



STEEPLE ASTON VILLAGE ARCHIVE TRUST

A Short History of Brasenose Farm

Built in the early 19th century, Brasenose Farm house, where I live, has had an interesting history - from being college-owned land to a working farm and most recently a family home. The exact date of construction is unknown but it is thought that Brasenose College built the Farm house between 1815 and 1833 as a result of Steeple Aston being enclosed in 1767. The College became one of the main owners of land in and around the village in the 16th Century, and established an association through figures such as the village rector Samuel Radcliffe, who was also Principal of the College.

Throughout the 19th century and early 20th century, the number of farms in the Steeple Aston area did not change, although their size did change as ownership moved between families. Brasenose Farm was sold to William Taylor, my "Uncle Bill", in 1941. Richard Lovell Taylor, Uncle Bill's father, rented the land around the farm from the College in 1902/3 on his return from the Boer War, so Taylors have been farming for 100 years. He rented Rectory Farm from around 1908, and then Bill bought it in 1941.

A farm cottage, adjacent to the farmhouse, existed from the early years, and in the 1901 census there was a family of four registered there. The Gardener family were farm hands and were provided with their own home. However, when the main road was widened in 1969 the farm cottage was partially demolished to allow rights of access, and has since fallen into even more ruin. It now consists of a couple of crumbling walls at the bottom of the farmhouse garden.



Farmhouse and outbuildings in 1960s

My Uncle farmed for many years at Brasenose, both arable and livestock, and a dairy was established there. To support this they installed a comprehensive water system fed from a well drawn by the wind pump, still a landmark on the Oxford Road today. Bill was quite a character and had a brilliant engineering mind - he never bought anything new unless it was tractors!! When he died in the early 1990s the Rays inherited the land and the farm business. In 1998 the Rays sold Brasenose Farm and it ceased to be a working farm. The land was split into the current plots. The farm house and the fields opposite were one plot and the cow shed and adjacent field was the other. The cow shed was later converted into a house.

Since then the farm house has been a family home. Recently, however, the farming roots have crept back and today the land around the old farmhouse is used once again for arable farming. It is also now home to eight sheep and many chickens, not to mention a polytunnel which is starting to produce strawberries, tomatoes, and salad. Whilst it's not to the same scale as in earlier times, the farm still lives on.

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