1932 the first homes at Kings Road, Fordington

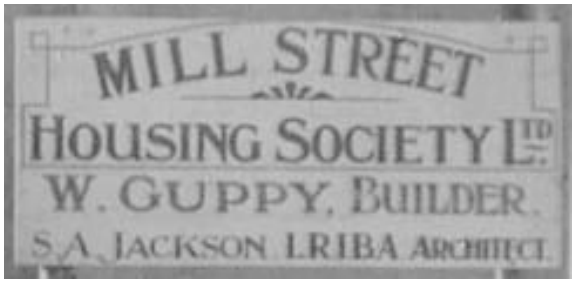
The Kings Road houses were the first new homes to be built by the Mill Street Housing Society in Fordington in 1932. Ten unemployed men were engaged by the builder, Mr Guppy, to work on the site in accord with Mr Edwards' mission to help the poor.

The first four houses cost £320 to build. A bathroom was included and tenants agreed that it would not be used for storing coal. There was no parlour, a seldom used best room, as family life centred in the kitchen.

The foundation stone was laid on 1 June 1932. The mayor, W J Fare JP, made a speech. Florence Hardy, the widow of Thomas Hardy who had died in 1928, addressed the dignitaries and onlookers as the Chairman of the Mill Street Housing Society.

Kings Road and Hardy Avenue 1932

Florence Hardy at Kings Road



Sydney Jackson, the architect, had designed the Mill Street Mission in 1930 for no fee. He was a partner with John Stark & Crickmay who remain the architects of the Mill Street Housing Society to this day.

Florence Hardy's speech was almost certainly written for her by Alfred H. Edwards. The ideas and manner of expression can be seen in his newsletter *Musings by the Mill Stream.* Mrs Hardy said: "By building these homes we hope to help the hospitals," she said, "for healthy homes should help to keep children well and healthy. We hope to see many groups of houses like this, but that can only be if a large number join us and take shares and help to continue the work. I am told that shares should be a really safe and good investment. There is another hope to have from the shares you take in the Society and that will be paid not in coins of this realm, but in coin of another realm – that kingdom where houses are not built by hands but where there are many mansions and where One dwelleth and reigneth. Who said the smallest thing done for the least of his little ones is done for Himself".

The Mayor of Dorchester, WJ Fare JP, also made a speech. He said,

June 1/32 1. Mill St Houses

We meet here today in the interest of good housing, to lay the foundation stone of the first house to be erected under the Mill Street Housing Society.

May it be the first of a large number.

In presiding at this ceremony, I should like to say that you have the sympathy and practical help of the Town Council in what we believe can be a very useful contribution towards the solution of a most difficult problem. The need for better houses in this distr is acute, and we know that this Society has arisen as a direct result of careful and constant observation, of those keenly interest in the welfare of the residents in this part of the town.

We appeal to all those who are desirous of bettering the conditions of the homes of our people, to come forward and lend a hand in so worthy a cause, by either lending money at a low rate of interes or by taking ordinary shares.

Whil'st the various housing schemes carried out by the Town Council have been of great assistance in comfortably housing as many families as houses built, there still exists urgent need for more of the type being commenced today.

The success of this undertaking, and its extension in further building must depend upon those members of the public who can render practical help in the manner already suggested.

W J Fare
Mayor of Dorchester

2.

We are glad to have as our Chairman Mrs. Thomas Hardy, who has shown great interest in the foundation of the Society, and we are glad that she is able to be with us today to lay the first foundation stone.

In Mr. A. H. Edwards (our Secretary) we have a gentleman of proved ability, and in him we have the utmost confidence, knowing that whatever he puts his hand to, will be carried out with that efficienc which is so characteristic of him.

To his foresight, and energy, the establishment of this Society is la due, and we shall follow its history with every good wish, and prayer, that through such agency many families will be better housed, and being better housed, they may indeed prove more useful citizens in regard to health, general good character, and ultimate happiness.

Many prominent townsfolk have already come forward and associated themselves with the Society, which is of great encouragement, and their sympathy is much appreciated.

I now have much pleasure in asking Mrs Thomas Hardy to lay this foundation stone,

Alfred Edwards
at Kings Road 1932

During 1933 six more new houses were built. After the repair and refurbishment of older houses and cottages a total of 155 Fordington people were rehoused.

A labourer's wage was about ten shillings a day. The rent for one of the three bedroom houses at Kings Road was set at 5s 6d per week plus 1s 2d for rates.

Among the first tenants were two families bearing good old Dorset names, Brewer and Sprules.

In the September & October 1933 issue of *Musings by the Mill Stream*
Mr Edwards said:

-:- -:- -:-

Congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. Sprules on the arrival of the first child to be born in the new houses of the Mill Street Housing Society, Ltd.

-:- -:- -:-

In the March & April 1932 *Musings by the Mill Stream* Mr Edwards reported:

-:- -:- -:-

I am pleased to learn that the Chairman (Mrs. Thomas Hardy, J.P.) was recently able to shew the Prime Minister and Miss Ishbel Macdonald the plans of the new houses to be erected by the Mill Street Housing Society, Ltd., and that both were most interested therein. Mr. Ramsay Macdonald was good enough to say that the scheme had his approval and that he very much liked the design of the dwellings.

Perhaps it may not be out of place to tender respectful congratulations to the New High Sheriff of Dorset (Mr. Wilfred Brymer, J.P.) who is a Vice-President of the Housing Society.

-:- -:- -:-

James Ramsay MacDonald (1866 - 1937)

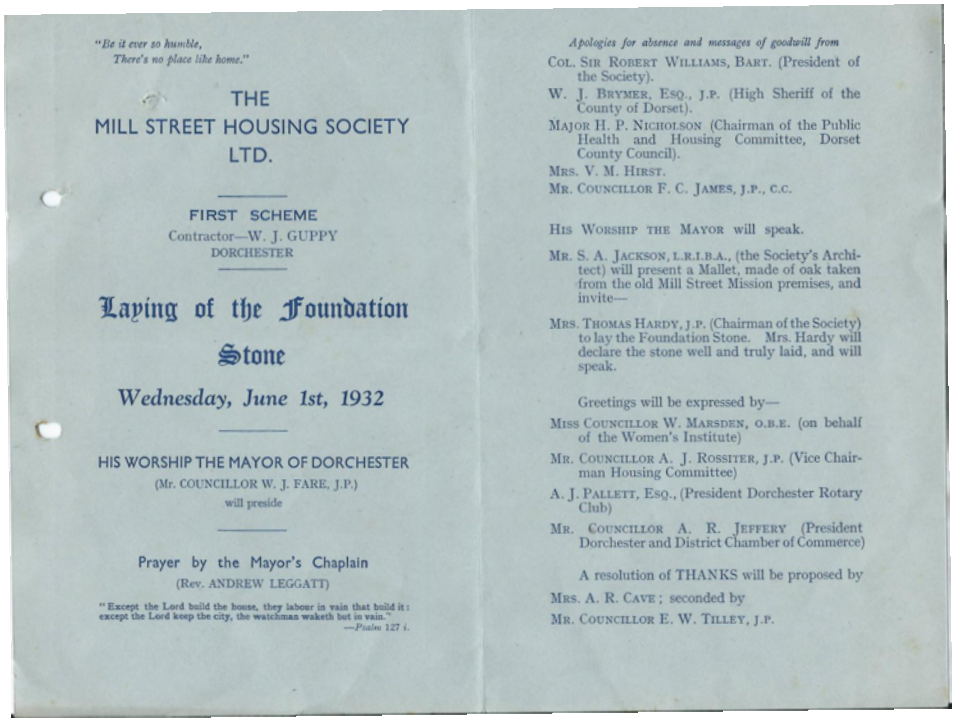
The first ever Labour prime minister headed a coalition government from 1931 to 1935.
He was a pacifist, not uncommon after the first world war, like Alfred Edwards.

Ishbel MacDonald

His daughter Ishbel, interested in the developing social sciences, ran the Downing Street household for her father.

Politicians could not claim expenses for their own households including formal professional social occasions. The lavish lifestyle of a political grandee was beyond their means, MacDonald being the son of a farm labourer and housemaid. Their tenure of No 10 Downing Street was noted for its frugality.

On the corner of Hardy Avenue and Kings Road the foundation stone can still be seen.



"Be it ever so humble,
There's no place like home."

THE
MILL STREET HOUSING SOCIETY
LTD.

FIRST SCHEME
Contractor—W. J. GUPPY
DORCHESTER

Laying of the Foundation Stone

Wednesday, June 1st, 1932

HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR OF DORCHESTER
(Mr. COUNCILLOR W. J. FARE, J.P.)
will preside

Prayer by the Mayor's Chaplain
(Rev. ANDREW LEGGATT)

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."
—*Psalm 127 i.*

Apologies for absence and messages of goodwill from

COL. SIR ROBERT WILLIAMS, BART. (President of the Society).
W. J. BRYMER, ESQ., J.P. (High Sheriff of the County of Dorset).
MAJOR H. P. NICHOLSON (Chairman of the Public Health and Housing Committee, Dorset County Council).
MRS. V. M. HIRST.
MR. COUNCILLOR F. C. JAMES, J.P., C.C.

HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR will speak.

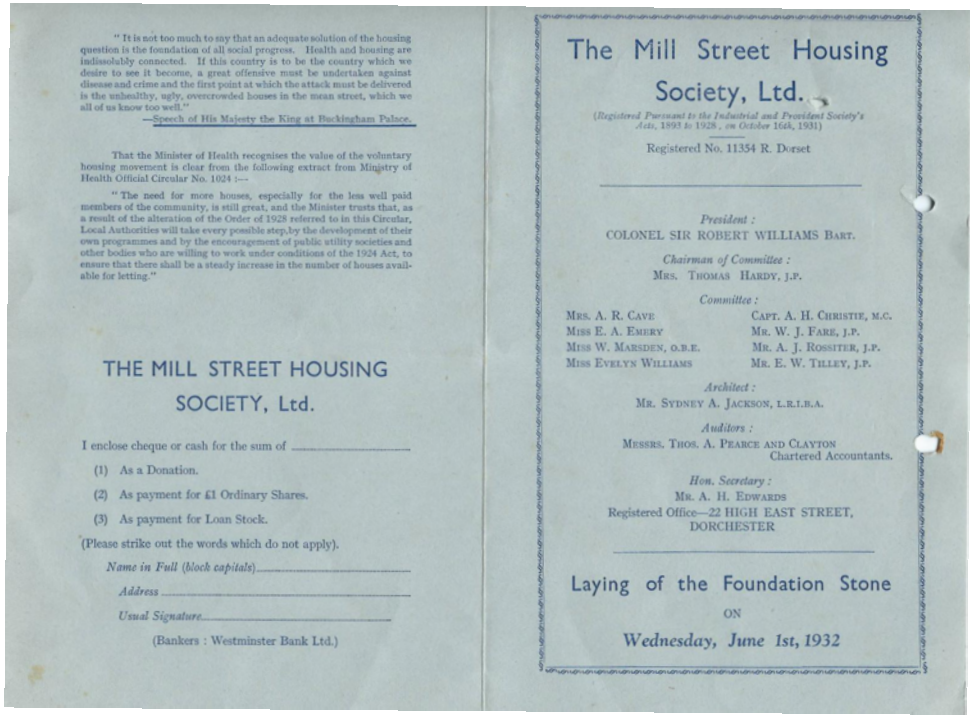
MR. S. A. JACKSON, L.R.I.B.A., (the Society's Architect) will present a Mallet, made of oak taken from the old Mill Street Mission premises, and invite—

MRS. THOMAS HARDY, J.P. (Chairman of the Society) to lay the Foundation Stone. Mrs. Hardy will declare the stone well and truly laid, and will speak.

Greetings will be expressed by—

MISS COUNCILLOR W. MARSDEN, O.B.E. (on behalf of the Women's Institute)
MR. COUNCILLOR A. J. ROSSITER, J.P. (Vice Chairman Housing Committee)
A. J. PALLETT, ESQ., (President Dorchester Rotary Club)
MR. COUNCILLOR A. R. JEFFERY (President Dorchester and District Chamber of Commerce)

A resolution of THANKS will be proposed by
MRS. A. R. CAVE; seconded by
MR. COUNCILLOR E. W. TILLEY, J.P.



"It is not too much to say that an adequate solution of the housing question is the foundation of all social progress. Health and housing are indissolubly connected. If this country is to be the country which we desire to see it become, a great offensive must be undertaken against disease and crime and the first point at which the attack must be delivered is the unhealthy, ugly, overcrowded houses in the mean street, which we all of us know too well."
—Speech of His Majesty the King at Buckingham Palace.

That the Minister of Health recognises the value of the voluntary housing movement is clear from the following extract from Ministry of Health Official Circular No. 1024 :—

"The need for more houses, especially for the less well paid members of the community, is still great, and the Minister trusts that, as a result of the alteration of the Order of 1928 referred to in this Circular, Local Authorities will take every possible step, by the development of their own programmes and by the encouragement of public utility societies and other bodies who are willing to work under conditions of the 1924 Act, to ensure that there shall be a steady increase in the number of houses available for letting."

THE MILL STREET HOUSING SOCIETY, Ltd.

I enclose cheque or cash for the sum of .....

(1) As a Donation.
(2) As payment for £1 Ordinary Shares.
(3) As payment for Loan Stock.

(Please strike out the words which do not apply).

Name in Full (block capitals).....
Address.....
Usual Signature.....

(Bankers : Westminster Bank Ltd.)

The Mill Street Housing Society, Ltd.

(Registered Pursuant to the Industrial and Provident Society's Acts, 1893 to 1928, on October 16th, 1931)

Registered No. 11354 R. Dorset

President :
COLONEL SIR ROBERT WILLIAMS BART.

Chairman of Committee :
MRS. THOMAS HARDY, J.P.

Committee :

MRS. A. R. CAVE
MISS E. A. EMERY
MISS W. MARSDEN, O.B.E.
MISS EVELYN WILLIAMS
CAPT. A. H. CHRISTIE, M.C.
MR. W. J. FARE, J.P.
MR. A. J. ROSSITER, J.P.
MR. E. W. TILLEY, J.P.

Architect :
MR. SYDNEY A. JACKSON, L.R.I.B.A.

Auditors :
MESSRS. THOS. A. PEARCE AND CLAYTON
Chartered Accountants.

Hon. Secretary :
MR. A. H. EDWARDS
Registered Office—22 HIGH EAST STREET, DORCHESTER

Laying of the Foundation Stone
ON
Wednesday, June 1st, 1932