

# THE GLEN, NORTHWOOD

by Simon Morgan

The Glen, Northwood is a pleasing arrangement of 52 maisonettes that has been designated a conservation area in view of its quality and excellent state of preservation. The estate was built in 1958-9 by AEA Prowting Ltd of Ruislip to the designs of the architect Kenneth C Saunders.

But the house that came before and gave The Glen its name is of equal interest. Much information and the photographs in this article have recently come to light thanks to Thomas McGuire of San Francisco who lived in Northwood in the early 1950s. What emerges is a wonderful insight into the way of life for the well-to-do in the early stages of Northwood's development in one of the many substantial Edwardian houses of which so few now remain.

We do not know exactly when the original Glen was built, nor who designed it. It first appears on the Ordnance Survey map of 1914, being absent from the 1895 edition. Houses built in this period can usually be found in the comprehensive planning records kept by the Ruislip-Northwood Urban District Council, and now in the care of the London Borough of Hillingdon, but no information has yet been found for The Glen. I surmise from its style and other evidence that it was built around 1908, following as it does the Arts and Crafts style that had become popular in the outer suburbs by then, having been adopted by Edwin Lutyens and others just before the turn of the century.



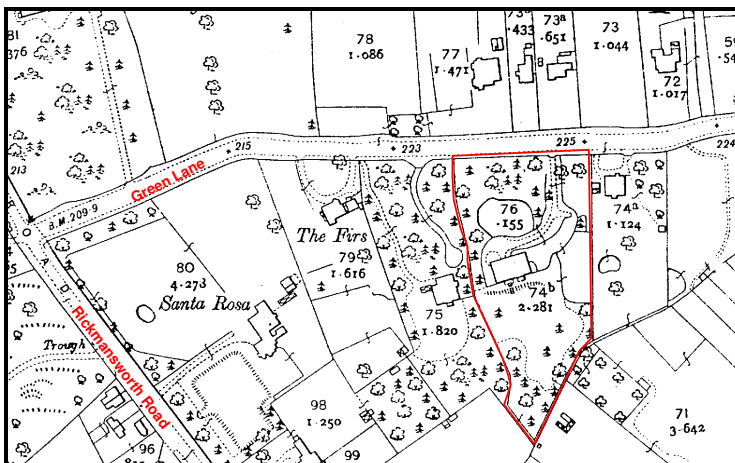
**The Glen from the south with the McGuire family on the steps**

At the time of the 1911 census Alfred Grieves was living here with his wife and daughter. As he was a builder we might surmise that he built the house for himself. Adjoining houses were The Firs (built by 1896) to the west and Wilford Lodge to the east.

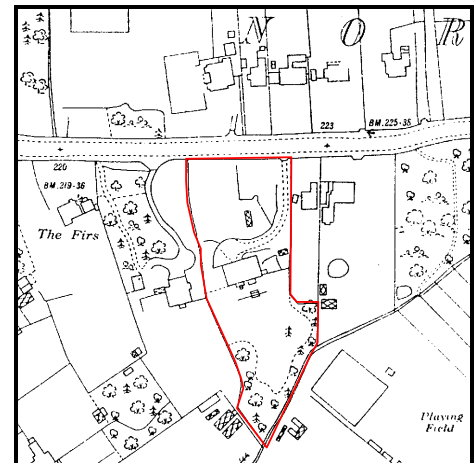
The Firs and The Spinney (a house built subsequently between The Firs and the Glen) were also demolished to build the maisonettes. The Grieves did not enjoy the house for long, as by 1915 a Mrs Shorrocks lived there.



**The main front viewed from the north across the garden and tennis court**



**The Glen (grounds outlined in red)  
on O.S. map of 1914**



**O.S. map of 1935**

The 1914 O.S. map shows a large pond to the north of the house, which had been present before the house was built, but by 1935 it had been filled in and replaced by a tennis court and a strip of land at the east had been sold, enabling a separate house to be built. The detailed plans of all four floors reproduced below are unfortunately not

those of the original designer, but drawn in October 1946 by the prominent architect Harry St John Harrison, FRIBA. He seems to have been an architectural historian and made drawings of buildings in Oxford and church monuments. During the Second World War he was a captain in the Royal Engineers.

Harrison's drawing of The Glen is subtitled *Proposed Alterations and Additions*, and shows the provision of two bedrooms in the attic, improved access to south-facing balconies from bedrooms 1 and 2, but most importantly a massive garage with billiards room above, each 31 feet by 20. It is surprising that major works should have been contemplated so soon after the war, when building materials were in short supply and needed for more pressing projects. The drawing has subsequently been annotated in pencil to show proposed alterations to the central heating. The structural alterations had not been made when the architectural photographs were taken, nor do they appear in the photos of the McGuire family, so presumably the scheme was never implemented.

This drawing shows that the house was to have had 7 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms and 5 reception rooms, plus ample space for the gardener, boiler room and storage in the basement under the west of the house. The two attic bedrooms were probably for live-in servants, as only the 'back stairs' led up to them. The main reception room was a large lounge hall, fully panelled and with a feature fireplace and Tudor style doors. Both ground and first floors were split level, presumably to accommodate the slope of the site, whilst adding some character and interest. There were three staircases connecting the ground and first floors: the main staircase by the front door, the back stairs for the servants, and a narrow private stairway leading from the lobby outside the master bedroom to the lounge.

Also shown on the plan are the dining room, an L-shaped music room, and a bar with curved counter leading to the billiards room mentioned above. Other space for the use of servants was on the ground floor and included a kitchen, pantry, larder and maid's room. All these rooms apart from the billiards room and two attic bedrooms appear to be original to the house, so we can assume that The Glen remained a 5 bedroom, 4 reception room house throughout its life.

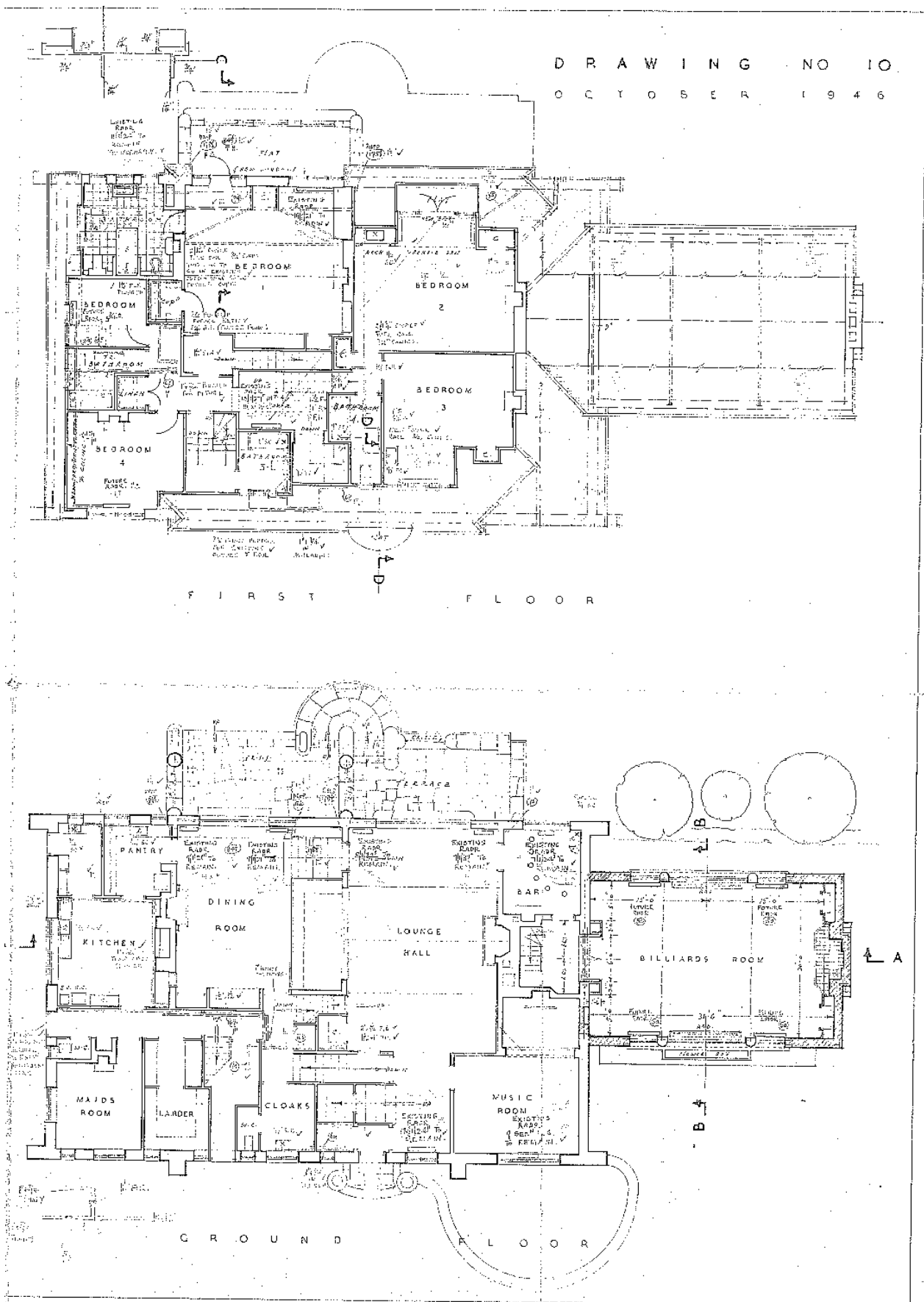
The owner in 1946 was Kenneth G Higgins, a Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, so his business at 96 Piccadilly, Kendor Ltd, was probably that of an estate agent or developer. By 1952 he no longer wished to live at The Glen himself, so rented it to a family already known to him.

This is where my American correspondent, Tom comes into the picture as he lived in this house as a boy from November 1952 to August 1954 whilst his father, Colonel G.F. McGuire, was stationed in Northwood. Tom's parents had retained the guest list for a buffet supper party they held on Monday the 12 July 1954, which included Sir James Barnes (Permanent Under Secretary of State for Air) and his wife and many titled and senior air force personnel. Lord De L'Isle and Dudley, the Secretary of State for Air, of Penshurst Place had declined.

Other memories of life at The Glen in the 1950s include there being a delightful berry patch and, in the house, a secret stairway down to the cellar hidden behind a wall panel, and a billiard table that slid out from behind two pocket doors.

The family must have become very attached to The Glen, as when they left in August 1954 in a very warm letter, Mr Higgins offered Mrs McGuire the set of photographs of many of the principal rooms (see below), and other mementos. Having such a set of pure architectural photos (with the rooms in pristine order and empty of people) is the sort of thing that might feature in *Country Life* for a larger house, but no magazine featuring The Glen has been traced. The photos were not all taken at the same time (ornaments and lamps are in different positions). Some are labelled on the back: *Photo Studio Briggs*.

When Tom McGuire revisited the site in the 1970s, all he found from the original Glen was a dilapidated shed, but that too has probably gone now. But thankfully we have another development of significant charm and architectural merit to replace what was evidently a much cherished house.



Architectural Plan of The Glen of 1946 - Ground Floor and First Floor







**The Lounge looking towards the garden**



**The Lounge looking towards the entrance hall and staircase**



**The Lounge looking through to the music room**



**The Dining Room**



**The Dining Room looking towards the garden**



**The Master Bedroom**





**Another view of the Master Bedroom**  
**From behind the door on the right a private staircase led directly to the lounge**



**Another Bedroom**



**The Kitchen**

## **Sources**

Correspondence with Mr Thomas J McGuire of San Francisco

1901 and 1911 Censuses

Northwood and Pinner Street Directory 1915-16 (Uxbridge Library)

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The London Gazette 14 April 1942 p 1640.

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