

# Church House - Claypits Lane, Shrivenham

By Neil B. Maw

Information so far



Although the Historic England assessment of Church House described the central core as 17<sup>th</sup> century, it is very likely that it is much earlier. Its location, being practically part of the churchyard, suggest that it was built on the foundations of some earlier structure. The earliest point in the history so far, comes from the documents of Christopher Ogden the current owner of the property, whom we thank for allowing us to view and copy. In an Abstract of Title, the earliest reference is to an Indenture made between John Hartley on the one part, and Henry and William Fairthorne on the other. John Hartley may have been from Highworth as we have a copy of a Will of a man of that name, described as, Gent, bearing dates that would match. Henry and William Fairthorne are likely to be cousins.

The Tithe Map of 1844 listed that the house and the cottages were owned by William Fairthorne, and that the house itself, that is today called, '*Church House*,' was occupied by him. However, he doesn't appear on the census listing for 1841 and a search of the census records showed that he was farming at Camden Farm just outside Faringdon, off the road to Radcot. His son William was farming at Brimpton Manor Farm, near Newbury.

It is relevant to note the wording of an indenture from 1880 within Christopher Ogden's papers, where it described, *'all that messuage tenement or farm house garden and premises.'* A close study of the 1851 walk-order of the census commissioner, showed Nathaniel Shuery as occupier of a small six-acre farm in the area of Church House. If the closes/fields are combined to the north and west, they add up to about six acres.

1851 England, Wales & Scotland Census  
Shrivenham, Faringdon, Berkshire & Oxfordshire, England

Learn about this record set

### Household Members (i)

First name(s)	Last name	Relationship	Marital status	Sex	Age	Birth year	Occupation	Birth place
Nathaniel	Shuery	Head	Married	Male	32	1819	Farmer Of 6 Acres	Buckland, Berkshire, England
Elizabeth	Shuery	Wife	Married	Female	33	1818	-	Middleton Cheney, Northamptonshire, England
Sarah	Shuery	Daughter	-	Female	4	1847	-	Longcot, Berkshire, England
Mary Ann	Shuery	Daughter	-	Female	1	1850	-	Longcot, Berkshire, England

A similar close study of the census for 1861 takes the occupation of Church House in a completely different direction as a, *'Boarding and Day School.'* The Historic England listing for the property suggests that the 17<sup>th</sup> century core house was extended by, *'two rear 19<sup>th</sup> century brick additions with a steeply pitched gabled stone tiles roof and west end brick stack to the 17<sup>th</sup> century range.'* With the death of owner, William Fairthorne the Elder in 1859, could it have been his wife or son's idea to make the additions to the property? In 1862 an advertisement appeared in the newspaper looking for a, *'Governess, in a Farm House, to instruct eight children in English and Music.'* But as normal for the time, the contact given was just the Post Office, Shrivenham. (Reading Mercury 12<sup>th</sup> July 1862).



### Record Transcription:

1861 England, Wales & Scotland Census

Boarding School Day School, Shrivenham, Faringdon, Berkshire & Oxfordshire, England

[Learn about this record set](#)

### Household Members ⓘ

First name(s)	Last name	Relationship	Marital status	Sex	Age	Birth year	Occupation	Birth place
Julia	Townsend	Head	Widow	Female	48	1813	Schoolmistress	Clanfield, Oxfordshire, England
Caroline	Townsend	Daughter	Unmarried	Female	15	1846	Scholar	Faringdon, Berkshire, England
Theodora	Townsend	Daughter	Unmarried	Female	11	1850	Scholar	Faringdon, Berkshire, England
Charlotte R H	Townsend	Daughter	Unmarried	Female	9	1852	Scholar	Faringdon, Berkshire, England
Tryphena	Townsend	Daughter	Unmarried	Female	6	1855	Scholar	Faringdon, Berkshire, England
Martha S	Symmonds	Governess	Unmarried	Female	23	1838	Governess	Over, Caernarvonshire, Wales
Mary	Widginton	Boarder	Unmarried	Female	12	1849	Scholar	St George the Martyr, Middlesex, England
Ann	Fox	Servant	Unmarried	Female	18	1843	-	Aston, Oxfordshire, England

Above: The School Listing for 1861. Below: A clear view of the two new extensions



The Barrington Estate Map for 1866 listed the owner of the house and the cottages as Mrs Fairthorne (Mary). This would have been in accordance with the Will of her husband William who bequeathed it to her for the rest of her natural life. The estate map listed the occupier as Henry George Elkington, but a subsequent search failed to discover just who he was. By the census of 1871, widow Mary Fairthorne was 80 years of age and living in Church House with her daughter and a servant. But Mary died in July the following year. The new National School in the High Street had been open since 1863 and this may have influenced the closure of the private school.

Upon the death of Mary, her late husband's Will directed that the property should go to his son, William Fairthorne the Younger. His son made out a Will dated 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1877, and in it he directed that upon his death the property should go into the hands of John Anns, the husband of his sister Mary, and a man by the name of Worthy Beak, in Trust, who should sell it all, and after his debts had been paid, the residue of the money should be invested for the benefit of his wife and children. William the Younger died the following year, and his Executors, John Anns and Worthy Beak, were granted Probate at the High Court at Oxford. But unfortunately, John Anns died on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1879, leaving Worthy Beak, the surviving executor to conclude the directions of William Fairthorne's Will.

Worthy Beak negotiated a deal with Amariah Fairthorne, who was the son of John Fairthorne, who owned and occupied the large property adjoining St Andrew's Churchyard and Church House called, The Manor House. (See SHS No N209). Even though his father was a wealthy man, Amariah was a successful businessman in his own right and part-owned a large Brewery in Faringdon. The deal he agreed with Worthy Beak was to buy Church House, the five cottages, two closes of pastureland (fields) and some garden ground, for £900. The subsequent documentation revealed that the sitting tenants of the house at the time were Mary Wyatt and Jane Dent, both School Governess'. Could the private school still have been running?

There is a period from 1880 through to the end of the century where it is unclear who was occupying the house. A study of the census for 1891 suggested that it might have been Francis Knapp and his family, with the peculiar address heading of, '*Church Yard*.' If a walk

is taken around the church yard, it is difficult to give any other location as to where the family may have lived other than Church House. Could this also be from when the name of the property originated? At the moment it is speculation.

**Record Transcription:**  
 1891 England, Wales & Scotland Census  
 Church Yard, Swindon Street, Shrivenham, Faringdon, Berkshire & Oxfordshire, England  
[Learn about this record set](#)

**Household Members** ⓘ

First name(s)	Last name	Relationship	Marital status	Sex	Age	Birth year	Occupation	Birth place
Francis	Knapp	Head	Married	Male	44	1847	Bricklayer	Shrivenham, Berkshire, England
Charlotte	Knapp	Wife	Married	Female	46	1845	-	Faringdon, Berkshire, England
Lizzie	Knapp	Daughter	Single	Female	24	1867	Housekeeper	Shrivenham, Berkshire, England
Frank	Knapp	Son	Single	Male	20	1871	Bricklayer	Shrivenham, Berkshire, England
Percy R	Knapp	Son	-	Male	16	1875	Bricklayer	Shrivenham, Berkshire, England
Edward J	Knapp	Son	-	Male	13	1878	Scholar	Shrivenham, Berkshire, England
George	Knapp	Son	-	Male	9	1882	Scholar	Shrivenham, Berkshire, England

The census of 1901 listed that John Selby Baseley was the occupier of a, 'House' and was described as a, 'Relieving Officer.' We know from the documents of Christopher Ogden that John Baseley's son would eventually purchase Church House, and the location within the listing fits the property's location. A Relieving Officer was a government employee who would evaluate all persons applying for medical or poor relief, and could authorize emergency relief or entry to the workhouse - a large one being located at Faringdon. John Baseley senior was still there according to the census of 1911, but he had retired from his post as relieving officer. On the census form that he was obliged to fill in, he didn't name his house.

**Record Transcription:**  
 1901 England, Wales & Scotland Census  
 House, Shrivenham, Faringdon, Berkshire & Oxfordshire, England  
[Learn about this record set](#)

**Household Members** ⓘ

First name(s)	Last name	Relationship	Marital status	Sex	Age	Birth year	Occupation	Birth place
John Selby	Baseley	Head	Married	Male	42	1859	Relieving Officer	Wormleighton, Warwickshire, England
Kate Isabel	Baseley	Wife	Married	Female	26	1875	-	Swindon, Wiltshire, England

Amariah Fairthorne died in 1907 and left his property portfolio to his son Berkeley Fairthorne, who sold Church House in 1922 to a Hannah Beatrice Day of Fern Cottage (House), Shrivenham, for £400. The deal was for the house only and not the cottages. Two years previously, John Baseley senior had died and was buried on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1920 in St Andrew's churchyard. It was his son, also John Selby Baseley, who purchased Church House from Hannah Day in 1924 for £300. The ownership of the property stayed with John junior for a long period, although we don't know if he lived there or let it out. The documentation shows that he ended his days in Roundway Hospital, Devizes, and that he had died intestate on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1967, not having made a Will. On his death record, a Doris Brown was listed as a, 'linked person,' and it was she who sold Church House on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1968 to John Bryan Young of Rochester in Kent, a Lt. Commander in the Royal Navy for £3250.

And it's from that point in history that we have to leave it – with a gap of about 50 years to the present day. If you have any further information on this property or would like to comment on this article, please contact us.

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Above: The huge fireplace in Church House and the quaint stairs to the side.

The Historic England Listing: *Built of 17<sup>th</sup> century rubble stone and part roughcast with two rear 19<sup>th</sup> century brick additions with a steeply pitched gabled stone tiles roof and west end brick stack to the 17<sup>th</sup> century range. The 19<sup>th</sup> century additions form with the 17<sup>th</sup> century section, a U-shaped plan. Two storeys and attic, two windows range facing the graveyard. Two stone-tiled gabled dormers with 20<sup>th</sup> century six pane windows, three light, six pane casement to upper floors and three light 15 leaded pane casements to the ground floor. One storey rubble stone addition with flat roof to the west with a three light 20<sup>th</sup> century pane casement.*

Listing No: NGR 2407189145