

LITTLECROFT, Catisfield

Notes following a chat with Mrs Eloise Pack, who lived there from 1926 till 1953.

Some notes reordered from chat. Doug Glading last update 6/3/2019

Arthur Skey was a navy officer (finally a Surgeon Vice-Admiral). In WW1 his squadron did a spell in Australia. Based near Sydney, where he met his wife-to-be Beatrice, who was from Melbourne area.

When he retired from active service they bought Littlecroft in 1926 from **Mrs Cotesworth**. The family was Eloise (born 1920) and her two brothers. The household included a nanny, 3 maids and 2 gardeners.

Mrs Cotesworth had a son Major Cotesworth, who lived at Lee. Mrs Cotesworth was friendly with Mrs Napier of Catisfield Cottage (they had a gate in the wall between the two properties) However they fell out over the land between them and Mrs Cotesworth planted trees to hide Mrs Napier's house.

On the land was a very old Granary (on rat-proof legs) also an old barn

Neighbours:

- Elmshurst: old Colonel (Lane ??) lived alone
- Catisfield Cottage: Admiral and Mrs Napier
- Catisfield House: the Imbert-Terry's
- The Limes: Sam Mortimer – had a lot of stables

One of the gardeners was **Alf Lock**, who lived in the cottages ("The Terrace") opposite St Columba (next to Mrs Edney, the caretaker of the church). Alf taught the young Eloise much about the garden, birds nesting and so on.

Littlecroft had many pretty blue and white tiles around the fireplaces in all the rooms. They were said to have been imported from Holland – via Titchfield The kitchen was huge with a large range. The scullery housed a copper boiler for hot water. Mrs Skey disliked the cold and made sure the house had large iron radiators throughout, driven by a coke furnace in the cellar.

Eloise married navy officer Arthur Pack near the start of WW2 (1941?). Arthur Skey died ????

Arthur Pack was posted to Scotland, leaving Eloise at Littlecroft, expecting baby. The Navy called at the house and gave her a requisition notice though she had nowhere to go. ("There's a war on"). The house was used to house an overflow of Wrens from Heathfield House -- there were 11 beds in the drawing room !

The Navy stored the Pack's furniture for the duration – in Bournemouth. And repainted the house before returning it.

Alf the gardener was 'posted' to Lee airfield but hated the maintenance role there. He returned and was much more useful keeping the Wrens supplied with vegetables.

Eloise remembers Catisfield had no shops other than the very useful Post Office. The Dairy in Catisfield Road was run by Mr & Mrs Pink and Mrs Pink's sister. They delivered milk by pony and cart. The pony was rather too lively for the job. Eloise's mother bought it for Eloise to ride.

Littlecroft was **sold in 1952** to a Mr. Johnson (from Ranvilles Lane). It was he who divided the house, the east side become **East Court**.

Eloise remembers there was a very small room lived in by a maid or the cook. When Mr Johnson rearranged the house a small window was found in that room pointing inwards – evidence of it being part of an earlier building.