

# Historical Village Tour in Words and Pictures

## Rectory Court

The four houses in this small development were completed in 2001. They are on the site of the former Rectory and its grounds.



An early picture of the Rectory and its tennis court, probably not long after 1900

The Rectory was built in 1800. Clearly there was an earlier building, presumably on the same site. In October 1797, the Curate, Rev. Thomas Thomas, wrote to the Rector (who seems never to have lived there himself), "Part of the Stable next to the Lime fell in on the late rainy Monday. Perhaps it may be to your Advantage to be at the Expence of a few Shillings about the Parsonage Premises this Winter to prevent some Articles from being stolen." More than this was needed; by May 1799, Rev. Thomas was writing, "Pulling down prevented grazing ye Garden..".



The Rectory in about 1910



The approach to the rectory in the early 20th Century

The plain, rather severe new Georgian Rectory was the Rector's home from 1800 to 1951. The trend towards having one rector in charge of several parishes meant that Farndon's Rector no longer lived in the village, but first at Marston Trussell and then later (as currently) at Great Oxendon.

The house was used as a paper factory and warehouse in the 1970s and 1980s. But when this usage ended, the building fell into disrepair. It was demolished in the early 1990s.



The Rectory after a fire and before demolition in 1990



The former Rectory, now a disused paper factory, up for sale in 1990

In its heyday, before there was a village hall, the Rectory was the scene of many village social activities. In July 1895, the 'parish tea' was held there and eighty people attended. There was dancing on the lawn, which was decorated with Chinese lanterns. For 150 years the house was one of the main centres of village life.

### School House



Currently a private house, School House was formerly a school with a house for a teacher attached.

The school was built in the mid nineteenth century and became the venue for village events. The Education Act of 1870 meant that there were now standards to conform to, so in 1873 the Vestry (the equivalent of today's Parish Council) decided to 'set up a committee who shall manage the general business of the school and shall also be empowered to collect a sufficient fund by Voluntary Rate or Contribution to meet the necessary expences [sic] thereof'.

Later the same year the Vestry also decided to raise money to make any improvements to the school building which might be required by the Act and to erect 'a cottage for a schoolmistress'.

In 1877, money raised from the sale of cottages owned by the parish was to be used for school repairs. The teacher's house was not in fact built till later.

In 1881 there is still discussion in the Vestry minutes of raising money for the project . By 1882 builders are to be invited to tender for the construction of the house and it appears to have been completed in 1884. A teacher is

recorded at the School House in the 1891 census.

The schoolroom continued to be the main social venue. At the coronation celebrations of 1902, for example, 150 people sat down to a meal there.

Schools were brought under the general supervision of the County Council around this time, as shown by the minutes of the Parish Meeting (successor to the Vestry) in 1903.

The County Council decided to close the school in 1965. The same fate has befallen many a small village school, as declining numbers of younger children made them uneconomic. Children now take a school bus to the neighbouring village of Clipston, up till the age of 11, and then after that to Guilsborough, several miles further away.

After the closure, the buildings were sold as one unit and now form a single property.



A view through the church gates to the school, taken in 1949. The gates were dedicated in 1948 as a memorial to those who died in the Second World War.



Inside the schoolroom in about 1929.

### Farrer Farm



The house a few years ago before the vegetation was removed from the brickwork

This house, recorded as early as 1874 as 'Farrer House', takes its name from Rev Richard Farrer, Rector of Ashley, a nearby village, from 1773 to 1809.

When the open fields of Farndon were enclosed in 1781, Rev. Farrer was allotted 78 acres of land on the eastern side of the village, extending back from where the house stands.

The house was built in stone and the date 1769 appears on a stone in the older part. This was presumably when it was built, most probably by Rev. Farrer. He is also recorded as having a house on the square in Market Harborough. Did he live in his Rectory at Ashley at all? He may have let the Farndon farmhouse out to tenant farmers.

The house passed on through the Farrer family until it came to the daughter of a Richard Farrer. She was Louisa

and she was married to Sir Henry Morgan Vane. The house has another date, 1865, higher up the wall in the middle of Victorian brickwork, with the initials H.M.V. It is clear from this that the original stone building was enlarged in brick in 1865 by H.M. Vane.



Vane's son, Henry de Vere Vane, became Lord Barnard in 1892, when another branch of the Vane family died out. He and his son and successor to the title were the last Lords of the Manor of East Farndon. The house and land continued in the hands of the Vane family, though let to tenants, until they sold it in 1967.

The change in spelling from 'Farrer' to 'Farrar' was simply a mistake, which has stuck.

### **Orchard House**

Originally known as 'The Orchards', this fine house was built in 1904 by the Cox family. There was an extension added on in the 1930s, but this maintains the Arts and Crafts style of the original. The house remains very much as it was, with minimal changes, and is an important example of the period.



The Orchards (left in picture) & Orchard Cottage (right) from Main Street in about 1904



The second picture shows a Croquet Party there in 1906

The Cox family moved to the village in about 1900 and seem to have occupied the small nearby house, 'Orchard Cottage', until the new larger house was completed. In the garden is an unusual wooden summer-house, which is several years older than the house. It must have been in the garden of Orchard Cottage originally. The cottage probably dates from the eighteenth century.

The Coxes became very important to village life. Frederick G. Cox rose to be Chairman and Managing Director of R. & W.H. Symington of Market Harborough, a company whose main product was ladies' underwear, with factories in many parts of the world. The programme of village activities for the Coronation of George VI in 1937 includes 'Presentation of Prizes..by Mr F.G. Cox', 'Cinematograph kindly lent by Mr F.G. Cox' and 'Toast to their Majesties the King and Queen Proposed by Mr F.G. Cox'. He was something like 'the village squire' at the time. He died in 1942

The house is set well back and is hardly visible from the road.

### Former Cottages at the Junction



Fortunately, a number of photographs survive of the time when there were two cottages at this junction, the more southerly of the two points where Back Lane meets Main Street. They were thatched and painted white. The one further along Back Lane was apparently not occupied long into the twentieth century, and later used as a barn. The one nearer the junction was occupied by the Jarman family from 1872, right through until the late 1930s, when the last of the family died. The houses were then demolished. The picture below shows the same spot today.



Orchard Cottage is on the right of this early photograph, taken probably about 1900. Beyond is the road junction and the cottages which stood between the two roads (Photo from Harborough Museum).



This photo dates from perhaps the 1920s or even earlier. Orchard Cottage is on the right and a group of children stand in the road in front of the now demolished cottages. A pony and trap passes the cottage door in Back Lane.

### East Farndon Hall



This Grade II listed building looks like an eighteenth century house. For a long time the entrance porch was not central, which is surprising in a house of that era. This photograph dates from the 1980s. However, a recent restoration (2019-20) has re-positioned the entrance in the centre, its rightful place.



*East Farndon Manor House, 1836*

The key clue to its former appearance is a drawing of 1836 in Northamptonshire Record Office. It is captioned 'East Farndon Manor House' and shows a lower building than today, with a central main door. This proves it was once symmetrical.

The central section has been raised since 1836 to give a full third storey. It looks like a building of the early eighteenth or even late seventeenth century. If it was indeed 'the Manor House', then it was presumably the house of the Lord of the Manor.

It is tempting to think it might have been built by Randolph Middlemore, who died in 1701, or shortly before, and left £40 for distribution of coal to the poor of the village. There is, however, no definite evidence as to who built it or when. There may well have been an earlier manor house, on the same site, or nearby.

### **Horseshoe Cottage**



A view of the pub in the late 1930s, when Herbert Giles was the publican

This house, formerly thatched, was one of the two village pubs and was called 'The Three Horseshoes'. Documents show it was functioning as a pub in the late eighteenth century but it may well date from some time before that.

It continued as a pub until 30<sup>th</sup> July 1961, when it closed down. Rural pubs were finding it much harder to survive by this period and very many have shut down since and are still doing so. Since then, it has been a private house, renamed 'Horseshoe Cottage'

The parish registers show that Mary Smith, an 'alehousekeeper', died in 1709. It is tempting to think that she was the landlady of the Three Horseshoes, though we may never know for sure.

## The War Memorial



East Farndon has an unusually large and imposing war memorial, which makes an impressive sight as you come up the hill from Market Harborough. The central stone bears an inscription which gives the names not only of those who died in World War I, but also of all those who served and survived to return to the village. On either side of this inscription, a wall with a bench continues the line of the central stone so you can rest at the memorial as you climb the village's steep main street.

The memorial was paid for by donations and fund-raising activities. It cost £280 and was unveiled in October 1920 by Viscountess Downe of Dingley Hall. In 1945 a small panel was added below the main inscription, bearing the names of those servicemen from the village who were killed in the second world war.

## Bell House



The publican Archibald Botterill outside The Bell in the 1940s

This house was formerly the Bell Inn and probably dates from the eighteenth century, or at least its predecessor on the same site does. Documents show that the Bell was one of the two village pubs by the second half of that century. Before the second world war, there was a skittle alley at the back. The pub closed for a period in the 1960s and then re-opened until 1975, when it ceased to be a pub. After that it was a post office for a time. Since then it has served various commercial uses, with a large shed being built to the rear. This currently serves as a printing works, and the Bell itself is a private house.

There were formerly three cottages attached to the pub, to the left as you look at the front. Two were in line with the front of the Bell and the third at right angles, making an 'L' shape. These appear in a number of old photographs. They were thatched and were demolished in the 1930s.



Mrs. Burton, the publican's wife, and their daughter at the door of the 'Bell' in about 1910.



The Bell Inn can be seen in this picture from the 1920s, when the fire brigade came to deal with a fire in the thatch of one of the cottages attached to the pub.

## The Manor



The Manor in 1989.

The Manor, as it is now called, is a fine Grade II listed house, with bay windows on either side of the central door. It bears the date 1664, but its rather random-looking mix of stone and brick shows that it has been altered over the years. It seems most likely that it was originally built of stone, with the brick indicating repairs or alterations. There is a more modern extension to the rear.



A postcard from about 1950, showing the view up Back Lane, with the Manor on the left.

The name 'Manor' does not truly belong to this house, as the Hall, a few yards up the hill on the other side of the road, was where the Lord of the Manor once lived. The name 'Manor' was given to the house in the 1930s.

There is a story (with at present no known documentary proof) that the house was built for the Lee family after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, as a reward for service to the crown. Certainly the house appears to have been occupied by Lees for several centuries. The Lee family have several memorials in the church dating from 1677 to 1807 and members of the family lived in this house up till the 1880s.



The house in about 1900, with members of the West family.

## Home Farm



This stone house, on Back Lane but very close to the corner of Main Street, is a Grade II listed building. It has had farmland attached for most of its existence, but in recent years it has been sold separate from its fields and is therefore no longer really a farmhouse. Next to it is an old stone barn, on which the date 1658 appears.



The mysterious carved head on Home Farm

From inside, it appears that the front section of the house may have been added to the rear part. If so, this rear area must be even older than the front. There are many unanswered questions about the house's construction, which may well be impossible to solve.

Next to the barn there used to be a timber-framed cottage, shown in a number of old photographs. The cottage was, in the nineteenth century and perhaps earlier, owned by the parish and let out to poorer parishioners at a low rent.



Looking towards Main Street in about 1910. Home Farm is in the centre. The cottage in the foreground was demolished in the 1930s.



Home Farm seen from Main Street in 1912. There is, of course, as yet no War Memorial on the opposite corner.



Home Farm in the 1930s.

The roads and pavements have by now been given a more modern appearance.



The housing development behind Home Farm under construction

## The Limes



'The Limes' in 1949

The land on which this Victorian brick house stands was owned by a charity, which used the income for the benefit of the poor of Wellingborough. The charity sold the land to the Rector of East Farndon, Rev. A.W. Wilson, in 1887. He built the house, with the intention of using it for the benefit of the village. It was described as 'The Institute' and contained a library and facilities for the people of the village.

After Rev. Wilson's death in 1894, the house was sold to Mr Barwell Ewins of Marston Trussell Hall and he rented it out as a private house. Its 'institute' function ceased. Then in 1912, Mr Barwell Ewins leased the house, now known as 'The Mount', to the Guardians of the Poor for the Union of Market Harborough. The Guardians had been established as the means of implementing the Poor Law Act of 1834, through a 'Union' of parishes. The Union workhouse was in Market Harborough, but by this time, it was not felt appropriate that children should be in

the workhouse, so the Union's Guardians made The Mount into the 'Cottage Home' for children. In 1930, the Unions were abolished and County Councils took over responsibility for the workhouse and the Cottage Home.

Then in 1953, Northamptonshire County Council ended the house's period as a children's home and sold it to a private buyer. It has remained a private house since then and the name has been changed to 'The Limes'.

Below is an account of life in the Children's Home in the 1940s, written by someone who was in the Home at that time.

**"Memories of the Children's Home at East Farndon" by Edward Davis**

My name is Edward (Teddy) Davis and I arrived at the home at the age of about 4 years, which would be 1943, and I left about 7 years old. I went to school and Sunday school at East Farndon. It was a boy's only home with ages ranging from 4 to 15. The Master of the home was blind. His wife was the Matron. She was a kind lady. We were fed and looked after very well and as long as we behaved, we were not punished.

If the Master and Matron were away for whatever reason we were looked after by a nice lady called Mrs Brooks who would arrive on her bicycle. Which meant she probably lived in the village.

Each evening just before bedtime we were allowed to listen to "Dick Barton Special Agent" on the wireless (very exciting). It used to be in the time slot now occupied by "The Archers".

Every Saturday morning two of the oldest boys would march us in twos to visit the cinema in Market Harborough to see the children's matinee, where we would sit and munch our issued 3 digestive biscuits and a handful of penny chews while watching the likes of Roy Rogers, Gene Autrey (Westerns), Tarzan and various cartoons.

Along the journey to Market Harborough was an Italian Prisoner of War camp and we would cross the road to talk to them through the wire fence.

Once a year we would travel with the Master and Matron by train to see a pantomime, where I would be allowed to sit by my two elder sisters, who were together in a girls only home. I was sad when we parted at the end of the show.

I live in Oxfordshire. My late Mother lived in Wellingborough and on one of my visits to see her I drove up to East Farndon and wandered around the village and finished my nostalgic trip by standing outside the home, which was named "The Limes". I would have loved to have gone to the door but as it was obviously now a private house I felt I shouldn't impose.

I could imagine the reputation of some children's homes at that time was not very favourable, but as far as my stay at East Farndon Children's Home was concerned, I was quite happy.

## The Village Hall



The Village Hall, built in 1994

Social events were usually held in the schoolroom, or outdoors in the Rectory garden, before 1924. For a time, they were sometimes held in an upstairs room in an outbuilding at East Farndon Hall. However, in 1923 the Parish Meeting set up a committee to oversee the provision of a 'recreation room' and the first village hall was erected soon after. It was a long wooden structure, with a raised stage at the far end. F.G. Cox, a wealthy local businessman, had offered the land at a nominal rent of one shilling per annum. Ten trustees were appointed to be the nominal tenants.



The original Village Hall before its demolition

The Hall opened in January 1924 and for seventy years was a vital part of village life. Plays, dances, whist drives and meetings of all kinds took place there.

There was a small kitchen at the opposite end from the stage. This kitchen was one of the main aspects which came to seem inadequate towards the end of the century. So it was decided to obtain loans to buy the land on which the hall stood, and its adjacent car park, and then to erect a new hall which would meet modern standards.



Above - The Village Hall during demolition.

The new hall was opened in 1994 and has proved a great success, earning enough in lettings to pay off the loans sooner than anticipated.

### Rose Cottage



On the left is Ivy House. Then, near the bike is a cottage which was demolished in the 1980s. The white thatched cottage is Rose Cottage. This postcard dates from about 1950 or a little before. Rose Cottage is no longer thatched.

This house stands right by the pavement of the village street, but at right angles to it. It was formerly thatched, as old photographs clearly show. It is probably of eighteenth century date.

The cottage came very close to demolition in 1951. The previous year, Brixworth Rural District Council had identified six houses in the village as unfit for human habitation. Standards had risen and so many very old

properties no longer measured up to modern requirements. Rose Cottage was one of these. It was owned and occupied by Miss Barber, who was 70 years old at that time. The demolition order was first put off for as long as she continued to live there. Then she was told she could stay if she raised the ceilings, which she promised to do. However the Medical Officer of Health seems to have insisted that the house was not suitable for a reprieve. But in April 1951 it was reported that Miss Barber had signed an undertaking to carry out the necessary repairs and renovations within six months. So the demolition order was finally cancelled.

One of Miss Barber's complaints was that she could not get a thatcher to see to the roof. Whether Miss Barber in fact carried out the improvements, as promised, and whether it was she who had the thatch replaced is not clear at present.

## Kiln Yard



This striking Art Deco (or more correctly) 'Moderne' style house on the road to Marston Trussell was built in 1934 and is now a Grade II listed building.

It was built by the Cox family who were very important members of the village community throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

Frederick G. Cox moved into the village in about 1900 and had the impressive house known as 'The Orchards' built. He worked for R. & W.H. Symington in Market Harborough, who were generally known as 'The Corset Factory'. He worked his way up in the company and became Chairman and Managing Director by 1912. His sons Edward and Geoffrey followed him into the firm and also became directors. Kiln Yard was built for Edward and he and his wife lived there for a number of years. 'Freddy' died in 1942 and Edward became Managing Director himself in due course. He and Geoffrey were controversially removed from the board after a company shake-up in 1962.

The house is strikingly situated and commands fine, extensive views. The windows on the top storey were originally unglazed but it was not long before the British climate made the 'loggia' cold and wet enough to necessitate the insertion of glass.

## The Grange



The land in this area of the parish formed part of the Rector's estate (the 'glebe') until 1864. In that year, an exchange of lands was agreed between the Rector, Rev. Henry Heming, and Hugh Stratford Stratford of Thorpe Lubenham, in the neighbouring parish of Marston Trussell.

The exchange meant that the Rector would take over some fields which were nearer to the Rectory, where he lived, and Mr. Stratford would now have fields which joined up with other land he owned in Marston parish.

Shortly after this, The Grange was built on the newly acquired Thorpe Lubenham land, by the road between East Farndon and Marston Trussell.

The house was a relatively modest one, but the farm buildings were a model for their time, with a system of rails running round the interior of the central yard, to deliver feed to the cattle stalls.

The house and its associated land were bought by the tenant, J.A. Hart, in 1912, when the Thorpe Lubenham possessions in East Farndon were all sold off. The farm remained in the ownership of the Hart family until the 1960s, when it was sold, following the retirement of J.R. Hart, son of J.A. Hart.

The farm was sold again in 1981. Then in 1988, the house and buildings were sold, without the farmland, and then converted to residential use.

Access to some of the dwellings is by a new access road, called Harts' Lane, in memory of the family who farmed it so long and played an important role in village life.

## Ivy House



This view looking down the hill towards Market Harborough has Ivy House (formerly 'Cessnock') on the right. The front wall and gate and a bay window are visible.

In the last years of the nineteenth century East Farndon Hall was the home of a staunch Baptist, James Dulley. He wanted the village to have its own chapel and it was for this purpose that he built the house now known as Ivy House. The local Harborough newspaper records, in its issue of 11th October 1898, that there was an opening ceremony, at which Mr. Popham of Brighton delivered an address. The description says that 'it is in the form of a house, with rooms upstairs'. Perhaps Mr Dulley always thought it could be used as a residential property, if its use as a chapel was not a success. It does not appear to have continued as a chapel for more than about a decade.

The report of its opening describes it as a chapel of the 'Particular Baptists', a strict Baptist splinter group. The 1901 census calls it 'Calvinists' Chapel'. For a time, before the Second World War, the house was also used as a shop.

## The Spring



Efforts have been made in recent years to clear the weeds and grass from round the spring, to show it as it used to be. This photograph shows it in 2000, after a clean-up project by the Women's Institute.

Up till the early 1950s, when mains water arrived, it was the only source of water for people at the northern end of the village, towards the bottom of the hill. Many residents can still recall the daily visits to collect their water.



This picture of May Day celebrations in the 1950s was taken in front of the Spring.

Much effort had to be put in to keep the water flowing and to keep it clean. The Parish Meeting actually held a special discussion at the spring in 1896, to consider what action was necessary to safeguard it.

The spring was well known to Rev. John Morton, Rector of Great Oxendon, who in 1712 published his 'Natural History of Northamptonshire'. He knew it then as 'the Caldwell Spring'.

He has the following to say about it. 'The Medicinal Water at East Farndon, formerly known by the name Caldwell Spring has the same smell and taste, as have the strongest of our Acidulae: has the same ochrous sediment and oil as they have, and agrees with them as to the properties of refusing soap, the loss of its taste upon standing, etc. In June 1701, I boil'd away half a pint of it in an earthen vessel and at the bottom of the vessel had 3 grains of a whitish powder of a mildly saline taste.' 'The water of this spring, at a due distance from its source, has been lately formed into a Cold Bath, which has been made use of with great success'. (No other reference to this 'cold bath' has so far come to light). [There is a well at East Farndon] 'out of which in Frosty Weather, there issues forth a tepid Steam or Mist'. The water comes from a spring in the field once known as 'Levitt's Close'. The Parish Meeting in March 1893 recorded its thanks to the District Council surveyor for 'relaying the drain from Levitt's spring to the watering [place] at the bottom of the village'.

## The Old Post Office



The house was built in 1925 and was used as a post office and shop right through to 1980. By this time it was the only shop in the village, though in pre-war days there had been several.



A postcard view, looking towards Market Harborough, taken around 1950. The Post Office is on the right.

The house was built after the previous house on the site had been demolished. Luckily, an excellent photo survives of this earlier house.

It was thatched and had also been the village post office for many years prior to its demolition. It was owned by the combined village charities, which used the rental income to fund the distribution of coal to villagers in need of financial help. It seems that a charity set up through the will of Randolph Middlemore had bought the cottage in 1701, the year the charity was established. The cottage cost £44/12s. (£44.60). How long before that the cottage was built is very difficult to say. The thatched cottage, owned by the village charity, stood on the site until 1924.



The photograph dates from about 1910. William Houghton was the tenant, seen here.



Gladys and Alan March in 1980 as they prepare to retire and close down the shop

Alan Langley  
February 2021

