

THE BEALE FAMILY IN HERTFORDSHIRE

Hitchin – 1477

The earliest mention of the family is on an inscription to a brass in Hitchin church. The inscription has now disappeared but was recorded by the antiquary Salmon as the effigies of a man and his wife with their four sons and four daughters, in brass with this inscription:

“Here lies John Beel and Marjorie his wife. The said Marjorie died on May 4th 1477, and John 14..... (date illegible)”

Radwell – 1516

About five miles north east of Hitchin lies the church of All Saints, Radwell. A brass on the floor of the nave shows a man between two women, with two sons and two daughters, and bears the inscription

“Pray for the soules of John Bele gentleman and Anne and Agnes hys wyfes, the whiche John decessed in the yere of our Lord God MVXVI”.

Since polygamy was not permitted in those days, one must assume that Anne died before Agnes became Mrs Beale!

Hertford, Hadley 1566 – 1582

A couple of entries in parish registers refer to Beales at Hertford in the 16th century. In 1566 Christian Beale, described as a traveller, was buried at Hertford, and Williame Bele married Alice Parkyn there in 1586. An Agnes Beale died at Earls Colne, near Halstead, Essex in 1510, and there is a tantalisingly brief reference to a William Beale of Hadley, Middlesex, who was left some property in the will of his friend John Pratt in 1582.

Buckland 1570 – 1873

About four miles south of Royston, the hamlet of Buckland straddles the A10 road to Buntingford and Ware. There in 1570 William Beale, yeoman, died in 1570, leaving some money to his son Edward “toward his exhibucon in Cambridge”. By this date were established the Christian names John, Edward and William, which recur so often in the family down to the present day. In 1637 a local meeting of JPs confirmed the indentures of an apprentice to William Beale, yeoman. Beales lived at Buckland for three hundred years, the last mention being a baptism in 1873. Another William Beale, the great grandfather of Trevor Beale, the retired managing director of Beales Ltd, was born at Buckland in 1838.

Barkway 1574 – 1847

Towards the Essex border about a mile to the east of Buckland lies Barkway. There Beales are mentioned from 1574 down to 1847. The parish register for 1800 records an episode concerning John Beale, a farmer, who lived in Barkway with his wife Sarah. They had ten children, with a gap of twenty five years between the oldest and the youngest, and all except one survived infancy. That year a family row blew up over their impetuous 23 year old son Bransome, who had become engaged to Sarah Bysouth and had caused the first banns for their wedding to be read. The rector then records in the register “Marriage forbidden by his father John Beale, who convinced his son of the impropriety of marrying Sarah Bysouth; and Bransome Beale came and asked that the second and third banns be stopped”. Poor Sarah!

Sandon 1744 – 1807

The scattered village of Sandon lies about a mile of the west of Barkway. Various Beale weddings took place there from 1744 to 1807.

Therfield 1677 – 1872

The pretty secluded village of Therfield lies in the shade of great oaks a couple of miles south of Royston. It was the home of many Beale families for two centuries from 1677. Several of them took their turn as churchwarden of Therfield, Edward Beale for 2 years from 1722, John Beale for 5 years from 1758, William Beale for 1 year from 1775 and another Edward Beale for no less than 30 years from 1776 to 1806, keeping the parish register in his own hand. In 1769 the family came even closer to the church when the curate, Booth Hewitt, married Judith Beale. A rector of Therfield, writing in the 1870s, recorded: "The family of Beale belonged to the old class of yeoman farmer. The mill by the glebe belonged to them at one time". Today the leafy churchyard of Therfield shelters the graves of the last two Beales to live in Therfield, James Beale who died in 1872 and his wife Esther.

Royston – From 1683

Although the Royston parish registers record Beales from 1683, it was about the end of the eighteenth century that members of the family started to leave the surrounding villages and move into this country town, where they lived in large numbers during the nineteenth century, and where some Beales still live today. In 1803 Thomas Beale opened the bakers shop at the Cross which was handed down for many generations, and still retained the name Beale and Son over the door until it was demolished for road widening in the 1960s. Don Beale owned the Bull Hotel in Royston during and after the second world war.

The Beale Family in Hertfordshire as Innkeepers and Hoteliers

The earliest record of any connections with the licensed trade comes in 1705, when Margaret Beale of Therfield was described as a victualler. The Red Lion at Chipping, just north of Buckland, was owned by Edward Beale, who left it to his son John in 1753. At Buckland the Chequers Inn was in the hands of Williams Beale in 1814, of Thomas Beale in 1845 and of Samuel Beale in 1854. In Royston William Beale was the licensee of the Jolly Butchers from 1851 to 1855, and John Beale was described as an innkeeper in 1874.

A more substantial property was the bull Hotel in Royston, which had a large outside catering department, catering for May Balls at Cambridge colleges among other things. This was run by Martha Beale, later Mrs Putt, around 1900, and during and after the second World War till about 1951 by Don Beale together with his brother Alec, who later moved to Devon where he owned the Pines Hotel at Beer.

In 1945 Edward Beale, chairman of Beales Ltd, purchased West Lodge Park Hotel, Hadley Wood, which enjoys a Hertfordshire postal address though it is actually in Middlesex, and in 1964 Beales Ltd acquired Hatfield Lodge Hotel at Hatfield.

The Move to London and back to Hertfordshire

For several centuries the Beales lived peaceful lives as yeoman farmers in the area just south of Royston, taking their turn as churchwardens of Therfield and for a time owning the Therfield Mill. In 1769 John Beale came to London and ran a baker's shop at 75 Oxford Street until 1802, when his namesake John Beale, either a younger brother or cousin, moved the shop a short distance to 2 Wigmore Street and stayed there until 1828. Edward Beale, whose father was Thomas Beale, baker, of Royston was recorded at Wigmore Street from 1821 to 1824, but moved to 45 Popham Street, Islington in 1829. It was there that William Beale, great grandfather of Trevor Beale, the retired managing director of Beales Ltd, came from Buckland in 1857 to learn the trade of a baker from his uncle Edward. In 1861 William Beale opened his first baker's shop, with facilities at the rear for outside catering, on Highgate Hill. After 5 years he moved to larger premises at Holloway Road, and in 1889 built the splendid and

palatial establishment known to generations of North Londoners as Beale's Restaurant. With a thriving bakery in addition, this prospered for 80 years until its closure in 1969.

Steps had already been taken to diversify the business with the purchase in 1945 of West Lodge Park Hotel, Hadley Wood, Herts, in 1960 of Firs Hall banqueting centre, Winchmore Hill, London N21 and in 1964 of Hatfield Lodge Hotel, Hatfield. After the closure of the Holloway restaurant and bakery in 1969 the head office moved to Southgate, N14, and West Lodge Park Hotel was doubled in size in 1972. This marked a further step in the return of the Beale family business to Hertfordshire, and continues the shift northwards of its centre of activity, which from the 1860s to 1960s was located in Inner London. The association with Hertfordshire goes back over five hundred years since the first mention of John Beale of Hitchin in 1477, and the modern day development at Hatfield and at West Lodge Park proves that the Beales are now back in Hertfordshire to stay.