



## The History of Holly Lodge

Holly Lodge is located within the coastal village of St Margaret's at Cliffe in Kent, formerly a popular holiday resort visited by royalty and guests such as Noel Coward and Ian Fleming. Holly Lodge was built during the 1730s, but the house is believed to originate from an even earlier building, first built in the late 17th century. Over the past 300 years Holly Lodge has been central to village life and was the home of a gentleman and his socialite wife, as well as the renowned local schoolmaster, James Temple.

### Early Holly Lodge and the Brett family

Very few early documents survive for St Margaret's at Cliffe, making it difficult to give a full picture of the history of the house during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. However, architectural evidence suggests that the house was originally built in the late 17th century. The house was rebuilt during the 1730s by the Brett family. Early stone work shows the date of 1733 inscribed into the bricks of the house, with the initials 'H.B. and M.B' along with further lettering 'H B A B', believed to be attributed to the Brett family when they built Holly Lodge. Sadly, a central plaque has worn away which may have revealed a crest or coat of arms.

### Thomas and Maris Kingsford Wood

The Brett family don't appear to have stayed long, as by the 1750s, the ownership of Holly Lodge had reverted to Lord of the manor, Richard Solly. The house remained in the hands of Richard Solly until the early 19th century, when it became the home of a gentleman farmer, Thomas Kingsford Wood. Thomas Wood was a prominent figure in village life, owning further land in the village and also doing much to provide relief for the poor in the village. In 1818, Thomas Wood married Maria Lound, who became a prominent socialite in St Margaret's at Cliffe. In fact, Maria wrote a diary describing her life and experiences at Holly Lodge, which has fortunately survived, giving a fascinating insight into life in a Kentish village during the early 19th century.

### Long standing residents

The Tithe apportionment records from 1840 and the 1841 census show Thomas and Maria Wood at Holly Lodge. However, by 1845 Thomas had passed away at the age of 78, and eight years later, Maria died at the age of 63. Memorials to Thomas and Maria can still be seen in the parish church a short walk from the house.

### School master – James Temple

After Maria passed away in 1853, Holly Lodge was purchased by a very prominent local figure, school master, James Temple. James Temple already owned large sections of land surrounding Holly Lodge, including the school house, playground, two further houses and an additional ladies school. Holly Lodge seemed an ideal addition to the extensive school grounds. The census records from the 1861 and 1871 do not clearly identify the residents in the house at this time, but they do show the vast numbers of students that were attending James Temple's distinguished school. The 1871 census shows around 175 scholars when there weren't many more than 800 residents living in the entire village. The school was so renowned that St Margaret's at Cliffe became known as an educational centre for the entire country.

### Maria Temple - spinster

James Temple passed away in 1874, but sadly no one continued with the famed school and it closed. However, by the late 1870s, records show James's unmarried daughter, Maria, had taken Holly Lodge to be her home. The 1891 census shows Maria in the house, aged 60, living on her own means, with just a house keeper and a lady's help in the house. Maria passed away not long after this time and the ownership of the house becomes a bit uncertain. For a short time the house was home to Dr. John Pollard and his family, recorded in the house in 1899, but they later moved to another house in the village. The 1901 census shows the house was unoccupied and it wasn't until around 1907 that Holly Lodge became the home of Charles and Esther Wickenden.

### The Holly Lodge Laundry

The departure of Maria Temple and the arrival of the Wickenden family at the turn of the 20th century brought about a significant change in the life of Holly Lodge. A local advertisement in the St Margaret's Visitors' Guide in 1907 shows 'The Holly Lodge Laundry' operated by Mrs. Wickenden, Laundress. The advertisement highlights 'High-Class Shirt and Collar Dresser', along with 'Flannels a speciality'.



### **Wickenden family**

The 1911 census gives us much more detail about the life of Holly Lodge during the early 20th century. The head of the house was Charles Wickenden, aged 58, in the house with his wife, Esther, aged 42, who ran the laundry. Also in the house at this time was Charles's mother, Charlotte, aged 72 and two nephews and a niece. The eldest nephew, 19 year old Charles was 'assisting in the laundry'.

### **Life during World War I**

Life at Holly Lodge saw a number of changes during the early part of the 20th century, as a number of residents spent time in the house. It appears that the house was sold in the autumn of 1914, shortly before war erupted in Europe. Records show the house was the home of a Mr. George Finn then, during the war, it was home to Albert Doubleday and also a Mr. William Winn. However, by the end of the war, Holly Lodge had become the home of Henry and Jane Woodland.

### **Luxury resort – famous guests in St Margaret's**

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, especially during this inter-war period, St Margaret's at Cliffe became a popular luxury resort. Many illustrious guests chose to stay in the more secluded and exclusive St Margaret's rather than the bigger resorts nearby. During this period, St Margaret's was visited by well-known stars, including Noel Coward, Ian Fleming and Peter Ustinov. It was also popular with royalty with many of the royal children holidaying here during the 1920s and 30s.

### **War comes to St Margaret's**

St Margaret's was greatly affected by the coming of World War II, being so close to the coast, it was not only used by the allies to house troops, but was under regular attack from the Germans. The attacks were so bad and so frequent that to many, it was even known as 'Hell-fire corner'. Many regular citizens were evacuated and it appears Holly Lodge was no different. The Woodland family, who had been in the house since around 1919, were no longer listed in the house after 1939.

### **Post war family home**

At the end of the war, Holly Lodge became the home of what appears to be two sisters, Mabel and Eunice Evens. The Evens sisters made Holly Lodge their home until the late 1960s when the house became the home of Albert and Evelyn Tatton. Throughout the remainder of the 20th century, Holly Lodge was a family home, secluded and quiet behind its picturesque gardens, much as it is today.