

ROUNABOUT VERWOOD

PAST and PRESENT

“The Old Farmhouse”, Newtown Road.

Early 20th Century



Robert Sims (born 1838) established the Newtown Road or Lower Black Hill Pottery at the foot of Black Hill by 1881 having previously worked as an Agricultural Labourer.

He was married to Ann Ferrett, daughter of the potter Paul Ferrett, his uncle Robert Shearing's business partner, in 1861. They lived at what is now known as "The Old Farmhouse" where according to descendants "*Ann was most clean and particular and whitewashed the cottage inside and out once a year*".

Now one of the most attractive buildings in Verwood, this was the cottage lived in during the 1970's by Jessie Matthews*, the musical comedy actress. The pottery yard has been transformed into a large and beautiful garden.

Robert styled himself a farmer in 1901

and by that time or before he died in 1911 the pottery had closed. Only one of their six sons followed him into the pottery trade and one of their four surviving daughters, Kitty, married Sidney Palmer of the Ebbake Brickyard in 1907.

The original well shown in today's photo (reputedly one of three in the garden) could well have been just a

hole in the ground covered with a grating and a bucket nearby!

*Jessie Matthews (1907 - 1981) was born in a flat behind a butcher's shop at 94 Berwick Street, Soho, London, in relative poverty, the seventh of sixteen children (of whom eleven survived) of a fruit-and-vegetable seller. She took dancing lessons as a child in a room above the local public house in Berwick Street and was a chorus girl in London in the 1920's which was the first of her many leading roles. In the 1960's she replaced the lead actress in the very popular radio soap "Mrs Dale's Diary". She was still appearing in one-off TV cameo roles in the late 1970's and was awarded the OBE in 1970.

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