

Davenport Farm

By **Linda Hankins**



Our house has a date stone on the gable end wall which reads “H □ D □ E 1723”. Records suggest that these initials may be those of Edward Davenport and his wife. The Davenport family are known to have been living in this area as far back as 1694

In 1723 the building probably looked quite different from today. It was a working farm with a lot of land, which has slowly been sold off, leaving us with approximately one acre of garden today. The house was originally a large barn and cottage. The roof in the lounge is supported by half a tree! The main beam is the forked trunk of a very large oak tree.

The farm has been occupied by many families in its lifetime, some of whom are known.

Owners

Some of the previous owners of Davenport Farm:

1723 Edmund Davenport

1829 Robert Aldred

1841 Abraham Toothill

1855 John Toothill

1939-52 The Hornby family – one of whom carved their name on a stone behind the house

The Boys family – the last family to run it as a farm

Then there was a period when the barn stood empty, and unused. It began to look very run down and dilapidated. The next person to buy it was a builder, who redeveloped it in 1989 and sold it to us in 1994

We are pleased to have a photograph of one of the families – the Toothills.



This photograph was taken in 1891 and shows Albert Toothill, with his sons and grandson – possibly taken in Davenport Farm's Garden

The Garden

In 1960, the farmland was scattered with outbuildings. These were the pigsties. Hen houses and old sheds which were all needed when this was a working farm. These were demolished during the 1989 development.

During the first hot summer that we were here, we watched our grass die off in mysterious rectangles all over the place. A little bit of investigative digging quickly confirmed that the bases of the old buildings were mostly still intact, just a few inches below the surface of the “lawn”.

Our garden plans were all put on hold for a year, whilst we tried to break up the old bases and remove them, along with loads of old bricks, door frames, windows and general rubbish.

Planting was postponed until 1996!

1996 – 2013



We had to adapt our garden plans/ideas many times, to work around some of the larger bases. Our patio and raised beds are all on land that was just too difficult to plant directly on. Our soil base is clay, it is mud all winter and baked in the summer, so we have added a lot of manure and topsoil.

We have tried and tested hundred of plants. Thanks heavens for astilbes, astrantias, geums, geraniums and potentillas – they are the most undemanding of plants. The poppies, hostas, ligularia and angelica always amaze us, when they push their noses out of the ground each spring, and grow amazingly quickly to become the kings of the garden.

Our roses have struggled every year. We have fed, sprayed, pruned, watered, moved them around, and even changed them for new ones! Maybe this year they will look better.

We lost several plants last winter, so some of our shrubs are quite new. The pair of clematis by the pond are a pair no more. One disappeared in the winter and the other proved hardier and is now 8 ft tall as usual.

The big fuchsia bushes around the garden are all divisions of cuttings from a fuchsia my mum gave me in the 1980's, which her mum had given her in the 1950's. So it is the oldest plant in the garden. We will make sure our son and daughter get cuttings from it, as it is a family heirloom now!

The vegetable plot is my husband's domain, and we get lots of fruit and vegetables every year. On the Garden Open Day, he is happy to chat about spuds and carrots to anyone interested.