

The Allen Family

Bernal Allen in New Zealand, has sent a wealth of information gathered together from his late father, Wilfred.

Wilfred was born, in Glemsford, in 1883, but emigrated to New Zealand in 1902.

To begin with, here is a newspaper article, transcribed from the "South West Suffolk Echo", published in Haverhill. As yet we are unsure of the date, for reasons we'll explore later, but an informed guess puts it between 1894 and 1896.

"Alarming Fire at Glemsford"

"Ten Cottages Destroyed"

Some observations:

The fire occurred on Egremont Street, opposite the "Cock Inn", between Pump Lane and the Angel. Pump Lane itself does not seem to have been affected. The 1891 Census is not entirely useful as it tends not to name or number individual properties, except according to an Entry Number on the return sheet. Nevertheless, several of the individuals mentioned can be identified.

Four of them were Matting Weavers or Matmakers - Frederick Hartley, Walter Oakley, William Brewster and John Suttle. Oscar Clarke was a "Grocer and Baker". Isaac Allen was probably Henry Allen's oldest son. Their addresses were all Egremont Street, and not Pump Lane, which is listed separately. David Crick was Manager of the Mat Factory on the Croft, Workhouse (now Flax) Lane, directly behind the "Cock".

This picture, annotated by Wilfred Allen, gives a rough idea of how the area looked after the fire.



Wilfred's own notes on the newspaper article read thus:

"This cutting ... is an account of a big fire which occurred near my home, some of the houses were owned by my Grandfather, Mr H. Allen who as you will see on reading gave an interview to a Suffolk Echo paper rep. a full page of his history which I'm sorry I did not keep. ... this I'm sure would be a very interesting interview as this fire occurred in 1896 and he was then in his 99th year as this cutting states. I have still a little miniature demijohn or jar that I recovered from out of the ruins. I have also a little pair of Guinea Scales with weights for weighing Guineas and half-Guineas at the time there being so many spurious coins about.

[Although Wilfred gives the year of the fire as 1896, some doubts remain, because the death of Henry Allen seems to be registered in the last quarter of 1895.]

