

Ford's Farm

A Brief History

Ford's Farm is a property with a rich history that spans more than 300 years. Over the centuries, the farm changed ownership many times, its story intertwined with the lives, fortunes, and misfortunes of those who possessed it. Much of what is known today comes from historical documents preserved by the current owners the Edwards family.

The earliest known mention of Ford's Farm appears in the seventeenth-century will of Colonel Francis Martyn, a resident of Ewelme and an officer in Oliver Cromwell's Parliamentarian army. In his will, Martyn bequeaths "a farm in Ewelme called Ford's Farm with all the Houses, lands and appurtenances" to his nephew Edmund Martyn. This document confirms that the farm already held significance and value during the mid-1600s.

By the eighteenth century, Ford's Farm had passed into the hands of Cudworth Bruch, an apothecary from nearby Wallingford. Bruch and his wife Jane had four children: Cudworth, Jane, John, and Anne. In 1745, sensing the end of his life, Bruch prepared a will that divided his estate carefully. The eldest son, also named Cudworth, was to inherit the farm, but financial provisions were made for the widow and the other children. Each of the younger heirs was to receive a total of £500, and an additional rent charge of £20 per year was granted to a woman named Mary Day. Tragically, shortly after the will was written, Bruch, his wife, and their son John died, leaving only the eldest son and two daughters to resolve matters of inheritance.



The younger Cudworth Bruch struggled to manage the financial responsibilities tied to Ford's Farm. In 1753, he borrowed £500 from Richard Toovey using the farm as security, and in 1757, still unable to meet his debts, he borrowed again—this time from Joseph Hopkins, a farmer from Cholsey. Although he managed to repay the first loan, the repeated borrowing placed the farm at increasing risk. Complicating matters further, a legal document from 1763 reveals that Bruch's wife, Martina, was entitled to a £1,500 dower, making the property even less attractive to creditors.

By 1770, Bruch had remarried. His second wife, Bridget Maria Winnington, was the daughter of Sir Edward Winnington of Worcestershire. A marriage settlement of £2,000 had been made for her benefit, and Sir Edward used part of this amount—£1,520—to pay off the large debt owed to Joseph Hopkins. This action effectively transferred Ford's Farm into the Winnington family's control, though it was held in trust for Bridget Maria's children. Bruch received the remaining £480 for himself.



Despite these interventions, the financial difficulties continued into the next generation. By 1784, Bruch's son—an officer in the 15th York Regiment of Foot—was heavily in debt. Facing disgrace and owing more than £1,000 to a woman named Mary Matthews, he sold Ford's Farm to John Lane for £967. Lane paid off the outstanding debts, and the ownership of the farm officially changed hands.

