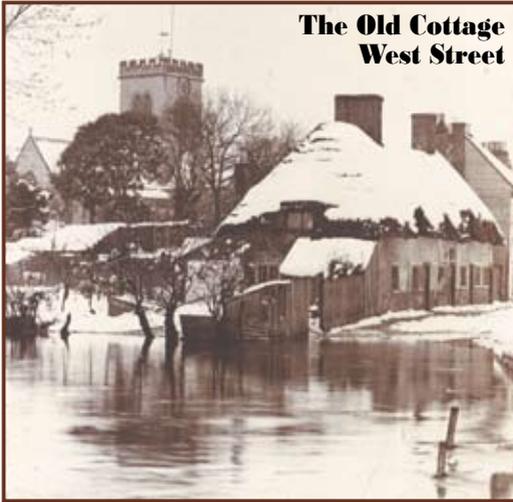


ROUNDAABOUT RINGWOOD & FORDINGBRIDGE

NOW and THEN

There was no problem finding an old picture of the thatched Old Cottage Restaurant in West Street, as it is probably the most photographed building in Ringwood. This snowy scene was actually taken during the great Easter snowstorm of April 1908, but it looks appropriately wintry for this Christmas edition of Roundabout Ringwood.



**The Old Cottage
West Street**

strange thing to me that the little thatched cottages down by the first bridge in those days were in a quite dreadful state. We always thought they would be knocked down or flooded out, we never expected them to last through another year. There they are now, quite a quality little restaurant, while the great big mill, the mill-house and the huge vicarage have all gone!"

Like Monmouth House next door, the cottage belonged to Kings College Cambridge as part of Ringwood Rectory Manor. A survey of 1768 describes the building as 'One cottage containing three rooms on a floor with a stable (now four tenements) and garden next to the River', suggesting that originally it had been one quite substantial cottage. Although undoubtedly one of Ringwood's oldest buildings, its date of construction is debatable. The box-frame timbering implies a date of probably no earlier than the 16th century Elizabethan period.

By the 18th century the building had clearly come down in the world and had been converted into four separate tenements, continuing as such into the 20th century. The 1901 census shows the occupants were the four families of a brewery cellarman, a blacksmith, a labourer and a cutler. A resident of Ringwood at that time recalled in 1989, "It does seem a very

Between the wars the four dwellings were combined to form the Old Cottage Tearooms. Some of the windows were enlarged and the timbers painted black to make them more of a feature, with three of the four front doors retained. The tearooms, which incorporated an antiques showroom, became a popular spot for the growing number of motorists visiting Ringwood for a day out.

During the 1960s the tearooms became a restaurant, and has continued as such ever since. The present owners, Paul and Tricia Harper, have been welcoming diners for meals at the Old Cottage Restaurant since 1989.



Today, 102 years later the view would be very similar with The Old Cottage, Monmouth House and the Church all still standing. But the surrounding trees have grown somewhat and together with 21st century vehicles all conspiring to conceal what would still be a picturesque vista.