

THE HISTORY OF Nos. 1 & 2 MARKET HILL, BUCKINGHAM

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The demolition of these houses confirmed Sir Nicholas Pevsner's opinion that they were in fact one house. The fine 15th-century timbers showed that the two parts had been linked by a room over an archway between them, giving access from Market Hill to a yard at the back.¹ The map on p.294, from the 10½" O.S. map of 1881, shows that all the back land of this great house running down to the Ouse had at some time been included in the grounds of The White House that adjoined it on the north-east. This looks like being a reversal of the earlier state of affairs, for it is highly unlikely that a house of the sort that Mr. Rouse has shown this to have been would have had no land attached to it other than a yard. It will be argued later that the site of The White House had once been occupied by farm buildings belonging to the owners of the house that concerns us. Who built this house and on what site, and what was its subsequent history, are questions which may be answered with a little patient enquiry.

In the 15th century the Stafford dukes of Buckingham held the lordship of Buckingham. They had great seigniorial rights, but never much property of their own there. Duke Humphrey was killed in battle in 1460 and Duke Henry was executed for treason after leading a rebellion against Richard III. In 1497 when Edward Duke of Buckingham came into his estates, he found his affairs in great disorder.² The castle of Buckingham had been allowed to fall into decay. The Fowler family had far more influence in the town than the dukes. The Fowlers were lawyers who had succeeded to the immense practice of John Barton senior and John Barton junior, two brothers, who in turn in the early 15th century had succeeded another lawyer, Roger Skirett. At the same time John Barton Senior, Recorder of London, purchased Skirett's messuage and other property in Buckingham. On his death in 1431, John Barton senior left his estates in the town and elsewhere, after life interests had expired, to William Fowler, his nephew and himself a lawyer.³ A rental of about 1450 shows how extensive the Buckingham property was.⁴ It was however charged with the maintenance of Barton's Chantry in Buckingham church and the payment of the stipend of its priest. Only if the endowment proved insufficient was the burden to fall on the other estates.

William married Cicely Englefield, daughter and co-heiress of Nicholas Englefield, through whom Rycote and other property came to the Fowlers. They had two sons, Richard and Thomas, both lawyers. Richard succeeded to the property, sided with

1.N. Pevsner, *Buckinghamshire*, (1960), p.74. Plate 1A.

2.C. Rawcliffe, 'A Tudor Nobleman as Archivist: Papers of Edward Third Duke of Buckingham', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, N. 5, April 1976, p.294.

3.Browne Willis, *History and Antiquities of Buckingham*, p.51.

4.British Library, Add. Roll 127.

Edward IV against Henry VI, and prospered. He was courtier and financier and held many public offices. In 1471 he became Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which supplied the impecunious king with revenue free from the control of the Exchequer and Parliament.⁵ Although he can seldom have been in Buckingham on account of his important public duties, he was a benefactor to the town. He added a new aisle to the church and rebuilt the shrine of Saint Rumbold the patron saint of the borough. He would have needed an imposing residence in keeping with his official position and as the administrative headquarters of his estates. He needed in fact just such a house as this one, and it will be argued that direct and circumstantial evidence point to that identity.

When the Chancellor died in 1477, he left to his son Richard, still a minor, all his estates, except his dwelling-house in Buckingham which went to Thomas his brother for life.⁶ When Richard married in 1485, he was granted his Buckinghamshire estates, with the exception of the manor houses of Buckingham and Water Stratford.⁷ The manor house of Buckingham must have been the Chancellor's dwelling-house which had been assigned to Thomas, who at that time was steward of the manor of Buckingham and no doubt held courts there. Although he had been closely associated with the Yorkist court, his career was not interrupted by the change of dynasty. He was MP for Wycombe 1472–5, Knight of the Shire for Buckinghamshire in 1478, perhaps 1484 and in 1495 and three times Sheriff. In 1494 Henry VII stayed at Fowlers on his way from Wycombe to Woodstock.⁸ In the previous year Thomas, in order to silence his enemies, had felt obliged to bring an action for defamation in the Prebendary of Buckingham's peculiar court.⁹ His character was vindicated, for he had the backing of eight of the principal townsmen, including Richard More gentleman, his cousin, and John Lambert, a future bailliff. The More and Lambert families were to play an important part in the history of the town and the house called Fowlers.

The first indications of its site are found in the deeds of The Cock inn in the early 16th century. In 1508, Edmund Vawse, a wealthy draper, and his wife conveyed to their daughter Agnes and her husband John Hartwell the inn with its croft and garden, lying between the messuage of Richard Fowler knight, the Chancellor's son, and The Angel, and between the highroad and the Ouse. In 1524 Henry Miller bought the reversion expectant on the deaths of Edmund Vawse and his wife from William son and heir of John Hartwell. The sale was completed in 1528, when The Cock is described as lying between the house of Sir Richard Fowler and that of William Counser called the Angel. In 1529 Henry Miller granted it to Paul Dayrell and other feoffees to his own use.¹⁰

After a gap of over fifty years another series of Cock deeds begins, giving a more precise location to Fowlers. In 1584 Paul Miller and John his son and heir sold to Hugh Hethersey or Ethersey, shoemaker, for £120 'all their messuage called The Cock, with a close of garden adjoining, situate between the messuage of Richard Fowler esquire, now

5.R. Somerville, *History of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1265–1603*, (1952) p.391.

6.George Lipscomb, *History and Antiquities of the County of Buckingham*, II, p.578.

7.B. L., Lansdowne Charter 5745.

8.*History of Parliament 1439–1509*, ed. J. C. Wedgwood and A. D. Holt, II, pp.350–3.

9.Lincoln Archives Office, Diocesan Records, Cj. 1.

10.P.R.O., Ancient Deeds, C 146/5084, 7024, 7289, 7402, 7513, 7597.

in the tenure of Thomas More gentleman, on the east, and the messuage of Paul Miller called The Angel on the south, whereof one head extends upon the queen's highway called the Market Place on the west and the other head extends down towards a river called the Ouse towards the east and south'. The description is consistent with The Angel being No. 9 Market Square, The Cock No. 10, and Fowlers Nos. 1 and 2 Market Hill, all three facing the Market Place with land behind running down to the Ouse.¹¹ In these houses lived three notable families. Two of the Millers had been bailiffs of the town. Hugh Ethersey was to be bailiff in 1591 and 1600, while Thomas More had been bailiff three times and was a kinsman of his landlord Richard Fowler III.¹² In fact Raphael More had recently succeeded his father as tenant of Fowlers.

During the hundred years since the death of Richard Fowler the Chancellor, the family fortunes had declined. When his son Richard II died in 1528, he left a large family, two married daughters and six sons, of whom George the eldest seems to have been incapacitated in some way. In order to provide for his children, Richard disposed of Oxfordshire property and acquired two Bedfordshire manors, Tilsforth and Stanbridge. In his will he left the profits of these manors to George for life, with reversion to Edward his second son who was assigned the Buckingham estate and is thought to have resided there.¹³ In 1540 Edward was succeeded by his son Gabriel who lived at Tilsforth and appears to have granted a lease of Fowlers in Buckingham to Thomas More and then to Raphael More his son. When Gabriel Fowler died in 1582, he left four daughters and a son, Richard Fowler III, the Richard esquire of The Cock deed of 1584. Richard was instructed in his father's will to sell Fowlers Farm in Buckingham, in the tenure of Raphael More, when he came of age, and with the proceeds to pay Gabriel's debts and provide marriage portions of £200 for each of his daughters.¹⁴

As the wealth and prestige of the Fowlers diminished, so that of the Lamberts increased. They were in origin graziers and butchers. In 1454 William Lambert was trading in Buckingham and held 'a great corner shop in The Shambles with six shops new built and to the great corner shop pertaining'.¹⁵ Three or more John Lamberts served as bailiffs. John Lambert I who supported Thomas Fowler in his lawsuit of 1493 appears to have been bailiff twice, in 1495 and 1513. It was John Lambert II who eventually acquired the concealed lands of Edward Duke of Buckingham, attainted and executed in 1521, including the Castle Farm, later the principal residence of the Lambert family.¹⁶ He was described as gentleman, burgess and justice, when he died in 1578.¹⁷ When Lady Jane Grey usurped the throne, he kept the town loyal to Queen Mary who in 1553/4 rewarded it with a charter of incorporation, freeing it from the control of its lord. John Lambert II was already in office as the lord's bailiff and became 'the first and new bailiff under the Queen', the equivalent of a mayor. He was a royal official to whom writs were directed; he held the queen's courts and acted as coroner and escheator in the

11. Bucks. Record Office, Buckingham Borough Records, Cock Deeds. See map., p.294

12. Lipscomb, II, p.567, list of bailiffs.

13. P.R.O., Prob 11/22/40

14. Prob 11/65/8.

15. B.L., Lansdowne Ch. 574.

16. Browne Willis, *Buckingham*, p.50.

17. Buckingham Parish Register.

borough.¹⁸ Before he died the last vestiges of the power of the lord of the manor over Buckingham had been swept away when in 1572 Bernard Brocas, then lord, leased all his rights to the corporation for 2000 years. Henceforth property in Buckingham was held of the borough and conveyances were entered in its court books.

There can be little doubt that in the days of Richard Fowler the Chancellor and Thomas his brother it was at Fowlers that the borough courts were held, and so probably they continued to be. That they were held in this house, at any rate during the latter half of the Tudor age, is strongly evidenced by the sumptuous decoration of its rooms, and by the form of it in the principal chamber, where the arms of Elizabeth dominated the wall facing the door and all the walls were striped in royal purple and gold. The medallions in the elegant frieze predominantly bore the initials IL – as will be shown probably those of John Lambert III – but others also appear perhaps of other local patricians. If the Lambert attribution is sound, these decorations can be dated to 1591–2.¹⁹

But beneath them, as Mr Rouse has shown, was an earlier scheme, different in character but equally fine, dating from the earlier part of the century. It seems that this room was set apart from the rest of the mansion as a court room, not only where the bailiff could exercise his jurisdiction, or royal justices, but where kings and queens might sit in majesty. Henry VII was entertained at Fowlers in 1494; he was a man of quiet tastes, but his son would have appreciated more lavish expenditure. The earlier decoration of the court room may well date from the first years of his reign. Although there is no record of Henry VIII himself staying at Buckingham until 1539 and 1540, it is said that Catherine of Aragon stayed there in 1513, and there received the news of Flodden.²²

It was John Lambert III, son of Queen Mary's bailiff, who succeeded to the position of the Fowler family in Buckingham, and he naturally wished to acquire their house with its traditions and its court room. In 1582, the same year that he became bailiff Gabriel Fowler died. Perhaps it had been arranged between them that John Lambert should purchase the Fowler estates in Buckingham as soon as Richard the heir came of age and was able to dispose of them. It was some years before it passed into his possession. On 10 March 1591 Fowlers Farm was conveyed to trustees and 18 June by them to John Lambert. He held it peacefully for almost a year and it is to this period that the late 16th-century wall-paintings in the front room of No. 1 Market Hill should be assigned.

His right to the estate was disputed and became the subject of a lawsuit of topical interest and importance. On 27 May 1592 two professional discoverers of 'concealed lands,' that is to say lands devoted to the maintenance of chantries or other 'superstitious uses', contrived to obtain a grant from the Crown, on the ground that the charges that John Barton had created on his Buckingham property brought it within the ambit of the statute of 1 Edward VI. The will of John Barton senior was read verbatim in court, and the fact that the farm and six acres, parcel of ten acres, was among the lands devised could not be disputed. On behalf of John Lambert it was argued that the claim did not fall within the statute, and the matter was reserved for argument among the judges. On the one hand, land devoted solely to the upkeep of chantries and the like unquestionably

18. B.R.O., Buckingham Borough Records, Court Book. Queen Mary's Courts are headed 'Court of the Lady Queen there before the Bailiff and Burgesses' for 25 June and 26 July 1554, and 'Court of the King and Queen nomine Bailiff and Burgesses' subsequently.

19. See Plates IIB and IIIA.

20. *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, XIV, Nos. 545, 1011 and 1012.

passed to the Crown on the statute becoming law. On the other hand, if a specific sum were charged on the land for such a purpose, the rent-charge passed to the Crown, subject to which the owner might retain the land. This case lay betwixt and between; the stipend of the priest was indeed fixed and limited, but the maintenance of the chantry chapel and almshouses might absorb the whole revenue of the estate, so that the argument that John Barton's dominant purpose had been the endowment of the Fowlers rather than the upkeep of the chantry fell to the ground. In Michaelmas Term 1602 the case was argued by four judges whose deliberations are minutely reported in *Coke's Reports*. They decided that the royal grant to the discoverers was good in law and that their tenant Theophilus Adams had been wrongfully ejected by John Lambert.²¹

Nothing is known of the negotiations between John Lambert and the owners of Fowlers under the royal grant and their tenant, but he was able to buy out their claims and acquire the property.²² By the time of his death in 1611 the Lambert family was predominant in Buckingham and of standing in official circles. William his son married Mary, the sister of Sir Frances Crawley, Justice of the Common Pleas. The initials of William and Mary are found on the Castle House which they extended and modernised, making it the chief residence in Buckingham. At William's death in 1626, his Inquisition Post Mortem showed that he held the Castle House 'of the king as of his manor of East Greenwich by fealty and in common socage', but 'a messuage late Fowlers with twelve acres of pastures appurtenant' was held 'of the bailiff and burgesses of the borough of Buckingham in free and common socage, by fealty and suit of court and rent of 12d'.²³ This document disposes of the belief of Browne Willis and later historians that the Castle House and Fowlers were identical.

William's son died still a minor in 1632 and left as his heir his sister Mary aged thirteen. After a childless marriage to her cousin John Crawley who died in 1641, she married Edward son and heir of Sir Hervey Bagot baronet of Staffordshire, by whom she had a large family. Mary and Edward never lived in Buckingham and in 1667 sold all their property there. At the end of the indenture of Bargain and Sale of the estates is a schedule of leases, the last of which records 'one fee farm rent of £6. 1s. 4d. charged upon one William Lambert deceased for a messuage and six acres of land, parcel of a late chantry called Barton's Chantry in the town of Buckingham'; in fact Fowlers.²⁴ This William was the youngest son of Simon Lambert, brother of John Lambert III. Simon was bailiff in 1612 and died in 1618; his third son Thomas was bailiff in 1631. This branch of the family may have lived at Fowlers and have been responsible for the extensions to No. 1 Market Hill and the insertion of the fine panelling.²⁵

No further reference to Barton's Chantry or to Fowlers have been found. The identification of Nos. 1 and 2 Market Hill with Fowlers must be established at this point. We know from The Cock deeds that Fowlers faced the Market Place and that its land ran

21. *Coke's Reports*, edition 1738, IV, p.96 seq.

22. B.R.O., Buckingham Borough Records, Box. 9. The Court Book for 28 April 1603 contains the following entries

Edward and Francis Dayrell gentlemen for a certain tenement lately Fowlers 2s. Raphael More for a tenement in his tenure: 3s. 4d. Theophilus Adams for Fowlers Farm 12d. John Lambert for a messuage in his tenure 8d.

The quit rent was 1s. a year. We appear to have here 7 years' quit rent apportioned among 4 parties who had claims on Fowlers. The court of 13 April 1607 contains the name of T. Adams, but in 5 October, 1607 it had been entered and cancelled. These random entries are difficult to interpret.

23. P.R.O., C142/429/118.

24. C54/4226

25. Plate IIA.

down to the river. We can be confident that from the 15th century to the 17th it was an imposing and sumptuous house. We know also that it was a farm with ten or twelve acres attached to it – meadow land no doubt along the river. It seems highly probable that The White House, and the George Inn which preceded it, were built by later owners of Fowlers on land on which there had previously been barns and a farmyard, for it would hardly have been practicable to operate a farm with no other way on to the highway, except through the domestic entry. But the matter is clinched by the prominence of the initials IL in the rich decoration of the court room in our house, for we know that the Fowler family continued to own their house up to the time when Richard Fowler III sold it to John Lambert, just about the date when these paintings were done.

After the sale of the Bagot estate in 1667, the history of the Fowlers and their old house on Market Hill was soon forgotten. It seems best to use the term, Market Hill estate, to cover Nos. 1 and 2 and later buildings on the land to the north-east of them. In fact no reference to it has been found between 1667 and 1696, when The Cock, no longer an inn and divided in two, was purchased by John Butterfield tallowchandler, and formed part of his marriage settlement. The Bargain and Sale describes the property as lying between the messuage of Joseph Gurney on the south-west and the messuage of John Muscot on the north-east. John Muscot was living in the old Fowler tenement, but whether as owner or tenant is not known. He had a remarkable career. He was postmaster of Buckingham 1686 to 1690, he became a burgess in 1702, bailiff in 1707, and was elected M.P. for the borough in 1713, but disqualified. Perhaps the old house gave him prestige in the town and helped his political ambitions. He died in 1731.²⁶

By this time a change had come over Buckingham, for in 1725 a great fire had devastated the town and it was many years before it was rebuilt. The Market Hill estate and the houses near it in the Market Square were spared and became all the more valuable. By 1741 a large new inn called The George had been built on the land where Fowlers Farm is thought to have stood.²⁷ It was in a splendid position, facing the widest part of the street and to the rear had land running down to the river. This inn raised the tone of the neighbourhood. In 1766 No. 10 Market Square was purchased by Benton Seeley, the writing-master, engraver and publisher of the first guide to Stowe. For some years he had had a shop in Buckingham patronized by the gentry. On his premises he installed a printing press at the back and, in the shop he sold all sorts of useful goods, in addition to being a bookseller and stationer and running a circulating library.²⁸ Perhaps Italian-Swiss watch and clockmakers and silver-smiths had already set up a business in No. 1 Market Hill. By the early 19th century the old Fowler house had certainly been divided into two business premises.²⁹

The George continued to be an inn until it became the residence of The Rev. James Long Hutton, an Oxford graduate, who became curate of Maids Moreton in 1790 and rector in 1791.³⁰ He came of a Lancashire family which since the Dissolution of the Monasteries had held the estate of Thorphinsty Priory in Cartmel, to which he was heir.³¹ He had other expectations through his mother, niece of The Rev. Thomas Long, rector of

26. Buckingham Borough Records, Cock Deeds; Corporation Precedent Book. D. Elliott, *Buckingham*, p.226. Bucks. Archaeological Society, T. Sylvester, MS History of Buckingham (1826-9), p.50v.

27. Elliott, p.204. Bucks County Council Estates Dept., White House Deeds, Map. p.294

28. I am indebted to Mr. George Clarke of Stowe for information about Benton Seeley, and to Mr. John Service of Messrs. Seeley, Service and Cooper for allowing me to see the Seeley file.

29. Pigot's *Directory*, 1830; Musson and Craven's *Directory*, 1853; Buckingham Electoral Register, 1846.

30. White House Deeds.

31. *Victoria County History of Lancashire*, VIII, pp.282-3.

Finmere, who belonged to an ancient Wiltshire family.³² In 1793 James Hutton married Henrietta Thomas, daughter and heir of Benjamin Thomas who had died the previous year, leaving her £5000 on marriage and estates in Buckingham and Herefordshire, including probably the Market Hill Estate.³³ James and Henrietta did not live in Maids Moreton which was within easy riding distance of Buckingham. They wanted a large, dignified town residence and made alterations to The George which became their home, renamed The White House.³⁴ They had two daughters who survived childhood: Henrietta born in 1796 and Jane Lucy born in 1808. In 1813 their father dropped the name of Hutton and took that of Long.³⁵

In 1838 James and Henrietta Long settled The White House on their younger daughter Jane Lucy Hutton and The Rev. Eusebius Andrewes Uthwatt, in contemplation of their marriage.³⁶ Eusebius belonged to a county family and had considerable property. The Market Hill estate was temporarily split, for while the Uthwatts had The White House, Nos. 1 and 2 Market Hill became the property of Henrietta Hutton, who never married. She left the two houses to her sister Jane Lucy Uthwatt, on whose death they passed into the hands of the family trust. On the death of Eusebius Uthwatt his daughter Henrietta Thomas Uthwatt continued for a time to live in The White House. Then in 1911, a few years before the sale of The White House itself, the Uthwatt trustees sold 1 and 2 Market Hill to sitting tenants, a butcher and a fishmonger.³⁷ An estate which had remained intact from the time of John Barton senior and John Barton junior in the 15th century was at last broken up. The houses themselves, originally two wings of the dwelling house of Richard Fowler, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to Edward IV, survived until 1967. Demolition revealed that the structural timbers were still sound five hundred years after they were first set up.³⁸

32. *V.C.H., Oxfordshire*, VI, under Finmere.

33. Prob 11/1225/587.

34. White House Deeds.

35. Maids Moreton Parish Register.

36. White House Deeds.

37. Mr. C. N. Gowing, Curator of the Buckinghamshire County Museum, was able to examine the abstract of title to 1 and 2 Market Hill by courtesy of Wallons, Bright and Co., 101 Leadenhall Street, London, E.C.3.

38. Plate 1B.

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