

Bridge Cottage, one of the oldest buildings in the village, had been thought to date from 1685 as shown above the front door. More recently, visiting surveyors of the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments were of the opinion that this date might refer to the addition of the turret staircase at the then rear and that the original house might be older. Turret staircases, of which this a particularly good example, were added as an extension to Wiltshire Longhouses to accommodate a fixed access staircase to the upper floor to upgrade from previous access by ladder via a hatch in the ceiling.



*BRIDGE COTTAGE IN 1945*

When construction of the Salisbury to Southampton canal began, navigable to West Dean by 1802, it ran very close to the house and a length of the canal, now grassed over but retaining its exact dimensions, remains in the garden.

When known as Ivy Bridge Cottage, attributed to the adjacent bridge constructed for the canal having become covered in ivy, it was occupied by a Miss Cowdery. In 1851 she advertised that she had moved her establishment to “a more commodious house, replete with every convenience” in West Dean “so celebrated for the salubrity of the air”. The advertisement also promoted the availability of access by the nearby railway station which had opened four years earlier. Her establishment provided preparatory education for ten children under twelve at a cost of 16 guineas a year for boarders and three guineas for daily attenders.

When she lived at the then Bridge House in the early years of the twentieth century, Miss Hilda Noyce featured in an advertisement testifying to the efficacy of Phosferine which she described as a remedy for headaches and “brain fag”.