

MEADOWCROFT

Elwick Road
Hartlepool



The history of the house

Meadowcroft was built in 1895 on Elwick Road on the south side of Ward Jackson Park, which was named after Ralph Ward Jackson, a local industrialist and benefactor of West Hartlepool (Figure 1).

The house is a Grade II listed building. The Historic England listed building entry records that it is a large villa. A plaque on the left gable end records the year of construction. It is built in red brick with ashlar dressings and a clay tiled roof in quasi-Tudor style. The layout comprises the house to the west, a lodge and main gateway to the east, with outbuildings and a second gateway between the two, all linked by drives. It had formal landscaped gardens, woods and fields to the south (North of England Civic Trust 2008).



Fig. 1

It was built by John Rickinson, a wines and spirits merchant and West Hartlepool councillor, and later an Alderman. Upon his death, Meadowcroft was sold in 1904 to George Jones who had been in the ship building industry.

The 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1896 (Figure 2) records the construction of Meadowcroft with glasshouse and gardens. Jones died in 1923 and the house was inherited by his children.

During the First World War, Hartlepool was heavily bombed due to its strategic location and docks. After the war, reduction in shipbuilding and widespread depression led to the breakup of several of the large residential estates in the area. This was the case at Meadowcroft, which was sold and lay vacant for several years; by the 1930s it was in the possession of the Wilson family. One of the Jones children had retained part of the Meadowcroft land, and built a house, 'The Moorings', on the land.

During this time, further infilling took place in the larger estates and new houses were added to the existing pattern of streets.

Meadowcroft was retained by the Wilson family in the 1940s and in 1946 planning permission was sought to divide Meadowcroft into two properties. Meadowcroft was taken by a solicitor, Kenneth Relton, with Meadowside taken by the Patterson family. Meadowcroft was later bought by Leslie McRobert with subsequent occupants being the Ovington Metcalfes and the Hoppers (Hogg 2007).

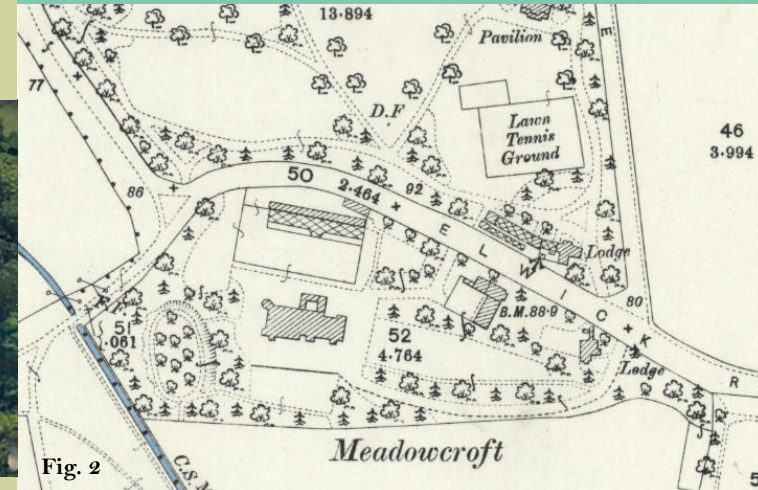


Fig. 2

The history of the site

There is some evidence for prehistoric activity in the area. The earliest evidence is a polished greenstone axehead found on Easington Road which dates to the Neolithic period. Activity of Bronze Age date is also recorded at Catcote, c.620m to the north-east of the house, where traces of a settlement were found during archaeological works. A Bronze Age urn containing a cremation has also been found nearby.

There is more definitive evidence for later prehistoric and Romano-British settlement in the area and several sites are recorded. An enclosure system with a possible droveway and several roundhouses was discovered during archaeological works at Tunstall Farm, and at High Tunstall a later prehistoric/Romano-British settlement was recorded.

A significant Iron Age and Romano-British settlement was also found in 1963 during rescue excavations at the English Martyrs School in Catcote.

Archaeological
Investigations

Remains included pits, a possible kiln, ditches, stone foundations, a midden, cobbled surfaces and several human burials. Excavations in 1964 identified pits, ditches, gullies, multi-phased round houses, inhumations and a furnace. An extensive pottery assemblage and other finds including querns, which dated to the Iron Age and Romano-British periods, were found. In 1987 additional trenches at the site identified a complex of ditches, gullies and a substantial 3rd century AD rectangular building. Further excavation between 1998–2008 recorded significant finds including human burials. An enclosure of possible prehistoric date has also been identified at Southbrook Farm, west of Catcote Road.

The pattern of landscape management and occupation defined in the later prehistoric periods was continued and adapted in the Roman period. Occupation continued at the Catcote settlement, where a range of Roman artefactual material has been recovered. It is also probable that other later prehistoric settlements in the area continued to be occupied into the period.



Fig. 3

In the medieval period the area was probably part of the manor of Tunstall; this was documented in 1146–51 when Robert de Brus held land in the manor. The manor was divided and passed through marriage during the medieval period. The medieval village of Tunstall is represented by earthworks which survive to the east of Tunstall Hall. These comprise raised platforms including a small rectangular enclosure/farmyard with a house platform/farmstead bisected by a substantial routeway to the east. A small pond is immediately east of these features. Tunstall Hall dates to the 15th century.

To the north of the village site, ridge and furrow earthworks are preserved which would have been part of the cultivated land of the settlement.

It has been suggested that the deserted medieval village of the manor of Morleston was in the vicinity of Meadowcroft, although the exact location is unknown. The manor was recorded in 1344 in the possession of Robert de Clifford and is documented as being absorbed into the manor of Tunstall after 1403. It may be that the earthworks at Tunstall Hall are the remains of Morleston village, although Page (1928) states that while its precise location is unknown it was located to the north on the boundary of the Hart and Stranton parishes.

During the medieval period a pattern of settlement was established which perpetuated in the area into the 16th century. Christopher Saxton's 1576 map of Durham (Figure 3) records the landscape, with the site of Meadowcroft being to the east of Tunstall. The area remained within a rural landscape in the post-medieval period with enclosure largely taking place during the 18th and early 19th centuries, when small farms were established.



Fig. 4

Sources:
 Hogg, P, 2007 Meadowcroft and Meadowside.
 North of England Civic Trust, 2008 Park Conservation Area: Character Appraisal
 Page, W (ed), 1928 A History of the County of Durham: Volume III. Victoria County History



Archaeological investigations

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during groundworks in the grounds of Meadowcroft as part of planning consent for the building of new houses on the site. While no pre-19th-century remains were uncovered, the brick foundations of the glasshouse shown on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey map of 1896 (Figure 5) were revealed (Figure 4 & 6). The walls were typical of the period, machine-made with no distinguishing stamps or marks, and correspond exactly to those shown on the 1896 map. No associated features or artefacts were identified. Figure 7 shows a sketched reconstruction of how the glasshouse would have looked.

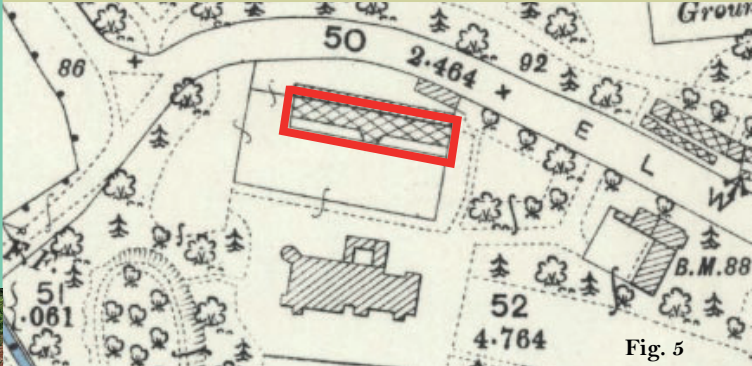


Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7