

# The Farmers Of Moorden

## JOHN, ANNE & GEORGE STACE

The Stace family were a prominent family in the parish of Leigh having been granted lands by Henry VII, including what is now Great Hollanden Farm. These lands were eventually passed to John Stace of Cobham & it was his son, also John, that held the lease of Moorden. He was married to Anne & although she was thought to be with child when he wrote his will in 1590 he also had a baseborn son, John.

At the time John made his will in 1590, there were at least four servants working for him, Elizabeth Parminger, Anne Bothbie, Johane Tannes & Edward Children. He grew corn & kept cattle. John left half the land he leased at Moorden to his wife & the other half to his brother George with the stipulation they should both enter a bond of £400 to 'save each other harm' should either of them fail to fulfil the obligations of the lease. Anne was to have all his waistscot & 'all other things belonging to housekeeping' & George the residue which included ironworks. John also left ten shillings to repair the highway between Moorden & Redleaf Gates.

In St Mary's Church in Leigh there is a brass plate with black lettering taken from John Stace's grave, which reads:

*John Stace, of Moorden, eldest son of John Stace of Hollanden, ob.  
1590*

## WILLIAM & GEORGE TURNER

Leigh Parish Registers show that a William Turner of Moorden was buried on 15 November 1692.

In Richard Children's will of 1749 George Turner is in occupation at Moorden & is included as the tenant there a year later in the Church Warden's list of those liable for the upkeep of the church boundary. Interestingly, a William Turner was recorded on the list as tenant at Great Barnetts farm in Leigh, one of the most profitable farms in the parish & with very similar farm buildings to those at Moorden, including the uniquely structured granary.

According to a deed of exchange between John Children & Thomas Harvey of Redleaf, George Turner was still at Moorden in 1785

## HUGH NEWSHAM

At the time of the 1861 Census Hugh Newsham (26), a young farmer from Cambridgeshire was farming at Moorden. His wife Elizabeth (24) was born in Huntingdon, so it is highly likely that William Wells II who owned Moorden at this time & whose family seat was in Huntingdon provided them with the opportunity to take on the farm. They had a baby of 6 months called Emily & they employed two boys on the farm, plus Henry Herbert (39) a carter from Buckinghamshire & two servants girls from Peshurst; Fanny Yeoman (29) & Jane Kingswood (12).

Hugh's time at Moorden seems short lived as he was leaving the farm & the live & dead stock of the farm, as well as his 'new' furniture & effects were being auctioned off (see South

## JOHN ABRAHAM DAY



c. 1930, John Abraham Day outside the farmhouse at Moorden

John Abraham Day took on Moorden Farm in 1900 later moving into the Farmhouse in 1902 with his wife Mary (nee Skinner), daughter of George Skinner from Locksingtons Farm in Chiddlingstone. John Abraham had been farming at Larkins Farm in Chiddlingstone with his brother James. They originated from Marden where their parents farmed.

John & Mary had five children, Eric, Don, Ethel, Cecil & Helen (Nellie)

John Abraham was a dedicated & innovative farmer, who specialised in hops, fruit & pedigree Large Black Pigs. He had many successes at agricultural shows.

He set up a successful contracting business, along with his cousin George Hale from Somerden Farm in Chiddlingstone Causeway, visiting farms with their traction engines to thresh corn.

John Abraham was also highly involved in the local farming & village community; an active member of the Tonbridge Branch of the National Farmers Union & a member of the management committee of the Bolebroke Beagles. He was also a keen supporter of the West Kent Hunt & in his younger days used to hunt regularly with the Surrey Stag Hounds. Other interests included the Tonbridge Fat Stock Show & the Peshurst Ploughing Match, of which he was one of the founders. For nine years he represented the Leigh Parish on the Sevenoaks Rural District Council, he was also a trustee of the Causeway village hall & a vice president of the Causeway Cricket Club.

## ROBERT HUNT

Robert Hunt was a tenant at Moorden in 1623. He originated from Shilbourne as did his wife Johane, daughter of Olyver Mills, blacksmith. At the time of Olyver's will in 1625, Olyver had also moved to Leigh, & Robert & Johane had four children; Clemence, John, Nicholas, Maries. By the time Richard wrote his own will in 1635 they had had two more sons; William & James.

It is probable that the rooms 'Hunt's Hall' & 'Hunt's Parlour' mentioned in a 1660 inventory of Moorden Farmhouse relate to Robert Hunt or one of his heirs.

## RICHARD HAMMS

A 1660 indenture between Richard Saltonstall & Richard Hamms shows Richard Hamms in occupation at Moorden & in the Kent Heath Tax Assessment of 1664 a Richard Hamms is described as a gentelmen of Peshurst with 10 hearths, which implies he must have had several holdings & was a man of substance. The yearly rent he paid for Moorden was £145.

He was most likely the Richard Hamms who was married to Mary Oliver who died in 1682. It is possible Mary was a relation of Robert Hunt's wife & this is how Moorden had come to be occupied by Richard Hamms.

In Richard Hamms' will of 1686 he names his brothers as Francis & Thomas & his cousin Stephen as his executor. Stephen is a London haberdasher of whom a 1690 monument can be found in the church of St. Anne and St. Agnes, Aldersgate.

## FRANCIS SHATTERDEN

Born in 1615 Francis (Franke) Shatterden was the daughter of Thomas Streatfeild & Frances Reeves. She married John Shatterden who died in 1645.

By 1663 she was listed as a widow living at Moorden in a conveyance concerning her inherited land in Chiddingtons.

By 1682 Francis was living in Malpas in the county of Cheshire.

## GEORGE & JOHN FRANKS

In the same year of 1785 George Franks starts farming at Moorden. He is mentioned in a release between Thomas Medhurst, yeoman of Leigh & Charcot, & George Children concerning Great & Little Moorden Meads.

Interestingly it seems Jane Wimhurst opened up Moorden Farmhouse as a meeting place for divine worship & charitable collections towards Christian Missions. Anniversaries of which were held in 1867 & 1868.

## JANE WIMHURST

Jane Wimhurst (52) a widow from Sussex, farmed at Moorden in 1871, but employed Charles Burgess as Balif. At this time Jane had two daughters, Harriet (17) & Elizabeth (16) & two sons Fredrick (13) & Alfred (10). She employed five men & three boys on the farm.

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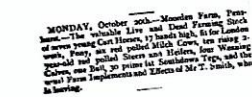
## EDWARD LEIGH

Edward Leigh married Frances Keeys, daughter of Richard Keeys from Chiddington in 1814 witnessed by Thomas Medhurst. At the baptism of their son Edward in 1816 they were recorded as farming at Moorden.

This was at a time of great change for the farm having been bought by William Wells I after George Children's Bankruptcy.

## T SMITH

A T Smith appears to have farmed at Moorden sometime after 1871, according to the following article of September 1879 in the Kent & Sussex Courier when he is moving on.



## JEREMIAH BELLINGHAM

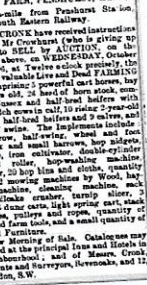
First recorded in the parish marriage records as Farming at Moorden in 1826, Jeremiah Bellingham (aged 20) from Shipbourne appears again on the 1841 Census as living at Moorden with his wife Remelia (by then aged 30) & their two sons Charles (15) & William (1). They have three male servants, William Wiels (20), James Wiels (15), Henry Latmer & a female servant Ann Boakes (15).

Ten years later Jeremiah is listed as a widower & lives with just his house keepers Hester Walls (34) & Mary Barfoot (18), Wagoner George Saunders (41) & farm servants George Wickenden (21) & James Leigh (18).

## JOHN CROWHURST

In 1881 John Crowhurst, widower (65) born in Withyham in Sussex, farmed at Moorden Farm with his three sons Albert (27), Henry (23) & Caleb (20). He employed four men & a woman on the farm. By 1891 John's daughters in law, Emma (44) & Ann (32), lived with them as well as three farm labourers, James James (23), Frank Sands (17) & Edward Roberts (40).

Local newspaper articles from the 1890s show John & Henry were associated with the Chiddlingstone & South East Kent Society & the West Kent Hunt.



According to the Kent Courier article opposite John or H? Crowhurst gave up the farm in 1896. This would have coincided with the death of Frank Ernest Hills.

John retired & by 1901 was living at neighbouring Whitepost Farm, which his son Henry & wife Mary farmed, helped by their servant girl Minnie Everest.

## WILLIAM CHATTERTON

William & his wife Mary Chatterton were from Lincolnshire, but farmed at Moorden in 1857 & are included in some of the records associated with improvements William Wells II made to the farm.

They had three sons whilst at Moorden; William, Louis & John. By 1859 they had moved to Well Place Farm in Peshurst where they had a fourth son, Percival & a daughter, Annie. It is likely they had given up Moorden for a larger farm as Well Place Farm was 470 acres at that time. William comes across as a gentelmen farmer, employing a large number of farm workers & domestic staff as well as a nurse maid & governess for his children, who are all listed as Scholars.

## HERBERT SIMMONS

In 1901 Herbert (38) & Ada Simmons (33) occupied Moorden. Herbert came from Wrotham & Ada from East Peckham. They had two servants living with them, a domestic cook called Frances Doiding (34) & a young lad called Tom Nickling (18).

Interestingly at this time there was a family, the Hedges from Surrey, living in the barn at Moorden. Thomas (39) & his wife Martha (40) had four children, Harry (14), Emily (7), Daisy (4) & Frank (2). Thomas & Harry both worked on the farm.

Herbert & Ada moved to Greentrees Farm in Tonbridge after leaving Moorden.

## ERIC DAY



c.1920, Eric Day as a young man in the farmyard at Moorden in his motorcar

When John Abraham died in 1938 his sons carried on running the farm, until Cecil & Don took on their own farms, Poundbridge Farm in Peshurst & Deaney Farm in Chartham, & the running of Moorden was left to Eric, who formed E J Day (Peshurst) Ltd. In 1954 Eric's mother Mary Day died & Eric moved into Moorden Farmhouse from nearby Spile Park, where he had been living since 1945 with his wife Betty & son John.

Eric carried on farming where his father left off, continuing to grow hops, fruit & corn as well as raising pigs & rearing Sussex yearlings brought to Moorden in the spring.

Eric also played cricket for Chiddlingstone Causeway.

His wife Betty was a keen horsewoman & secretary for the West Kent Foxhounds, often having set up a successful business rearing chicken at Moorden & nearby Cinderhill Farm, to produce eggs in quantity for Stonegate Packers amongst others.

## JOHN DAY



2013, John Day in dilapidated hoggarden at Moorden

After finishing his education at Eastbourne College Eric's son John returned to work alongside him on the farm at Moorden.

In 1980 John officially took over the running of the farm after the death of his father. He moved, with his wife Sandra & son Thomas, from No.2 Postoffice Cottages in Chiddlingstone Causeway, into one half of the Farmhouse at Moorden, his mother, Betty, remaining in the other until her death in 1984.

John saw farming & the farm landscape at Moorden change a great deal with the inevitable cease in production of hops & fruit & the conversion of the traditional farm buildings in the 1980s. John continued with the production of arable crops, & sheep & a contemporary livestock building was built at Moorden to support this enterprise.

It was a difficult time for the farming industry & John & Sandra diversified into running a successful bed & breakfast business to help bolster the farm revenue.

The farm's wildlife has always been important to John, who assisted by his daughter Rebecca, implemented an ELS Environmental Stewardship Scheme on the farm.

Also continuing in the line of keen cricket enthusiasts, John has always undertaken the upkeep of the farm's cricket pitch for the annual amateur match against neighbouring Beckets Farm.

## TOM DAY



2020, Tom Day at lambing time with nephew Freddie

By 2008 John had taken a step back from the farm business to allow his son Tom to take over, moving with Sandra to Edridge. Tom moved into a new farmhouse & the original farmhouse was sold.

Several contemporary farm buildings were erected to form a new farmyard & support the farming systems. The farm enterprises now consisted of grass production for producing haylage & hay for the equine market & the re-introduction of a small herd of Sussex Cattle, which was later disbanded due to the unsuitable heavy clay ground conditions of the farm. Sheep production continued, but lambing was no longer carried out undercover.

With no need for large quantities of straw for the new lambing system the decision was made to cease the production of arable crops on the farm. The arable enterprise itself had also been struggling to bring in a revenue because there weren't enough acres to spread the cost of the machinery required, or justify outside contractors to undertake the task.

Tom undertook an extensive schedule of improvements to the farm including re-fencing & hedge planting, coppicing & management of the watercourses & waterbodies on the farm.