A BRIEF HISTORY OF MORETON HALL

Notes for a lecture given to the Stratford Roundabout Club on Wednesday 11th March 1998 by R H Graham Suggett OBE, JP, DL, Hon DSc with acknowledgement to A Frank Howell BSc Agric, Dip Agric who carried-out much of the original research.

"He who would forecast the future must first study the past"

In doing so it is interesting how history repeats itself and how intertwined and full of coincidences and links with America are the sad stories I am about to unfold.

WARWICKSHIRE

Warwickshire divided into two somewhat different types of countryside by the valley of the Avon. At one time they were considered to be distinct under the titles of Feldon, (field-land) to the South and Weldon (wood-land) to the North.

Romans built the Fosse Way virtually down the dividing line between Feldon and Weldon in AD 47 (Britain was known as the ‘Granary of the North’ at that time exporting corn to the Continent.) The Feldon was mainly corn though some of the villages were depopulated in 15th and 16th Century to make way for sheep pastures. Thus, leading, together with ‘the plague’, to the ‘lost villages’ of Warwickshire e.g. Kingston, Hardwick.

Weldon was well-wooded with cattle and grass. Most of the woods were felled in the Seventeenth Centuries to feed the iron furnaces of Birmingham when this industry moved from Sussex after Henry VIII and Elizabeth I had decimated the forests in that area.

The Avon runs through a shallow flattened valley with escarpment slopes on either side which afford wonderful views and hence, ideal locations for country mansions.

MORETON MORRELL PARISH

1086. Domesday Book mentions MORTONE, in the Hundred of Tremelau, which clearly is what we know now as Moreton Morrell.

The Manor, plus a lot of other land in Warwickshire, was given to Robert, Earl of MELLENT who distinguished himself at the Battle of Hastings. In 1103 Robert was made Earl of LEICESTER by Henry I. When he died, half of the land was inherited by his brother, HENRY de NEWBURGH, the Earl of Warwick and half by his son, the Earl of Leicester. Subsequently, half of the land (the hamlet of Merell) was inherited by his son Robert DUDLEY who, being a favourite of Queen Elizabeth I, was later created Earl of Leicester and the other half by his brother HENRY de NEWBURGH (originally from a village on Tayside called Newburgh) who subsequently became Earl of WARWICK. About 1490 enclosed for sheep and was depopulated. In 1517 only 23 people reported as living in the Manor.

In 15th Century the Manor reverted to the Crown and until 1550 various courtiers held the Stewardship.

In 1550 the Manor came back to John DUDLEY who was made Earl of WARWICK and later created Duke of NORTHUMBERLAND. (Dud Dudley, about 1620, produced malleable and cast iron by heating iron ore and coke. Percy estate in Warwick, Percy is still family name of Dukes of Northumberland)

1552. The Manor was purchased by the COLEBORNE family.

Circa 1600 an unpretentious house was built on the site of the old manor house, next to the church, and called Moreton Hall.

1604. Sold to Richard MURDEN and then passed to his only daughter, Mary. She married Sir
Stephen HARVEY and they had two sons who died unmarried, hence the five daughters inherited one fifth each in 1635.

Arthur SAMWELL married the eldest daughter Mary and acquired the share of her sister Elizabeth. This two fifths, which contained Moreton Hall farm passed to Anne who married Francis BAGSHAW. (For interest, but not related to the history of Moreton Hall: 1672. William RANDOLF, who had been born in the cottage opposite the old Methodist Chapel in Middletown, Moreton Morrell, emigrated to Virginia. His grand-daughter, Jane, married Peter JEFFERSON and their son, Thomas drafted the American Declaration of Independence and subsequently became the third President of the USA....i.e. the Great Grandfather of Thomas Jefferson born in Moreton Morrell)

1704. Francis BAGSHAW’s son inherited from his father

1719. Bought by Henry WISE an eminent landscape gardener, successively to William III, Queen Anne and George I. He also worked at Blenheim, Melbourne and Windsor and was Superintendent of Royal Gardens at Hampton Court where he laid out the original maze in Hornbeam and he also laid-out Kensington gardens as well as being deputy ranger of Hyde Park

1734. Henry Wise died (buried in St Mary’s, Warwick) leaving estates in Warwickshire, Surrey, Rutland and Brompton Park, London.

1753. Sold to Henry GRENVILLE. His daughter married Charles, Viscount MAHON (later The Earl STANHOPE)

1792. Sold to William LITTLE of Newbold Pacey whose descendent Lt Col John Little (Born 1922, married with one son, called William, and two daughters) still lives at Newbold Pacey Hall.

1689. This three fifths was sold to Colonel John FIENNES and in 1730 was held by his son, the VISCOUNT SAY and SELE.

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MORETON HALL.....HOME OF WARWICKSHIRE COLLEGE SINCE 1949.

How did Moreton Hall come to be there?
THE THREE HOUSES

The story involves three houses on the escarpment at Moreton Morrell and begins at the neighbouring house of Ashorne Hill.

ASHORNE HILL

Original house owned by a Leamington Spa banker called GREENWAY (Greenway, Smith and Greenway). Had to close as could not meet debts and sold to Mr BECK.
Arthur TREE bought the house from Mr Beck together with Wiggeland farm and Ashorne Hill farm and also bought Bromson Hill and New Lodge (re-named Ashorne Hall and subsequently an organ museum). He also bought Oakley Wood (now houses the Crematorium) and 60 acres of land from E K LITTLE (of Newbold Pacey). (There is a story of how Oakley Wood came to be... a great gambler lost his land in a bet, pleaded for one more crop and planted........ acorns)

We now come to an American link.
Arthur Magie TREE was the son of an American Judge called Lambert TREE. He had been well-educated in both the USA and Oxford. Arthur Tree married Ethel FIELD, daughter of Marshall Field, the millionaire Chicago store owner (Originator of the concept of 'pile high, sell cheap’) The couple travelled widely in Europe but decided to settle in England and rented a house at Compton Verney. They then discovered Ashorne Hill which they bought in 1892.
Marshall Field put up the money for the house to be built on site of the old house. Ethel liked the blue brick and the ivy so the facade left intact and incorporated; with the remainder being built in Horton Stone and completed 1896. (About same time as Agricultural Education started in Warwickshire) Ethel and Arthur divorced. Ethel then married a Captain BEATTIE (later Admiral Beattie of Jutland (1916) fame) and went to live in Leicester (at what is now the Leicester Agricultural College). Arthur moved to New Lodge and, when he died in 1914, was buried in Newbold Pacey churchyard in same grave as his two infant sons.
Ashorne Hill was rented out, mainly to Worcestershire families (circa 1905 to Sir James Heath MP and circa 1910 to Howard St George) who used it as a base for hunting in the Winter and polo in the Summer.
However, circa 1900, one tenant was an American called Charles Tuller GARLAND who remained there until 1905.
He was the son of James Albert GARLAND who had co-founded the First National City Bank of New York and made a fortune. Charles, the youngest son, was extremely fond of hunting and polo. These two sports have contiguous seasons and as, at that time, the best hunting and polo was to be found in the Midland Shire Counties he sought to rent a house in England.
In 1924 Ashorne Hill was bought by Mr FELLOWES (from Ronald TREE, son of Arthur TREE) and then by Mr BRYANT and then British Iron and Steel Federation and is now a management college run by British Steel. (Having been occupied by troops during War II and being run as a conference centre between 1947 and 1957)

MORETON PADDUX

Let us leave Ashorne Hill again and explore a further American link.

The executed Irish patriot Robert EMMET had a brother, Thomas, who was banished to Scotland where he studied law. Subsequently he escaped to the USA where he became Attorney General. One of his descendants, also named Robert EMMET, was the son of an eminent surgeon and also qualified as a Doctor. However, before he could practice he became involved, as a sergeant in the New York cavalry,
in the Spanish-American War and the Cuban and Puerto Rican conflicts (1898). He left the army as a captain and still did not practise as he married Louise GARLAND...the daughter of the co-founder of the First National City Bank of New York.
The couple travelled to England and rented the Old Priory House in Warwick.
One day whilst out riding with brother-in-law Charles Garland along the escarpment at Moreton Morrell, he was impressed by the views of the Avon Valley and the open vista to the distant Malvern Hills, both thought what a wonderful place to build a house. They spun a coin and Garland won. Capt. Robert Emmet therefore, bought Hill Farm, Lower Lea Farm, land to the north of Staple Hill and Hell Hole Wood and built a house called MORETON PADDOX.
He instructed his architect, Romaine WALKER, to build it in the style of the old the Priory in Warwick. (which was demolished in the 1920s and re-created in Richmond, Virginia)
The building was in a Jacobean style with tall Gothic chapel (the family were ardent Roman Catholics), exuberant Elizabethan chimneys and 16th/17th Century oak panelling. (No wonder that Major BOUCH, from Ashorne House, described the three house as ‘a major assault on the skies of Warwickshire’)
A 1918 photo shows 42 indoor workers, 27 gardeners plus chauffeurs, ground and estate workers.
Captain Robert Emmet took British citizenship and volunteered to serve in the 1914-18 war and raised and equipped a 44-strong Troop of Yeomanry. He was promoted Major in the Royal Field Artillery and awarded the DSO.
By 1924 James A Garland Emmet was the owner of Moreton Paddox though his mother, Louise, still lived there until the outbreak of World War II when she returned to America where she died in 1947.
Major Emmet returned to the British Isles and eventually died at the family home in Wicklow in 1955.
Wartime experiences had turned Emmet away from sports involving animals and he devoted his time to his 27 acre garden. He employed Ben MARTIN, a renowned landscape gardener. It was said that the gardens contained had every tree, shrub and plant which would live outdoors in this part of the Midlands and many others in the glasshouses.

Garden had... according to a contemporary descriptive leaflet:-

Beautiful shrubberies
Sun Dial Garden
Topiary, with peacocks, unicorns and dragons and a 100 yard canal down the centre.
Old English Lavender Garden
Summer House
Paved Garden
Rock Garden
Long Terrace
Iris Garden
Amphitheatre
Wild gardens

The gardens also featured in articles in the Gardeners’ Chronicle in 1915 and 1916.
Lead statues were sculpted by Walter GILBERT, who founded the Bromsgrove Guild, and included a 14 feet high Pan. (Gilbert also sculptured the Diana and Nymphs fountain for Moreton Hall.)
The house was requisitioned during WWII to billet British troops.
1944. Major Robert Emmet’s son, James, sold the estate to the Birmingham Co-operative Society who then sold it on to the Workers Travel Association who used it as their ‘Shakespeare Country Centre. until it was demolished in 1959 for a housing development.
MORETON HALL
Let us now return to Mr GARLAND

1904. Charles GARLAND bought 400 acres of the BOLTON estate (his sister bought 436 acres of the same estate) and started to build the present Moreton Hall from Monks Park Bathstone. He lived in Moreton House (The centre part of which was built in the Eighteenth Century) to be near the building work. His architect was also W R Romaine WALKER (He built four major houses but mainly concentrated on ecclesiastical work)
The house was built in a neo-Palladian style which gives it an Eighteenth Century appearance. The plain outside, however, belied the rich interior where there was a series of oak-panelled rooms with exquisite carvings and rich plaster work.
(Many stories are told of the house. The seven Italian marble bathrooms costing £1000 each to equip, the false fall pipes, the silver door furniture, the symmetry which results in imitation doors and hidden real doors, the underground storage of soft (rain) water, the 647 feet deep well, the sewage and electricity works, the last brick built riding school to train polo ponies, the artificial polo pony, the polo ground, cricket field and golf course etc.)
Garland, a bachelor when he built the Hall, married, at age 28, a Miss Margaret WILLIAMS of Barford, aged 21.
The old manor house near main gates used to be called Moreton Hall. Garland owned it so re-named it Moreton Manor and used the name Moreton Hall for his new house.
Moreton Hall was completed 1908.
Garland badly wanted a son and blamed his wife for having three daughters which lead to an unhappy marriage.
He was very fond of horse racing and had a house and stables in Newmarket where Mr. R COLLERING trained his flat racers and at Moreton Morrell Mr I’ANSON trained his steeplechasers. It is reputed that he spent £100,000 on training in one particular season and only had success in one minor race. (Such stories, and similar from the hunting field, abound because, though some workers and locals liked him (he was a Churchwarden, gave the land for the school, bought books for the school library and employed a coach for the village cricket team) others did not and the ‘County Set’ were somewhat jealous of his good looks, wealth, flamboyance and generosity.
One such story concerns the building of the Real (Royal) Tennis Court at Moreton Morrell. It is said that he was ‘black-balled’ as an applicant for membership at the Royal Leamington Spa Club and hence, build his own court. He did employ, Edward JOHNSON, the world champion (whose son was also World Champion) as the Club Professional.
Many well-known polo players came to Moreton Hall including: - Walter BUCKMASTER (to whom Garland sold Moreton Manor and 42 acres in 1919), Lord KIMBERLEY and the MILBURN Brothers from America.
Charles GARLAND took UK nationality in 1913. During the Great War he joined the Warwickshire Yeomanry and also allowed his Scottish house, and deer forest, to be used as a soldiers’ convalescent home for soldiers.
He was appointed an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.
1917. Margaret GARLAND, his wife, died at age 36.
Garland sold the estate in 1920 (16th March) for £36,000.....same price as tennis court cost to build 15 years earlier.
Apparently he was being taxed twice, in the USA which was the source of his wealth and again in the UK, the whole resulting in a rate of 17/6 (87.5 pence) in the Pound. Thus, the £10,000 per annum needed to run Moreton Hall would require a gross income of £80,000 and he had three other houses.
A young man, Reginald DIBBEN, lived in the Bungalow and treated as a son. When Garland died
(10th June 1921 in London with the death certificate recording Pulmonary Embolism and Mitral Heart Disease) he left Reginald £50,000 in a will of £344,000 together with his personal effects. Garland also had another protégée Reginald de TRAFFORD who was killed in 1915.

Most of the inheritance went to ‘a widow and her daughter’ and the Newmarket stables and horses to his trainer.

The rest was divided amongst the girls provided they did not marry before they were twenty one years of age. (Two died in the Turkish DC9 air crash at Paris in the mid-70s the other lived in Worcestershire till recently)

Col Robert J L Ogilby. DSO of the London Scottish Regiment, who also had houses in Ireland and Kent and a flat in Mayfair but couldn’t enter Ireland as ‘serving officers had a price on their head’ and hence, bought Moreton Hall as a gentleman’s sporting estate. He continued with the Real Tennis and Polo and had The Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII ) as a guest player.

Col. Ogilby enlarged a room to form a study to the house, the only part which throws the symmetry, to house the books of his Seventeenth Century ancestor, John Ogilvy the traveller and author. He also had a collection of Louis XIV and XV furniture to display.

In 1936, he married Mrs Isobel BROCKLEBANK, a vicar’s widow, with whom he had been in love for 35 years after having met when they were both in the entourage of Princess Louise. After the marriage the couple spent most of their time in London and Kent. Isobel died in 1940 after only four years of marriage, and shortly afterwards Ogilby was called-up to act as staff officer for the Dunkirk evacuation. He died in 1964 leaving most of his wealth to army museums and trusts.

In 1939 the little used hall was requisitioned by the Government and used during World War II as the Czechoslovakian Artillery Officer Training School (Vilem Tauski CBE, Czech MC, Czech OM, the band leader was one of the officers trained at Moreton Hall) and as a base for USA, Belgium and British troops.

The estate was purchased in 1948 by Warwickshire County Council in order to establish a Farm Institute to train returning ex-servicemen.

SEVERAL SAD STORIES

Arthur Trees....Marriage broke up, two children died in infancy....house a college
Charles Garland....Unhappy marriage, wife died young....had to sell an estate he built and loved...two daughters killed in an air crash...house a college
Robert Emmet....two of his three sons died in infancy....grandson burnt to death in a train fire on way back to school....house demolished.....Ben Martin’s gardens destroyed.
Ogilby....wife died three years after marriage
Earls of Warwick......Tax Exiles....Castle now owned by Madam Tussauds

However, the Little family from Newbold Pacey who featured earlier in this description are still at around after over 200 years. Col John Little, MC. DL and an ex-Governor of the College, and his wife Nancy own and live in Newbold Pacey Hall

E&OE

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