

Emanuel Cole (1840 - 1926) of Brendon, Thornbury



I am attempting to write an account of the life of my Great, Great, Grandfather Emanuel Cole (pictured left) who was born in Brendon in 1840. In the meantime, I read the June 2015 edition of the Thornbury Tatler (Issue 11) and your plea to properly record information before it is lost. So I thought you might be interested to read the following.

My family has a few photographs and papers but much can be found on the internet which has helped fill in the many gaps. I visited Thornbury recently but at the time (my research was still in its infancy) I had not known that Lower Brendon Farm was the Cole family farm.

I now know that Emanuel's family had been farming at Brendon for many generations. His parents Matthew and Mary, his Grandparents Emanuel and Ann and his Great Grandfather Matthew. Many of these family members are buried at St. Peter's, the Thornbury Parish Church and their headstones can still be seen today.

Your article makes mention of Emanuel's Grandfather (my four times Great Grandfather) also called Emanuel Cole (1778-1850). To save confusion I shall refer to him as Emanuel the elder.

I found several interesting newspaper articles and one such article was that found in the Somerset Gazette dated 15th June 1839 in which Emanuel the elder had placed an advertisement requesting approaches from those willing to undertake the measuring and mapping of the parish of Thornbury and to produce a 'first class' map and Book of References.

Two years later, some of the Brendon landowners called a public meeting concerning the division and allotting of the Common and the Wastelands. Emanuel the elder, his son Matthew (of Lower Brendon Farm), Mr Hutchinson (possibly Hutchings?), Joanna Routley (of Jewell's Brendon) and Richard Rowland (of Hooper's Farm) made the announcement through the Western Times on Saturday, 11th December 1841 stating that the meeting would take place at 11 o'clock on 23rd December 1841 at Emanuel's farm house.

The following year, the Valuer, William Routley gave notice in the same newspaper that as he had been commissioned by the owners and occupiers, he would be dividing and allotting both the Common and Waste Lands on Thursday 13th January 1842. The meeting took place once again at Emanuel's farm house in Brendon. I assume that this did indeed happen and all the relevant landowners received a piece of land to add to their existing farms.

Emanuel the elder appears to have been a major landowner and so much so that in 1835 he donated a piece of land to the Methodist Church. The land at Holsworthy Beacon was used to build Wesleyan Chapel and it was considered a 'fine chapel'. Fast forward forty five years to 1881 and his grandson would continue the legacy by donating further land for a new chapel to be built when the original started to crumble. The Western Times reported on this on 18th November 1881, stating that Emanuel 'very generously gave the land required'. Residents celebrated the official opening of Beacon Chapel in 1882 with the addition of a school on the site of the old chapel. I see from your article that William Routley was involved in the celebrations too. Apparently, Thomas Daniel wrote a book about the Centenary celebrations in 1982 and I am currently trying to trace a copy of this book or pamphlet to see if there is any reference to either Emanuel.

In 1845 Matthew Cole died at the young age of 41. Matthew was Emanuel the elder's son and father to the young Emanuel. Emanuel was only five years old when his father Matthew died and then just five years later, his Grandfather, Emanuel the elder, died in 1850. Both were buried close to each other in St Peter's in Thornbury.

What happened to Lower Brendon Farm after the death of these two males? I have to assume that the family farm was managed by the Cole women until Emanuel came of age and was sufficiently experienced enough to manage the farm himself.

Emanuel's mother Mary ensured that the young Emanuel attended a day school. Whilst there he formed lifelong friendships with George Harris, Richard Ward and W (possibly William) Sanders. I do not know which school Emanuel attended at the time of writing. George Harris said in later years that he and Emanuel had been "almost cradled together" having attended both school and Sunday school together. He and George went on to farm together from around 1861/1863. One of George's tenements of land (possibly Vaglefield) adjoined Emanuel's and if cattle happened to stray into fields on either side, they never had a cross word with each other he said and Emanuel always met him "with a cheerful countenance". George was only one year older than Emanuel being born in 1839. Aged 12 he lived in Cranbury, Holsworthy then as a young man lived at Vaglefield, Cookbury with his widowed father Thomas. From around 1889 he lived at Sydney Villa, North Road in Holsworthy.

His other school friend, Richard Ward, came from a family who, like the Cole family, had farmed in the area for many generations, at Simpson in Holsworthy. Then there was Mr William Sanders who eventually settled in Yeomanden, Pyeworthy. I had difficulty in trying to trace this individual but I did find a William Sanders of Pyeworthy mentioned in an article in the Western Times (9th April 1880) where his trade was that of a Land Surveyor and another article (24th June 1879) states that William's trade was that of an Auctioneer.

The Reverend William Edgcombe, Rector of St. Peter's was also a friend. He had known three generations of the Cole family having moved to Thornbury as a young boy with his mother and father John, who took up the position of Rector at St Peter's. John held this position for 37 years and William followed in his footsteps and also became Rector at St Peter's and he held the position for 48 years.



In 1861 Emanuel married Lucretia Fry (pictured left). Lucretia had been born in Inwardleigh but in the year of their marriage was living in Hatherleigh. Over the next sixteen years they had several children: Emanuel Samuel Fry Cole, Theodora Cole, Walter William Cole, Lily Cole, Matthew Cole and their youngest child (my Great Grandmother) was May Cole. The 1871 census shows that, certainly older children, were educated at home by a young Governess, Jane Sanders.

The local community was saddened when Emanuel announced that he would be leaving Brendon. Perhaps Emanuel wanted to expand further but he did not sell the land or Lower Brendon farm preferring to retain it (possibly rent it out) and come back on occasion to visit.

It was decided that Emanuel should be honoured in some way with a token of their affection and so William Edgcombe formed

a committee. William was President. Committee members were: William Brown of Hayne, Hollacombe, George Harris of Cookbury, Thomas Harris of Holsworthy, Mr J Kelland of Cookbury, Mr W Sanders (Vice President of the Committee) of Yeomanden, Pyeworthy, Richard Sloggett of Bradford, William Treble of Thornbury, W Yeo Esq of Abbots Bickington, Matthew and Benjamin Yeo of Bradford.

Within a short space of time over one hundred individuals contributed and nearly £50 was collected which, for the time, was a substantial sum. There was also a sum left over to buy Lucretia a small gift.

On 28th April 1881 a dinner was held in Emanuel's honour at The White Hart Hotel in Holsworthy where Emanuel was presented with his parting gift and no doubt Lucretia and he felt moved by the outpouring of affection towards them. The event was reported upon at length in the 23rd April 1881 edition of the Western Times and it is from this article that I have been able to learn so much about Emanuel.

Emanuel and Lucretia were amongst many friends that night who were all interestingly listed on the 1881 article. There were speeches throughout the evening from William Brown, George Harris, Thomas Kivell, William Short, James Vivian and Richard Ward. Finally Reverend William Edgcombe stood up to say a few words on behalf of them all. He told of the '*great regret*' that had been expressed by all when it was known that Emanuel was leaving '*the neighbourhood in which he was so thoroughly beloved*' but that they had all met to do honour to Emanuel by presenting him with 'a handsome testimonial' – a timepiece – so Emanuel would remember them. The timepiece was a large gilt and blue porcelain clock made by William Short, Emanuel's friend and the Clockmaker in Holsworthy. It was 30 inches long and 24 inches high. Emanuel must have been astonished at their generosity. He rose to offer his heartfelt thanks for the handsome gift which he would look upon as mark of their kindness to him. There were loud cheers and more speeches!

In subsequent years it seems the clock was placed under a dome to protect it and then decades later my father Keith Cottell was custodian of the clock for some years as was his brother Anthony Cottell. I remember how quite magnificent it was. There was an engraving at the base of the clock which read:



"Presented to Mr Emanuel Cole, of Brendon Farm, in the parish of Thornbury, Devonshire, by his numerous friends as a memento of their esteem and regard. This testimonial is an expression of their sincere regret at his leaving the neighbourhood, and of their hearty good wishes for the future welfare and happiness of himself and family – Holsworthy, 10th April 1881."

Emanuel and his family moved a short time later to 400 acres on the estate of Cricket St Thomas in Chard, Somerset. The estate was owned by General Sir Alexander Hood, Lord Bridport who Emanuel would come to know well. Their new home was called

Manor Farm and I believe it was a dairy farm.

After only six years at Manor Farm, and at the young age of forty-nine, Lucretia died in 1887. Emanuel, and I am sure the children too, made the long journey back to St. Peter's in Thornbury to bring Lucretia 'home'. She was buried next to her parents Catherine and Samuel Fry.

Emanuel never remarried and continued to live at Manor Farm for the next forty or so years. As well as running Manor Farm, I am told by a family member that Emanuel was a noted horse breeder, a show judge, rode to hounds with the Cotley Harrier and hunted with the Culmstock Otter Hounds. He was also a member of the Chard Rural District Council and sat on the Chard Board of Guardians.

Seventeen years later in 1898, Emanuel decided to sell Lower Brendon Farm and the surrounding land. His friend George Harris in Holsworthy agreed to assist with viewings of the property and so the property was advertised. I have to assume that this did sell but I have yet to find out who the purchaser was.

It was during the same year that Lord Bridport, the owner of the estate at Cricket St Thomas, had some financial difficulties and had to sell the estate. It was bought by Francis J Fry, the co-proprietor of J S Fry and Sons Ltd, the chocolate manufacturer. The estate would change hands again in later years and it is now owned by Warner Leisure.



The 1911 census shows that just Emanuel and his eldest son were living at Manor Farm, his other children all having moved away and married. His youngest daughter May (my Great Grandmother pictured left) was living close by in Chard on Victoria Avenue. She had married Thomas Henry Cottell who was an official of the County Court and Manager of the local Labour Exchange. He was a staunch member of the Church of the Good Shepherd and was on the Church Council. Emanuel now had a grandson too, Thomas Harry Emanuel Cottell (my Grandfather), who was now eleven years old and attending school in Chard. It seems May was close to both her father and her eldest brother and so I assume they were regular visitors at one another's homes. May had named her home 'Brendon House' - a sentimental gesture to the Cole family property back in Devon. The house in Chard is still there and is still called Brendon House.

Emanuel continued to live at Manor Farm until his health deteriorated and May seems to have nursed him at her home where he died on 22nd May 1926 aged 86. Emanuel was buried in Furnham Churchyard, Chard.

Emanuel with the 'cheerful countenance' had lived his life well I think. He had some fine qualities it seems. He was reported as being 'truthful and honourable' and had earned the 'respect and esteem' of all those who knew him. No wonder he was 'thoroughly beloved'.

The above is only a brief sketch of Emanuel Cole's life and not the full account I am currently compiling and researching for my family. Any errors are mine and I am only too glad to be corrected! If any of your readers have any information or photographs to share, I would be very grateful to receive them and would gladly share any information I have. I can be contacted via email ej.gec@ntlworld.com

Thank you for your interest.

Elizabeth Cottell