

Leicestershire (Skeffington) Davenports (update)

The Link back to Cheshire.

This is very brief and deals only in first sons.

For those of you at Capesthorpe last year, I wrote what little bit I knew of my great grandfather and gg grandfather, both of whom were Rectors of a place called Skeffington in Leicestershire and both of whom were “huntin’, shootin’ and fishing” types of sporting parsons. Fairly common for the day I think.

However, I was always told by my own father that we had a link back to Cheshire and to the family crest of a man with the rope round his neck. I just didn’t know then how to find out more.

Help came in the surprising form of a “cousin” I didn’t know I had. He was descended from a daughter my grandfather had sired when aged only seventeen and which was obviously all hushed up. This “cousin” Mark Barker had always been interested in the Davenport family history, so we met for the first time at Capesthorpe and shared all the information we had. I think that weekend fired us both up to try and make the link back to Cheshire and we actually achieved it at about the same time but independently of each other.

The information we found was as follows:

Thomas Davenport, gent of Siddington, (or Sithrington) Cheshire – spellings always varied. This must be Thomas Davenport and his wife Elizabeth Pilsbury of Leek, Staffordshire

Rev Thomas Davenport (1722 (approx) – 1795). Baptism 25 June 1722 at Capesthorpe.

Moved to Radcliffe or Ratcliffe (spellings vary) on Trent in Nottinghamshire. There is also a reference of his appointment at St Mary’s Nottingham officially in March 1771. He was married to Margaret, nee Lancelot. It looks like this is where the name came from in the later Davenports, ie my father and grandfather but the spelling they had was always Launcelot. I think spelling was not always fixed in those days.

Rev John Davenport succeeded his father in as vicar of St Mary’s Ratcliffe on Trent. He also went on to appointments in Tugby, Tilton on the Hill, Leicestershire etc. He moved to Goadby and could be seen as the one who started off the Leicestershire/Harborough Davenports.

Thomas Reginald Davenport, (1776 - ?). Surgeon, lived in Market Harborough and ended his days in Skeffington. I have him on a census form also living in Appleby Parva in the 1841 census. Probably in retirement.

Rev John Charles Davenport (1806 – 1889) of Skeffington Rectory, a prolific countryman. John Charles seems to have been the one with the money. He had about 9 children and some of them went on to live on independent means.

Rev John Reginald Davenport (1849 – 1930) the same, in many respects, to his father. One source describes him as a 'chip off the old block'.

Geoffrey Launcelot Davenport, (1887 – 1970) a gentleman rogue, sports promoter, journalist, publican. Geoffrey was my grandfather and did not conform to the life of the cloth like so many of his predecessors. He was more like his uncle Henry, John Reginald's brother who wrote about hunting and country sports for the Daily Telegraph and The Field Magazine. He also wrote a book on fox hunting in the County of Leicestershire, called "Memories at Random".

He was known as a bit of a rogue all his life and went through any money which the family once had. My own mother once said that if something was not nailed down, then Geoffrey would sell it. His own family often had to do a moonlight flit one step ahead of the debt collectors, so it came as no surprise to learn that he had fathered an illegitimate daughter when aged only 17.

The next in line is my father Peter Launcelot Davenport, (1901 – 1983) who sadly had no son and only sisters of his own, which leaves me (Marie Hall nee Davenport –1945 - ?). End of this particular line.