

ROUNDAABOUT
RINGWOOD & FORDINGBRIDGE

NOW and THEN

Blynkbonnie House



The house pictured in the old photograph c1930 is remembered by many as 'Blynkbonnie', though fewer people will recall its original name of 'Brooklands'. It stood set back from Christchurch Road at the end of the lane next to the Methodist Church, now the entrance to Blynkbonnie carpark.

The house was built in the late 1880s by John Cogan Conway and his wife Flora. A previous house on this site, belonging to his father John Cogan Conway Snr, had suffered a severe fire in 1886 and was subsequently demolished. The Conway family had run a tannery located next to the house on land extending down to Bickerley Common throughout the 19th century, until the death of John's uncle, Giles Brown Conway, in 1880. All the family were keen supporters of the Unitarian Meeting House and many of them were buried in the family vault in the graveyard of the Meeting House, now a prominent feature of the courtyard outside Sainsburys.



John Cogan Conway Snr and his son John Cogan Conway Jnr were the only members of the family not to be involved in the tanning business. Mr Conway Snr was a successful sugar importer in London, where his son was born, but both made regular visits back to Ringwood.

From 1890 onwards John Cogan Conway Jnr and Flora moved back to live at Brooklands on a permanent basis. In 1905 John died suddenly in Christchurch Road, aged 58. His wife continued to live on at Brooklands, surviving him for another forty years. They are both commemorated by tablets in their beloved Meeting House.

Following the death of Mrs Conway, Brooklands was purchased in 1946 by Albert and Doris Parry, who had taken over the running of a small private school in Southampton Road called Blynkbonnie. The school had been given that name by its original owners, two sisters named Mold, possibly because of some Scottish connection. When Mr and Mrs Parry moved to Brooklands they transferred the name Blynkbonnie School to their new property. Mrs Parry had been a friend of the late Mrs Conway. She and her husband were both Quakers, so they must have shared many of Flora Conway's non-conformist beliefs.

During the 1950s Blynkbonnie School expanded. The registers, now in the possession of their son John Parry, the osteopath in Christchurch Road, record the names of several well-known former pupils, including Patterson, Pierson, Oakenfold and Wright.

In 1980, following Mr and Mrs Parry's retirement, the property was sold to New Forest District Council, subject to a planning blight for a proposed service road which was never actually built. Blynkbonnie House was used for a while by the NFDC as a half-way house for homeless people, before being controversially demolished in the early 1990s, despite many local objections. The site of the house and its surrounding garden are now Blynkbonnie carpark.



Today the only sign that the house ever existed at all in this location is the bench in the middle of the car park which has the words Blynkbonnie House on a plate fixed to the back. The only indication that this is the same location are the three chimneys on the far left of the original photo which are still visible today.

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