

## Story of a House

### A History of Orchard Cottage

October 2005

#### 1. Introduction

We bought Orchard Cottage, 2 Scrimshire Lane, Cotgrave, Nottingham NG12 3JD in 1991 because it had a wonderful feel to it and we have enjoyed living in it over the past thirteen and a half years. Margaret Eldred, from whom we purchased it, told us the house was originally built in about 1690 and several architectural features suggest this must be a reasonable approximation, though it has obviously undergone many changes during its life (see Section 2). From the first years of our occupation, I was attracted to the idea of trying to uncover the history of the house but pressure of work limited progress until my retirement (which occurred gradually but can best be placed in or about 2003). Most of what follows can therefore be seen to have emerged during the past two years – it represents only a first shot and will doubtless be considerably annotated in future as I study further sources. However, it seems worthwhile to set down what I now know (and, in several cases, don't know!), if only as a basis for further discussion. Let me qualify the account by freely admitting that I came to this as a complete amateur in architectural and social history and, though I have very much enjoyed the chase and the inevitable learning process, I recognise that there may well be numerous errors and obscurities which are a direct result of my lack of experience.



Orchard Cottage is situated towards the north end of Scrimshire Lane and sits end-on to the road, as was the usual practice at the time of its construction. It lies near the centre of the old village of Cotgrave (as distinct from the new village which grew up in the 1960s with the development of the Cotgrave coal mine), a mere two minutes walk from the medieval church of All Saints. This is consistent with the well established principle that villages in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries were closely knit affairs – even though the dominant industry was farming, the principal farms congregated closely round the church and pub, the development of isolated farmsteads coming somewhat later. Not that Orchard Cottage, itself, was built as a farm – the house was almost certainly erected by the Scrimshire family (because it stands on what was, without doubt, their land) and it has been suggested by William Lewin [1] (writing in the first half of twentieth century) that it was built to house some of their servants. Certainly, the Scrimshire Manor House was located little more than 100yards to the west, that is, further from the lane which now bears their name (according to William Grantham [1A], the lane was named in 1790 after Harold Scrimshire – died 1610 – then the largest landowner in Cotgrave but I have my doubts – the Cotgrave Enclosure Act of 1790 refers to it as though the name was already well established). Though the site of the Manor was built over in the 1960s, Lewin claims to have seen evidence of the ruin [2] which must have lain there for some considerable time – Throsby [3] reported in 1790 that “the Scrimshires had a good old house, now pulled down” and, at the time of Enclosure (1790), Lionella Clay was made responsible for levelling the Scrimshire ruin prior to the land on which it stood being transferred to the Manvers Estate (in the person of Charles Pierrepont) [4].

Orchard Cottage, as it now stands, includes an L-shaped collection of brick-built outhouses which make it clear that, in later years, the house certainly did function as a farm. At the time of the break-up of the Manvers Estate in December 1941, these outhouses were described in detail in the sale catalogue as Cow Sheds, Pig Sty, Barn, etc which leave no doubt as to their usage in the early part of the twentieth century. It was only following this sale that they ceased to serve as farm buildings and it is only more recently still that the house itself came to be known as “Orchard Cottage”. Nevertheless, for convenience, I shall frequently refer to it by this name in the subsequent account. In fact, very few houses were given names or numbers before the twentieth century [5] and were referred to in various more or less convoluted ways – Orchard Cottage was known, for example, at the time of enclosure (but probably for only a limited period) as “Morley’s Homestead”. An interesting question arises, of course, as to when the various farm buildings were first erected. Their brickwork suggests a fairly early date and I have evidence from a Manvers Estate map [6] that they certainly existed in 1800. The Scrimshire family left Cotgrave round about 1758, so this seems to pin down the time of their erection to the forty years between 1760 and 1800, though I have so far found no documentary evidence to confirm this. An interesting feature of the outhouse wall running alongside the footpath in Scrimshire Lane is that it incorporates a short section of a very old stone wall which probably formed part of the boundary of the Scrimshire estate. This must vie with the old brick wall at the corner of Risegate and Scrimshire Lane/Owthorpe Road for the honour of being the oldest bit of Cotgrave still standing. (It bulges ominously but has probably done so for several centuries!).



## 2. Architectural Features

During June 2005, I spent some time exploring and measuring the structure of the house so, though I can lay no claim to being any kind of expert, it seems worthwhile setting out the results of this effort before proceeding with the documentary history in later sections. It is clear that several features of the present house are relatively modern – the two porches, one on the north side and one on the south, the bathrooms and hall on the north side, two bay windows on the south, at least part of the cellar and, of course, the rendering which now disguises almost all of the brickwork. Indeed, we have been assured by our friends John and Liz Wood (who used to live in The Old Manor House at the corner of Risegate and Scrimshire Lane and who were close friends of the Eldreds) that when the Eldreds bought the property it was architecturally “flat” – ie there were no protuberances! So all these features are twentieth century additions, but what of the lean-to larder and utility room at the west end of the house? My first thought was that this too was modern but further consideration made me doubt that. Firstly, it had no damp course (like the original house), secondly, the door from the present kitchen into the larder includes an old oak beam above the doorway in much the same style as several other doorways which we can be reasonably sure are original. For the moment, I have to leave it as one of the many uncertainties!

The fact that the house has been modified at various times and that the walls have been rendered on the outside and plastered on the inside raises obvious problems of interpretation. However, it is clear that the whole structure is built in brick, the bricks probably having come from the brickyard on The Gripps, near the bottom of the hill, just off Owthorpe Road. There was a brickyard here for a long period and it was almost certainly functioning at the end of the seventeenth century. All that can be seen now are a few courses of brick at ground level, below the rendering and some structure in the roof space. We also know that the present windows do not correspond to the original arrangement because, a few years ago the plaster was stripped off the north wall of our bedroom (overlooking the yard) revealing clear evidence of earlier windows in significantly different positions.



The roof space probably provides the best evidence concerning brickwork, the various internal walls (running north-south) having been extended upwards. In fact, it appears possible that these walls may have supported an earlier roof, being roughly triangular in shape. There is also what appears to be an old roof timber spanning the distance between the two central walls. The present roof is obviously modern (late nineteenth or twentieth century) and is significantly higher than the apex of these old walls. The principal feature of this old brickwork is that it uses

thin bricks, approximately two-and-a-quarter inches thick and somewhat variable in length but, typically, about nine-and-a-half inches (modern bricks being standardised at 9" x 4.5" x 3"). According to Iredale and Barret [7] bricks were about two inches in thickness before the middle of the sixteenth century, increasing to 2.5 inches by 1725 and to three inches after 1784 (the year in which the brick tax was introduced). Our walls are characterised by a complete lack of any "bond", the arrangement being irregular and random, mainly stretchers but with some headers holding the two thicknesses together. The overall appearance is distinctly rough and ready! Again, according to Iredale and Bennet [7], "ordinary brickwork before 1640 and inferior walls later rarely showed standardised bond". They also suggest that up to 1660, load-bearing walls were usually one-and-a-half bricks thick (ie about 14 inches). Our load-bearing walls are uniformly about ten inches thick so all this is consistent with a building date at about the end of the seventeenth century.

There is further evidence from brickwork when one looks at the two or three courses visible at ground level. As expected, the old parts of the house are built with old bricks – roughly 2.25 to 2.5 inches thick. However, there are two contrasting areas – the bricks which form the foundation of the lean-to larder and utility room turn out to be three inches thick suggesting a date later than 1784 which implies that it is at least a hundred years later than the original building (though perhaps still relatively "early"?). Secondly, the foundations of the north side extension containing the cellar, hall and bathrooms, uses bricks 2.75 inches thick, quite consistently, suggesting a date sometime in the eighteenth century, contradicting my earlier assumption that this part was relatively modern! It merely emphasises how precarious many of these arguments are!



The most striking architectural evidence is probably that provided by the exposed beams in the three downstairs rooms and in our bedroom (at the west end of the house). The beams in the present kitchen (west end) and dining room (middle room) are fairly well finished and the main beams, running east-west have been given a modest chamfer, with, in one case (kitchen), simple moulded stops which correspond to the ends of the beam as fitted into the east wall. Some, but far from all, the subsidiary beams (north-south) are also chamfered, in a somewhat random pattern. These modest chamfers are consistent with beams in similar houses round about 1700 [8] and the fact that the beams are reasonably well finished suggests that they were intended to be seen – also consistent with a date of about 1700. The other significant fact is the incorporation of ingle nook fireplaces in both rooms (one may note the four similar stopped chamfers on the beam over the fireplace in the dining room) which is also consistent with such a date. It is interesting to note that the arrangement of the beams and their dimensions are very closely similar in these two rooms which seems to indicate that they were built at the same time. I suggest, therefore, that the original house consisted solely of these two rooms, together with the bedrooms above them. I believe that the staircase and the present sitting room (at the east end) were added somewhat later.



If this hypothesis is correct, we obviously need evidence for a stairway within this part of the house and I believe I have found such evidence from exploration of the roof space. Immediately above the south end of the ingle nook in the central room there exists a bricked-in shaft which reaches down from the roof space to the bedroom floor. Its dimensions are 33inches by 26inches and it is constructed with old bricks in very much the same rough and ready style as the walls referred to above. It would appear that there was probably a steep stair leading up from the ingle nook into the

middle bedroom, an arrangement which was not uncommon in the seventeenth century. The floor/ceiling has been boarded up and the opening into the bedroom has been bricked up, as is clearly visible on the bedroom wall to the left of the fireplace, but there was certainly something special about this part of the building. (There is no evidence, incidentally, of any similar structure above the ingle nook in the kitchen.) The bricking-up of this stairway must have coincided with the introduction of the much grander staircase situated between the present dining and sitting rooms and the nature of the brickwork implies that this occurred rather early in the history of the house.

If we believe that this was the only stair in the original house, it follows that there must have been doors between the two downstairs rooms and, similarly, between the two bedrooms. Such doors exist and are both characterised by old door frames – very simple unmoulded four inch square timber with a lintel mortice-and-tenoned onto the jambs and pegged with a wooden peg. The only difference concerns the position of the frame within the pierced wall – otherwise the frames are closely similar. In both cases an oak beam spans the region above the lintel and takes the weight of the upper wall, a structure common to several other doors in the house. When I uncovered this beam in the kitchen, I found that the wall above was largely rubble and the plaster covering it contained coarse hair (horse-hair?) typical of early plasterwork.



This brings us to the fascinating question of the grand staircase – obviously superior in style to the rest of the building and, equally obviously, cobbled together to fit into its present position! Furthermore it has a look of having an earlier origin than Orchard Cottage, possibly early seventeenth century [9]. The story goes that that this was originally part of the Scrimshire Manor House and was brought to Orchard Cottage following some catastrophe, such as a fire. I should say, though, that there is no evidence of any fire damage to the staircase in its present state. In respect of the date of its transfer, we know that the Scrimshires left Cotgrave in 1758 [10] and that, by 1790, “their good old house [was] now pulled down” [3]. This could be taken as implying a transfer date in the period 1760-1780 but I wonder whether it might actually have been considerably earlier. Perhaps, at some time during the early eighteenth century, the Scrimshires were in process of extending their manor, installing a new and grander staircase for their own use and needed to dispose of

their old one. What better than to enhance the facilities in their “servant quarters”?

There is some evidence to support this idea in the nature of the wall built to accommodate the staircase (ie the sitting room inner wall). In the roof space where it can be seen in its naked state it looks very similar indeed to its neighbour, the dining room wall – similar old bricks, identical rough brickwork, etc. There can be little doubt that that this wall was built specifically for the staircase – the separation between the two walls is much larger than would be appropriate to a mere corridor, while being far too small to represent living space. In fact, it is just right to include this “dog-leg” stair, which fashion, incidentally, is common from the beginning of the seventeenth century [9]. Everything points, therefore, to its having been installed quite early in the life of the house, at a time when the Scrimshires were flourishing, rather than after their departure from the village. It is certainly clear that its installation was an improvisation, consistent with its transfer from another site. I note, too, that the brickwork used is very similar indeed to that used to brick up the old stair, as might be expected – as soon as the new stairs were in place there would be no need for the older, and much less convenient arrangement.

What, now, of the third room at the east end, currently used as a sitting room? This, I believe, was added at a slightly later date – later than that of the staircase. Three significant differences between it and the rest of the house are apparent – there is a small difference in floor level, no ingle nook (the chimney being uniform in width, not flared like the other two) and, more importantly, a major difference in ceiling beams. Firstly, the principal beam runs north-south, rather than east-west and, secondly, it is very roughly finished, this latter being consistent with the fact that it was never intended to be seen. It had, in fact, been plastered over until the previous owner, Mrs Eldred, exposed its untutored features to public view. In other words, this room was added at a time when it was no longer acceptable to leave structural beams exposed and this suggests a significant time interval between its construction and that of the rest of the house. I can only guess, but it seems a reasonable possibility that this new room was added by the new owners, following the departure of the Scrimshires in 1758. This provides an appropriate time (some fifty years) for fashions to have changed in respect of the ingle nook and exposed beams. Why the main beam was arranged to run north-south is hard to say but, as the room is very nearly square, there seems no particular reason to choose one direction over the other.

It probably points to the use of a different builder having different ideas, though it is interesting that all three rooms are closely similar in size – roughly fifteen feet two inches square. Another difference concerns the treatment of the doorway into the sitting room – this is distinctly more “modern” than the corresponding doors between kitchen and dining room and between dining room and hall (ie the bottom of the grand staircase). Not that too much should be read into this – doorways can very easily be altered – and the doorway into the third bedroom (directly above the sitting room and presumably built at the same time) is still based on the more primitive style referred to above.

The remaining feature of the house is the corridor running from the top of the stairs to the west bedroom, allowing access to this room without the need to go through the middle bedroom. While it must post-date the incorporation of the new staircase, it is far from easy to date it with any precision. The inner wall is much thinner than any other wall in the house, being only about three-and-a-half inches thick but it is not, of course, a load-bearing wall. Nor is it easy to discover how it was constructed. The west end of the wall adjacent to the west bedroom doorpost is actually part of the old stair shaft so it must be old but one cannot be sure whether the rest of it is of the same date. The fact that it follows a surprisingly variable path seems to hint at a fairly early date and the doorway into the middle bedroom is also of primitive style but these are straws at which to clutch, rather than firm tranches of evidence!

Finally, we have to address the question of the outhouses. It is clear that these imply the house was used as a farmhouse at some stages of its life and I understand that it was known as “Whyers Farm” in the first half of the twentieth century. Frank Whyer had a butchers shop (now the DIY store) just along Scrimshire Lane and also farmed in a modest way. Presumably he was a tenant farmer, as the property belonged to the Manvers Estate until December 1941 when the Estate lands in Cotgrave were sold off. As I said in the introduction, the sale catalogue listed the various outhouses in terms of their usage, making it



crystal clear that the house was then a farm but this tells us nothing about the likely date for the outhouses’ construction. I have examined the outhouses and the various other walls associated with the property and, without exception, they all use old bricks. These bricks vary in length (nine inches to nine-and-three-quarter inches) and thickness (two inches to two-and-a-half inches) which are similar to those used in the house walls. Also like the house walls, they show little sign of any regular “bond” – there is a somewhat irregular use of headers and stretchers which imply local bonding but there is no overall plan! The general state of finish is superior to that of the walls in the roof space which may signify a somewhat later date (but may merely reflect the fact that the outhouse walls, unlike those in the roof space, are on public view!). The sizes of the bricks seems to suggest a date prior to 1784, when bricks became standardised on three inches, though one should be careful of taking this too literally because these bricks probably came from a small local brickworks which may have been slow to follow national trends. More valuable from the dating point of view are old maps. There is clear evidence from the Ordnance Survey maps of 1901 and 1921 that an L-shaped arrangement of outbuildings was in existence then but several earlier maps relating to the time of Cotgrave’s enclosure (1790) do not show any such indication [11]. However, I found one Manvers Estate map [12] in the University Library which confirms their presence in 1800 or thereabouts (the map is dated 1790 but I had a feeling it may have been drawn somewhat later). This was a valuable find, as it confirms the evidence of the brickwork and suggests a building date between 1758 (when the Scrimshires left) and 1800. It seems reasonable to assume that the new owners were responsible for turning the old servants quarters into a self-contained farm. The old manor, having been pulled down, there was no longer any requirement for a servants quarters to service it.



### 3. The Scrimshire Family

The Scrimshires were an important family in Cotgrave for some two hundred years. We first notice the name in the person of Robert Scrymshire who was Rector of Cotgrave from 1498 to 1517 [13], though there were several other church connections over the years [10,14]. In 1641 no less than ten individuals shared the surname Scrimshire, Thomas Scrimshire was a Churchwarden and Harold Scrimshire was Constable. John Scrimshire became Rector in 1667, though his reign was only brief – he died in 1669 at the age of 28. The Cotgrave Parish Registers [15] record a Memorandum in 1688 to the effect that Timothy Trowman left ten shillings to the poor – it was witnessed by Robert Scrimshire – while in 1722 Robert Scrimshire was Parish Clerk. In 1645 the then Rector, Robert Kinder took, as his second wife, Ursula Scrimshire, the daughter of William and, c1800, another Rector, Nathan Haines, also married a Scrimshire as his second wife (though the family had, by that time, left Cotgrave). Their status in Cotgrave is further illustrated by the Church Terrier [16] of 1764 which was signed by William Scrimshire, as one of the principal inhabitants of the village. Scrimshire gravestones occupied the aisle floor of the church for three centuries, prior to the restoration which followed the devastating fire of 1996, when they were moved outside the building and now lie forlornly, gathering moss below the south face of the tower and adjacent to the south aisle. There is also an impressive memorial within the church to Mildred Scrimshire who died in October 1783, aged 73.



Even a casual search through the Parish Registers confirms that there were numerous Scrimshires living in the village both before and after the time (1759) when the family sold its Cotgrave land and departed, and there are Scrimshire gravestones in the Churchyard dated as much as a hundred years later (1854 and 1870). Clearly, not all these people lived in the Scrimshire Manor House and we must conclude that many of them were artisans, rather than landowners, a conclusion supported by one of the many bills submitted to the Manvers Estate at the time of Enclosure in respect of the fencing off of newly enclosed lands - it came in 1793 from a Thomas Scrimshire “for double posts and rails, two dykes and cutting quick” (quick being hawthorn hedging) [17]. The Parish Registers for the nineteenth century also record various Scrimshires who were framework knitters, weavers and labourers. From the point of view of understanding Orchard Cottage’s provenance, we need to distinguish between the two groups and, initially, this seemed like a major problem but, fortunately, nearly all relevant documents follow the convention that landowning Scrimshires are given the appendage “Gent” or, at very least, “Mr”. The rest are referred to as just plain Robert Scrimshire or John Scrimshire, etc so the members of the (unofficial!) squirearchy can be readily recognised.

Though the Scrimshire family may sometimes have acted as “unofficial squires” [10], they were not the only people of significance in the village. There were, in fact, two manor houses in Cotgrave during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the second one belonging to the White family of Tuxford (County of Notts) and it is worth taking a minor detour in our account to explore the relevant background. In the Domesday account [3], Cotgrave estates had been given by King William to two of his supporters, Ralf de Buren (ancestor of the Byron family) and Roger de Poitou whose families eventually gave their shares, respectively, to the Cluniac Priory of Lenton and to the Cistercian Abbey of Swineshead, near Boston (Lincs), a situation which continued until the monasterial dissolution in 1536 (or thereabouts).

Doomsday also refers to there being “half a church” in Cotgrave which seems to be a reference to the fact that both parties sponsored Rectors – there were said to be two “medieties” - and this division continued until shortly before the end of the Commonwealth (1659) when the Rev John Clarke became the first singular Rector. He, personally, did not last long, being ejected for “non-conformity” in 1662 (being a Protestant nominee in 1659, his “politics” were clearly inappropriate following the Restoration!); nevertheless, there was, from that time on, only one Rector. But, from our point of view, the dissolution of the monasteries was of greater significance. According to Thoroton [3], Henry VIII retained in his own hands the estate originally belonging to Lenton Priory but, in 1540, sold to Harold Rossel and to George Pierrepont that lately owned by Swineshead Abbey. He also sold the advowsons of both rectories to George Pierrepont. The Pierrepont family (of Holme Pierrepont) was destined to retain an interest in Cotgrave for the next 400 years rising to become, first, Dukes of Kingston, later Earl Manvers – hence “The Manvers Estate”. It was the fact of the Swineshead land being then in private hands that allowed Harold Scrimshire to set himself up as local squire sometime round about 1550-1570 by purchasing various pieces of land which had thereby become available. But he was not to have everything his own way. After Henry’s death in 1547 and the weakly Edward VI’s short reign, Queen Mary succeeded to the Throne in 1553, but only after the plot by Northumberland to install Lady Jane Grey had been put down. One of Mary’s supporters at this time was Thomas White of Tuxford and, in 1556, he was rewarded by the grant of the Lenton Priory lands which included a manor house situated at the corner of Risegate and Scrimshire Lane. As we saw earlier, its (somewhat modified) 17<sup>th</sup> cent. successor on the site is still known as “The Manor House”. Thus, the original division of Cotgrave lands at the time of the Conquest led to there being two Manor Houses in the village for two hundred years from the middle of the sixteenth century. However, in practice, these were not of equal importance, largely because the White family maintained its base in Tuxford, while the Scrimshires chose to live wholeheartedly in Cotgrave.



Following this little diversion, we can now attempt to trace out the Scrimshire lineage. It all started with Harold Scrimshire who must have been born round about 1530-1540 (I know not where) and who bought land and property in Cotgrave, probably in the period 1550-1570. According to Thoroton [3], this included Rempstone Hall, a house from Harold Rossel and other property from Walter Whalley and Richard Champion. William Lewin, in his “Short Story of Cotgrave” [1], claims that these purchases included Cotgrave Place (the present Golf Course and Country Club) and he seems to associate Rempstone Hall with the Scrimshire Manor House in Scrimshire Lane (near where Orchard Cottage now stands). I have no way of knowing how reliable these statements are, though it is clear that Cotgrave Place was included in the property owned by Lionella Clay at the time of Enclosure, following its sale to the Lamb family by John Scrimshire in 1759. (A Manvers Estate survey of 1740 attributes just over 200 acres of freehold land to “Mrs Scrimshire Senior” which gives some indication of the family’s holdings.) Harold Scrimshire was certainly a power in the village and, on his death in 1610, left the sum of £20 for the betterment of the village school. He had a brother Thomas who died shortly before him in 1606 but of whom I know nothing further.



Harold married Margaret, daughter of a Mr Henson and they had at least one child, William, probably born about 1570, who inherited the estate. In 1599 William married Elizabeth, daughter of Nicholas Pierpont of Estwell in Leicester (whether any relative of the Holme Pierrepont Pierreponts I know not) and they had at least two children, John, born in 1608 (d1669), and William. John married Margaret, daughter of Michael Wright of Brixworth and produced five children, Elizabeth (1637), William (1640-1688), John (1641), Michael (1646) and Samuell (1654). William, as eldest son, inherited the estate, while John, the second son, went into the Church and became Rector of Cotgrave in 1667 (but died in 1669). William had at least two children by his wife Elizabeth de Pontefract, John (1666-1713) and Margaret (1681-1748). There is a gravestone to Elizabeth (died 1682). John, in turn, produced eight children, William (1693-1725), Mary (1695-1743), Margaret (1701-5), Brian (1704-5), Sarah(1705), Elizabeth (1709), Mildred (1710-1783) and Michael (1712). It is to Mildred that the monument in Cotgrave Church was raised by her “neices”, while the premature deaths of Margaret and Brian are recorded on one of the gravestones in the churchyard. William married Elizabeth ? c1722 and they had only one son John (c1723) who succeeded to the estate when his father died in 1725. Elizabeth outlived him (d1756) and



must have been the “Mrs Scrimshire Senior” referred to in the Manvers Estate Survey of 1740. It was John who sold the estate to the Lamb family in 1759, having already left Cotgrave – in the sale document [18] he is described as having an address in London. It may possibly be significant that his mother had died in 1756 and his wife, Rebecca in 1759, thus breaking his remaining links with the village (though he probably had several Uncles and Aunts still living – we know that Mildred, at least, lived for twenty years after the sale, though she had moved to live in Nottingham [19]).

In summary of the principal aspects of the succession and including a few inspired guesses as to some of the dates(!), we note the following:

- c1540-1610 Harold Scrimshire
- c1570-? William Scrimshire
- 1608-1669 John Scrimshire Gravestone (John S and two grandchildren)
- 1640-1688 William Scrimshire Gravestones (wife Elizabeth, daughter Margaret)
- 1666-1713 John Scrimshire Gravestone (two children Margaret and Brian)
- 1693-1725 William Scrimshire
- c1723-? John Scrimshire

If we believe that Orchard Cottage was built in 1690, we must assume that the second John Scrimshire was responsible. It may be significant that he was also responsible for the purchase of further Cotgrave property in 1703 [20] – presumably the Scrimshires were flourishing and probably needed accommodation for additional servants.

#### 4. The Sale

The first indication that Orchard Cottage was sold to the Lamb family of Southwell was provided by the WEA study “Cotgrave: Aspects of Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries” [10] where we read (p37): “They [the Scrimshires] had sold out about 1758 to a branch of the Lamb family of Melbourne. The Duke of Kingston had apparently been offended at not being given first refusal of the land, which passed ultimately to a Mr Clay of Easthorpe” (Easthorpe being an area within the town of Southwell). The confusion of Southwell and Melbourne needs some comment – Mathew Lamb (1705-1768) was a lawyer of Southwell who became legal advisor to the Coke family of Melbourne (Derbyshire) and in 1740 married Charlotte Coke who inherited Melbourne Hall. Their son Peniston Lamb became the first Viscount Melbourne and his son William, the second Viscount, became Whig Prime Minister in 1834 and from 1835-1841. He was responsible for initiating Queen Victoria into the subtleties of politics. Thus, the Lambs were rather important people but the “branch of the Lamb family” referred to above was probably a relatively unimportant side-shoot! The 200 odd acres of Scrimshire land would scarcely have been of interest to the important members of the central trunk.

Further confirmation of the sale comes from Manvers Estate Papers of 1759 [18] and it is interesting to examine these in detail. (Note that in the original there is absolutely no punctuation – I have added a little here and there in my transcription to help understanding.) The first point of interest lies in the very first line: “This Indenture made twenty-first day of May in the thirty-second year of the reign of the Sovereign Lord George by the grace of God of Great Britain, France and Ireland King ----- .” [note the reference to ‘France’] In common with several other sale documents which I have come across, there is a linked pair of “Indentures”, the first dated 21 May, the second dated 22 May. The first refers to a “Lease” of properties by John Scrimshire to Thomas Lambe (the final ‘e’ comes and goes with a certain degree of randomness!) while the second is concerned with a “Release”. I am some way from being able to understand all the legal subtleties of this procedure but it recurs frequently and is obviously a standard form [18A]. I think we can be confident that the net result is the transferring of ownership from the first party (John Scrimshire) to the second (Thomas Lambe). Both documents spell out the details of the two parties to the sale as: “John Scrimshire of the Parish of St James within the Liberty of Westminster in the County of Middlesex Esquire, only son and heir of William Scrimshire, late of Cotgrave in the County of Nottingham, Gentleman deceased, of the one part and Thomas Lambe of the Town and County of Nottingham, Gentleman, of the other part”. The first document then goes into a standard routine along the lines of: “for and in consideration of the sum of five shillings of good and lawful money of Great Britain to the said John Scrimshire in hand paid by the said Thomas Lambe ----- the said John Scrimshire hath bargained and sold --- to the said Thomas Lambe, his executors, administrators and assigns all that capital and messuage or tenement and four oxganges of arable land --- etc, etc,” (an ‘oxgange’ appears to be equivalent to ten acres). The list includes properties in both Cotgrave and in Lamley (now spelt ‘Lambley’, a village some ten miles due north from Cotgrave). Finally, the document refers to a “rent of one peppercorn only on the last day of the said term” (the term being one year). This is also a standard condition – it is a purely notional rent because it is implicit in the overall procedure that the parties of the second part will actually become owners on the following day. The second indenture includes the same list of properties and land but also includes what appears to be a purchase price, rather than a rental.

With regard to the description of the various properties and pieces of land, it is difficult to be sure whether Orchard Cottage was included, though it seems very likely that it was. The method of identifying “messuages or tenements” is by reference to their present or previous tenants or occupiers and there is a list of names: “William Felstead, William Clarke, John Smith, Harry Randall, Timothy Trainan(?), William Scrimshire, Thomas Storey, John Parr, John Metcalfe, John Scrimshire, John Wyld, William Summer, John Morley and ??????” Some of the names are familiar, some not but I have little hope of ever knowing where these various people lived. “William Scrimshire” may be John’s father and the house involved may therefore be the Scrimshire Manor but where the rest were is anybody’s guess! In fact, the evidence that Orchard Cottage was included in the sale comes from more precise description in later documents which refer to various sales and exchanges which took place at the time of enclosure c1790. Thomas Lamb’s properties came into the possession of Lionella Clay, who I think was probably his daughter and there is clear evidence concerning her portfolio of land at enclosure and the various exchanges which took place between the major players in the enclosure lottery!

## **5. Cotgrave Enclosure 1790**

Towards the end of the eighteenth century there were widespread moves by the Country’s landed gentry to improve the efficiency with which agricultural land was utilised. The ancient field system by which numerous tenants each tilled narrow strips of land under a four year rotation system (one year fallow) was democratic but wasteful, as was the use of common land by those too poor to have access to designated strips. In the case of Cotgrave, the dominant landowners, the Pierrepont family took the initiative in enforcing the enclosure of land in very much larger pieces, the details being spelled out in an Act of Parliament, dated 1790 and (fortunately for my purpose) set out in the 71 pages of a book [21], a copy of which resides in Cotgrave Library. This particular copy was signed at the top of the title page by Joshua Mann, one of the minor landowners referred to in the document who has also scribbled details of the land areas apportioned to him and Mary Mann (his wife?) on the appropriate page. The title page describes the Act as:

“An Act To Confirm and Establish the Division, Allotments, and Inclosure of the Open Fields, Meadows, Pastures, Commons, and Waste Grounds, lying in the Parish of Cotgrave, in the County of Nottingham, and also several Exchanges of Lands within the said Parish.”

(Note the almost excessive use of commas in a document drawn up, presumably, by London lawyers – locally produced Indentures, etc show an almost total disregard for punctuation of any kind.) The Act also laid down details of a road system which specified how wide the various carriageways were to be and, in many cases, attached names to them – an important innovation – it being at this time that “Scrimshire Lane” may have been named in honour of the now departed family who had once lived alongside it. Finally, it made an important change to the manner in which the Rector was rewarded for his ecclesiastical administrations – this had, in the past, been largely on the basis of tithes – in future it was to be based entirely on the income from his allotted lands which were consequently considerably increased in area. In this regard, Cotgrave was being seriously innovative – the general Tithe Commutation Act was not enacted until 1836 [22].



Enclosure was, to say the least, expensive and time-consuming, designated lands being divided by a hedge, a pair of wooden fences (oak posts and ash rails) and a corresponding pair of ditches. The Manvers Estate Papers for the years immediately following the Act contain bills from local artisans pertaining to the cutting down of trees, making of fences, digging of ditches and planting of hawthorn bushes and the Act made allowance for all this endeavour by setting a date of 5 April 1791 for its completion. The Act also laid very specific responsibilities on the various petitioners for erection and maintenance of these fences and the expense apparently proved prohibitive for many of the smaller participants who gradually disappeared from the list of freeholders. According to the WEA study [10], “By 1832, according to White’s Directory, Lord Manvers was the sole landowner in Cotgrave apart from the Rector.” The effect on the poor was also disastrous. Whereas, in the past they may have survived on the proceeds of a cow or two grazing the common land, Enclosure left them with literally nothing. It may have been beneficial from the macro-economic viewpoint (indeed, so it certainly was) but many a poor peasant must have cursed the day.

To put the following land areas in context, the Act first lists the overall areas in Cotgrave as:

“Several Open Fields, Meadows, Pastures, Commons, and Waste Grounds containing Two Thousand Three Hundred and Sixty five Acres, or thereabouts; and there are also within the said Parish Several ancient Inclosures, or inclosed Lands or Grounds, containing One thousand Two hundred and Thirty-seven Acres, or thereabouts:”

Thus, the total area under discussion was 3602 acres. (Interestingly, in the Kelly’s Directory for 1922 the total land area in Cotgrave is listed as 3700 acres – nothing changes!) After Enclosure, the Rector found himself with 555 acres, Lionella Clay held roughly 250 acres and the remaining fifteen small landowners probably accounted for about 350 acres, leaving some 2450 acres in the hands of Charles Pierrepont, Duke of Kingston – later Lord Manvers. There could be no doubt as to who was in charge!

So much for the general picture – but what of Orchard Cottage? Firstly, we need to identify it. When John Scrimshire sold his lands to Thomas Lambe in 1759 there was no specific mention of the house – we can only assume that it was part and parcel of the total deal, a perfectly reasonable assumption but an assumption, none-the-less. However, at the time of Enclosure, there is good evidence that Orchard Cottage belonged to Lionella Clay who was probably Thomas Lambe’s daughter. In 1714 a marriage took place in Calverton (a village a few miles north of Nottingham whose chief claim to fame is that the framework knitting machine was invented here in 1589 – yes, 1589! - by William Lee) between “Thomas Lamb of Oxon” (almost certainly a misprint for Oxton, a village near Calverton and about 5 miles west of Southwell – yes, the Calverton Parish register confirms this!) and Ann Talbot (presumably of Calverton) [23]. They could well have been Lionella’s parents – we know from legal documents that her maiden name was “Lamb” and that she died about 1793 [10] so, if she was born about 1720, she would have been 73 which is reasonable. It is also interesting that in a sale document of 1790 [24] she is described as Lionella Clay of Calverton – it looks as though, late in life, she was returning to her roots. She married a William Clay of Westhorpe, Southwell [25], though I have no information as to when. Anyway, she certainly inherited much land and property in Cotgrave, including Cotgrave Place (on the site of the present Golf and Country Club) which was probably a fairly superior residence. According to the WEA study [10], this was where Lionella and her husband chose to live.

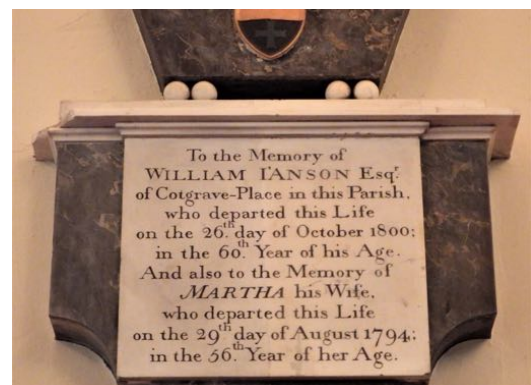
At the time of the Cotgrave Enclosure Act, Lionella was a widow and the third largest landowner in the village. Prior to Enclosure she owned not only Cotgrave Place, together with land all about it, but also several plots within the village itself, including two plots in Scrimshire Lane. As part of the deal struck between the various petitioners, she ceded nearly all her village land either to Charles Pierrepont or to the Rector, in exchange for additional land outside the village. Remarkably, the one bit of village property which she retained was none other than Orchard Cottage, then known as “Morley’s Homestead”, presumably because at least one member of the Morley family lived in it (as a tenant). I am aware of three Morleys – John had been a tenant of the White family, Samuel was a blacksmith and Joseph was a carpenter – but I have no idea who lived in Orchard Cottage.

Can we be sure that Morley’s Homestead was, indeed, Orchard Cottage? I think we can, because its location is precisely specified in the Act: “----also all that Piece or Parcel of ancient Inclosure called, or known by the name of *Morley’s Homestead* in *Scrimshire Lane*, containing One Acre and One Rood, be the same more or less, belonging to the said *Lionella Clay*, bounded on the North and West by an ancient Inclosure or Homestead, belonging to the said *Thomas Kendall*; on the East by the said Street called *Scrimshire Lane*; on the south by an ancient Inclosure or Homestead, belonging to the said *Thomas Frost*; and on the West by an ancient Inclosure called *Shortcroft Closes*, belonging to the said *Charles Pierrepont*; ---“. The Enclosure maps [10,11] confirm the identities of these surrounding properties so we can be really confident that we have the correct identification. Note the area of one acre and one rood, because this will assist identification in future references. Note, too, that this description applies to property which was allocated to Lionella after Enclosure – there can be no doubt that it remained hers and was not transferred either to the Rector or to Charles Pierrepont.

It would be easy for confusion to make an entry here because the site of the old Scrimshire (Rempstone?) Hall, just to the west of Orchard Cottage *was* allocated to Charles Pierrepont and there is a specific requirement placed upon Lionella that she should level and tidy up the site before 5 April 1791, otherwise it would be done on her behalf, but at her expense! In fact, there were several such properties on which ancient houses existed: “and whereas there are Four Orchards and Farm Yards, whereon stand Four old Houses and Outbuildings, hereinafter given in Exchange by the said *Lionella Clay* and hereby vested in the said *Charles Pierrpont*; which by Agreement and as a Condition to and in such Exchange, were to be taken down by the said *Lionella Clay*, and the materials thereof converted to her own Use, and the same cleared of the Rubbish, free of Expencc to the said *Charles Pierrepont*; ---“. This point is significant in relation to yet another transfer of ownership which we must now consider.

## 6. William I’Anson

No sooner had Lionella been allocated her share of the messuages, temements, closes, meadows, lands, etc by the Act, than she arranged for its sale to the ex-London Lawyer William I’Anson who had recently become a figure of some importance in the village (there is a memorial to him in the Church chancel). Indeed, the WEA study [10] suggests that he might have been responsible for the drawing up of the Enclosure Act, in the sense that he caused certain difficulties in the discussions which preceded it.



Acts of Parliament were expensive items and many villages contrived to reach acceptable arrangements without the need for one – the fact that Cotgrave took the more formal route does suggest that there were some important differences of opinion. It appears that one or two unfriendly exchanges took place between I’Anson and an Enclosure Commissioner, William Sanday which supports such an idea. No matter; the fact is that the now familiar Lease and Release documents effecting the transfer of lands from Lionella to I’Anson exist in the Manvers archives, dated 2 Aug and 3 Aug 1790 [24]. She is described as Lionella Clay of Calverton widow of William Clay of Westhorpe Southwell and he is referred to as William I’Anson of Bedford Row County of Middlesex (Bedford Row still exists and lies within a bowler hat’s throw (remember Oddjob?) of Grays Inn which sounds appropriate for a lawyer). In this case, there are one or two departures from the norm in that, firstly, there is a clause making it clear that the transfer would only become effective from 5 April 1791 (the date on which the Enclosure Act was to come into force) and, secondly, that Lionella was to receive not a lump sum of money but an annuity of £280 per annum for the rest of her natural life. As she only lived about three years, I’Anson effectively bought her property for less than £1000, a remarkably good deal, when we compare it with the £20,000 plus paid by Earl Manvers when it was sold on to him in 1807!

According to the WEA Study [10], Lionella left her property to I’Anson in her will of 1793 and there may well have been some close personal relationship which accounted for the generous terms of the sale but it is beyond doubt that she actually sold most of it to him in 1790. It is also worth noting that I’Anson was married at the time and his wife was with him in Cotgrave. It is, of course, possible that the I’Ansons knew the Clays beforehand and that it was this friendship which decided I’Anson to choose Cotgrave for his retirement – we shall probably never know. The Study also suggests that I’Anson built Cotgrave Place on Lionella’s land. A rather grand Georgian building, it was completed in 1796 at a cost of £5000. Perhaps “rebuilt” would be more accurate for there is evidence that Lionella lived at Cotgrave Place well before Enclosure and I’Anson descended upon the village.



William I’Anson died in 1800 at the age of fifty-nine, as is made clear on the Church memorial tablet, his wife having pre-deceased him by six years, and his wealth was passed on to their son Thomas. I know nothing about Thomas but I suspect he still lived in London and had no desire to follow his father into the world of “Gentlemen Farmers”. In the event, he kept the property only until 1807 when it was sold to the Manvers Estate. I have, so far, been unable to find copies of any sale documents but there is an interesting letter in the Manvers Papers [26] from one of Earl Manvers’ agents Mr Nathaniel Stubbins advising him that he would be well advised to purchase the property at the price quoted. It listed three pieces of land as follows:

House with land area:	198acres, 3roods, 6perches	£21,000
Wolds Closes	64acres, 2roods, 22perches	£ 2,262
Cottage House	1acre, 0roods, 0perches	£ 500
Total		£23,762



The first item corresponds to Cotgrave Place, the second item being on the Wolds Common and the third almost certainly represents Morley's Homestead. On this latter point, it is significant that the stated area is in near agreement with that quoted in the Enclosure Act and it is also important to know that, at Enclosure, Lionella retained only one bit of land within the village – this must surely be it. This letter does not, of course, provide proof that the sale actually went ahead but the writers of the WEA Study [10] were confident that it did, so I think we can feel reasonably happy that Orchard Cottage entered Estate ownership in 1807. Again, according to the Study, the Pierrepoint family was upset that they were not given the opportunity of buying the Scrimshire Lands back in 1758 so they were presumably well pleased to acquire them at last in 1807.

## **7. The Eakring Connection**

As we shall see, Orchard Cottage was in Manvers Estate ownership in 1941 when the Estate was broken up and sold off, so I had naturally assumed that the house had remained part of the Estate throughout the intermediate time span. This in spite of a persistent rumour to the effect that at one time it belonged to the Church. For example, William Lewin (who was born and lived in Cotgrave during the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries), in his "A Short History of Cotgrave", written in 1944 [1] says the following: "The tradition of the period of my youth, was that the present Wyer residence (Orchard Cottage) had once been the servants party (sic) of the old Hall, but though it was later called the Rectory, I doubt whether a Rector ever lived there, for the latter years of the eighteenth century was an age of pluralist Rectors, who preferred to live at their other charges, such as St Marys of Nottingham, or at Holmepierrepoint". The previous Rector, Bryan Barrowdale also told us that Orchard Cottage once belonged to the Church but when I wrote to him at his new residence in Beaston for further details, no answer was forthcoming. It was during my period of puzzlement over this mystery that I stumbled on the next, somewhat bizarre development.

Working not very consistently through the various Manvers Estate Papers, I came across evidence for a quite unexpected transaction whereby the house appears to have been sold by The Right Honourable Charles Herbert Earl Manvers (the second Earl) to an unlikely pair of purchasers named as "Anthony Hardolph Eyre Esq of Grove County of Nottingham and Reverend John Henry Brown Rector of Eakring" [27]. Once again, there were two documents dated 16 and 17 January 1826, one a lease, the second a release. They include a modest list of Closes, Fields, Meadows, Grounds, etc and the second document contains a purchase price of £6150 (with a receipt for that sum signed by Charles Herbert) but my principal interest, of course, is whether Morley's Homestead was included. The answer is: "not, at least, under that name; nevertheless it seems more than likely that it did form part of the contract". The list begins with "All that messuage tenement or farmhouse with yards, gardens and outbuildings 3roods, 24 perches" then "Tenters Close Orchard containing by admeasurement 1acre, 2roods, 24perches". I now know that Tenters Close approximates to what is now the graveyard adjacent to Orchard Cottage, so the implication seems to be that the farmhouse referred to may well be Orchard Cottage, itself. Notice that the area of Tenters Close agrees well with that quoted for Morley's Homestead at the time of Enclosure. We might reasonably suppose that, thirty-six years later, the house is no longer occupied by a Morley and that those involved in specifying the nature of the property under consideration have opted for a slightly different method – ie they list the house itself and the land immediately surrounding it separately.

Who, though, were the buyers and what did they want with property in Cotgrave? My first attempt to answer this conundrum was based on the realisation that the then Rector of Cotgrave was also a John Henry Browne and, in those days of plural livings, it seemed an obvious explanation – the Rector of Eakring wanted land in Cotgrave because he was also the Rector of Cotgrave. What could be simpler? Unfortunately, it turned out not to be true – the two Rectors were distinct and separate people, as reference to the respective Parish Registers showed all too clearly. The Cotgrave man, who was also Archdeacon of Ely, was born in 1780 and died in 1858, while his Eakring namesake lived from 1748 until 1830. Their co-existence was apparently pure coincidence! I obviously needed a better theory than this.

Some inspired surfing of the Web revealed quite a lot of information concerning the Eyre family [28-30]. Grove is a country estate near Retford, quite a long way from Cotgrave, and Eakring is a small village near Rufford Country Park, also quite a long way north of Cotgrave. What, then, was the connection between the two men involved? One was a country “squire” and the other the Rector of a small parish. Anthony Hardolph Eyre inherited the Grove Estate from his father Anthony Eyre in 1788 and enjoyed a family connection with the Pierreponts through the marriage of his eldest daughter Mary Letitia to Charles Herbert Earl Manvers in 1804. In other words, the latter’s sale of Cotgrave property was to his father-in-law and perhaps represented some carefully thought-out family plan (though I have no idea what that might have been!). On the other hand, one can’t help wondering why the Rector of Eakring should be involved. So far as I can discover, there is no definitive evidence that John Henry Browne had any other connection with the Eyres. The best I can come up with is the observation that Anthony Hardolph had three brothers. John, the second son, born 1758, was Rector of Babworth, Canon of York, Prebend of Southwell and Archdeacon of Nottingham, while Charles, born 1768, was also a cleric, being Rector of Headon-cum-Upton and Rector of Grove. George, the third brother, was also Rector of Headon (twice!). Babworth, Headon and Grove are all small parishes near Retford (Anthony Hardolph being the patron!), while Eakring is a mere eleven miles to the south. (Incidentally, the Pierrepont family were well ensconced in their grand new home at Thoresby which is within about eight miles of Retford and even closer to Eakring. It may also be relevant to our musings that John Henry Browne was ‘presented’ by them to the Eakring living.) It seems extremely likely that John Henry Browne (born 1748) would be well acquainted with his fellow clerics and, through them, with Anthony Hardolph but that alone can hardly explain their joint purchase. It is all the more implausible when one recognises their respective ages in 1826 – AHE was sixty-nine and JHB was 78. One might suppose that the newly acquired property was intended to benefit a member of the next generation, which is understandable in the case of AHE who had four children but less so in the case of JHB who, as far as I know, was unmarried. Having said all this, I should, nevertheless, draw attention to the fact that it was not the first time Anthony Hardolph and John Henry had been jointly involved in property speculation – they also appear together in a sale document of 1811 which is referred to in the 1826 release. Perhaps they had made a lifelong practice of it - and why should advancing years make any difference?

While I remained totally baffled by the above, there was an even greater black hole in my understanding when faced with the undoubted fact that Orchard Cottage and land in its immediate vicinity was part of the Manvers Estate sale in 1941. It seems surprising, to say the least, that the Estate should wish to part with it in 1826, having been annoyed not to be able to purchase it in 1759, but even stranger that they should decide to buy it back again sometime between 1826 and 1941. Who, I wonder sold it to them? The answer, at least in part, lies buried in the title deeds to Orchard Cottage which I have now explored in detail but firstly we should look at the recent history, as it emerges from these deeds.

## 8. The Twentieth Century

The relative wealth of detailed information covering the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries stands in stark contrast to the almost total absence of data relevant to the period 1826 – 1941. I can only presume that Orchard Cottage housed tenant farmers during this time but I have no knowledge as to the identity of any of them until the beginning of the twentieth century. The farm was then known as “The Wyer Farm” in honour of Frank Wyer who doubled as a small dairy farmer and as a butcher. In Kelly’s Directory for 1916 and 1922, he is described as a butcher, while in the corresponding entry for 1941, he is listed as a dairyman. His butchers shop was probably the present DIY shop some hundred yards or so further up Scrimshire Lane. Incidentally, he must have died in 1941 because the Manvers Sale document [31] which carries the date December 1941 refers to the tenancy being in the hands of his executors.

The Sale Catalogue includes Orchard Cottage as Lot 7 and describes it as:

“A very attractive Small Holding – Rent £49-15-0” with accommodation: “Living Room, two Sitting Rooms, Lobby-Hall, three Bedrooms” with Town Water and Gas laid on. The outbuildings (round an open yard) consisted of: “Pig Sty, Wash House Cooling House, Cow Shed for six, Barn, another Cow Shed for six, Wooden Buildings (owned by tenant).” There was a “Good Kitchen Garden and Orchard”. The area was specified as: “House and Premises: 0.836acres, Grass Land: 2.960acres, Grass Land 3.648acres, Total 7.444acres”.

**LOT 7**  
(Coloured GREEN on Plan 3.)

**A Very Attractive Small Holding**

on the West side of Scrimshire Lane—Tenants The EXORS. of the late Mr. F. WYER.  
Rent £49 15s. 0d.

**The HOUSE** contains Living Room, two Sitting Rooms, Lobby Hall, and three Bedrooms.  
Town Water and Gas are installed.

**The BUILDINGS**, round an Open Yard, comprise Pig Sty, Wash-house, Cooling House, Cow Shed for six, Barn, and another Cow Shed for six. (The Wooden Buildings are the property of the Tenant.) Good Kitchen Garden and Orchard.

**The Land** has a frontage to the Cotgrave-Plumtree Road and is ripe for development.

**SCHEDULE**

No.	DESCRIPTION	ACREAGE
305 Pt. ...	House and Premises (approx.) ...	.836
317 Pt. ...	G ...	2.960
336 ...	G ...	3.648
	Total	7.444

There was then a mysterious hand-written comment to the effect that the Lot had been “Sold to Mr A Fraser for £1100”. The mystery arises because our Title Deeds imply that the property was transferred from Earl Manvers to a Mr Harold Smith (of Jasmine Cottage, Cotgrave) on 9 February 1942. (Was Fraser acting as some kind of agent? Or did he provide a mortgage?) In any case, it appears that Harold Smith bought Orchard Cottage, together with three other properties in the neighbourhood, for a total sum of £2320 but I have no clear evidence that he lived here. I only know that he died on 14 September 1957 and the house was then transferred to his widow Edith Maud Smith who, in turn, died on 13 July 1961. Their daughter inherited it as a minor and kept it until 1970 when, needing money to further her marriage plans, she sold it to John Eldred on 22 December 1970 for £5500. (Legally, the sale was by a solicitor Roy Seely Whitby, acting as executor for Harold Smith.) I understand that John and Margaret Eldred had been her tenants for some little time prior to purchasing it. Note that, at this point, the house was referred to as “Orchard Cottage, 2 Scrimshire Lane” – I presume, therefore, that the Smiths had christened it “Orchard Cottage” soon after they bought it. It is also significant that when John Eldred bought the house, both porches existed and the protuberance which contains the bathrooms. On the other hand, there were no bay windows - these were presumably added by the Eldreds, who also landscaped the garden.



Note that the farm land which had originally been part of the package bought by Harold Smith had been disposed of (by his executors) to developers so, at this stage, the land associated with the house (the Orchard) took the form of a strip, lying along Scrimshire Lane and extending as far as Broad Meer but the Eldreds proceeded to sell off two further building plots. John Eldred, himself, sold the Broad Meer end of the orchard (now number 4 Scrimshire Lane) on 3 March 1978 to Derek John Hodgkinson and Nancy Margaret Hodgkinson of 18 Scrimshire Lane (now Primrose House) for £6438. John died on 16 November 1983 and Margaret inherited the house. In February 1988 she sold more of the land (now 2A Scrimshire Lane) to D Clegg and S M Clegg for £29,000, reducing the garden area to the roughly 0.3 acres which exist today. We bought the property from Margaret on 12 December 1991 for £195,000 and have lived in it ever since. She moved two doors away into number four.

## 9. Mystery Solved?

We left the state of affairs following the 1826 sale in the form of a question: who sold Orchard Cottage back to the Manvers Estate? And it appeared an insoluble mystery until I looked once again at our Title Deeds. Light then slowly dawned – the answer was that no one did! In a sense Orchard Cottage never left Manvers ownership, as is made clear in the Conveyance document by which Gervas Evelyn (sixth) Earl Manvers sold Orchard Cottage to Harold Smith Gentleman. As is usual in such cases, one of the several “Schedules” is concerned to prove that the Vendor actually has the right to sell the said property and, in this particular case, The Fourth Schedule contains no less than twenty-one clauses setting out the various stages through which the several bits of property came into the Sixth Earl’s possession. They begin with a “Resettlement” of 21 June 1876 made between the Third Earl, Sydney William Herbert, his son Viscount Newark, the Rev. Evelyn Hardolph Harcourt Vernon, the Rev Henry Seymour and others. In 1991, when I first read these mysterious names, they meant nothing at all to me – now I know that Henry Seymour was Rector of Holme Pierrepont and that Sydney William Herbert and Rev. Evelyn Hardolph Harcourt Vernon were both grandsons of Anthony Hardolph Eyre, the one being the son of his first daughter Mary Letitia, the second of his second daughter Frances Julia. It is also important to realise that Anthony Hardolph’s only son, Gervase Anthony was killed in action in Spain in 1811, some 25 years before his own demise. It therefore becomes extremely likely that Anthony Hardolph’s estates (including, I believe, Orchard Cottage and other Cotgrave properties) should have come down through the female line to his two first-born grandsons, thus remaking the link with the Manvers Estate, without any need for anyone to buy and sell them. Could I ask for a neater solution than that?

Careful perusal of the University catalogue of Manvers Papers then provided me with even greater enlightenment – I discovered a copy of Anthony Hardolph Eyre’s will [32] from which it is clear that he left all his estates to his *second* daughter Frances Julia and her husband Granville Venables Vernon (known also as Granville Harcourt Vernon), with the rider that, following their deaths, the estate should pass to their first-born son, or, failing that, to their second-born son Evelyn Hardolph Harcourt Vernon (in fact the firstborn son Granville Edward died in 1861, before his father so the estates effectively passed to Evelyn Hardolph). It seems strange that the first daughter Mary Letitia should be nominated only in default of the claim of his second daughter but perhaps he thought she was adequately provided for, being married to Charles Herbert Earl Manvers. No matter; from my point of view it is clear that Orchard Cottage eventually came into the possession of Evelyn Hardolph Harcourt Vernon who was first cousin to Sydney William Herbert 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl Manvers. It appears, then, that the clause in our house deeds which concerns a “Resettlement” between Sydney William Herbert and Rev Evelyn Hardolph Harcourt Vernon (among others) may provide the link whereby Orchard Cottage returned to Manvers Estate ownership.

It would be pointless listing all the other clauses if only because I have not so far seen any of the relevant documents, so I have no way of knowing their detailed content. For the time being, it is sufficient to accept that they adequately fulfil their avowed purpose, that of justifying the Sixth Earl's right to sell the various properties to Harold Smith. The crucial point for me is the manner in which Orchard Cottage slipped unobtrusively back into Manvers ownership – the details of its transfer between the third, fourth, fifth and sixth Earls being of relatively minor significance! By the way, there is even more to this romance – the Rev. Evelyn Hardolph Harcourt Vernon was Rector of Cotgrave between 1859 and 1873 which perhaps hints at an explanation for the rumour that Orchard Cottage belonged to the Church at some time in the nineteenth century. If EHHV owned it, he was in a position to let it to a Cotgrave Curate – he himself had other irons in the ecclesiastical fire and probably spent very little time in Cotgrave, though he did appear occasionally. William Lewin [1] tells us that “[He] was a rich man ----- and was very generous in his benevolences. He was also picturesque, always wearing his Oxford cap and robes in the street. His man of all work was named Stephen, and I never knew any other.” Perhaps Stephen lived in Orchard Cottage? but, unfortunately, Lewin is silent on this. EHHV became Rector of Grove in 1873 and succeeded to the Grove Estate in 1879 when his father died so I imagine Cotgrave saw no more of his academic sartorial flourishes but it would seem that he certainly left his mark here.

But! Yes, there is a “But”. Delightful as all this reasoning surely seems, we are still no nearer understanding the part played in this saga by the Rev John Henry Brown, Rector of Eakring. He and Anthony Hardolph Eyre bought Orchard Cottage *jointly*. Just what this really meant, I really didn't know but it seemed to imply that they had equal shares in the house and I have no knowledge of how JHB might have disposed of his share. Note that he died in June 1830, some six years before Anthony Hardolph and it may be significant that Anthony Hardolph's will is dated February 1830 – was there some connivance between them when it became apparent that JHB was approaching the end? In fact, this was probably not relevant because, further reading of Adcock's book on Old Title Deeds [18A] made me aware that joint purchasers could act either as “Tenants in common” (which means they could sell or will their individual shares) or as “Tenants in survivorship” (meaning that, on the first death, the survivor succeeded to both shares). I then went back to the Lease and Release documents of 1826 to see if they provided any clue as to the arrangement appropriate here and, lo and behold, they did! In the Release, there are repeated statements along the lines: “the said Anthony Hardolph Eyre and John Henry Brown *or the survivor of them or the executors or administrators of such survivor*” (my italics) which make it clear, I think, that, on JHB's death in 1830, AHE would automatically become owner of both their shares, thus confirming that Orchard Cottage did, indeed, come into his possession. The rest, as they say, is history!

**John Orton**

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