronk Ellis	} 0.. 6.. 8
Inrolling	0.. 6.. 8
Copy	0.. 6.. 8
Stamp & parchment	1.. 2.. 0
Fine certain	0.. 2.. 6
Oath of Fealty respited	0.. 1.. 0
Charges in lieu of Surrender to Will	} 1.. 0.. 0
	5.. 2.. 4
Homage 2/6 } Beadle - 1/- }	} 0.. 3.. 6
	5.. 5.. 10

*paid
George Cronk*

**Account showing the cost of presenting details to the Lord of the Manor 1843
(document in private collection)**

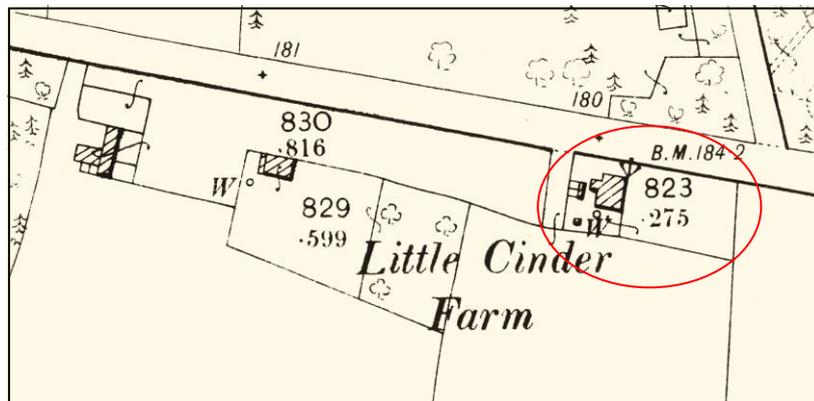
Sarah and John Ellis then appear in the 1851 national population census, Sarah being 33 years old and her husband John, an agricultural labourer, 30 years old. Their young family was George (3), William (3) and Elizabeth (6 months). George Cronk, aged 60, still had the adjacent farm.

Further research, including the national census and land tax forms, would show who owned and lived at the cottage through the rest of the 19th century. The account shown below provides some details for 1879.

Allington General Court 30 th July 1879	
Presenting the death of Mr George Ellis	6. 8
Inrolling	6. 8
Heriot certain	2. 6
3 Proclamations	3. 0
Reciting Will of Mr Ann Cook	6. 8
Admission of Mr Geo Ellis as Tenant in Tail	6. 8
Inrolling	6. 8
Copy	6. 8
Parchment	2. 6
Fine certain	2. 6
Oath of Fealty respited	1. 0
Admission of Mr Eliza Saunders (late Ellis Widow) as Guardian	6. 8
Inrolling	6. 8
Copy	6. 8
Parchment	1. 0
Fine	2. 6
	3. 15. 0
Homage 2/6	5. 6
Beadle 3/4	
£ 4. 0. 6	
30 th July 1879 Received Museum of Great Hundred	

Account showing the cost of presenting details to the Lord of the Manor 1879
(document in private collection)

Below is the Ordnance Survey map sheet XL 1, at 1/2500 scale, published in 1899, showing the property. A well is shown with the letter 'W' and also an Ordnance Survey bench mark showing the height on the corner of the cottage as 184.2 feet above sea-level. A couple of outbuildings are shown, one presumably being a toilet and the other possibly a couple of pig sties.



1899 Ordnance Survey extract showing Fir Tree Cottage circled

Into the 20th century the land tax records for Chailey parish show the property being in the ownership of the executors of William Ellis and occupied by William G Day and his wife Emma.

In 1904 the property was still owned by the executors of William Ellis but the occupancy changed to George Saunders and his family. The old photograph below (somewhat stained) shows the front of Fir Tree Cottage. Written on the back of the card are the words "from Mrs Saunders July 1908" so it is likely that the photograph was taken in 1908 showing George Saunders with his dog, his wife Eliza and two sons.

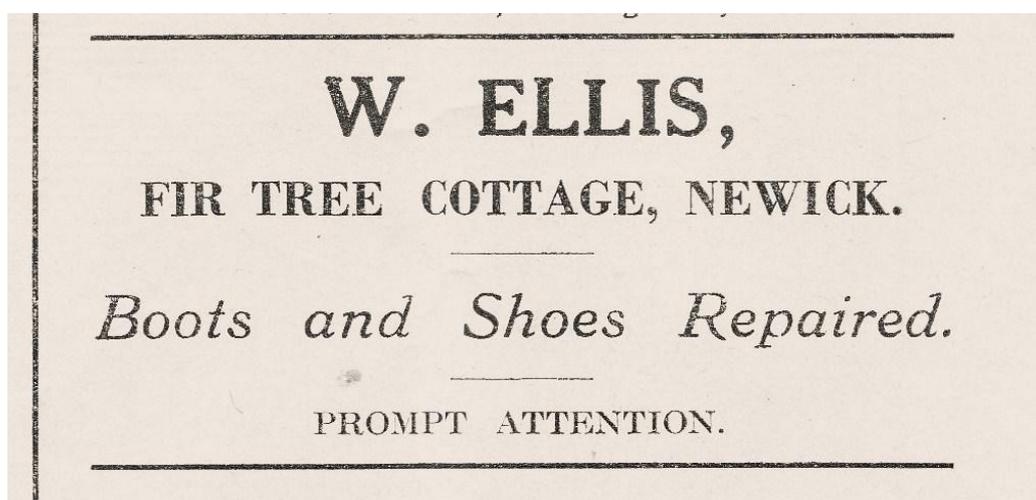


Postcard photograph probably dated 1908

George was a well-known figure on the roads between Newick and Lewes, having been employed by the Chailey Rural District Council as a roadman for between 30 and 40 years. Two of his sons, George Saunders and Henry Alfred Saunders from Fir Tree Cottage, were both soldiers, killed in action in the First World War in 1916. George was 22 years of age and Henry Alfred was 27. Full details of the military history of the two brothers are provided on the very informative web site 'Chailey 1914-1918'. The *East Sussex News* newspaper dated 19th November 1916 includes an article giving details of Henry, showing that he was a keen footballer and that he also took part in some local cricket matches. He was secretary of the 'Newick Silver Star' football team. When aged 3 he had part of his right forefinger amputated but later he still managed to become an expert rifle shot. The names of the two brothers appear on the war memorial on Chailey Green. There was also an eldest son in the family, Thomas Henry Saunders, together with daughters Rose Eliza Saunders and Emily Saunders.

The above-mentioned web site states that there was also a 'half-blood' brother named William Ellis (born about 1875). William Ellis's mother was Eliza, who, when she married George Saunders in 1878, was recorded as widow Eliza Ellis. Descendents of Thomas Henry Saunders still live in Newick.

The 1938 *Kelly's* commercial directory shows, under 'Chailey', William George Ellis as a boot and shoe repairer at Fir Tree Cottage. William was the honorary secretary of the Benevolent Committee of the British Legion Newick branch. In the October 1941 Newick Parish Magazine, the name W Ellis appears as a repairer of boots and shoes.



Trade advertisement from the 1941 Newick Parish Magazine

In 1960, the rear roof slope of the house at first floor level was altered to incorporate a bathroom with a flat mineral felt roof. Windows were altered and internal alterations were made, including new brickwork for a 'chimney corner exposed in living room'. A storage building was provided on the side (later to become a garage) with attached toilet and fuel store. These works comprised the planning application E/60/495 submitted by Mrs B Jones.

In 1979 the building was listed as a building of architectural and historic interest, grade 2, described as being built in the early 19th century.

In 1985 a two-storey extension was built on the eastern end of the cottage to comprise a living room with bedroom over (application LW/85/0109) for the freeholders Mr and Mrs C A Bone.

The photograph below shows the rear of the house, with the flat-roofed part and also the two-storey pitched roof extension which was added to the eastern flank elevation in 1985.



Fir Tree Cottage from the garden

The photograph below shows the property from the front as it stood in 1997, including the garage on the side and the flank wall of the first floor bathroom projecting to the rear. An additional window has been inserted above the front door (compare with the 1908 photograph)



Fir Tree Cottage in 1997

In 2006 a detached triple garage was approved near the western side of the cottage together with a detached workshop at the eastern end of the garden (application LW/06/1271). The triple garage was built and the opportunity was then taken to remove the redundant single garage on the side of the house. The roof design of that old garage was very much out of character with the cottage (see photograph) so the structure was replaced with a pitched-roof extension that paid more respect to the architecture of the cottage. This new extension, comprising a kitchen, was built under permissions LW/07/0929 LB, LW/07/1214 and LW/08/0456. The photograph below shows this new extension, which now usefully hides from view the flat-roofed extension on the rear of the house. The white-painted timber fence on the frontage, shown on the earlier photograph, has been replaced with a planted hedge.



Fir Tree Cottage in 2011

In September 2011 the Newick Village Society gave an environmental award to the owners Mr and Mrs Francis. The award certificate stated that it was "in recognition and appreciation for the works at Fir Tree Cottage...comprising a side extension, a detached garden workshop and a triple garage. All of these works have been carefully designed in terms of the scale of the buildings choice of materials, brick bonding, window design, roof pitch, etc illustrating a clear respect to the architecture and character of this listed property".

An attractive old brick wall remains along part of the rear garden boundary. The well in the garden no longer exists, but its position can be assessed, not simply from the past maps, but by seeing in dry weather a circular area on part of the lawn having a different appearance to the surrounding grass.

The simplicity of this old cottage is an important part of its character, particularly when viewed from the front. It is hoped that the character of this old cottage and its setting will be preserved, consistent with its merits as a building of architectural and historic interest.

Information sources:

The East Sussex County Record Office, The Keep, Brighton has the records (court books) of the Lord of the Manor of Allington, the 1829 plan showing the land of the Lord of the Manor, land tax assessment forms, the Chailey tithe map, the 1830 map of 'Readings' (Reedens) and surroundings, old Ordnance Survey maps, national population census details, electoral rolls, some old Sussex newspapers, *Kellys* directories, etc.

Lewes library has Sussex maps, census information, microfilms of some Sussex newspapers and a fine stock of Sussex books.

Sussex County Handbook 1908 page 418

Postcard photograph from private collection. Other modern photographs by author.

The website referred to is Chailey 1914-1918. Other web sites can provide details of births, marriages and deaths.

British Legion handbook for Sussex 1937

Newick parish magazine 1941

The town planning records referred to are at Lewes District Council.

Newick Village Society records

Information kindly provided from a private collection, including the deeds and the two accounts of 1843 and 1879 included in the text.

Information kindly provided by property owners Mr and Mrs Francis

Sussex Express newspaper 12th October 1928 refers to the golden wedding anniversary of George and Eliza Saunders, with some general family details