

ROUNDAABOUT
RINGWOOD & FORDINGBRIDGE

NOW and THEN



Clark's Almshouses, The Quomp

Photographed 1920 approx.

Clark's Almshouses in the Quomp were built in 1843 with a bequest from wealthy brewer William Clark (1763-1841).

Mr Clark was one of Ringwood's most influential citizens of the 19th century. He owned a brewery, which then ranged along the south side of Meeting House Lane from Southampton Road to the Meeting House, and also ran another brewery up Star Lane, now part of the Furlong Shopping Centre, which his wife Elizabeth had inherited from her first husband. William and Elizabeth Clark lived in a large house near the Furlong called The Elms, which was demolished in 1978 to make way for the new roundabout and Mansfield Road. A part of their garden now makes up the Rotary Picnic Park and Dr Little Gardens.

William Clark was a dedicated supporter of Ringwood Meeting House, with strong non-conformist principles. After the death of his two daughters, who both sadly died in their early twenties, William drew up his will leaving much of his considerable fortune to many local charities, some of which still survive today. His most noteworthy legacy was a bequest to enable the

erection of almshouses on land he owned in the Quomp.

The architect appointed to design the almshouses following Clark's death in 1841 was Frederick Francis, who later went on to design the National School (now Ringwood Infants) and the new Parish Church. He designed the building in a mock-Tudor style, which was popular in early Victorian times, with very ornate chimneys a prominent part. The first occupants, who were all local parishioners not receiving parish relief, moved in during 1844.

Since then the almshouses have continued to fulfil William Clark's original wishes. During the 1960s the district council compulsorily purchased the land around the almshouses and erected the surrounding Clark's Close apartments. However the original building retains its independence and is still maintained by a committee of local charitable Trustees in accordance with Clark's instructions.

Today the eight flats are occupied by local residents who enjoy the convenient location

in almshouses which outwardly have changed very little since their construction, but inwardly have adapted well to modern living standards.



January 2011