

ROUND AND ABOUT IN THE PARISH.....

This photo was taken during the construction of Chapelwood Manor (at Chelwood Corner on the way to Nutley) and has been provided by Stephen Wood who is the great great grandson of Job, the builder. There were said to be 90 men working on the construction. Job is 3rd row from the front in the centre, wearing a bowler hat. The property was built for the first Earl Thomas Brassey.



Job Luxford was a well-known builder from Forest Row and he built many of the large houses in our Parish. His grandfather, John, was a bricklayer and owner of the beer house known as the Crocodile at Danehill. Job was born in 1850 at Starve Crowe, Horsted Keynes and by 1895 he was described as a builder, contractor, plumber and house decorator.

Job was an imposing well built man who dressed in a frock coat and top hat. He was very strict and insisted work was done to the very highest quality. There are many tales about him and his character, one of which is that he picked up a newly engaged boy returning to a building site from the village. Job asked who he was, where he was going, and who was his boss. The boy answered satisfactorily to the first questions but replied to the last "I don't know him, but he's some miserable old bu***r the men call Job Luxford". What happened then was not recorded.

When I was researching Streeters Rough, the name Thomas Brassey was of significance since he had been involved in the financing of the laying of the first transatlantic cable. Francis Lucas (of The Barn, Streeters Rough) was involved in the actual laying of the cable. Hence there was a connection.



Job Luxford ~ 1920

Whilst we were on holiday in Cornwall my husband, Allan said to me that the Porthcerno Museum was about an hour's drive away, which was the point at which many submarine telegraph cables came ashore, and would I like to visit it? I most certainly did and whilst there purchased a book 'Girdle Round the Earth'. Oh goodness me, it was such a difficult book to plough through but it mentioned Lord Brassey (who was principally known as a railway engineer) and his investment of £60 000 in about 1864 to achieve the laying of the first transatlantic cable from America to England. I subsequently got well and truly stuck in my research and to try and clear things up I went down to the Bexhill Museum and saw the curator Julian Porter who straight away noticed where I was going wrong. [The Brassey family had an enormous estate at Normanhurst, which is why a lot of their details are at the Bexhill Museum]. The book refers to Lord Thomas Brassey, but this is wrong - he never had a title, he was always Mr Thomas Brassey. It was his son, Thomas Brassey who had the title Lord Brassey (1st Earl Brassey) and his son Thomas Brassey became the 2nd Earl Brassey. That's all clear then? The moral? Don't believe everything you read! Now, would you really like to read on?

Another book about Thomas Brassey (1836-1918) says 'Chapelwood Manor was built by Earl Brassey, 1911' and as Mollie Smith of the Nutley Historical Society pointed out to me, this too is inaccurate as a drawing of Chapelwood Manor, when completed, was hung in the 1904 Royal Academy exhibition. The building was completed before 1911.

In 1905 Lord and Lady Ribblesdale rented the house for a couple of months whilst Lord and Lady Brassey were away on a long cruise, and this too confirms the date when Chapelwood Manor was completed.

It has never been entirely clear how the name Chapelwood Manor arose. Among considerations are that there was a chapel in the woods surrounding the house, but despite research by the Nutley Historical Society nothing conclusive has been found. Therefore the name remains an enigma.

My thanks to Julian Porter, Mollie Smith, Ray Smith and Stephen Wood.



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