

Packwood House

As I looked down from the Top of Sermon on the Mount a collection of Yew Trees planted to resemble the Biblical scene, I paused at the House. I wondered what or whom all this lot was about. All I knew that it appeared to run by the National Trust and there was a Family called Fetherston.

With some searching on the Web and the use of the census records I was able to compile a brief History of the House. I was more interested in the 19th and 20th Century but the early History I have used the records on various sites.

When did It Start

The first building at Packwood was a modest timber-framed farmhouse constructed for John Fetherston between 1556 - 1560.

The Fetherston's were Yeoman Farmers who gravitated to Gentry.

During the Civil War the Fetherstons were careful in their allegiances. In 1642 Parliamentarian general Henry Ireton slept at Packwood House the night before the Battle of Edgehill. However, there is also a family tradition that Charles II was provided with food and drink here after his defeat at Worcester in 1651.

It was common for Families during the Civil War to support either side in the hope of not losing their Estates.

Often son's were forced to support the Parliamentary Forces and the King side. We think we have it bad in Iraq

Today but it must have been terrible for the Families.

Further residences were bought up in nearby properties, near Knowle, Lapworth, Warwick and elsewhere, in the seventeenth century. On the death of Thomas Fetherston in 1720, the estates passed to his sister, Dorothy, who married Thomas Leigh. He assumed the name Fetherston Leigh. Their only daughter, Catherine, died unmarried in 1769, leaving Packwood to the husband of her half-sister, William Dilke of Maxstoke. He took the name Fetherston Dilke, as did his son and grandson.

Out of the blue we have stumbled into Maxstoke Castle near Coleshill.

In 1759 Mary Fetherston Leigh (1736 1768) died not very old Married William Dilke of Maxstoke Castle (1734 1801)

They appear to have had three Children William, Charles and John.

The first census taken in 1841 shows a Fetherston Family

Living at Packwood House.

1841 Household Members:	Packwood
Name	Age
Beaumont Thomas Fetherston	1 6 Mo

Charles Fetherston	4
Cuthbert Albany Fetherston	1 Mo
Frances Mary Fetherston	30
Frances Mary Fetherston	6
John FetherstonEsqr	30
John Fetherston	7
William George Fetherston	3

John Fetherston born in 1812 would appear to be the
Mentioned as Esquire of Independent means.

The 1851 census shows only the Housekeeper
At Packwood house but the Family were at Rugby

1851 Household Members: rugby

Name	Age
Sarah Ashby	22
Ann Barratt	25
John D Boston	17
Beaumont T Fetherston	11
Catherine R Fetherston	4
Charles Fetherston	14
Cuthbert A Fetherston	9
Edith M Fetherston	7
Francis E Fetherston	15
Timothy D Fetherston	5
Wm Geo Fetherston	13
Francis Fetherstone	41
John Fetherstone	41
John Fetherstone	17
William Mitchell	42
Sarah Petty	41

With servants and all the census scribe had added an
E to the end of Fetherston in some cases.

All names and ages reflect the Packwood House Family.

The address at Rugby is Newbold Road.

John is still referred to as an Esquire and his wife Francis as a Lady
Esquire. Cooks and Footman are all there.

By the 1861 John Fetherston had taken over Packwood
House.

Household Members: Packwood

Name	Age
John Baldwin	21
John Fetherston	26
John Richmond	23

It would appear that John Fetherston Senior had died
And his son John had inherited Packwood.

His younger brother William was now living at Maxstoke
Castle.

By 1871 Packwood House changes. A Charles O Arton and his wife
Helen purchase the House.

The Family appear to have a Hardware Business employing 3men 6boys
and 3girls.

Address appears to be Deritend Bordesley on the
Coventry Road. The new Nuevo Rich would appear to be taking over
from the country squires.

The 1871 Census at PackWood recalls: -

1871 Household Members:		Packwood
Name		Age
Alfred Arton		1
Blanche Arton		10
Clemont Arton		3
Edith Arton	13	
Frances Arton		11
George Arton		6
George O Arton	43	
Gilbert Arton		4
Helen Arton		38
Herbert Arton		4 months
Ann M Bord		21
Eliza Crump		21

The Arton family were present right through the Census records but by
1901 the Family had been reduced to a much smaller one.

The 1901 Census at Pack Wood recalls: -

1901 Household Members:		Packwood
Name	Age	
Clement Arton	33	
George Arton	36	

Georg O Arton	73
Gilbert Arton	34
Helin Arton	68
Mary C Due	27
Lucy Parker	24

By 1904 the Arton family had sold Packwood to the Ash Family.

The Ash Family from Acocks Green were Alfred I Ash In 1891 was recorded as a Galvanised Iron Manufacturer.

The 1891 Census records: -

1891 Household Members:	Flint Green Lane
Name	Age
Alfred I Ash	31
Emily H Ash	32
Graham B Ash	1
Henrietta Hilyard	18
Lizzie Hunt	21

Alfred Ash was the son of Joseph Ash. The huge empire Joseph Ash was born in 1824, the son of a Birmingham chemist. He founded his company in 1857 which took an active part in the rapid industrial expansion of the Midlands. In 1864 he joined with John Pierce Lacy to form Ash & Lacy, which until the year 2000 was the Parent Company of our Group. Joseph Ash died in 1915 at the age of 91, but his name lives on as part of a thriving, energetic, National Company with 6,000 active customers.

By 1901 the Ash family had moved to Lickey End

The 1901 Census records:-

1901 Household Members:	Plymouth Road Lickey
Name	Age
Alfred James Ash	43
Beryl Hobroyd Ash	7
Emily Hannah Ash	42
Graham Baron Ash	11
Rose Liyyitt	19
Minnie Wilton	28

Alfred's fortune was derived from his astute Grandfather, who founded companies making galvanised iron products for the booming Victorian engineering construction industry. In 1904 Graham, then aged 15, moved with his father mother and younger sister Betty, from Flint Green Rd near Acocks Green to Packwood House 'An old fashioned country residence'

with 134 acres of land. His father bought the house “because the boy wanted it” ! The property needed repair and this was done initially in the 16th century style. This was the start of a protracted restoration/development and which created the illusion that it is an ancient building. Almost all the Tudor features are imported from buildings that were being demolished; the great hall being made from a Tudor Cowshed (Possibly the earliest known barn conversion). There are few records of the origins of the imports.

Much of what is seen at Packwood today is down Alfred’s son Graham Baron Ash who in the 20’s and 30’s restored and rebuilt the house.

In 1941 the house was handed over to the National Trust where it lies today.

Graham died in 1980.

Interesting how the efforts and energies of Birmingham folk were all around me as I looked upon Packwood House.