

HOLLYDENE - 55 Alpha Road

In 1898-9, "Hollydene" was one of only three properties in the eastern half of Alpha Road. It is not included in the 1897-8 lists so it was possibly built in about 1897 in order to be included in the following year's Kelly's Directory. On a few occasions, people chose not have their properties included, so it may have been built a little earlier.

It appears to have been built for Mr William Tomlin, a local man of some standing in commercial world. By 1900 he is listed as a J.P., so was involved in the judiciary as well by then.

Arthur Frederick Reading (known as Fred to his family) later owned the house by 1951-2 and continued to live there for many years. It was eventually sold for development in c. 1980 and Olantigh Court now stands on the site.

Most of the photos lent by Richard Reading were taken in the early 1950s. In one, dated c. 1975, his father, Frederick Reading, is standing on the front doorstep with his two granddaughters, Verity (aged 10) and Christina (aged 8). Other photos show the front and rear of the house and its extensive gardens, as well as one internal photo of the fireplace in the sitting room. This was one of the two large bay-windowed front rooms downstairs. One photo of the rear gardens also shows The Thicket, built in 1900 by Dr Cross in memory of his wife. This backed on to the railway on the other side of the track from the Reading's house. One of the photos in the front garden shows the second vicarage, which stood at the corner of Albion Road and Alpha Road.

The house is very similar "The Rock", built in c. 1910 for Sydney Cumbers and also the earlier houses in the western half of Alpha Road, "Highfield", "Upton Lodge", "Bon Accord" and "Norfolk House". Only one of them is still a single private dwelling, the others having been converted into flats. That particular one still has its concrete air-raid shelter at the bottom of the garden.