

Abbey Farm Cottage - How It Came To Be What It Is Today

Abbey Farm Cottage started off its life at just one third of its current size. It was part of three single 'One-Up-One-Down' cottages built in the early 18th Century; the other two thirds have been joined together to form what is now known as 'Ochre Cottage'. Thus Abbey Farm Cottage is a semi-detached residence.

In the very early 20th Century two additional 'One-Up-One-Down' cottages were added to the right-hand cottage of the three original thatched roofed cottages. These additions were built with a tiled roof (as they remain today) and they, together with the single right-hand thatched roof cottage, have been conjoined to make one dwelling now known as Abbey Farm Cottage.

The five original single cottages formed part of the Wroxton Abbey Estate, which was owned by Trinity College, Oxford, but leased to the family of Lord North and were, therefore, classified as 'tied cottages' in which Lord North placed members of his estate employees. The tiny lane in which Abbey Farm Cottage is situated was known as 'Shepherd's Close', so it is quite possible it was the Abbey's shepherds who were accommodated here. Thus it remained until the Wroxton Abbey estate was returned to Trinity College in 1932 as a result of Lord North's poor financial position.

Records in Trinity College show that in 1933 Abbey Farm Cottage was subsequently leased to a Mr Barry Jakeman. Other residents included Mr Roger Freeman and Mr Robert Denton (both of whom now reside in other properties in the village), until its eventual sale on 14th August 1969 to Mr Colin and Mrs Wendy Andrews. During their ownership the cottage was renamed 'Andrews Cottage' and it is under this name that it was given a Grade II listing status on 20th September 1988.

On 22nd July 1988 Mr & Mrs Andrews sold 'Andrews Cottage' to Mr Mark and Mrs Jane Hesketh. The Heskeths did much to the cottage - they returned the name of the cottage back to its original title 'Abbey Farm Cottage' and in August 1994 they extended the rear of the cottage to give it a much larger sitting room and kitchen area with a sloping tiled roof abutting the original building. But most interestingly, on 9th February 1995 they purchased some additional land to the rear of the property for £5,000 to give the cottage's rear garden the extended 'two tier' look that it currently has. It was in this additional portion of the garden that the discovery was made of a grave stone belonging to one Gabriel Lucas, who died on 19th June 1690 - it remains propped up against one of the two apple

trees therein today. This discovery reinforces the use of old grave stones in the building of the additional two early 20th century cottages. Two parts of such stones were placed with the script of the grave stone facing outward - a builder with a sense of humour. ***See if you can spot them when you visit this house!***

The Heskeths vacated the cottage on 29th July 1999 and sold it to Mr James and Mrs Brigid Turner before they, in turn, sold the cottage to its current inhabitants, Mr David and Mrs Kate Marsh, on 15th December 2006