

Lemsford Village History

Some notes about Bocket Hall

Past and present



LEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Publication 5

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The History of Bocket Hall

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The early Years 1086 – 1400

In the Domesday Book a manuscript record of the "Great Survey" of much of England and parts of Wales completed in 1086 by order of King William the Conqueror the area was Hatfield and below is the entry for Hatfield.

Total population: 55 households (very large). Households: 18 villagers. 18 smallholders. 6 slaves. 1 priest. 12 cottagers. Plough land: 30 plough lands (land for). 2 lord's plough teams. 3 lord's plough teams possible. 20 men's plough teams.

Edward the Confessor granted 40 hides of land around Hatfield to the Abbots of Ely. In 1109 this was transferred to the Bishops of Ely – hence the name Bishops Hatfield.

Among the many manors in this domain were Waterships and Durantshyde. These roughly occupied the area now covered by Bocket Park. The Victoria County History states that "in 1234–5 Adam Fitz William held rent in 'Watershepe' from Robert and Alice de Cranemere, to whom he paid 1d. Rent, while in 1277 Simon Fitz Adam held Durantshide of the Bishop of Ely for a rent of 60s" (about £1,600.00 in today's money).

There is an early record of a house called Waterschyppes being owned by Simon Fitz Ade in 1239. This was possibly a simple Hertfordshire manor house of its period, typically half timbered, there being no other local building stone apart from flint, with a Great Hall where everything happened, a Solar for the use of the family, kitchens, storerooms, and stables and other farm buildings.

On his death in 1477 Thomas Bocket who had married Elizabeth Ashe, the heiress to both the manors of Waterships and Durantshyde, held both manors. **Thomas Lord Fauconberg 1341 – 1371** Daughter **Joan De Fauconberg 1367 – 1397** marries **Thomas Bocket 1363 - 1431 (the first Bocket)** No children.

The Brockets c.1440s-1598

The Brocket, sometimes spelt Brockett, family originally came from Yorkshire and settled around Wheathampstead. They became one of the leading families in the County counting among their numbers three High Sheriffs and three Members of Parliament for the County as well as numerous other commission and offices.



Thomas Brocket (died 1477), who had married the heiress Elizabeth Ashe, became a substantial land owner and was one of Hertfordshire's two Knights to the Parliament of 1435.

His son, Sir John Brocket (c.1514-1558) also married an heiress, Margaret Benstede, and acquired Brocket Hall in 1550. He was one of the gentlemen who accompanied Anne of Cleves to her reception upon her arrival in England. He too was a Member of Parliament and served on many Commissions. Edward VI knighted him shortly after becoming king.

His son **Sir John Brocket (1540-1598)** was a confidante of Queen Elizabeth I. Before Elizabeth I became Queen she was under house arrest at Hatfield House, her childhood home. Brocket Hall was only three miles distant, and Elizabeth visited frequently, some say plotting to secure her succession and her safety.

She was found reading a book beneath an oak tree when the news was brought to her that her sister, Queen Mary I, had died and that she was now Queen. Both Hatfield House and Brocket Hall lay claim to the oak tree. She is said to have held her first Council in Brocket Hall after her succession.

Sir John had five daughters by his wife Helen, the daughter of Sir Robert Lytton of Knebworth as well as another daughter from his second marriage. With no male heir to succeed him he sold off most of his lands to provide dowries for his daughters. Mary, his fifth daughter, married to Sir Thomas Reade, inherited the estate.



He died on 2 Oct. 1598. In his will, made 7 Aug. and proved 12 Oct., he asked to be buried near his first wife and directed that the funeral should cost not more than £200. Above is the grand alabaster tomb of himself and wife Lady Margaret in Wheathampstead parish church.

The Reades 1598-1710

Sir Thomas Reade (1575-1650) came from a notable and wealthy Berkshire family. He served as High Sheriff of Berkshire in 1606, Oxfordshire in 1615 and Hertfordshire in 1618. In 1598 he married Mary Brocket and they had eleven children, five boys and six girls.

Sir John Reade (1616-1694), their youngest son, inherited the Brocket Estate. He was created a baronet by King Charles I in 1642. In 1652, by an Act of Parliament under the Commonwealth, his title, like others created by King Charles, was disallowed. In 1657 it was restored by Oliver Cromwell (his first hereditary honour). After the Restoration in May 1660 it was disallowed again but in the June he was pardoned of his offences during the Civil War and the original baronetcy of 1642 restored. Sir John was Sheriff of Hertfordshire on a number of occasions.

Sir James Reade (1655-1701), 2nd Baronet Reade of Brocket Hall inherited the estate on the death of his father in 1694. He married Love Dring. Their son Sir John Reade (1691-1712) 3rd Baronet Reade of Brocket Hall was a serious young man who went to Rome to follow his interest in politics. Sadly he contracted smallpox there and died in 1712. The Baronetcy died with him. As there was now no male heir the estate passed to his sister Love Reade.



Love Reade marries Thomas Winnington (above) on 6th August 1719.

Thomas Winnington 1710-1746

In 1710 Love Reade, who had inherited Bocket Hall, married the Whig politician **Thomas Winnington (1696-1746)** of Stanford Court in Worcestershire. They had no children.

The landscape designer Charles Bridgeman was approached for ideas for the improvement of Bocket Park, and some of these were executed.



The River Lea which ran through the Park was dammed to form a lake. A fashionable white Chinoiserie bridge was built over the weir to connect the eastern and the western park. There was a large walled kitchen garden to the north-east of the house and an enclosed garden with winding paths and two small pavilions at each of the lake side corners to the south-east. Trees were planted to frame the view from the Hall of the then main entrance to the Park at Lemsford Mill. Blocks of trees were planted along the south and eastern part of the estate and circular copses at the corners of the fields on the western side.

As there were no children to inherit the estate when Thomas died in 1746 it was put up for sale and bought by Sir Matthew Lamb.

The Lambs 1746-1848

Sir Matthew Lamb (1705-1768), a successful lawyer and politician married Charlotte Coke the daughter of the Rt. Hon Thomas Coke of Melbourne in Derbyshire, Vice Chamberlain to Queen Anne and a wealthy heiress after the death of her brother in 1777. He was created a baronet in 1755.

Sir Matthew commissioned the architect James Paine to rebuild or rather remodel the Elizabethan Bocket Hall. The work was begun in 1760 and was not completed until 1775, seven years after Sir Matthew's death.



At the same time Sir Matthew commissioned the landscape designer, Richard Woods of Essex to produce plans to enhance the Park. The Broadwater was created by enlarging the lake and constructing a cascade at the southern end over which James Paine set his elegant Palladian bridge. A flint bridge and picturesque Fishing Arbour were built where the River Lea enters the estate. There was new planting and paths along the river banks and two large walled gardens with glasshouses constructed near the house. There was some tweaking to Bridgeman's plantings of trees in the park with specimen trees to add interest. A brilliant improvement was to create a new entrance to the Hall from Bocket Corner. James Paine designed the twin lodges and the decorative screen and gates from which the road swept down, over Paine's bridge to the front door of Bocket Hall.

Sir Peniston Lamb (1745-1828), later 1st Viscount Melbourne, married Elizabeth Milbanke in 1769. This was not a monogamous marriage, Sir Peniston had mistresses and Elizabeth lovers. It is thought that of her six children, only her firstborn was definitely the son of Sir Peniston. She was beautiful, clever and a brilliant Whig hostess and used her lovers and contacts to advance her family. 6 As a result of her liaison with the Prince Regent, later King George IV, Sir Peniston was granted the position of Gentleman of the Bedchamber and created Viscount Melbourne. The Prince was a frequent visitor to Bocket Hall and it is said that the chinoiserie bedroom with its hand painted wallpaper was decorated especially for his use.

After a comment by the Prince Regent on the lack of a respectable race course north of London Sir Peniston Lamb established one in the Park. This became very fashionable and was the Ascot of its day.

William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne (1749-1848) inherited Bocket Hall on the death of his older brother. He fell in love with the charismatic but unstable Caroline Ponsonby and married her in 1805. In 1812 Caroline had a notorious affair with Lord Byron. After he ended it she remained obsessed. Eventually she and William agreed to a formal separation and she retired to Bocket Hall. It is said that she was riding in the Park one day when she saw a funeral procession passing by the gates. On finding that it was that of Lord Byron she fell off her horse in her distress. She had not known that he had died.



Lord Melbourne immersed himself in Whig politics, becoming Home Secretary and then Prime Minister. When Queen Victoria came to the throne aged only 18 he gently guided her in the art of politics and they became good friends. She visited him at Bocket Hall on many occasions.

He died in 1848 and is buried in the Bocket Chapel in St. Etheldreda's church, Hatfield.

The Cowpers 1848-1923

Emily, Countess Cowper, (1787-1869), Lord Melbourne's sister, inherited Bocket Hall on his death, both of his children having died young. She was married to Peter, 5th Earl Cowper. For many years she had a liaison with Henry Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston, the Foreign Secretary and later Prime Minister, and after the death of Earl Cowper, having sought permission from Queen Victoria, they married – she was 52 and he 55. They were said to be a devoted couple. Bocket Hall passed to **Francis Cowper, 7th Earl Cowper (1834-1905)** on his grandmother's death in 1869.

His younger brother The Hon Frederick Henry Cowper came to live at Bocket Hall, Frederick took an interest in Lemsford school, provided boots for the boys and cloaks for the girls and 'treats' in Bocket Park. The year before his death, he had provided the children with soup twice a week in cold weather. The Cowper family were great benefactors to the village of Lemsford. In 1859 St. John's church Lemsford was built and endowed by Anne, Countess Cowper in memory of her husband, George, 6th Earl Cowper. Francis, 7th Earl Cowper built St. John's School in 1872 and supported it financially until 1903.

His wife, Katrine, Countess Cowper, paid for improvements to the church in 1913. Several “Cowper Cottages” were built in the village in a distinctive yellow brick, with a crest on the front of the cottage containing the initials CC and a date.

On the death of Francis, 7th Earl Cowper in 1905, Bocket Hall passed to his sister, Lady **Amabel Frederica Henrietta Cowper (1846-1906)**. She only survived him by one year and the estate then passed to her husband, **Admiral Walter Talbot Kerr (1839-1927)** who lived at Melbourne Hall in Derbyshire.

He too had cottages built for the Bocket Estate workers, including No. 20, dated 1913 known as “Keeper's Cottage” as it was built for one of the gamekeepers on the estate.

The Mount Stephens 1893-1921

Lord George Mount Stephen (1829-1921) rented Brocket Hall from 1893 until his death in 1921. Originally from Banffshire he emigrated to Canada aged 21 and by hard work and business acumen became very wealthy and a great philanthropist. He retired to London in 1890 and rented Brocket Hall as his country home in 1891. In that same year he was created a Baron taking his title from the mountain in British Columbia named in his honour.

His first wife died in 1896 and is buried in St. John's, Lemsford churchyard. The following year he married Georgina May Tuffnel (Gian), Lady in Waiting to the Duchess of Teck. She was the mother of Queen Mary, the wife of King George V, with whom she became a close personal friend.



The King (above) and Queen were frequent visitors to Brocket Hall. Lord Mount Stephen had his eccentricities. He would not have a telephone installed at Brocket Hall despite his business interests. His butler would have to cycle through the Park to send telegrams from Lemsford Post Office and the postmistress then had to walk back with the replies. He also would not purchase a motor car. He regarded both as 'new fangled inventions'.

Lord and Lady Gian Mount Stephen spent most of their married life at Brocket Hall where they took a great deal of interest in the church, school and village. Lord Mount Stephen and the Rev. Ward had the Wagon & Horses PH on the other side of the road from the church demolished - the men should be in the church not in the bar.



He built the Lady Mount Stephen Nursing Home (above) on the site with an endowment to pay for a resident nurse to serve parishioners in both the Lemsford and the Ayot St. Peter parishes.

In 1905 Lady Gian paid for a canteen to be built in Lemsford school where the children could eat their dinner in bad weather. She provided an annual treat for the children each Christmas which included tea, the distribution of prizes of books, dolls and work-baskets and a dress length of warm material with lining for each girl and a jersey for each of the boys.

Lord Mount Stephen paid for the repair of the church organ and Lady Mount Stephen presented the church with the carved altar frontal. The Brocket gardeners decorated the church for the main festivals, although this had to cease after 1915 because of a lack of gardeners, most of them had enlisted.

The Nall-Cains 1921 – to the present day.

After Lord Mount Stephen's death the Hall and estate was put up for sale and bought by Sir Charles Nall-Cain (1866-1934), the wealthy Chairman of the brewing firm of Robert Cain & Sons of Liverpool.

He was created a baronet in the 1921 Birthday Honours for his charitable work, particularly to hospitals. (Under Lloyd George a baronetcy was understood to cost £30,000.)

In 1933 he was created Baron Brocket, of Brocket Hall in the County of Hertford. His title refers to the Hall and not to the original Brocket family. His major gift to the village was the beautiful Brocket Chapel built in memory of Florence, his first wife, the last private chapel to be built in an English Parish Church. At the same time he had other improvements made to the church including the installation of electricity.



2nd Lord Brocket with son

His eldest son, Arthur Ronald Nall-Cain, 2nd Baron Brocket, inherited the title and the estate. He was known as a Nazi sympathiser and used Brocket Hall to entertain supporters of Germany. He was an ungenerous landlord and not popular in the village.

In the 1930s he had an avenue of lime trees planted to form a vista from Bocket Hall to Benstead Wood. A beautiful pair of wrought iron gates were erected where the avenue crosses the Marford Road in memory of his parents. A small copse was planted to hide the houses in Cromer Hyde Lane where the avenue crosses the lane.



Lord Charles Bocket in 1967 outside St John's Church Lemsford

Charles Ronald George Nall-Cain, 3rd Baron Bocket (1952-) was only 15 when he succeeded to the title on the death of his grandfather, his father having died six years earlier. The Hall was in a bad state of repair and he worked tirelessly to improve it and provide an income for the estate.

He converted the Hall into a hotel and conference venue for high profile corporate events and senior government meetings. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher used it on a number of occasions for important meetings and conferences, as it was safe and convenient for London. She also wrote her memoirs here.

Two world class golf courses were created in the Park, the Melbourne course in 1992 and the Palmerston in 2000. In the early 1990s he attempted to solve his financial problems by an insurance fraud with unhappy results. He had to relinquish his interest in the Hall and a sixty year lease was sold to CCA International. In 2016 Bocket Hall Ltd. bought the lease after CCA International went into administration.

Life in the Bocket Lodges in the early 1930s

Jane Thompson was lodge keeper from 1910 to 1936. She had come back home, having been born in the laundry yard at Bocket Hall in 1852. Her duties included opening the gates when gentry arrived. She would curtsy as their carriage drove through and the gentlemen would doff their hats.

Jane's niece, Winifred, moved into the other lodge with her husband and son in the early 1920s. Their daughter was born there and named Florence at the request of Sir Charles Nall-Cain, as she was the first girl born on the estate and he and his wife, Florence, did not have any daughters.

Photo: Arthur Webster, gardener at Bocket, Jane Thompson, gatekeeper



Florence Weston (nee Webster) writes:-

"The lodges each had 1 large room downstairs, with a pantry off. The large kitchen range was always gleaming, and tantalising sights and smells of freshly baked cakes were too much for Florence's father and his friends to resist. Upstairs was one large bedroom with a double and a single bed for my parents and I. My brother slept in the other lodge with great Aunt Jane.

There was no running water; father fetched water from the well on the right side of Bocket drive for drinking, using a yoke to carry the buckets. For other water the well to the left of the lodge was used. Behind the Lodge was a shed with a copper and mangle where the dogs slept on a stage and behind that a toilet."

Four people lived in one lodge in the 1930s, but in recent years one person has occupied both lodges and the gates have opened electronically.

The World Famous Bocket Babies

On the outbreak of war in 1939, the London Maternity Hospital equipped and staffed Bocket Hall as a 50 bed maternity unit for evacuated mothers. The maternity hospital in City Road was badly damaged by bombing on 10 September 1940 and again on the 16 April 1941 and the 10 May 1941. The building was completely destroyed.



Expectant mothers were sent to Bocket Hall and a total of 8,338 Bocket Babies were born in the peace of the countryside. Mr Christy Brown, a surgeon in Harley Street, made the financial arrangements for mothers to be evacuated to Bocket Hall. The first Bocket baby was born on the 3rd September 1939, and the last was born on the 27th November 1949. Lord Melbourne's Room was the centre of the birthing, and the Prince Regent's Chinese Room was used for recovery. Some of the mothers remember being startled by the Chinese style wallpaper as the anaesthetic wore off.

Lemsford House, the old Vicarage next to the church on Bocket Road, was used to accommodate unmarried mothers whose babies were born in Bocket Hall and were to be put up for adoption.

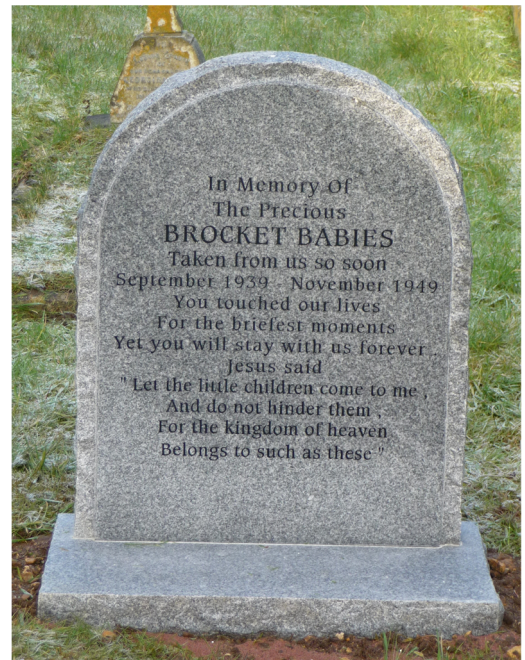
At the end of war in 1946, the City of London Maternity Hospital took over financial responsibility for Bocket Hall from Hertfordshire County Council. It was decided not to rebuild the hospital on the very noisy site in City Road and after several moves is now the City of London Maternity Unit at the Whittington Hospital in Islington.

The Bocket Babies Memorial

In April 2015 two members of Lemsford Local History Group attended a reunion of the Bocket Babies and met June who wanted information about the babies. We asked her if she was a Bocket Baby, she replied "No, but my sister was". We enquired if she was here, and were thrown by her reply "No, she was stillborn".

Her question was "Where are the stillborn babies buried?" We did not know but after talking to various people came to the conclusion that in the 1940s the babies were passed on to the local undertaker, who would place them in a stranger's coffin. No records would be kept of burial or location.

At the next reunion we met Pauline who asked the same question. This led to further research; we learnt that the Burial Register of St John's Church Lemsford lists the names of 62 babies who were born and died at Bocket Maternity Hospital shortly after birth [the youngest only minutes old]. There is no written record of stillborn babies being laid to rest though it seems likely that they were buried in Lemsford Churchyard.



We contacted Justin Burgess (funeral directors) to find out about cemeteries in use in the area in the 1940s. We told him of our findings and suggested a memorial in Lemsford Churchyard would be appropriate. Without a moments hesitation he donated a memorial. The Diocesan fee of £120.00 for the application was paid by Bocket Hall. Permission from the church was granted in January 2016. Justin had the stone inscribed and erected and the Reverend Ron Ingamells held the memorial service on the 9th April 2016.

The Parks & Gardens

Brocket Park when Sir Matthew Lamb bought the estate in 1752

Sir Matthew Lamb bought the estate in 1752 and in 1746 employed the architect James Paine and the landscape designer Richard Woods for the improvement of the Hall and Park.



In 1730 Thomas Winnington had sought ideas from the landscape designer Charles Bridgeman for the enhancement of the park. The River Lea was dammed to form a lake with a white Chinoiserie bridge over the weir connecting the eastern and the western park.

A large walled kitchen garden established to the north-east of the house and an enclosed garden with winding paths and two small pavilions at each of the lake side corners to the south-east.

Trees were planted to frame the view from the Hall of the then main entrance to the Park at Lemsford Mill. Blocks of trees were planted along the south and eastern part of the estate and circular copses at the corners of the fields on the western side.

Brocket Park in the time of Sir Peniston Lamb, 1st Lord Melbourne (1798)

The 1798 map of the Estate shows the improvements made by the landscape designer Richard Woods of Essex for Sir Matthew Lamb and after his death for his son, Sir Peniston Lamb, the first Viscount Melbourne.



The Broadwater was created by enlarging the lake, constructing a cascade at the southern end over which James Paine set his elegant bridge. In the 1790s Sir Peniston Lamb, having been scolded by the Prince Regent for the lack of a respectable race course north of London (Barnet races were distinctly rough) established one in the Park. This became very fashionable and was the Ascot of its day.

James Paine designed the two lodges, decorative screen and gates for the new imposing entrance to the Park at Bocket Corner. From here the drive wound its way gently down over Paine's Bridge to the entrance to the Hall.

Before the First World War Lord Mount Stephen had gardeners. His Head Gardener, George William Kent lived with his family in the six room Garden House, whilst the foremen and seven other gardeners lived in the Bothy and more gardeners lived in their own homes in the parish.

The Monarchs at Bocket Hall

Brocket Hall has many associations with royalty, one of the most noteworthy being that with Queen Elizabeth 1st. It is clear that Elizabeth spent time at Bocket Hall in 1558, with documents showing she wrote a letter from Bocket Hall on 28 Oct, and received an envoy from Phillip II of Spain there on 10 Nov, only five days before Mary's death (M.J. Rodriguez-Salgado and Simon Adams 1984). It seems possible that she was still at the Hall five days later when Mary Tudor died.

"It was whilst Mary was on the throne, Elizabeth was kept under house arrest at Hatfield House. She used to walk along the banks of the River Lea to visit John Bocket, probably plotting to raise an artillery to overthrow Mary. In 1558 Elizabeth was sitting under an oak tree on the far side of the lake when a horseman galloped from London bringing the news that she was the new Queen - From the Wheathampstead website (by Raymond W. Madsen)

Two King George's were regular visitors to Bocket Hall, George IV, and George V, their visits separated by over a century. The first would have been visiting his mistress Lady Elizabeth Melbourne in the 1770s, while George V was frequent guest of Bocket Hall tenants Lord and Lady Mount Stephen in the early 20th Century.



Mathew Lamb's son Peniston (1745 – 1828), who became the first Lord Melbourne. Peniston's political success was thought to be largely a result of the influence of his wife **Elizabeth Millbanke (1751–1818)**, who was mistress of the Prince Regent, later George IV.

Penistone and Elizabeth's second son **William Lamb, 2nd Viscount Melbourne (1779 – 1848)**, inherited the hall and title in 1805 and married Caroline Ponsonby, who has been immortalised as the notorious Lady Caroline Lamb.



A portrait of Lady Caroline Lamb, notorious for her affair with Lord Byron, while married to William Lamb, the 2nd Lord Melbourne. This picture hangs in one of the downstairs drawing rooms at Bocket Hall, and is a duplicate of the portrait by Eliza H Trotter in the 1810s, which hangs in the National Portrait Gallery.

Royal visitors to Bocket Hall through the years would have been entertained in the grand ballroom, which has an ornately decorated ceiling and many historical portraits.

The widowed Lord Melbourne went on, at the age of 58 in 1837, to become Queen Victoria's first Prime Minister and a valued adviser. His mentoring of the young Queen, who was only 18 when she came to the throne, resulted in a close friendship, with Victoria often staying at Bocket Hall.

When Lord Melbourne died in 1848, the hall passed to his sister Emily Mary, who married Lord Palmerston in 1839. Palmerston went on to become Prime Minister, and in 1865 died at Bocket Hall, two days before his 81st birthday.

Rumour has it that his death happened in somewhat bizarre circumstances involving a chambermaid and a billiard table (below).



In 1893, the prominent Canadian businessman **Lord Mount Stephen (1829 – 1921)** rented Bocket Hall as his country residence.

At Bocket Hall, the first Lady Mount Stephen frequently entertained the Prince and Princess of Wales (the prince being the future Edward VII, father of George V) as well as the Duke and Duchess of Connaught and Princess Mary Adelaide, Duchess of Teck.

The second **Lady Mount Stephen, Georgiana (known as Gian) Tufnell (1864–1933)**, had been Lady-in-Waiting to the Duchess of Teck, the mother of Queen Mary, wife of George V. Through this connection, Gian became a lifelong friend and confidant of Queen Mary and she and Lord Mount Stephen regularly entertained the royal couple at Bocket Hall.

Gian Mount Stephen was said to have been exceedingly popular in Hatfield, giving many benefactions. Lady Mount Stephen gave Queen Mary a diamond necklace, which was later given to Princess Margaret, who wore it on her wedding day.

Films made at Bocket Hall

Local History Group, Jeremy summers. Jeremy who lives in Cromer Hyde was assistant for a film called Moonraker which were shot in Bocket Hall grounds.



List Of Films

- 1957 Night of the Demon -Horror
- 1958 Moonraker -Action
- 1973 Lady Caroline Lamb -History | Romance
- 1986 Highlander - Action | Adventure | Fantasy
- 1988 Willow - Fantasy
- 1991 A Kiss Before Dying - Crime | Mystery | Thriller
- 2002 Final Curtain - Drama
- 2006 The Queen - Biography | Drama
- 2011 Johnny English Reborn - Adventure | Comedy

List Of TV Films

- 1974 Father Brown Episode: The Oracle of the Dog - Crime
- 1980 Caleb Williams - Adventure
- 1980 The Professionals Episode: Mixed Doubles - Action | Crime
- 1981 Band of Brothers - Action | Drama | History
- 1982 The Scarlet Pimpernel - Romance | Drama | Action
- 1985 Murder With Mirrors - Crime | Mystery
- 1991 Clarissa - History
- 1991 Morse (Who Killed Harry field) - Crime | Drama | Mystery
- 1995 Pride and Prejudice (TV Mini Series) - Romance | Drama

Memories of Lord Mount Stephen era

Memories of Annie Gardiner who lived in Cromer Hyde

Queen Mary used to visit Bocket and we had to line up in the drive to see her. Lady Mount-Stephen was a great friend of hers and left her all her jewellery when she died. Old Lord Mount-Stephen would not have a car on the place and one had to be hired each time she came.

Dad (William Gardiner) was in the army during the war, he went out to Africa and on to India in 1916, he was kept there for nearly a year after the end of the war because of Gandhi. His job in the gardens at Bocket Hall was waiting for him and he stayed there till 1935 when all the old hands were sacked and green, cheap labour was taken on.



Across the road from the church was the nurse's home, it was built by Lord Mount-Stephen in the place where a pub once stood. He bought the place and pulled it down as he objected to the men going in for a drink after church. The Nurse was free but was very unpopular and a lot of the villagers preferred to have the one from Wheathampstead and pay her. We had to go over there to see the school dentist and Nurse Kenny used to come into school to look at our hair. We hated her.

An extract from 'The Lemsford I knew' by Keith Ladbury (Head Teacher 1902-1936)

All through those early years before the First World War, the School was very fortunate from the great interest taken by Lord and Lady Mount-Stephen. Memories which return were the Christmas Treats provided by Lady Mount Stephen. In those years around 1910 – 1914 each girl was given a dress length (red or green) with lining and each boy two woollen jerseys. A number of books were also given as prizes for attendance, work etc. usually by G.A. Henty.

The Christmas Prize Giving was an Occasion. Early in the day a van would arrive from the Hall with vast supplies of 'tin' loaves, Estate butter, buns and cakes. The Teachers would prepare masses of bread and butter always popular in those days. Tea over, the older boys rearranged the desks, set tables stacked with clothing and prizes which, in due course, Lady Mount Stephen presented.



St Johns School 1910

King George V, being a keen shot, would come down at least once a Season with Queen Mary, a personal friend of Lady Mount. The journey would be to Hatfield station; met there by the Brocket carriage and pair, and driven back to the Hall. On such occasions, the school children could line up on either side of the iron railings to wave as the carriage passed to the Lodge Gates.

The COCHRANE family connections with Bocket Hall

The COCHRANE family of Lemsford have had connections with Bocket Hall and Gardens in various ways over the years. In 1899 my grandparents, John and Lucy Cochrane, were living in a cottage on the Great North Road just above Lemsford. My grandfather was a Waggoner and made regular trips to the London residence of the Bocket family with produce from Bocket gardens, flour from Lemsford Mill, fodder for their horses, etc.



John and Lucy later moved to a Bocket cottage on Church Hill and later still to the 400 year old cottage at Cromer Hyde. From the 1920's to the mid 1950's they came into their own as market gardeners. At the Bocket Estate Shows they won many cups and trophies for their fruit, vegetables and flowers. In the late 1930's and 1940's they supplied produce to Welwyn Department Store and nearby markets always using the pony and trap pulled by Sandy, their pony. Lord Bocket owned the old cottage and pulled it down soon after they died in the 1950's.

My father, James Cochrane, worked in Bocket Gardens under Mr Kent before he went into the 1st World War. His uncle Joe Halsey worked there for many years also.

My mother, Betty Beech, worked for a time at Brocket Hall in the early 1920,s. She enjoyed staff outings on many occasions and accompanied members of the Brocket family on holidays to Scotland.

David Cochrane, my father's youngest brother, worked as a footman for Lady Mount Stephens at Carlton House Terrace in London until leaving for Canada in 1919.



Lord and the 2nd Lady Mount Stephen were very much a part of village life and were well liked in Lemsford and the surrounding area. Families were large in those days and in this small rural community most families had a member connected in some way with Brocket Hall.



We know that many of the people of Lemsford worked on the Brocket Estate and in the Gardens; others were employed in Brocket Hall itself. In large country houses at that time the usual staff would probably have included a housekeeper, a cook, a butler, one or two maids, a footman and a few other servants. Also there was a Head Gardener who had his own house near the Walled Gardens with the adjoining Bothy where the gardeners lived; an Estate Carpenter, also with his own house; the Estate Farm with its fine herd of prize cattle.

Houses built by the Brocket Estate in Lemsford Parish

During the late 19th century and early 20th century the Brocket Estate was responsible for the building of several houses that still stand today for workers on the estate and neighbouring farms.



Houses built in the late 19th century were known as Cowper cottages named after the family who owned the Brocket Estate at the time. These houses were built with a distinctive yellow brick and marked with a shield bearing the date of the build. These can still be seen by a short walk around the Parish and are number 57 Lemsford Village (1880), numbers 40 and 42 Lemsford Village (1886) and the row of terraced cottages numbers 63 to 66 Great North Road (1891). These would have been built for the estate workers.

Whilst in the ownership of the 7th Earl Cowper, Brocket Hall was rented out to Lord Mount Stephens between 1893 and 1921. On the death of Earl Cowper in 1905 his niece Lady Annabel Cowper inherited the property and on her death in 1906 her husband Admiral of the Fleet Lord Walter Kerr inherited the building. Lord Walter Kerr continued to rent out the property to Lord Mount Stephens preferring to live at his home at Melbourne Hall in Derbyshire.

However he did not neglect his duties to Brocket Hall and in the early 20th century was responsible for building several houses in Cromer Hyde which would have been mainly to house the farm labourers for Cromer Hyde Farm and surrounding farms at the time. These houses were built from more traditional red brick and bore the insignia 'WK' with the date of the build. A walk around Cromer Hyde today would find numbers 5 to 11 (1909) and number 20 (1913) known as Keepers Cottage. Numbers 5 to 11 were farm labourers' cottages and were built with the front of the houses facing the fields and the backs looking out on the lane.



Number 20 is known as Keepers Cottage namely because this was built to house the Gamekeeper to Lord Mount Stephens who at that time was Alfred Henry Brown. His grandson is local historian HJ Brown known as Jack and he has written several articles on local history including an account called 'Life in a Victorian Cottage' which can be found on the LHG website.

The houses were all built with brick outbuildings which would have served as toilet facilities, there being no water or sewage available. Water would have been drawn from a nearby well and taken to the houses via a yoke with buckets on either end. Some houses were fortunate and had a well in the garden.

Gallery

William Gardiner working at Brocket Hall



William Gardiner with gamekeeper William with other person.

Gardiner Rabbiting



William Gardiner with shot fox

Gamekeepers at Brocket Hall



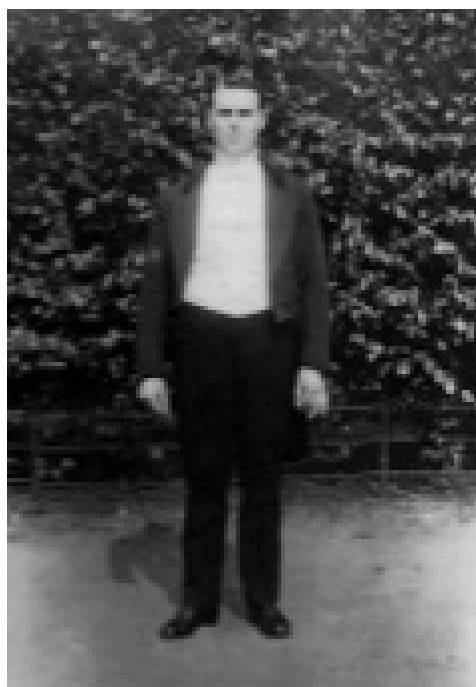
Workers at Bocket Hall



Mr Telford.



Walter Daws



Mr Rhodes



Mr Smith, one of the gamekeepers



Brocket Outing 1920s - Shirley Knapps mother, Betty Beech, worked for a time at Brocket Hall in the early 1920,s.



Scottish House in 1920s - Shirley Knapps mother, Betty Beech, worked for a time at Brocket Hall in the early 1920,s.



Lady Angela Bocket



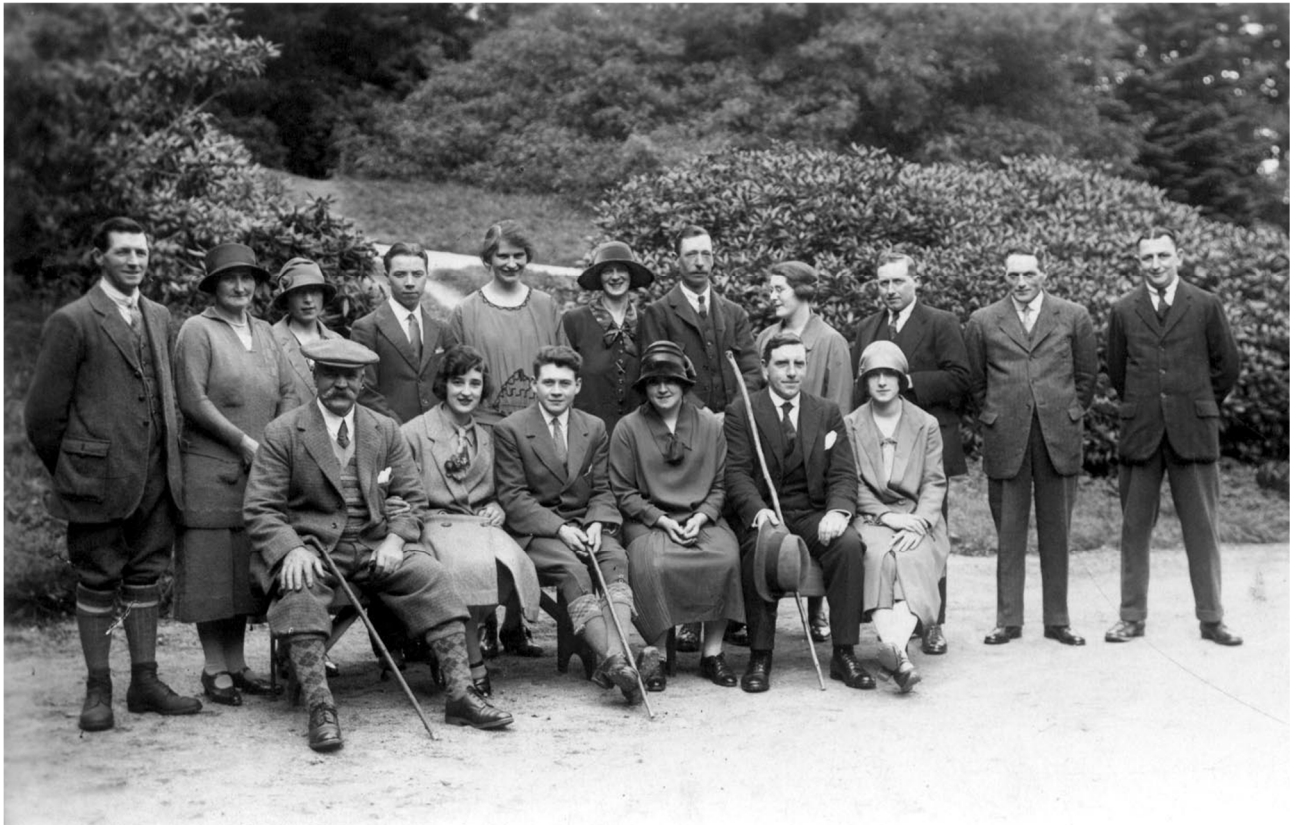
2nd Lord Bocket



Paynes bridge, Bocket Park 1950



Lady Angela Bocket & son



Staff at Bocket Hall 1924

References

www.geni.com

National Portrait Gallery

Wheathampstead History group

HJ Brown

Shirley Knapp

Brocket Babies Website

Imperial War Museum

Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies

Brocket Hall Ltd

Andy Chapman

LEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

April 2016

Lemsford Local History Group

No 1: Rex's Walk through Lemsford Village.

No. 2: Jeremy's Walk through Cromer Hyde.

*No.3: Lemsford Village History. Some notes
about the village pubs, past and present.*

*No.4. St John the Evangelist,
Lemsford Memorial Inscriptions.*

*No.5. The History of Brocket Hall
1200 to present day.*