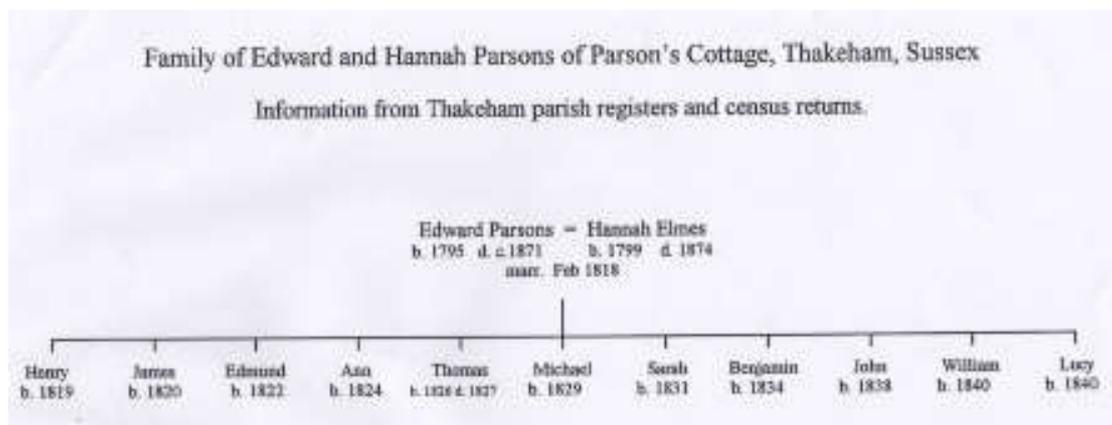


PARSONS COTTAGE – Coolham Road (B2139)



We researched this plaque (above the front porch of our originally humble 2-up 2-down) and found the cottage had been built by a John Short, whose wife was Abigail (hence the J S A), on common or ‘waste’ land. He was an agricultural labourer and was termed a ‘squatter’ because he didn’t own the land, and had to pay an annual levy of two shillings and sixpence – presumably to the Parish – as rent. (Several Shorts are buried in Thakeham churchyard ... is anyone related still living in or near the parish?)

In 1783 the cottage would have had no name, but we assume that ‘Parsons Cottage’ was from Edward Parsons who was living here in 1841 with 5 of his children (full family tree below).



At one time the cottage was owned by Redlands Farm, our neighbour to the north, whose estate workers lived here. In 1891 brickmakers John Reid and his son Arthur occupied it ... we suppose they worked at the brickworks in Goose Green Lane (now Ibstock).

In 1933 Rueben Scutt, a poulterer, bought the house for £210. His daughter Ruby lived here for 63 years until 1989. Jack Arnold joined her and together they made and restored gypsy caravans, which were to be seen and admired in the garden, by locals and passers-by, including Anthony Armstrong-Jones (later Lord Snowden) on his journeys from Nymans along the B2139 to visit Princess Margaret in her 'bolt-hole' in West Chiltington, prior to their marriage – apparently he had a 'thing' about gypsy caravans. The 1985 photo below (given to us by Ruby) shows the cottage decorated with all manner of assorted ironmongery ... she and Jack called the house 'Shady Doo' because the two of them conducted so many shady deals here. They must have been real characters.



In 1989 the property was sold to Don and Pamela Richardson, who modernised the cottage, added an extension to the rear, built and restored the outbuildings, and put in a lot of work taming the garden. We bought the property from them in 1999; the old "2 up 2 down" can still be seen from the front of the house and the downstairs part is now our dining room. We have added some more to the house but it's in the garden that we've done most work, adding a shrubbery, rose bed, patio, herbaceous border, vegetables, the bottom meadow, and of course are still 'adding', and I'm sure will be for ever more!

Rita & Robert Benton