

Kentsford House

Kentsford House was built in about 1870. The private carriage road linking the house with Kirkhead Road and Carter Road later became the public highway known as Kentsford Road.

The occupiers in the 1871 census were John and Mary Clegg. John was 60 years old born in Oldham and described as having no profession. They had 3 servants. In 1870 he and his gardener, R Wilson, won a prize at Grange Floral and Horticultural Society for a dish of parsley. John Clegg died at Kent's Ford House aged 64 on 26 June 1875 (Lancaster Gazette 3 July 1875)

The occupier from 1877 until 1882 was James Garstang Brogden. He had married Elizabeth Sarah Edwards at West Derby, Liverpool in the middle of 1877. They had a daughter whose birth was announced on 15 August 1878. He had spared no expense in furnishing the house and acquired costly, high class, artistically carved, inlaid and otherwise ornate cabinet furniture of the most substantial character, manufactured to special order and designed by the most eminent firms in Manchester. There was sumptuous, gold figured satin and tapestry window draperies and rich Persian carpets, Chinese and other ornaments, oil paintings and fine bronzes and about 150 volumes of books.

John Brogden and James Garstang were responsible for promoting the building of the Ulverstone to Lancaster railway. James Garstang Brogden was the son of Alexander Brogden whose father was John Brogden. Alexander married Ann Garstang, the daughter of John's business partner, James Garstang. James Garstang Brogden was born in 1850.

In April 1881 Mr Brogden of Kents Ford presided at the annual meeting of Cartmel Race Committee (Soulby's Ulverston Advertiser 7 April). The Ulverston Mirror and Furness Reflector dated 17 June 1882 announced on June 20 1882 there would be an auction of surplus furniture and effects on the instruction of J Garstang Brogden who was leaving Kents Ford owing to the termination of his lease.

Alexander's bankruptcy, owing £800,000 in 1884, led to his son also being declared bankrupt. James Garstang Brogden had been trying to pay off his debts from income from his wife's marriage settlement but when his late father's estate was declared bankrupt he was

unable to hold off his creditors any longer. His liabilities amounted to £3100 of which £381 was fully secured and his assets were valued at £900. He was made bankrupt by the furniture firm John Lamb of Dalton Square, Manchester to whom he owed £2075 15s 9d for furniture and furnishings that he had purchased when he moved into the house. He owed at least a further £1000 to local businesses. These included the following businesses based in Grange

John Mossop, grocer and confectioner was owed £83 11s 1d

Thomas Graham, a plumber was owed £34 16s 9d

Mr Beardsley, General Practitioner was owed £33 16s

William Westwood, butcher was owed £25 1s 8d

George Sedgwick, farmer of Cart Lane was owed £15 3s 8d

Thomas Rigg, was owed £2 11s 3d

An auction of the contents of the house was advertised to take place in Kendal on Dec 11 1884. The catalogue described in great detail the contents of the house.

Mrs Brogden returned to Liverpool with her young daughter Edith. James Garstang Brogden died on 1 April 1885 at 46 Dulwich Road, Herne Hill, London, his father's home. At that time his estate totalled £179 6s 6d.

The house was listed as part of James Simpson Young's estate which was put up for sale following his death in 1879. James owned most of the land in Kents Bank and lived at Abbot Hall. He was a wealthy man who had originally been a calico printer in Salford. He became a developer and built grand properties in Kents Bank, shops on Main Street in Grange and grand houses in Silverdale. John Brogden had been a friend of his and often stayed with him when visiting Grange.

In an advert from the Times dated May 31 1880

'Also the charming detached marine villa residence known as Kent's Ford House, with capital stabling and out offices, all new and in excellent repair.'

Assuming the Brogden's left in June 1882 on the expiry of their lease the house possibly remained empty for sometime as a report in Soulby's Advertiser dated 2 November 1882 said that the Grange Gas and Water Company had lost money from some of the larger houses being empty for some time and Kentsford was mentioned with a loss of £26.

Following the Brogdens John and Ellen Sutcliffe Witham became the new occupiers. The 1891 census record John and Ellen Sutcliffe Witham living at Kentsford House. They probably were there from 1882. The 1881 census show them living in Silverdale.

Catholics took sacrament at Kent's Ford before the Catholic Church was built. The foundation stone of the Catholic Church was laid on 29 May 1883 and the newspaper report dated 2 June 1883 stated that Mr Sutcliffe Witham moved to Kents Ford in about 1881 or 1882 and through his generosity the Catholics of the District have had the happiness of hearing Mass in his private chapel. When the opening was reported in the Lancaster Gazette on 26 January 1884 it stated that mass has been said at the residence of Captain J Sutcliffe Witham, Kents Bank, and within the last few months at the house of a resident in Grange. Another newspaper called The Tablet dated August 27 1892 states that '*Father Bilsborrow undertook to establish a mission at Grange over Sands , and Mr John Sutcliffe Witham, an old college friend of his, having purchased a house at Kentsford, near Grange gave him hospitality and placed his drawing room at his disposal as a chapel during the 12 months he was his guest. During this time Father Bilsborrow built a new church and dedicated it to St Charles Borromeo, in fulfilment of a vow which he had made at his shrine in Milan in June 1880.*'

Only servants were recorded in the 1901 census but the Sutcliffe Witham's remained there until 1907 at least. Ellen died there in 1904 and John died in Burnley in 1909 and an advert to sell the property was dated 1905. However the electoral register show John as the owner until his death in 1909. His obituary in the Burnley Gazette dated 7 April 1909 gave details of his life and said that he was devotedly attached to the Catholic Church.

In April 1907 the occupier of Kent's Ford Mr George Ridehalgh's death was announced. George Junior had inherited Colonel Ridehalgh's Fell Foot, Windermere, Estate in 1892. He was the son of George Ridehalgh, the cousin and heir of the Colonel but he had died before the Colonel. By 1900 George Junior and his younger brother William Smith Ridehalgh were living in Grange with their mother at Graigengower, Fernleigh Rd Grange. On George Junior's death in 1907 he left his estate to his brother William. William married Ethel Ravenscroft 1909 in Birkenhead. She was born in 1884 in Hunslett, Liverpool. A marriage announcement in the Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser dated 22 Sept 1909 gives William's address as Kents Ford, Grange-over-Sands. He was described as the

son of the late George Ridehalgh of Polefield House, Prestwich and Ethel was the only daughter of Samuel Ravenscroft of Brathay, Oxton, Cheshire.

PUBLIC NOTICES.

A GARDEN PARTY & BAZAAR
in aid of the New Organ Fund in connection with
ST MARY'S CHURCH, ALLITHWAITE,
will be held in the Grounds at
KENTSFORD, KENTS BANK
(By kind permission of W. S. Ridehalgh, Esq.).

ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12th, 1908.
Various Entertainments will be arranged, comprising Shooting Gallery, Conjuring, Concerts, Guessing Competitions, and Dancing.
An excellent String Band will be in attendance.
The Bazaar will be opened at 2 o'clock.
Admission to the Grounds, 6d. 839

A public announcement in Soulby's Advertiser dated 27 August 1908 advertised that on 12 September a Garden Party and Bazaar would be held at Kents Ford, by kind permission of Mr W S Ridehalgh, in aid of the new organ fund at Allithwaite Church.

£140 of the £300 needed for the new organ was raised at the event (Soulby's Advertiser 31 December 1908).

Bulmers Directory of 1910 records that William Smith Ridehalgh was in occupation and the 1911 census also records him there. In October 1911 he purchased the Broughton Lodge Estate and he was recorded as living there in April 1912. This is where his death, aged 50, in 1923 was reported and Ethel continued living at the Lodge at Field Broughton (Broughton Lodge) until she died in 1975, aged 90. William had been a successful breeder of horses and in August 1908 he had success at Lancaster Show, in 1909 at the London Show of Hunters and in March 1912 it was noted that he had been a successful exhibitor at the North Lonsdale Agricultural Show.

The next occupier was Thomas Tomlinson whose death at his residence, Kents Ford, was announced in August 1917. His son Robert, also of Kents Ford, was described as a managing director and a councillor in Barrow in 1919. In May 1920 Major R Thompson was appointed a JP in Barrow and in March 1921 Lieut. – Col. R Thompson, Kent's Ford, Grange advertised for an experienced gardener. He already employed a boy whole-time for assistance. I have not been able to find anything else about the Tomlinson family. In 1924 Grange Carnival decided to appoint a President and several vice presidents and amongst the

vice presidents elected were Col. Thompson whose address was given as Kents Bank and Mr John A Aspell who was living at Kent's Ford.

Sir John Aspell of Kent's Ford, aged 84, died on 9th September 1938. He had been chairman of Lancashire Highways and Bridges Committee from 1913 until 1934 and overseen huge changes to the roads in that period. He received a knighthood for his work. He did not marry and in later life his sister Ellen lived with him.



Lancashire Evening Post *10 September 1938*

He left Kent's Ford to her but following her death on 19 January 1939 an announcement of the sale of the property and its contents was placed in *Lancaster Guardian 14 April 1939*. John left an estate worth £130,000 and Ellen left £100,000 estate.

The 1939 Register, compiled in September 1939, lists the property as Kentsford Park and the occupiers are Betty Jones, married, born 26 June 1908 and Ethel V Boswell, widow, born 21 July 1887. Personal occupation for both is listed as unpaid domestic duties (a common occupation for married women). There are 2 other entries that are redacted as unless deaths

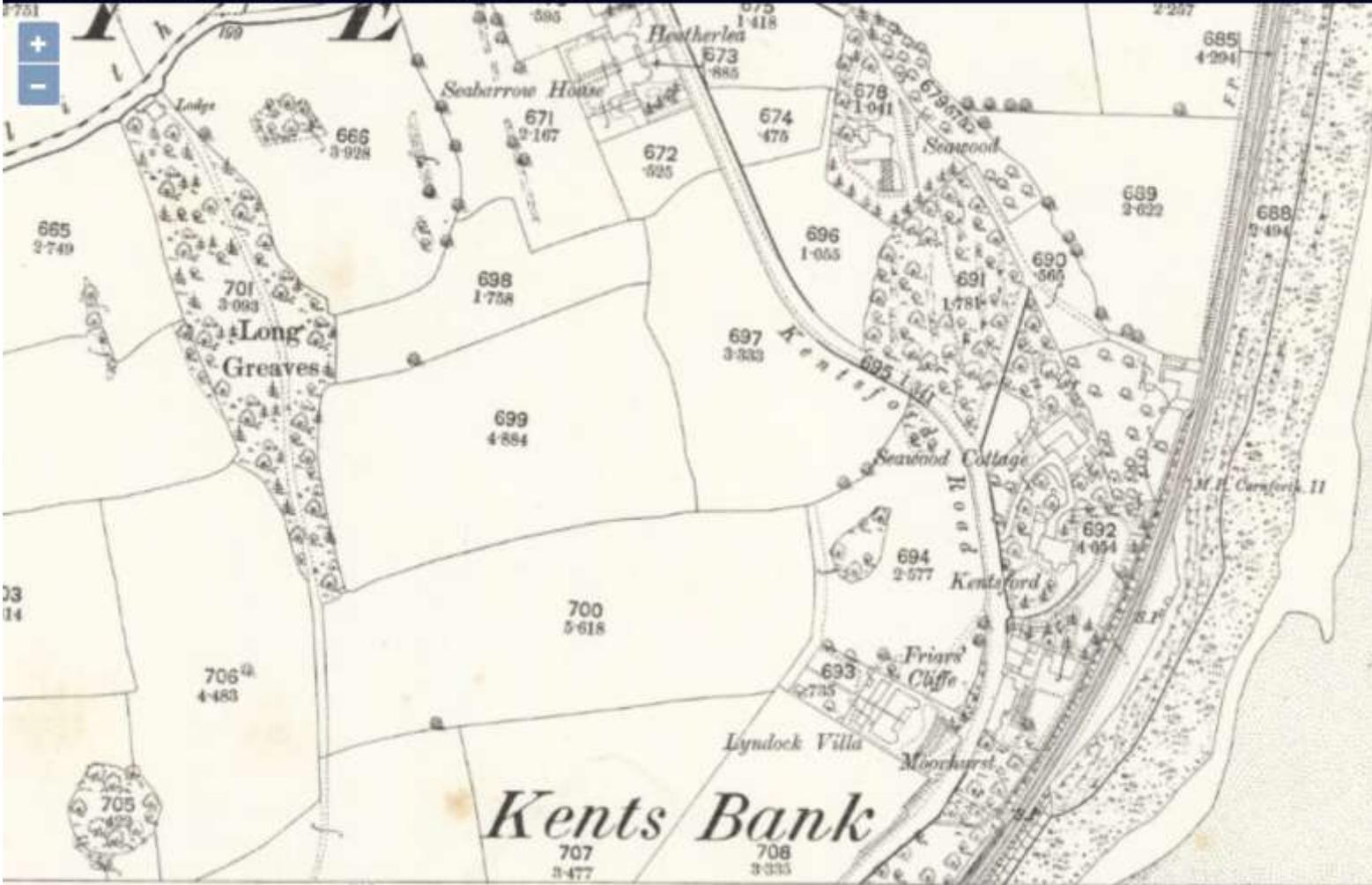
have not been recorded for them the entries are not visible to the public. Ethel was Betty's mother. She had married Hugh James Boswell in 1907 and the 1911 census show them living in Norwich, Norfolk and his occupation was stock and share broker. At that date they had 2 children, Betty born in 1908 and John Dudley in 1911. Hugh died in Norfolk in 1935 and Ethel died in Leeds in 1964. Betty married Oliver Howarth Jones in 1930 and they lived in Leeds where Oliver was recorded in the 1939 Register as Colliery Company Director. He died in Norfolk in 1973 and Betty died there in 1978. Why mother and daughter were at Kentsford and for how long is not known but possibly they had moved to Grange for the war period.

In 1947 Miss S Ward of Kent's Ford advertised for part time secretary and bookkeeping work in Preston and in 1952 a 1947 Daimler was advertised for sale by Ward of Kents Ford. This is probably Herbert Horace Ward. Known as Horace he was born in 1886 in London and married Edith in 1913. They had 3 children, Ronald was born in 1915, Alan in 1917 and Sylvia in 1920. The 1939 Register record them at Edgewood, Rocklands Road, Grange and Horace was described as an analytical chemist. In 1910 he was living in Aberystwyth and was Official Agricultural Analyst for Cardiganshire Council. He died in 1999.

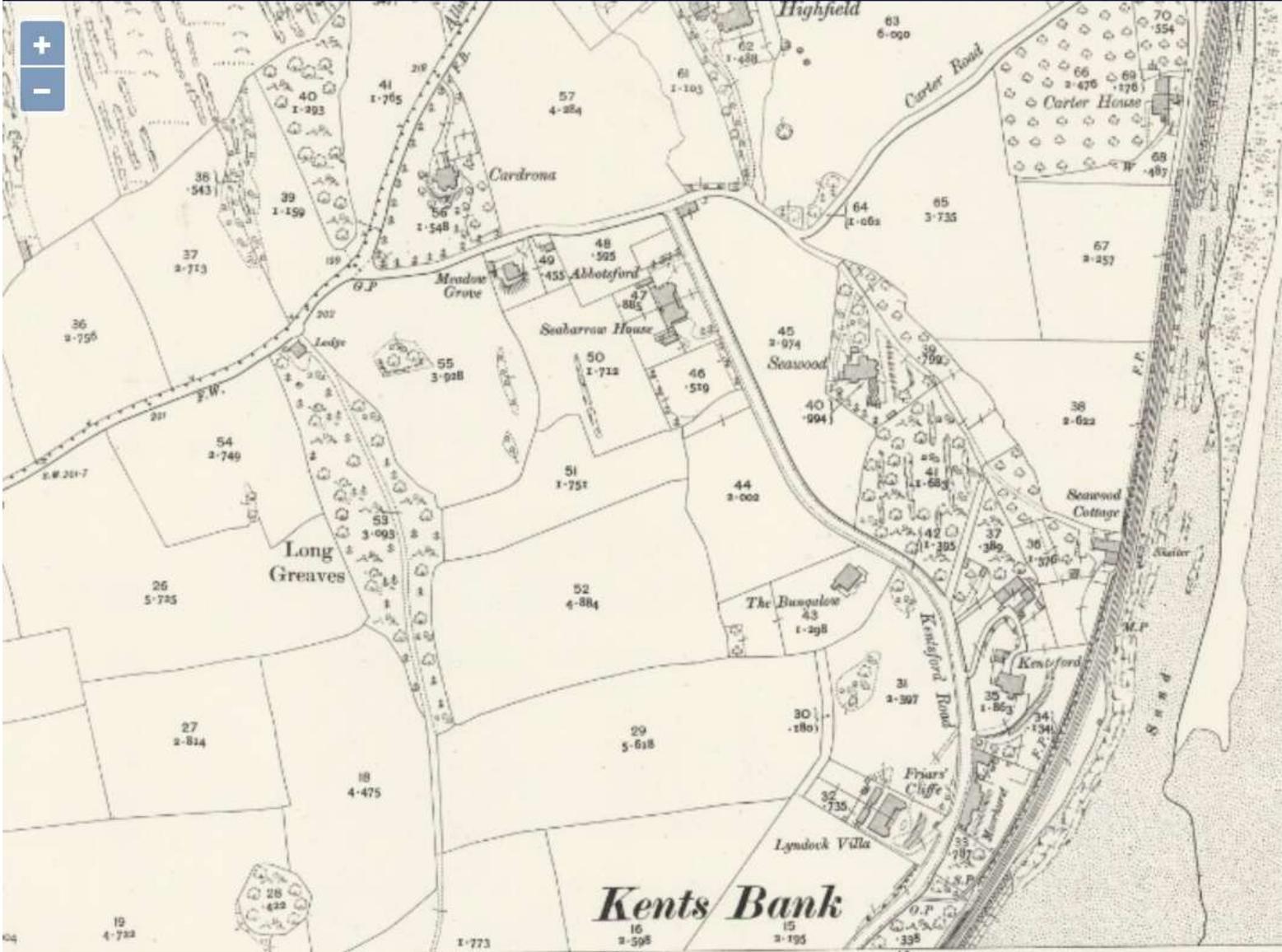
In the 1953 Kentsford House became the home of Aynsome Laboratories, the business set up before 1900 by J Stewart Remington was transferred from Aynsome, Cartmel. Originally set up as a small seed testing laboratory it became a comprehensive agricultural analytical laboratory according to Swale (Grange-over-Sands. The Story of a Gentle Township. 1972). H Horace Ward of Kentsford House took over the business and his sons continued it. In 1972 when advertising for a Chemist Supervisor the business was described as a busy laboratory dealing with the routine analysis of animal feeding stuff (Liverpool Echo 3 November 1972). The business closed in the 1980s and the building was converted to apartments.

Pat Rowland; Amended 2 July 2020

Maps home > OS 25 Inch England and Wales, 1841-1952



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