

# The History of Eynsham Hall



For nearly 300 years this site has been the home to one of Oxfordshire's many country houses. It all started with one landowner's efforts to keep up with the wealth and times of the early 1700s. Willoughby Lacey enclosed vast acres of his land to create his own pleasure parkland. At the heart of this was the newly built Eynsham Manor, a typical Georgian house, with its Greek style columns, elegant interiors, and grand gardens. In 1778 he sold the estate to London auctioneer and newspaper proprietor Robert Langford. On Langford's death in 1785, ownership passed to his chief legatee, James Duberley. Duberley and his five daughters remained at the Hall until 1799 when the Reverend John Robinson moved in. His stay was relatively short because in 1805, for reasons unknown, he sold to Sir Thomas Parker.

Sir Thomas' father, the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Macclesfield, purchased Eynsham Hall to serve as a dower house for Shirburn Castle. On the death of Sir Thomas' mother Eliza, Dowager Countess of Macclesfield, the estate was sold to Sir Thomas Bazley MP, a prominent Lancashire cotton manufacturer. Best known for his hatred of holly trees, Bazley had them cut down and burnt all over the park. This did not make him the most popular of owners with the local country people, as English folklore considers it *'unlucky to lay steel to them.'*

A hasty exit led to the arrival of the present owner's grandfather, James Mason, in 1866. Mason was a mining engineer who had made his fortune in Portugal.

After his death in 1903 his son James Francis and his wife Lady Evelyn took over. The Hall was rebuilt upon the request of Lady Evelyn and by 1908 work was completed, replacing the old four storey Georgian house with the present day Jacobean style mansion. Lady Evelyn clearly designed the residence for entertaining on a grand scale. The intricately designed ceilings, oak panelling and exquisite carvings would have been the talking point of any Victorian dinner party.

After her husband's death in 1929 Lady Evelyn continued to live in the grounds even during World War II when the estate was used first by Barclays Bank and then by the Air Ministry. In 1946 the Home Office took over the lease and the Hall became a Police Training Centre. For 35 years Eynsham Hall was one of the top training grounds, and was used for very important occasions. Even today ex-policemen who trained here return for a nostalgic visit.

In 1981 the Hall became a Training and Conference Centre. Although the interior has been converted into three conference suites, 43 bedrooms, two dining rooms and several lounge areas nearly all the original features remain. The demand for training facilities led to an expansion and between 1988 and 1993 four more buildings were erected within the walled garden of the original Hall.

**IN ITS THREE CENTURIES EYNSHAM HALL HAS SEEN MANY CHANGES AND A STRING OF VARIED OCCUPANTS HAVE INHABITED THE BUILDING. LET'S HOPE IT REMAINS PRESERVED FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS TO ENJOY.**