



*Stoneham Lane, built 1927. Herbert's partner John G. Birkett lived in the nearest house, No. 23, from 1927 to 1938.*



*'Moderne' close built 1933 in Ethelburt Avenue.*

## THE BASSETT GREEN ESTATE, SOUTHAMPTON

After the First World War W. J. Collins bought land to the north and south of Bassett Green Road, some of which had been used as a cavalry re-mount depot. He offered ten acres to the nearby Swaythling Housing Society, who built about a hundred houses on the site in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Some of the houses were let but most were sold and provided much-needed income for the Society. W. J. Collins retained the freehold and the houses were sold on 999 year leases, subject to an annual ground rent. Communal areas and greens were leased to the Society, who are still responsible for their maintenance.

The first houses were built along the western boundary of the site in Stoneham Lane, where nos. 25-27 bear a plaque dated 1927. These are similar to houses in the Uplands Estate, in classic 'Collins' style: mellow dark red brick, handmade plain clay tiled roofs, small paned casement windows and well proportioned neo-Georgian doorcases. Herbert's partner in his practice, John G. Birkett, lived at number 23 from 1927 to 1938. The corner of Stoneham Lane and Bassett Green Road is marked with a 'L' shaped block of two storey flats and houses, set back behind a group of trees on a small square green. Development continued up Bassett Green Road, including two pairs of houses with attic storeys.

The site at Bassett Green was relatively flat and treeless, and did not offer the same potential for site planning as the Uplands Estate. A road, Ethelburt Avenue, was made into the site, running westwards from Stoneham Lane then turning through 90° to connect with Bassett Green Road. The name 'Ethelburt' was derived, not from historical sources as one might expect, but from a combination of 'Herbert' and his sister's name 'Ethel'. The road is unmade, with a rough gravel surface bordered by grass verges and trees, reminiscent of early Letchworth.

Houses on the north side of Ethelburt Avenue are grouped to form three squares of varying sizes, each open to the south. Although the houses are all similar in size and have certain features in common, they present a fascinating range of styles, all designed by Herbert Collins. Working chronologically from the 'correct' Georgian-style houses in Stoneham Lane, there are the less assertively neo-Georgian group (nos. 2 to 16 Ethelburt Avenue) with roughcast walls, half-glazed front doors and external shutters to some windows. Opposite, nos. 5 to 39 were built of red brick in three terraces around a formal green. A footpath between houses in the north-east corner leads to a small pavilion and two grass tennis courts. The south side of the Avenue continues with a series of rendered detached and semi-detached houses in a neo-vernacular cottage style, similar to early examples at Letchworth. Further along the south side of Ethelburt Avenue are two terraces in a classical style: the projecting central section of one terrace is surmounted by a gable in the form of a massive triangular pediment. In contrast, the houses in two small squares opposite are in a version of 1930s 'Moderne', with metal casement windows with horizontal glazing bars and curious front doors incorporating three wide horizontal glazed panels. These are dated 1933. The

houses on the outside of the 90° bend return to a neo-vernacular cottage style with steep-pitched roofs and dormer windows. Housing continues along the west side of Ethelburt Avenue to the junction with Bassett Green Road, with a series of modest semi-detached neo-Georgian pairs. Land on the east side remained vacant until after the Second World War where nos. 97 to 111 Ethelburt Avenue were built, with stuccoed walls, sliding sash windows, metal canopied porches and 'patera' ornaments supplied by Herbert's brother William.

The Bassett Green Estate also includes the houses in Bassett Green Road between Ethelburt Avenue and Stoneham Lane, Field Close and Leaside Way. The first houses in Leaside Way, built in 1934, are simple flat-fronted semi-detached pairs. They were the first Collins houses to be built with central heating and had a solid fuel boiler built under the quarter landing of the stairs. As a consequence the stairs were built of concrete, with rubber treads and nosings.

In 1938 a brochure 'The Model Estate of Bassett Green' was issued for prospective purchasers. It was printed and illustrated by Martyn Collins, son of Ralph Collins, who later became an architect himself. The booklet outlined points to look for when inspecting the houses and included notes on their planning and design:

"The keynote of our policy is to keep the design as simple and direct as possible thereby not only producing a house which is conspicuous for its solid and sturdy appearance, but actually saving money which may be applied to the use of the best materials. We believe that many purchasers prefer this to the cheap showiness together with a somewhat rickety appearance which, alas! is the leading characteristic of most speculatively built houses."



*Post-war houses to initial designs by William B. Collins in Ethelburt Avenue.*



*Kitchen of a house in Stoneham Lane with built-in dresser designed by Herbert in the 1920's.*



*Thornhill Park Road, houses designed by Herbert but built by Haines of West End, 1920's.*



*Pine Drive East, Herbert's last housing development, completed 1962.*

## THE THORNHILL PARK ESTATE, SOUTHAMPTON

The Thornhill Park Estate was developed in two main phases, one in the 1920s and the other in the 1950s, by the Southampton and District Land Company. W. J. Collins founded the company, which later changed its name to Woodhill Properties Ltd., and purchased the land. The site was on the eastern outskirts of Southampton and comprised a large mixed plantation of conifers and birch trees.

In the mid-1920s Herbert designed pairs of semi-detached houses on the southern boundary of the site fronting Thornhill Park Road. Unlike his other estates at the time, the houses were not built by his brother Ralph, but by the builders Haines of West End. Herbert did not supervise their construction and the houses lack the attention to detail usually associated with his work.

The houses are roughcast, with a projecting string course, under a hipped tiled roof. They have small-paned casement windows, some with shallow projecting bays to the ground floor, and standardised front doors. Upstairs are three bedrooms, bathroom and w.c., and downstairs are a wide hall with stairs rising crossways, a front parlour, rear living room (originally with a cooking range), and a small scullery.

In between two pairs of houses is the entrance to The Close, an unmade gravel road which appears to have been carved out of the existing woodland. The houses are in three roughcast terraces built around a densely wooded central square and in a similar style to those in Thornhill Park Road. Round arched passageways through the blocks provide rear access for mid-terrace houses.

Further east along Thornhill Park Road W. J. Collins donated a site for a Baptist Church, although this was not built until 1965, using another architect. Towards the junction with Moorhill Road Herbert designed six houses, 'Kootenay Rise', Thornhill Park Road. It was called Kootenay after the Canadian National Park of that name, which one of the Collins' family had visited. The houses are double-fronted and built in semi-detached pairs with sliding sash windows and shutters, similar to nos. 2 and 4 Ethelburt Avenue, Bassett Green.

A plan for the development of the whole Thornhill Park Estate was produced in 1939 but work was halted by the outbreak of the Second World War, when some of the land was requisitioned by the military. After the War a temporary school, the Hawthorne, was built in Pine Drive, but it was later demolished and replaced by houses. The planned layout at Thornhill Park included one hundred and forty-seven houses on the twenty-one acre site.

The first post-war houses were nos. 4 to 8 Kootenay Avenue, built in 1952 when there was still a shortage of building materials. Saxon white sandlime bricks were used with brown tiled roofs and standard softwood windows set in hardwood surrounds. Development in Woodland Close was started in 1954. These houses are smaller than most of those on Herbert's other estates, each with only one living room and two or three bedrooms, and were intended as a mixture for both sale and private rental. The houses are built in buff sandlime brick on a red plinth and incorporate circular porthole windows.

Many of the drawings for the Thornhill Park Estate were by Herbert's partner, J. Norman Calton, and further development stopped when their partnership ended in 1956. The rest of Woodland Close and also Priestwood Close, off Pine Drive, was built in the late 1950s by James Miller & Partners Ltd., to designs approved by Herbert. They follow the original layout of the estate, with a mixture of houses and two storey blocks of flats built around open wooded greens.

Also in the late 1950s, Herbert sold the remaining land in Kootenay Avenue, Moorhill Gardens and Bramdean Road to the builder Mr. A. G. Tizzard, who built bungalows, houses and two storey blocks of flats to designs by Herbert and his brother William. The development is spaciouly laid out, with open plan front gardens. At the junction of Kootenay Avenue and Pine Drive the bungalows are stepped back to form 'L' shaped blocks, and the housing in Bramdean Road is set back from the road behind broad wooded verges. There are three types of bungalows, some with semi-circular arched porches, which are identical to those also built by Tizzard at Summerfield Gardens on the Bassett Green Estate.

The last true 'Collins' houses, for which Herbert prepared all the drawings himself, were in Pine Drive East, Thornhill Park. They were completed in 1962 and consist of twelve houses and two small bedsitter flats in a cul-de-sac, built of buff brick with brown Roman tiled roofs. The careful composition of the terraces, with their projecting bay windows and neo-Georgian doorcases, is less austere than the rest of the post-war housing at Thornhill Park, and more reminiscent of Herbert's inter-war estates. Plans of the double fronted semi-detached pair nos. 1 and 3 Pine Drive East are almost identical to houses built on the Uplands Estate nearly forty years before.



*Houses and flat, Pine Drive East, completed 1962.*



*Woodland Close, house for sale and rent built mid-1950's.*



*Kootenay Avenue, bungalows designed by Herbert and his brother William, and built by Tizzards in the late 1950's.*