

THE HISTORY OF BEECH HOUSE

It is assumed that the date stone shows us both the date of its building and the initials of the owners. The year was 1698 and the initials are E and A C.

The book **“Records of Guilsborough, Nortoft and Hollowell”** by Ethel and Eleanor Renton states that the house was said to have been the Dower house of the Manor (built 1655), the only cited evidence being traces of a path leading through the spinney between the two houses.

The family living in the Manor historically had the surname Lucas, including at the time of the building of what is now Beech House.

This led us to doubt the Dower house theory and to investigate who E and A C could have been. Diana Wells and I, with the assistance of Barry Smith, have pored over documents in Northamptonshire and Warwickshire records offices as well as spending hours on the internet. These are our conclusions (so far!).

“The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire” by John Bridges.

Bridges died in 1724, having written his History, according to Peter Whalley, “in the latter end of his life”, thus dating his account to a period very near to the building of the house in 1698.

(Peter Whalley published the work after Bridges’ death.)

Bridges lists possessors of estates in Hollowell, including ‘Mr Chapman of Newbottle-grove’. He also confirms that “Mr John Lucas of Nortoft is the present Lord of Hollowell Manor.” Incidentally, the only other of the three possessors of estates in Hollowell was a Mr Atterbury.

Poll of the County of Northamptonshire 1730 lists Edward Chapman of Nobottle as a freeholder in Hollowell. (He is probably the son of our man, but more of that later). The Records of G N & H lists Edward Chapman as a freeholder in 1721.

Assuming that the builder could have been Edward Chapman of Newbottle Grove or Nobottle, we started to look for his marriage to establish the “A” of the datestone. Several people on Ancestry.com have him married to Alice Cox but this needs more investigation to justify. (The same people have confusion over other things including birth dates etc., a common occurrence on Ancestry)

However, in **Brington Churchyard** is the grave of Edward Chapman and his wife Alice. (“Mrs Alice Chapman of Nobottle” is on her grave). They died in 1729 and 1726 respectively

Therefore our assumption is that these two are the E and A C of the datestone.

This raised many more questions about the story behind a man from Nobottle – who later was buried in Great Brington, the graveyard for Nobottle - building a house in Hollowell. Was it because all land in Nobottle would have been Althorp land and not available for a successful tenant farmer to purchase?

Interestingly, John Lucas of Hollowell Manor sold some land in 1692 to Joshua Hotchkiss, Rector of St Anthony, London. Is this in any way connected to the building of Beech House 7 years after that? Nothing has been established. Were the Lucas family in financial difficulty at the time? Did they also sell land to the Chapmans?

Assuming above is correct, we have Chapmans in residence until 1730 at least, our Edward having bequeathed his estate to his son, also called Edward.

Moving on, **Hollowell Church** was built in 1840, becoming a separate parish in 1850.

Rev J D Watson of Guilsborough paid for the purchase of the land, which had formerly belonged to the Manor, and built both the church and the school (now the Village Hall and garage of Beech House). He also bought Beech House to be used as the vicarage. Living there at the time were the Underwoods, farmers.

From then until 196? The house was presumably occupied by a succession of vicars.

The house was sold in??

Diana Wells and her late husband Harold bought the house in 1968 and Diana is still there today.

V Benjamin. 2 Sept 2018