



## ARCHIVE UPDATE No. 40

### RIVER HOUSE



River House – circa 1905

Courtesy of Bruce Castle Museum

## RIVER HOUSE

Exciting discoveries were made during the inspection of glass lantern slides, depicting the area around Devonshire Hill Lane in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, held at the Bruce Castle Museum. Included was a coloured slide of River House which is reproduced on the front page. The reproduction of a black and white photograph of the same scene was published in Update No. 37. Slides of other views of the River House grounds appear below. It is intended to print further slides in future editions of the Update. (See Update No. 34 for more detailed information about River House)



Courtesy of Bruce Castle Museum

“New River in grounds of River House, Devonshire Hill Lane, 1905”



Courtesy of Bruce Castle Museum

“Bridge over New River in grounds of River House, Devonshire Hill Lane. 1905”

## ISOLATION HOSPITAL

Research among Tottenham District Council Minutes has uncovered much information about the development of the Devonshire Hill Lane area in general and River House in particular. In 1914 the Council considered building an isolation hospital for patients suffering from infectious diseases rather than sending them to accommodation provided by neighbouring Hospital Boards. A report of the Public Health Committee in April 1915 recommended :-

**River House site, Devonshire Hill.** This freehold land is owned by Messrs. South & Sons, whose surveyor is Mr. H. S. Couchman. It immediately adjoins land owned and acquired by the Wood Green District Council for the purpose of an Infectious Diseases Hospital 17 years ago. The land offered has an approximate area of 14 ½ acres. It is situated at a high level, is easily accessible and deemed by the Committee and your Officers to be the best of the sites under consideration.

The costs of acquiring the site were estimated as follows :-

	£	s.	d.
Devonshire Hill Estate, Messrs South & Son			
Cost of acquiring 14 acres 3 roods 10 poles	8220	0	0
Tottenham Manor: Waste Land Purchase Money	202	0	0
Vendor's Solicitors' and Surveyors' and Steward's Fees	40	15	0
Estimated Cost of raising Loan, and of Stamp Duties on Conveyances, Mortgages, etc.	180	10	0
	<u>8643</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>0</u>

Negotiations were entered with Pedley, May & Fletcher, the solicitors acting for Samuel South(1), but, in the event, the Local Government Board refused to sanction the loan necessary to proceed with the purchase of the land. After much deliberation, in 1918, the Council decided to approach Samuel South(1) again in order to ascertain if he would be prepared let River House (also referred to as Devonshire House) to them for the treatment of cases of Infectious Diseases, and if so, on what terms. By that time, however, Samuel(2) had moved into River House with his family. In March 1918, the Public Health Committee reported on the outcome of their approach :-

**Isolation Hospital Accommodation:-** Adverting to our previous Reports, the Solicitor of the Council has received a letter from Messrs. Pedley, May and Fletcher, stating that their client has considered the suggestion that he should let Devonshire House to the Council for hospital purposes, but owing to the house being occupied by Mr. S. South jnr., the letting of the premises would involve Mr. S. South jnr. in considerable expense and inconvenience, apart from the difficulty he would experience in obtaining a suitable residence near his business. In these circumstances, Mr. South feels that the rent and terms he would have to ask would not meet with the Council's approval. Mr. South would, however, much prefer to sell this estate as originally proposed, and he wishes to know whether, if he were willing to allow a substantial part of the purchase-money to remain on mortgage, this would result in the negotiations being completed. We recommend :- That the Clerk of the Council be instructed to ascertain whether, in view of Mr. South's offer to permit a substantial portion of the purchase-money to remain on mortgage, the Local Government Board are now prepared to sanction the acquisition of this site, and the raising by the Council of the necessary loan.

Once again, the Local Government Board, refused to sanction the loan and, eventually, the hospital project was abandoned. The history of both Devonshire Hill Lane and, indeed, the South family would have been different had the plans of the Council been implemented.