

# Kite Hill



**From notes taken at talk by Christopher Ayland**

**Kempshott History Group 6<sup>th</sup> January 2012**

Kite Hill is a triangular piece of land on the corner of Old Kempshott Lane and Pack Lane. The four acre plot was covered by trees and resembled a small forest before it was built on.

It was an ideal plot for the building planned by John L. Littlefair who bought the land in about 1930. Mr Littlefair was, from 1947, the slightly eccentric headteacher of Fairfields Senior Boys School in Council Road Basingstoke. He lived off Old Worting Road. When Basingstoke schools were reorganised in 1960 he became headteacher of Charles Chute Secondary School<sup>1</sup>. He is remembered as being a formidable figure by his former pupils, always carrying a cane which was used very quickly for the smallest misdemeanours. I have also been told that he never wore socks.

John Littlefair engaged a Mr Jacobs to build him his dream house on Kite Hill, a project that took twenty years.

The trees surrounding the plot were left as a boundary and those in the centre cleared for the house and gardens. Part of the plot was thought to have been a Roman burial ground; pottery, coins and a few bones were found and sent to the Willis Museum. (Bob Applin told of his

neighbour digging up part of a skeleton in his garden which backs onto the Roman road and his storing it in his garage before it was taken by the county museum service.)

John Littlefair scoured the country for reclaimed building materials for his house. It was built in the baronial style; bare brick walls huge inglenook fireplaces and high ceilings. There were four bedrooms but no central heating. John Littlefair could not afford to finish his dream house, the roof was not constructed, but he moved some of his goods and furniture on a barrow from Worthing Road and used a narrow cupboard as his bedroom as this was water-tight and warmer.

In 1952 John Littlefair realised that the house was too big and costly for him and sold it to Leslie Ayland.

John Littlefair put his possessions on his barrow again and trundled them back to Worthing Road.

Leslie Ayland was part owner of the car franchise and garage Wheeler and Ayland which occupied a prominent site at the bottom of Reading Road, near where the new John Lewis and Waitrose store is being built. Mr and Mrs Ayland had a roof put on the house, installed oil-fired central heating, built an extension and conservatory and employed two gardeners to transform the former forest into beautiful gardens.

For nearly forty years the Aylands used their family home for entertaining fellow business people of Basingstoke and members of Basingstoke Golf Club. Mrs Ayland bred Persian cats.

Leslie Ayland died in 1985 and his widow in 1989. The house was sold to Peter Trussler and demolished to make way for redevelopment in 1991. The original driveway from Old Kempshott Lane remains as the drive to one of its successors.

Notes. 1) John, Janet R. *Fairfields Schools Basingstoke (1888-1979)* p.90

Geoff Palmer March 2015