

# The History of Ivy House, East Farndon

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## Introduction

Ivy House was built as a chapel for Particular Baptists in 1898 by James Dulley, a local brewer. It was, however, only a chapel for maybe two or three years. This account describes who lived at Ivy House, as far as is known, and how the building changed over time.

## Land

The Land Registry Charges Register describes the property as 'bounded on the South and East by property formerly belonging to Elizabeth Tirrell'. Judging by the fruit trees on the land, including a very old apple tree, the land may have been an orchard. The Tirrells had been in the village for many years; some are buried in the churchyard. The 1871 Census lists Tirrells at The Bell Inn: John ('Grazier') and Alice (parents), and Samuel and Elizabeth (children). Later Samuel, a carpenter, lived with his sister Elizabeth (listed in 1901 and 1911 Census) maybe at White Cottage (now demolished, the site of Spring View), which would explain the ownership of the bordering land. Samuel died in 1912 aged 83. In summary, the land that the original chapel was built on was bought from the Tirrell family.

## James Dulley

James Dulley was a brewer who lived in the village at Farndon Hall between around 1885 and 1907. He was born in Wellingborough, where his father William Dulley ran the brewery Dulley & Sons. His brother, David Dulley, a brewer as well as a JP and County Councillor, was a key figure in Wellingborough. A brass memorial tablet in the Baptist Tabernacle thanks him for his many years of service as Deacon there. His legacy continues in the public swimming bath he built for the town known as Dulley's Baths, now the Wellingborough Museum. He is described as a 'staunch Nonconformist' and 'preferring the sterner creed of Calvinistic ancestors', and it seems James Dulley shared his religious fervour and brought this to the village with him.

Calvinism is a sect of Baptism following the teachings of John Calvin (1509-1564), a French protestant reformer. There was a Calvinist Chapel (a two-story building) built by a Mr Carvell behind his house at No 2, Gold Street, in Clipston (in 2022 it is an Airbnb). James Dulley took some of the

services there. The 1901 Census describes what became Ivy House as a 'Calvinist's Chapel'.

The previous Census in 1891 lists James and his wife Catherine living at Farndon Hall with four children while a fifth child (James Dulley Junior) was away at school (Hanley Castle Grammar School in Worcestershire). Also listed there are a Governess and three servants. His Calvinist zeal is described in an essay called 'East Farndon - Memories of a Villager' written by John Clifford (of 'Windyridge') for a competition in 1960. In it he describes how the firework display at the Hall on 5th November was provided by Mr Dulley ('a very strong Calvinist') and his partner at the local brewery. As the fireworks went off he would get excited and shout 'No Popery!'. On quieter days he would pay money to children in the village who caught cabbage butterflies, as they were a nuisance to the vegetables he grew. At Christmas he would distribute gifts of beef and coal in the village, and for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 he donated £5 and an 18-gallon cask of ale.

James' brewery partner was Joseph Eady, a local Magistrate and County Councillor, who grew up in Welford. The Eady & Dulley partnership formed in 1882 and the existing brewery, from a previous partnership, was rebuilt in 1893. It was sited in Little Bowden (then Northamptonshire) next to the river Welland on the site now occupied by Market Harborough Market Hall.

## Opening

The ceremony to open the new chapel took place on Tuesday, 11th October 1898 and was described in the Market Harborough Advertiser. As this is a key moment in the life of Ivy House the full text is included here:

### *EAST FARNDON*

*Opening Of A New Chapel. - Aided by the influence and support of Mr Dulley, a little band of Particular Baptists has been gradually drawn together in this village and the neighbourhood. For years they have been without a chapel, the services being held in a cottage, but a piece of ground was some time ago purchased of Mr. Samuel Tyrell, and a permanent place of worship has recently been erected therein. It is in the form of a house, with rooms upstairs. Tuesday was the day fixed for the opening. Drizzling rain fell at times during the day, but there was a good number present, including Mr and Mrs and the Misses Wardle (Old), Mr Carvell and family ; and Mr York (Clipston) ; Rev and Mrs Butler (Ashley) ; Mrs Palmer (Clipston) ; Miss Palmer, Mr Houghton and family ; Mrs Mutton, Mrs*

*Burnham, Mrs Lee, Mrs Pollard, all of Farndon, Mr and Mrs Warner, Mr Elliott, Mr Foster, senr., Mr W Foster, junr., (Market Harborough), Mr Haynes (Naseby) ; Mr and the Mrs U Brown (Clipston) ; Mr. Cramp ; and many others. Mr Popham, of Brighton, performed the opening ceremony at three o'clock and delivered an address. Tea was partaken of after the service upstairs and a good spread was enjoyed. Mr Popham again preached a sermon in the evening and the Chapel was packed. Mr Dulley afterwards provided refreshments.*

One point to note is that the land purchase is recorded from Sam Tyrell (variant spelling), rather than Elizabeth Tirrell (as referred later to by the Land Registry) - maybe she later inherited it after his death in 1912, or maybe it is just 19th century bias to refer to the man rather than the woman. The Tirrells are not listed as attendees though they may be part of the 'many others'. The Houghtons lived next door in the building which preceded the current 'Old Post Office' and would have had a good view of the construction of the chapel. There are photographs which show Mrs Ann Houghton in the doorway of the previous Post Office and her daughter Letitia Houghton in the front garden, with the recently built chapel in the background. Mr Carvell and his family had travelled from Clipston, where Mr Carvell's Calvinist Chapel probably inspired James Dulley to build a chapel of his own. Overall, if James Dulley's family is included, it looks like around 40-50 people attended the ceremony, with many travelling some distance to get there, when the means of travel were horses, horse-drawn transport, or on foot. It would be interesting to know whose cottage in the village, referred to in the article, hosted the services prior to the chapel being built.

The 'little band' is referred to as 'Particular Baptists' rather than Calvinists. The preacher who led the service was James K Popham, from Brighton, who had earlier in his life preached on occasions in nearby Lubenham and Clipston. He was Pastor of the Galeed Strict Baptist Chapel in Brighton from 1882 to 1937. The history of the Galeed Chapel shows roots from both Particular Baptists and Calvinists. Unlike mainstream Baptists, Particular Baptists believe in 'particular redemption', i.e. Christ has chosen only certain people to have their sins redeemed, also known as predestination. It would take a theologian to describe this properly. In order to understand James Popham's 'fame' his writings are still available to buy today, there are 1,400 of his sermons lodged in the Gospel Standard Baptist Library in Hove, and he even has his own Facebook page.

A key piece of information in the description of the ceremony relates to the layout of the building: it was clearly built in the form of a house. So it was more a collection of meeting rooms than a single open space for worship.

Tragically, less than 18 months after the chapel had opened James Dulley's wife, Catherine Dulley, died at the age of 52. At this point their 5 children were aged between 14 and 23. The cause of death is not known, but Catherine died in Menton on the French Riviera on the same day as her companion there, Bertha Chandley, aged 30, who was buried in Felmersham, Bedfordshire, with a memorial including a statue. Was it an accident or illness? Menton had a reputation at that time as a destination for those suffering with tuberculosis, including the short story writer Katherine Mansfield, around 1920.

The impact on James Dulley of his wife's death can only be guessed at, but in 1907 Farndon Hall was sold by the mortgagees and the brewery was demolished in 1908. He moved down to 'The Gables' on St Marys Road in Market Harborough. The 1911 Census shows him living there with James Dulley Junior, a Cook, and a Servant. Although the location of this residence is unclear it would have been within walking distance of the Eady & Dulley offices which were behind The Peacock Hotel (Pizza Express in 2022); indeed it might even have been part of these buildings as they do have gables.

Despite the brewery being demolished Eady & Dulley continued to trade and James Dulley continued to work as a Director. He became Chairman in 1920 a role which lasted until 1927. He died in Leicester in 1928 at the age of 86, with the newspaper entry mentioning his 'Calvanistic' (sic) views and that he would read the bible while at work. He is buried within the family grave in the London Road cemetery in Wellingborough.

A last sight of his presence can be seen in a 1950s postcard of St Marys Road which shows 'Eady & Dulley' directly underneath the wording that in 2022 says 'Louisa's Place'; these offices were sold to the Post Office next door in 1958.

## **Renting**

The details of the purchase of Ivy House in 1985 indicates 'present use of property' commenced in 1902, i.e. people living in it. This would fit with the death of James Dulley's wife and decline of his business. The days of the chapel were clearly short-numbered.

The best indication of those renting the property is found in the 1911 Census. Mary Keetley was a widow aged 55. The 1901 Census shows that she previously lived in Arthingworth, was born in Belton in Leicestershire and married to John Keetley, a farmer, born in Hathern, also in Leicestershire. In the intervening time her husband died presumably prompting the move from Arthingworth to Farndon.

Living with her was Annie Green, her 54-year-old cousin born in Normanton-le-Heath in Leicestershire according to the Census, although her father was a coal miner, from South Normanton in Derbyshire (40 miles away) so there may be some Normanton confusion here, or it is a coincidence. The third member of the household, listed as a servant, was Jane Jelly, aged 29. Jane had lived with the Keetleys at Arthingworth Lodge, noted in the 1901 Census as 'Domestic Servant General'. Previously, in 1891, she appears as a resident at the Bulls Head Inn in Arthingworth where her father is shown as an Agricultural Labourer.

On the night of the 1911 Census there was a fourth person in the house: a musician named Maude Wood, aged 31, born in Nottingham. She lived down in Harborough at No. 62 on the High Street (Millington Travel in 2022), two doors down from The Red Cow. Her father Herrap Wood was shown as Professor of Music and Music Seller on the High Street in 1891, then Mary is shown as Professor of Music at No. 62 High Street in 1901 and her father as Organist and Music Dealer. A photograph from 1905 shows No 62 with a sign indicating 'Herrap Wood - Harboro' Music Stores' so in summary Maude's father ran a music shop and she was a music teacher. Her father was also the organist at St Dionysius Parish Church, about 100 yards down the High Street from where he lived, from 1882 to 1914.

Having established that the house had occupants thought should be given to the servant Jane Jelly. Her duties would have included cleaning, washing, cooking and laying/clearing fireplaces. But the building was originally constructed with no kitchen or other facilities so when was it properly converted into a house?

## **Conversion**

The photograph of Letitia Houghton in next door's front garden, which shows the house in the background, is the best indication of what was

originally built as a chapel. Although an exact date is unknown the following additions were made:

- a bay at the front of the house
- a bay on the north side of the house
- a porch enclosing the canopy above the front door and semicircular stone threshold below it
- a window to create an 'attic room' in the triangular brickwork above what is now the bathroom
- possibly a staircase to get to the attic room
- a 2-storey extension on the east side with a kitchen below, a bedroom above and 2 new chimneys
- the bricking up of a window on the south side
- the addition of some sort of 'outhouse' the brick base of which was uncovered in the late 1990s, a couple of yards beyond the kitchen

It is clear that these additions were of a lower quality than the original build, in terms of the materials and workmanship. This is evident by standing back and looking at the north side of the house; the original brickwork not only looks more attractive, but also more durable. The attic room window is not a tidy job; this is echoed indoors in the way the doorway to the new bedroom (above the kitchen) has been crudely inserted into what had previously been a window. Another mystery is the hall floor which is concrete; why was this not floorboards like the rest of the house? And why is the window in the hall higher than the other windows on the south side? The space underneath the staircase is slightly odd, as if a cellar was planned and then decided against. Or was it built as a 'birthing pool' for Baptists as some have suggested?

If the house was rented from 1902 it is conceivable that these additions were made at that time even if just considering where cooking might take place; surely, for example, a cauldron was not used in the lounge fireplace. The quality of the build certainly suggests something done cheaply and quickly. Maybe James Dulley needed the rental income urgently.

The most significant of the additions to the house is the kitchen. This would have had a range in one corner (the door of it still exists) and maybe a fireplace in the other (underneath the one in the bedroom above). It would have been quite dark with a door maybe including small panes of glass, and small windows on the east side and north side. A close inspection of the old outside wall of the kitchen on the east side (now indoors in the new extension) reveals the end of the arc of the bricks

above the door and the whole arc above the window; this was bricked up when French windows were installed in the 1980s. Outside, on the north side the last brick of an arch of a window can be seen; this would have predated the more modern window there, and shows the same double brick arch as the window on the east side.

## **Sale**

On 9th December 1914 James Dulley sold the house to John Rhodes for £350. It is not known whether John Rhodes intended to live in the house or acquired it for the rental income. The First World War had started a few months earlier so this must have impacted upon the circumstances of many people, but maybe Mrs Keetley and her companions continued to rent there.

The background of the Rhodes family is worth exploring, particularly as there is a memorial tablet in the church in Farndon dedicated to John Rhodes. The Rhodes family are shown in the 1871 and 1881 Census at Lower Fairsnape, a farm in Bleasdale, Lancashire. The oldest son of parents John and Margaret was also called John, born in 1863. The youngest son was called William. The family moved to Northamptonshire and is shown in the 1891 Census living at Haselbech Grange Cottage, about 6 miles south of Farndon. At this point the elder John is recorded as Retired Farmer and the younger John as Farmer's Son. By 1901 he has married Helen, born in Overstone, so a local lass, and they are farming in Faxton Village, Draughton. (Note: locally Faxton is known as the 'lost village' and gives its name to the present-day Faxton Group of churches which includes Farndon.) In 1911 they are at Manor Farm, Hanging Houghton, apparently childless, but still not a long way from Farndon.

Around that time, his youngest brother William Rhodes also married a local woman, Judith Lancaster from Thornby (she later dies in Farndon in 1956 aged 77). The 1911 Census shows them at Clipston Grange Farm (just off the road between Kelmarsh and Clipston) and he is listed as a Grazier. At some point it appears the older John dies and the Rhodes converge on Farndon, judging by entries in the Electoral Register. It is a fair guess that they lived at 'Bleasdale', halfway up Main Street, naming it in memory of where they grew up. Middle sibling Mary appears back in the records, though it is unclear where she and her parents had recently been residing. Margaret Rhodes, the mother aged 78, dies and is buried back in Lancashire in the summer of 1915. John Rhodes then dies in 1916, according to his gravestone in the churchyard, and ownership of the house

apparently passes to his youngest brother William and his widow Helen. They sell the house in February 1917. William Rhodes is still shown as a resident of Farndon in 1939 recorded as a 'Farmer Carriage', whatever that is.

At this point it is worth looking at the covenant on this and subsequent house sales, as recorded in the Land Registry Charges Register; it states:

*Covenant ... that there should not be erected ... any house or building within seven feet of the Western boundary ... and that the existing windows on the south side ... should at all times thereafter be kept glazed with opaque glass and should not be opened ... and ... the existing fence on the South and East sides [should be maintained] or [there should be] some other sufficient close fence not less than 5ft in height.*

It would be interesting to know whether this applied to the building when it was a chapel, or only after it had been converted into a house, particularly the stipulation of opaque glass on the southern side. The 'Western boundary' is a curious description as that is Main Street; maybe this was to prevent the addition of something like the lounge bay window; if so, it did not work.

## **Herbert Lonsdale**

The house was bought from the Rhodes family by Herbert Lonsdale, a widower. He was born in Gosforth, Northumberland in 1879, educated at Ilkley College and Leeds Grammar School and apprenticed to engineering. He married Maude Hallewell, a Shorthand Typist, shown in the 1901 Census living in a '2-up 2-down' in Leeds. In 1899 Herbert became partner in the firm of Monk & Lonsdale of North Road, Brighton, makers of the 'Lonsdale' car. From 1904 he was proprietor of the Harborough Motor Company on St Marys Road (sited approximately where the Eco Village is in 2022), and at this point presumably he moved to Market Harborough. Later, in 1936 and 1941, his business is shown at No. 32 St Mary's Road, (in 2022 a Pay & Display car park next to No. 44 Fernie Hall).

The 1911 Census shows him and his wife, plus two of her sisters, Dorothy and Kate, living on St Marys Road. Shortly afterwards in 1911, Herbert and Maude had a son, Douglas. Sadly, his wife Maude died aged 35 in



November 1914, (leaving a will of £29 9s 3d). So when Herbert bought the house up in Farndon in 1917 he might have seen it as a more rural place to raise his son, maybe assisted by his sisters-in-law.

The Electoral Registers for 1918, 1919 and 1921 show Herbert Lonsdale at the house. Kelly's Directory in 1920 lists him as Private Resident at 'The Chapelry'; this entry occurs again in 1924, but is likely to be a mistake due to the name of the house changing, after new occupants moved in during 1922. It is fair to assume that though he is registered at the house he spent a fair amount of time away due to the First World War.

The records show that in 1918 Herbert served in the Royal Army Service Corps as a Private, presumably using knowledge gained from his engineering apprenticeship and as proprietor of the Harborough Motor Company. In July 1918 he was granted a temporary commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in RAF 52 Squadron, which was formed on 1st April 1918 when the Royal Flying Corps merged with the Royal Naval Service. 52 Squadron returned to the UK in February 1919 at which point Herbert is listed as an Administrative Officer. On his war record his address is recorded as London City & Midland Bank, Market Harborough, their branch being on the High Street, (HSBC in 2022). Presumably this was for the purpose of sending on his salary.

Having returned from his war service Herbert put the house up for sale in 1920. The entry in the 8th June Market Harborough Advertiser makes interesting reading:

*Sale. Superior detached small residence known as 'The Chapelry'.  
Instructions from Mr H.M. Lonsdale. Dining room, drawing room, kitchen with range, copper and sink, small cellar, 4 beds, bath and lavatory, outside W.C., coal house, small garden.  
Agents: J. Toller Eady.*

This confirms some of the assumptions made about the conversion to a house. The attic room, without a dormer window (assumed to be added in the 1970s), must have been a claustrophobic triangular space; enough for a servant perhaps. However, the Advertiser shows in its issue of 22nd June that the house was taken off the market.

The 1921 Census shows that Herbert had moved to Great Bowden. In 1925 he married Phyllis Robinson, from Kettering, in Market Harborough. They went on to have a son and a daughter and to live at 'The Grove' No.

66, Northampton Road. Later this became The Grove Motel and is fondly remembered by Harborians in the 1970s due to its longer licensing hours. It is now part of Brooke House College.

Herbert died in September 1941, aged 62, recorded in an obituary by the Institution of Automobile Engineers. Another source indicates that at the time of his death he had become a Chartered Automobile Engineer. He was also a Special Constable (noted in his son's war record), maybe in response to World War Two. His estate was valued at £7334 16s 10d, or approximately £385,000 in 2022, so it seems that the Harborough Motor Company was a successful business.

Dying at this time meant Herbert was spared the knowledge of the loss of his son. Flight Lieutenant Douglas Lonsdale was in a Lancaster bomber when it was shot down by a night fighter near Arnhem in early January 1943. All of the crew were lost. He is buried nearby at Rheden, in the Netherlands. Having followed in his father's footsteps by joining the RAF he died at the age of 31.

## **Margaret & Mabel Paterson**

The next occupants of the house were the Patersons. Margaret and her daughter Mabel were from Scotland. Margaret was born in Glasgow in around 1857; Mabel was born in New Kilpatrick, Dumbartonshire around 1888. Their route south was not direct to Northamptonshire.

The 1901 Census shows the Patersons living in Up Street, Sharnbrook, a village in North Bedfordshire. There was a third Paterson, Eric aged 2 (born in Mildretts, Cambridgeshire), but no sign of a Mr Paterson; Margaret is listed as 'Own means', so she appears to be widowed. The household includes a 16-year-old Housemaid from Norfolk.

By 1911 Mother and Daughter have moved on to Woodbine Cottage at Eaton Socon in Huntingdonshire (now Cambridgeshire). The Census confirms Margaret as a widow of 'Private means'. No other occupants are listed in the household; maybe Eric has been sent away to school. The local Electoral Register shows that Margaret is still at this address in 1915, but has gone by 1920.

The first sign of the presence of the Patersons at the house is Margaret's appearance in the Electoral Register in Autumn 1922. In this year Mabel

has already become involved in village activities, organising a cricket match between the village team and a team of ladies.

In 1923 Mabel is also listed in the Electoral Register, plus the only appearance of Eric who is listed as 'Absent Voter'. At this time the house is renamed 'Cessnock', presumably after the area of Glasgow, Margaret's home town; maybe she was born or grew up there. In Kelly's Directory in 1924 both the 'Chapelry' and 'Cessnock' are listed; this looks like an error on Kelly's part in not picking up the name change. Kelly's also lists Mabel Paterson at 'Cleeve' in 1940, somewhat inexplicably.

Margaret Paterson died aged 75 in 1932, listed as Market Harborough, though this is probably where the death was recorded rather than where it took place. From this point on it looks like Mabel is alone in the house through the Second World War. From the front bedroom, facing west, she would have been able to see the glow in the sky of Coventry burning during the Blitz.

'Miss Paterson', as she was known in various parish records, was very involved in village affairs. In 1924 she became a Trustee on the General Committee set up to establish a Recreation Room in the village. This became the Village Hall for which she was Secretary. In 1928 she presented a report to the Annual Parish Meeting as the Collector of the Fire Brigade Subscription. She was also Secretary to the Parish Meeting and Secretary to the Burial Board, from its inception in 1947. Minutes in her handwriting show that many Burial Board meetings were held at 'Miss Paterson's house'.

In 1953 meetings of the Coronation Celebrations Committee were also held in the house, and again she was the Secretary. Nearly 70 years later some of the meetings of East Farndon Platinum Jubilee Celebrations Committee similarly took place at Ivy House.

Mabel was also active in the village in amateur dramatics. A couple of photos exist from the 1930s of her in costume. One is a cast photo taken in the garden of Beauchamp House, the other shows her centre stage at the Village Hall in a performance of 'The Jacobite'.

The Market Harborough Advertiser records in February 1947 that the village's oldest resident George Osbond, an unmarried farmer aged 92, had died. He lived across the road at Spring Cottage. The only mourners

at his funeral *“were his Housekeeper, Miss Weston, and Miss Paterson, a neighbour”*.

Mabel is last listed at the house in the Electoral Register of 1953; it is unknown where she spent the last ten years of her life. Like her mother she died aged 75, recorded as Market Harborough. The day she died was 1st March 1963 just five days before the ‘big freeze’ ended, the worst winter of the twentieth century. Her last months were cold ones.

### **Eveline Hammond & Henrietta Simpson**

The mid-1950s onwards is a tale of two spinsters. As they were both born in the early 1890s they form part of the ‘lost generation’ of women whose opportunities to marry, had they wanted to, were limited by the loss of hundreds of thousands of men in the First World War.

Eveline Hammond is first listed on the Electoral Register at ‘Cessnock’ in 1956. However, this is not her first appearance in the village as she is listed several times from 1930 and specifically in 1946 at The Rectory, a large building that used to stand behind the church, (now ‘Rectory Court’). She was the Housekeeper to Rev T F Merriman, Rector from 1930 to 1951 and the last Rector in the village. The organisation of the church changed and the Rectory was disused from 1951 so Eveline would have needed to find somewhere else to live.

Henrietta Simpson is shown at Cessnock from 1957 in the Electoral Register, and, like Eveline, is already shown as living in the village from 1930 onwards. The Simpson family were from Manor Farm, Northaw, in Hertfordshire, according to the 1891 Census, and Henrietta, named after her mother, but first recorded as Ruth, was born in 1892, the youngest of four children. Her father, born in Exton, Rutland, was recorded as an Estate Agent Auctioneer in 1891, then a Grazier in 1901, by which time the family had moved to Wilbarston in Northamptonshire.

At the age of 18 Henrietta was boarding at Polam Hall School in Darlington. This small school, with only eight teenage pupils, was run by two young women from Bristol: sisters Agnes Hunt, Head and Housekeeper, and Violet Hunt, Music Mistress. With no other teachers listed, the emphasis was presumably musical.

It is not clear what route took her to Farndon, but Henrietta is a resident in 1939 listed as ‘Nurse Housekeeper’, living with and looking after Robert

Fisher, a retired and 'incapacitated' farmer at Moyargot on Main Street. It is interesting that her mother is not far away; when she dies in 1942 (in Barham, Kent) she is described as 'widow...of Foxton, Leicestershire'. Significantly, she left 'Effects £2320 19s 10d' (around £110,000 in 2022) which, if inherited in part by Henrietta, might have given her the means to help purchase a property. In 1955 the farmer she had been caring for died, which was probably the event prompting a move to the house.

Over the next couple of decades people remember the house being a sort of general store being run by a slightly eccentric lady referred to as 'Miss Dancer'. She had tiny bells sewn into the hem of her skirt so her approach could be heard, maybe as a warning to potentially light-fingered customers. It would be interesting to know exactly how the house was configured to be a shop, but there are local memories of ice cream being served from the french windows which used to form the front of the lounge bay. (These were removed in 1987 as they tended to let in rain; the brickwork around the bay was remodelled in 2014.)

Miss Hammond and Miss Simpson clearly took an interest in village affairs. Both are noted as attending the Annual Parish Meeting in 1949 at the Village Hall which included a vote on whether East Farndon should become part of Harborough District (9 votes) or remain in Brixworth District (43 votes). They also attended a Special Parish Meeting in February 1956 concerning street lighting, and the Annual Parish Meeting in 1958.

In 1974 Eveline Hammond died, aged 81, and was cremated in Northamptonshire. Maybe Henrietta stayed on alone in the house for a couple of years, but in any event the house was sold in 1976 and then she died in February in Sudbury in 1981, aged 89.

### **David & Margaret Neal & children**

In 1976 the house was bought by the actor David Neal and his wife. They had two daughters so for the first time the house was a family home. It is not clear when the name change from Cessnock to Ivy House took place.

As his Wikipedia page states, apart from the children's series *The Flockton Flyer*, David Neal was rarely cast as a lead actor, but had significant supporting roles in episodes of a great range of highly popular British television series, including *Softly Softly*, *Z-Cars*, *Doctor Who*, *Inspector Morse*, *The Bill*, *Wycliffe* and *Noah's Castle*. He was also Captain of

Ming's Air Force in the 1980 film *Flash Gordon*, now considered something of a cult classic. In Farndon there is a story that on Halloween he would dress up as a ghost and go round the village spooking the children who were out for 'trick or treat'.

At this point the house became more modernised. A key development was the installation of electric storage heaters in 1977. In fact David Neal, when he was 'resting' from acting had a propensity for electrical work, for example, wall lights installed either side of the mirror in the lounge, and spotlights fitted to point at paintings along the stairs. Some of the wiring (although tested satisfactorily for safety) continues to mystify electricians to the present day.

Before he died in 2000, aged 68, a telephone call with him revealed that he had installed the small window on the landing to relieve the darkness there; unfortunately he fell off a ladder during the work. Another incident took place on the other side of Main Street in the area around the spring, which was used to park cars. There was no drive at this time, indeed his application to install a drive had been refused. One day David reversed his Volvo into the coping stones around the spring trough and allegedly pushed them into the water. They were retrieved in 2020. They don't make Volvos like they used to.

One electrical venture involved providing power to a shed in the garden. With no apparent health & safety risk assessment a wire was stretched across from near the kitchen to the shed where it provided not only light, but also warmth in the form of a wall-mounted single bar electric heater. There was carpet too. The steps which are still in the lawn are part of a path that ran in a semi-circle from the kitchen door to the pent-roofed shed (demolished in 1997). It is possible that David used this sanctuary to learn his lines, but it is certain, according to a neighbour, that Mrs Neal did not want him smoking his pipe in the house.

### **Robert Hamberger, his wife & children**

In 1985 the Neals moved on and the house was bought by Robert Hamberger and his wife. They went on to have three children, one of them born in the house. Their second child was a planned home birth which happened during very snowy weather in January 1988. The story goes that the first midwife was so nervous about a home birth she had a migraine and had to be replaced by a second midwife who travelled through the snow.

In the spring of 1987 many initiatives to maintain and improve the house took place. It must have been a busy time. The house was re-roofed (re-using the existing slate tiles), guttering was replaced, rotten window frames were made good, replastering done, and many other domestic initiatives carried out. The most important change was the installation of oil-fired central-heating.

In the kitchen, changes included the removal of a chimney breast and replacement of the side window. In addition French windows were installed and a patio laid outside making the kitchen a brighter and more sociable area. Overall the fabric of the house was improving as it approached the 21st century

The family left the house in 1996. Robert Hamberger is a published poet and writer now living in Brighton.

### **Russell & Caroline Burton & children**

In 1996 the current occupants of the house, not from Northamptonshire, like many before them, were renting in Cold Ashby, a couple of villages up what used to be called the B4036. Expecting a baby in the spring of 1997 and unable to accelerate the purchase they came to an arrangement that they would rent the house pending the sale. After moving in on a rainy day in November 1996 they immediately started to decorate the house from top to bottom in preparation for the birth of their first child.

The solicitor acting for them said of this arrangement - in writing - "If I was the solicitor acting for the seller ... then frankly I would be horrified...". But they carried on anyway and the house became theirs at the end of February 1997.

The conveyance was not, however, straightforward. Subsidence does not make for a smooth house sale. Fortunately, this was not the result of endemic structural problems with the property which has stood solidly for over 120 years. It was the dry summer of 1995 causing a thirsty tree too close to kitchen wall to get into the drains and cause them to collapse, affecting the brickwork. This was all sorted out, but not before the solicitor had the chance to quip "...Ivy House in East Farndon ...or is it in Clipston yet?". Subsidence, which can be serious, should not be confused with 'thermal cracking' which affects many properties and is

irksome from a decorative point of view unless people like their properties 'elegantly distressed'.

It is worth remembering that 'Farndon' means 'hill of ferns' in Anglo-Saxon. Ferns like moist conditions and, due to the amount of clay in the local soil, water tends to be abundant in the village in the form of springs and wells. Indeed the spring on the other side of Main Street (known historically as the Caldwell Spring) did not stop running at any point during the recent heatwaves of 2003, 2018 and 2022.

In order to improve the patio area the large grey slabs, laid in 1987, were lifted in 1998. Surprisingly, underneath there was ... another patio. The kitchen must have previously been floored with red quarry tiles because these were laid out in a circular pattern with some slabs in-between. But there was another surprise; in the middle of the circle several feet from the back door to the kitchen was a manhole cover. When lifted the pool of water underneath was so clear and still it was almost invisible. It was a well. The quarry tiles and slabs were lifted and remade into a more permanent patio, and the well was covered up with a couple of slabs.

There was another discovery related to the local water table. The 'small cellar' under the stairs, described in the 1920 house details, had been filled in, probably in the 1970s, with rubble and a layer of concrete due to 'flooding'. In 2000, as a sort of Millennium project, this was excavated, step by step, a bit like Tutankhamun's grave, but without the gold. Three steps down was a floor of bricks, coincidentally exactly like the bottom of the spring trough across the road. The slabs to the newly found well outside were lifted and the rubble shovelled down there to help fill it in. The 'small cellar's' level of 'flooding' became clear in very wet weather; at this point the floor would be covered with water, no more than two inches, which would then drain away. To counter this bricks and slabs were put in (and covered up) to give space for the water to come and go, whilst allowing the rest of the space to be used usefully.

Planning permission for a drive was given in 1998 by Daventry District Council. The issue to overcome was visibility on a blind bend. This was achieved by buying a very small triangle of land from the Old Post Office next door and reducing their wall in height. But even now the only safe way to pull out is to wind down the windows and listen for traffic.

When the day came to dig the drive out in May 1998 it was raining heavily, in typically English fashion, and what had been the front garden soon



resembled a bomb site. The ground used to come up to a height of about 5 feet from the pavement so around 70 tons of soil needed to be moved and taken away in '8-legger' lorries. The man in charge of the JCB had worked on the construction of the nearby M1 in the 1960s so he took this work in his stride.

Returning to the idea that the house was built on an orchard one of the memorable moments of the drive being excavated was the appearance of an enormous sloe tree stump just behind the front wall. This had been coppiced (although the house sale particulars of 1989 show a substantial bush), but when the JCB tried to get the stump out with its front bucket it was like watching a cat bat around a boulder with its paw.

Once the drive was complete it made getting small children in and out of the house much safer. It also improved the ease and speed of transferring the purchases from Calais booze runs from the car into the house.

Other work took place around this time such as the removal of the chimneys above the kitchen in order to prevent potential damp problems, although the fireplace and opposite chimney breast are still in place in the back bedroom. The building of the drive also meant relocating the oil tank to the south side of the house.

The next big change came in 2004 with the building of an extension to the kitchen. The main purpose was to create a shower and an extra toilet to meet the needs of growing children and guests. In addition the new kitchen freed up space both in the 'old kitchen' and the dining room, from where the dining table was removed; 'entertaining' now happening in the new kitchen.

The extension build went well ... until the builders reached the well. The Building Inspector was called and he advised that the foundation should be very deep and include a very large amount of concrete. Having a drive enabled the cement mixer lorry to reverse right up to the back of the house and pour in its contents. After the extension was complete a new patio was built; the wall around it reused the coping stones from the old wall in front of the house. A new boundary wall on the south side had already been built to better enclose the patio area.

Following the extension it was discovered that the back bedroom wall got damp when heavy rain hit it from due east. It was difficult to see how this could happen, but ultimately a roofing expert said the best solution was to

the clad the wall in vertical slates which was done in 2007. Ivy House has excellent countryside views, but even these were enhanced for anyone when surveyed from the scaffolding erected for the work.

In 2014 the crumbling lounge fireplace was rebuilt and a new mantelpiece built and installed. There had been changes to it over the years which had even included, slightly bizarrely, the use of a marble washstand top as a hearth. The previous mantelpiece, which did not look 'original' though it might have been, was sold to the man renovating Spring Cottage across the road, and was apparently destined for a property he was doing up in Guilsborough.

There were more changes in 2016 when the bathroom was remodelled and modernised. This meant that the bath, mentioned in the house sale particulars of 1920, could be relocated to the garden to use as a large planter.

Then in 2019 new more modern plumbing arrangements meant the removal of the cold water tank from the attic room and the header tank on the attic room stairs shelf. So, although somewhat triangular, there is now more space in the attic room. Decorating it involved removing the very last wallpaper from the house. It would be interesting to know from a historian of interior design the vintage of this wallpaper; printed on it was 'Crown - Made in England'.

One of the attractive features of the house is the wood of the floors and doors. It appears that the spirit of Barry Bucknell, the television doyen of DIY in the 1950s and 1960s, was conjured up when at some point, it was decided to paint all of the doors gloss white. In early 1997 the doors were taken away and dipped in acid, bringing them back to their natural state. In the last few years considerable energy has been expended to remove the paint and varnish from window frames, stairs and floorboards. Whilst the oak boards are surely English, the wooden floor installed in the kitchen extension in 2004 is likely to be Russian oak. How times have changed.

## **Summary**

Since the house was built it has undergone all sorts of alterations, but ultimately it still looks and feels like the building blessed at the opening ceremony in 1898. When the sunlight falls through the original panes of glass in the sash windows, projecting a rippled reflection onto the walls, it generates a strong sensation of the age and stability of the house.

Spanning three centuries it has had three uses - chapel, shop, home - and been occupied by people from near and far: Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Scotland, London, Warwickshire and Essex.

Finally, the sense of the house as a family home is captured here by Robert Hamberger in *Ivy House* a sonnet from his collection *The Smug Bridegroom*:

*We were rock solid, seduced by each snowdrop  
daffodil and door-frame, the view from every room.  
We put down roots: damp-proofed, re-wired, sprayed woodworm,  
coated on buckets of gloss. We couldn't stop  
until french windows had their cat-flap  
and kids' hand-marks swiped the walls.*

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Russell Burton  
November 2022