

House History of The Old Mansion

There was a medieval Cottesmore family were prominent landholders in the area from the 14th to the 16th century, and the buildings in Cottesmore Lane containing the Old Mansion and Cottesmore Farm date back to the 15th century. 'Cottesmorelondes' was mentioned in 1476. By the 1510s Cottesmore Farm was let, and in 1609 totalled 270 acres. Recorded tenants were the Spindler, Slyhurst and Marmion families. John Marmion and then his son Edmund allegedly lived there between circa 1519 and 1569. In 1627 (when the Ewelme estates were being sold by the Crown) the farm was sold to Andrew Field.

In 1673 it was sold by Gilbert Crouch Gent., to the judge Sir Matthew Hale. His son Edward, obit 1682, and his descendants lived there until the 1740's and the property included Ewelme Mill. (There is one remaining Hale tombstone of the original two recorded and must be the oldest memorial in the churchyard, to the left of the Jerome K Jerome memorials. It had been buried under dense foliage until unearthed recently in clearance and is still readable and not discoloured). [Their story is told elsewhere in the archive].



Above: Matthew Hale



Left: Renn Hampden

Ewelme Rector Bishop Renn Hampden bought the Mansion in 1836 as a home for his curate [1845-49] Rev E.B Hawkshaw, who had married his daughter. The following Curate T H Gillam [1848-1862] and his family also lived in the Mansion. However, it remained in the Hampden family until 2000. (An ancient house Beke's Place, also known as Tavern House, sited to the left on the other side of the road to the Old Mansion, was demolished in 1876 by the bishop's son Rev Edward Hampden, allegedly because it spoiled his view!)

The house was loaned by the Hampden family to the Air Ministry in World War II and it became a domicile and offices for RAF personnel. Nissan huts were erected in an adjacent orchard to develop photographs taken by the Spitfires and Mosquitoes of the Photographic Reconnaissance Unit based at RAF Benson.

The tall cedar tree in the front garden had to have a red light affixed to the top (by electrician Herbie Winfield) as landing Spitfire pilots could hit the tree.