

THE HISTORY OF "TUBBENDENS"

Tubbenden Lane,

ORPINGTON

1293 to 1955 A.D.

THE HISTORY OF TUBBENDENS

Tubbendens (Tuppence) was an ancient seat lying partly in the parish of Farnborough and partly in Orpington. The early owners of it are given in Hasted Vol. II Page 50, and begin with John de Tubbenden of Farnborough obtaining it from Gilbert Saundre of Crofton in 1293 in the reign of Edward I, and ending in 1797, when Hasted's account finished.

Many well-known families, including the Belknaps, Shelleys and Posiers owned it, but probably the most important was that of Brome when the then owner, William Gee of Bishops Burton, Yorks. conveyed it to Thomas Brome Esq. in the middle of the 17th century and his descendants continued ownership until the estate was sold for building in the 20th century.

Thomas Brome Esq. was made a Serjeant-at-Law in 1660 and his arms were in one of the windows of Gray's Inn Hall, viz:- Azure, a dexter hand couped at the wrist, extended in pale argent, a crescent for difference (second son), and underneath his name and addition of title.



He died in 1670 or 1673 and was buried in his parish church of Farnborough, a mural monument being erected on the north side of the altar, bearing on top two shields, i.e. Brome and Mansell. His first wife was Elizabeth, the daughter of Sir William Mansell, Kt. and Bart. (a chevron between three maunches).

At Michaelmas 1664 he paid Hearth Tax on 20 hearths.

His grandson, Col. John Brome inherited, and resided at Tubbendens. He married Elizabeth, daughter and only child of George Berkeley, Prebendary of Westminster, and second son of the Earl of Berkeley, and had several children. Dying 1747 (his memorial and that of his wife are to be found in the Chancel at Farnborough) the estate was inherited by his two surviving daughters, and one of them, Maria, married Mr. John Hammond, Surgeon of H.M. Dockyard, Chatham and he in his wife's right became entitled to Tubbendens. He died 1774 leaving two daughters. One of them Anna Maria, married James Primrose Maxwell Esq. of Llyn, Dorsetshire, and he, in her right became the owner. He was also of Harley Street, London and died 1830, aged 76. Anna, his wife, died 1821 and a plaque on the chancel wall at Farnborough commemorates them also.

In 1779 a milestone was erected at the Lodge at the main entrance to Tubbendens bearing the words "XV Miles from London Bridge, 1779" which is still to be seen there. A daughter of theirs, Elizabeth (1785-1859) married a very famous man, Thomas Young M.D. (1773-1829). The life of this remarkable man, a Fellow of the Royal Society, known as "Phenomenon Young" is to be found in the National Biography. At one time a physician of 48 Welbeck Street, London he retired from practice and gave himself up to other scientific work. His memorial is also on the Chancel wall, viz: Near this spot is deposited the remains of Thomas Young M.D. Fellow and Foreign Secretary to the Royal Society, Member of the National Institute of France. A man alike eminent in almost every department of human learning, whose many discoveries enlarged the bounds of Natural Science and who first penetrated the obscurity what had veiled for ages, the

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hieroglyphicks of Egypt. Endeared to his friends by his domestic virtues. Honoured by the world for his unrivalled acquirements, he died in the hopes of the resurrection of the just". Born at Milverton in Somersetshire, June 13th 1773. Died in Park Square, London May 29th 1829 in the 56th year of his age. The remains of his widow, Eliza (Maxwell) who died May 5th 1859 daughter of J.P. Maxwell, Esq., are deposited at "Leamington, Warwickshire"

James Primrose Maxwell had also a son, Captain George Berkeley Maxwell, R.A. (died 1854), but by this time the family appeared to have ceased to live at Tubbendens, for when his son, Col. George Shirley Maxwell inherited, the estate was rented to a Mr. Samuel Brooker.

Edward Walford in "Greater London" (1880) states that "The present house dates from the 17th century, but has of late years been partially rebuilt and modernised. The estate, comprising about 170 acres has this much of interest attached to it, that it has remained the same in extent for centuries past, except when a small portion was taken by the South Eastern Railway to construct the chalk embankment on which Orpington Station stands". This took place in 1866 and in the same year land was sold for the building of an inn, now called the "Maxwell Arms", thus perpetuating the family name.

One of the daughters, of the above Captain G.B. Maxwell, Annette Laetitia, married Sir Thomas Willshire, Bart., (1789-1862) and his son, Col. George Shirley Maxwell who died in 1911 left the property to his nephew, Sir Arthur R.T. Willshire Bart. son of Annette Laetitia. Sir Arthur died in 1919 having previously changed his name to Maxwell Willshire, and his son Sir Gerald Maxwell Willshire inherited. He died in 1947, but the estates had been sold in various portions over the last twenty years or so. There were no surviving heirs or successors.

In 1875, Col. George Shirley Maxwell let the house to Col. C.B. Vickers and in 1880 to Francis H. Evans, who was elected Liberal M.P. for Southampton in 1890. In 1893 he was made a K.C.M.G. Sir Francis was a banker and Director of several companies, including the International Sleeping Car Company. He died in 1911 and soon after the lease was surrendered by his representatives. On the Lodge at the main entrance, there is still a weather vane bearing the initials "F.E." and the date 1906.

In 1914 Sir Arthur Maxwell Willshire let the house and subsequently sold it to Mr. William Cook of Orpington House, St. Mary Cray. Mr. Cook and his sons carried on pioneer work on poultry and created the famous Buff Orpington strain. On his death, Tubbenden was left to his eldest son, Mr. W.H. Cook, who carried on the poultry business there. The Cook family's reputation as experts in poultry was world-wide and they developed an extensive export business for their particular breed of bird. Mr. Cook remained there until he retired in 1947, but lived in the Lodge.

At one time the mansion was used as a training college for students specialising in poultry breeding.

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Mr. Cook sold the estate to Messrs. Speight & Partners Ltd. who then sold it to Messrs. James Miller and Partners in 1946. This latter firm in 1954/55 is developing the site by the erection of 200 small houses, 78 of which are "Cornish Unit" houses.

Now all that remains of this ancient estate is a few scattered trees, a narrow stretch of land which is unsuitable for building owing to a drainage problem and which has been sold as a market garden, the Lodge with its milestone and weather-vane, which has been bought privately and modernised, and the old name, for all the road names on the new estate contain the word "Tubbanden".

K. Dixon.

Tubbanden Lane,
Orpington.

February, 1955.