

# The Cedars Coggeshall

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The story of a house and its garden



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Illustrations by Jon Harris

## From Nether Church Field to the Green Dragon

The high ground on which the church of St Peter ad Vincula stands is one of the older inhabited quarters of Coggeshall; land which has been lived on and cultivated for at least 1,000 years, and in all likelihood far longer, possibly as far back as the Romans. The Cedars, at the top end of Church Street, is there.

Now a commanding Regency building, with trim stucco elevations and a spreading Tuscan roof, the house had humble origins. It is an amalgamation of several dwellings and holdings that gradually evolved over the centuries on what was formerly Nether Church Field, property once owned by the Church and later by the Cistercian Abbey of Little Coggeshall.

No records survive as to how this land was used or cultivated in the early Middle Ages, but a significant part of it appears to have been acquired by a wool merchant, Richard Copsheff, in 1441.<sup>1</sup> An entry for the Court Rolls of Coggeshall Manor in 1492 shows that not long after the field was being commercially exploited; it records the lease of a garden and parcel of land on Nether Church Field for a yearly payment of “one clove gilly floure and two capons”.<sup>2</sup>

The dwellings on the site in the early Middle Ages would most likely have been modest frame-and-plaster tenement with a limited life-expectancy, readily lending themselves to enterprising rebuilding. The first significant rebuild seems to

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<sup>1</sup> An indenture of 1441 records that Abbot John gave up Nether Church Field to Richard Copsheff. (Manorial Volume 1574-5, pages 55-56). Local historian Michael Horne says there is speculation that Copsheff helped fund the re-building of the Church of St Peter ad Vincula.

<sup>2</sup> G. F. Beaumont, *A History of Coggeshall in Essex*, 1890, p 123.

have occurred in the late 1500s or early 1600s on the back of East Anglia's wool boom, which in Coggeshall had produced houses such as Paycockes, and what is today the ample oak-framed Woolpack, and which had already given rise to the splendour of St Peter ad Vincula. For their showroom homes, the new merchants demanded tall, airy rooms, and it was thus that the high-ceiling barn-like framed structure, the core of the present house, took shape, back from the Church Street fronting, and behind what was most probably a miscellany of less ambitious structures. This could well have been the work of Thomas Trewe, the first tenant registered in the property.

Trewe's tenancy is listed in a rental survey of Coggeshall carried out in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I in 1575.<sup>3</sup> Records state that Trewe was a copyholder, paying a rent of one shilling and living on the south of Church Street on a plot of 82.3 perches (half an acre) with an orchard. The land, presumably owned by the Manor of Great Coggeshall, would previously have belonged, before the Dissolution, to the Cistercian Abbey across the river in Little Coggeshall. Trewe was living in a single tenement, while some plots of similar size in Coggeshall had up to half a dozen tenants. By this token, Trewe was modestly well-to-do, and as such the first of a succession of prosperous men and women recorded as living on the premises.

By the late 1600s there was an inn in the curtilage – the Green Dragon – a fact duly noted in the Deeds to the house:<sup>4</sup> This

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<sup>3</sup> The 1575 rental survey was apparently carried out for the Lord of the Manor; a copy is with Michael Horne of the Coggeshall Heritage Society and the original is in the National Archives. Mike Meadows has drawn a detailed map of Coggeshall in 1575 using all the information in the survey which shows the location of each plot and tenant.

<sup>4</sup> Deeds to The Cedars, 80 Church Street, Coggeshall, in possession of Brian and Gail Mooney.

was almost certainly in the central timber-framed structure, and may even have been Thomas Trewe's old house. The earliest historical reference to the inn is 1693, when it was listed in the Court Rolls of Great Coggeshall Manor.<sup>5</sup> This makes the Green Dragon older than the nearby Woolpack; although its timber-framed building dates to the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, it did not become an inn until 1708.<sup>6</sup> The Green Dragon was part of the marriage dowry in 1707 of Martha Cox, and records show that it had been previously owned by Ann Pennock, Mary Bemington and Isaac Bentall.<sup>7</sup> Later it would be owned by the Skingleys, a family of local brewers, though by 1769 it was no longer recorded as an inn.<sup>8</sup> But the evidence remains: extensive cellarage of the hostelry still exists, and even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the borders of the rose garden continue to yield shards of oyster shells and fragments of clay pipe – typical throwaways of a Georgian tavern not far from the Blackwater and Colne Estuaries. Situated on the edge of the town on the roads to Earls Colne and Great Tey, and with an ample yard for stabling, the Green Dragon was almost certainly also a coaching inn.

At the turn of the 1800s when it came up for sale, the property was still a hybrid sprawl of buildings and outhouses. Deeds of sale in 1799 cite “all that capital messuage situated, standing or being on or near Church Street, and all the

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<sup>5</sup> G.F. Beaumont, *A History of Coggeshall in Essex*, 1890, p 237.

<sup>6</sup> *A Guide to Coggeshall's Pubs*, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> “Also messuage called the Green Dragon in Church Street, formerly in occupation of Ann Pencock, widow, and Mary Bemington, and now of Isaac Bentall.” Essex Records Office (D/DU 144/2).

<sup>8</sup> The list of inns in the Essex Records Office.

houses, outhouses, buildings, edifices, yards, gardens, backsides, profits, commodities, advantages, land tenements, hereditaments, thereunto belonging, situate in Church Street and also all that croft and land heretofore used for a garden by estimate one acre more or less lying behind the capital messuage in a field called Nether Church Field.”<sup>9</sup> Names of current owners or occupiers are given: Jordan Unwin, who seems to have held some of the land on the south-eastern corner of the property, and also John Godfrey, surgeon, in all probability the first of a line of professionals to occupy the premises, and not the last medical man. The 1799 sale Deeds give a picture of a huddle of premises ripe for development; but in the climate of the wars with France, this was not to take effect until some years later, and with a further change of ownership.

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<sup>9</sup> Draft Deeds and Leases of capital messuage and land (one acre) in Church Street, 1799, Essex Records Office (D/DBmB17).

## Regency Makeover

The date is uncertain, but it is probably in 1805, Trafalgar Year, that Thomas Andrew, an established attorney, purchased the former Green Dragon site. As a rising local professional sensing its potential both for business and his own pleasure, young Andrew had probably had his eye on it for years, and he struck when the time was right: at the height of the Napoleonic wars.<sup>10</sup> In this prominent location at the eastern end of the town, with its well-drained curtilage sloping to the south, Andrew set out to create what a 20<sup>th</sup> century owner of the house, the author Frank Baines and himself the son of an architect, described as “a near perfect example of a small-scale gentleman’s town-house”.<sup>11</sup>

The son of a Coggeshall cabinet-maker, Andrew was born in 1774.<sup>12</sup> He practised law and prospered at a time when the town itself was in steep decline; by 1805 the wool trade had completely collapsed, and in the early 1820s half the town’s population would be registered under the Poor Law.<sup>13</sup> But he

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<sup>10</sup> A series of documents in the Essex Records Office relate to a large loan Andrew took from Joseph Skingley, whose family had formerly owned the Green Dragon, in October 1805. The loan was repaid with interest in 1825, the year before Andrew’s sudden death.

<sup>11</sup> Frank Baines (1915-1987) inherited The Cedars from his mother, Lady Rhoda Baines, and sold it to Phyllis Storey in 1963. See Appendix IV for his account of the house - *A Memoir Concerning The Cedars*.

<sup>12</sup> His father, Thomas, was a cabinet maker in Great Coggeshall, and evidently did well. In his will (Essex Records Office D/ACW 31/1/1) he left his son Thomas “all volumes of Henry’s works”, and he discharged the debts of his other son, John, provided for his wife, and left £100 an annuity for his unmarried daughter, Mary. He had a workshop and warehouse in Market Hill and several other properties in Coggeshall.

<sup>13</sup> Poor Law Registers, Essex Records Office. Coggeshall began to thrive again with the introduction of silk mills, of which the first opened in 1826. This was very much a regional industry – the Courtaulds in Bocking and Braintree – and later in the century, a local silk manufacturer would come to reside at The Cedars.



himself was well enough set up by 1809 to make a start on creating the imposing house that stands there today.

In these early years, a not altogether edifying but a clearly biased picture of Andrew emerges from his public conflict with another local attorney. Daniel Whittle Harvey, born in Witham, set up practice in 1807, perhaps as an act of provocation, just two miles away in Feering, and he seems quickly to have fallen out with Andrew, already well established in Coggeshall.<sup>14</sup> Recollections of his character might suggest that this was a quarrel picked by Harvey.

Professional rivalry appears to have turned personal and bitter. Between 1808 and 1814, Harvey, who combined his legal work with property speculation, brought three actions against Andrew at Chelmsford Assize Court. The first case was of slander, following accusations of embezzlement and fraud; he lost on all three occasions, and the ensuing stigma stuck to Harvey, preventing him from being called to the Bar. Many years later, by then a politician and newspaper proprietor, Harvey would organise a highly irregular use of public funds to move a Select Committee of the House of Commons to investigate the cases and exonerate him. The Benchers, however, conducted their own more stringent review, and upheld their previous decision to bar him.

By contrast to his rival, Thomas Andrew remained rooted in Essex and led a charmed, though much shorter, life. He had his office in Coggeshall. It was described as “a small one”, almost certainly what is now the study in the north-west corner of The Cedars, reached up the front steps of the

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<sup>14</sup> Harvey set up his practice at Feering House, in nearby Kelvedon, the home of his maternal grandfather, Major John Whittle (*The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*). See Appendix III below for more details of their quarrels.

porticoed entrance and through a door to the right of the hallway.<sup>15</sup>

It is the house, and the grounds which go with it, that remain the lawyer Andrew's true legacy – a testament to his vision, ambition and taste. He took an old timber-framed inn, and turned it into a double-pile to create a beautiful Regency villa. He seems to have started work on redeveloping the site around 1809 – the year G.F. Beaumont records that the Green Dragon was pulled down.<sup>16</sup> George Frederick Beaumont, a lawyer and local historian, was in a good position to know what had happened in the property – he was living next door to The Cedars in what became known as Beaumont House.

The present-day Deeds to The Cedars reiterate much of the 1799 document in describing Thomas Andrew's holding “all that freehold messuage or tenement heretofore let out and divided into several dwellings with the outhouses, edifices and buildings, yards, gardens, orchards” which he would bring together into a single capital dwelling with a full acre of sloping, well drained garden to the south.

In addition to Henry Skingley's former inn, then owned by Mr Finch, there is reference to property owned by Hannah Raven (the widow of John Raven) and to an orchard occupied by Mary Babbs (a clothier, also almost certainly a widow). Mary Babbs' or Hannah Raven's property was most likely at the western end of the house, on what is today the rose

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<sup>15</sup> *Law Magazine or Quarterly Review of Jurisprudence*, Vol XII, 1834, p 389.

<sup>16</sup> G.F. Beaumont, *A History of Coggeshall in Essex*, 1890, p 237.

garden, where there was a small cottage which was demolished.<sup>17</sup>

As rebuilding got under way, Andrew paid off the land taxes owed on all the separate parcels – in effect consolidating the new house and grounds within today’s boundaries, which were defined in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Deeds as Horn Lane to the west, Beaumont House to the east and Starling Leeze to the south.<sup>18</sup> At the same time he also redeemed the taxes on three acres of land he owned off Queen Street.<sup>19</sup>




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<sup>17</sup> Footings of an earlier building the size of a cottage were found in the rose garden during excavations for the new west wing in December 2011, and there is a bricked-up gate in the brick wall indicating previous access to that part of the garden, and a gap was left in the house numbering, presumably for what would theoretically have been 78 Church Street. Timbers from the old cottage were evidently re-used by Andrew to build the new west wall, and were discovered in situ with signs of old lathe nailings, joins and some smoke blackening when the west wing was built in 2012.

<sup>18</sup> The part of Starling Leeze abutting The Cedars remains open land to this day thanks to the generosity of Captain and Mrs Dixon, who owned the property and sold it to Coggeshall through public subscription as a site for the town’s WWI memorial and as a recreational space in perpetuity in memory of the 84 men from Coggeshall who died in the conflict.

<sup>19</sup> The Deeds of The Cedars. Andrew paid a total of two pounds and eight shillings to redeem the properties in 1810.

Andrew's The Cedars – give or take a few colour touches supplied later by Frank Baines – is pretty much as he left it, strikingly placed and novel, a full double-pile, with its spreading slate roof, crowned between the chimneys with a belvedere. In place of the ale-house range of the Green Dragon three tall brick compartments were built out facing Church Street and tied into the best rooms of the timber-framed inn and sealed with course stucco-work to create a spacious house with a central corridor on both floors. An elegant curved stairwell was installed in the west bay of the retained timber structure, replacing (it has been suggested) one of two 17<sup>th</sup> century chimney stacks, while a single-flight back stair was put in at the east end of the new street frontage.<sup>20</sup>

The new frontage is more later Georgian than Regency contrived, relying on simplicity and proportion. The central sash of the three at first floor level is arched; below it, the doorcase has half-columns and a pediment over spreading stone steps that could have been sliced off a Tuscan temple. The arched upper window is repeated in the reworking of the garden façade, handsomely lighting the new stair, while the three ground floor openings become French windows onto a stone terrace sheltered by a graceful glass and latticed timber verandah. The new brickwork and the old timber structure were rendered and painted, and sheltered with a brand new slate roof, its broad soffits patrolled by pairs of shaped consoles.

The straight-forwardness of the exterior treatment gives way, inside, to exuberant proto-Victorian display. Thomas Andrew's unknown architect gave his three principal ground-floor fireplaces reeded white marble surrounds, and had

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<sup>20</sup> Appendix I – English Heritage Grade II listing of The Cedars – October 1966.

elaborate patterns moulded onto the ceilings of the two tall 17<sup>th</sup> century ground floor rooms overlooking the garden. He similarly embellished the central hall, opening a flamboyant elliptical arch at the divide between the back rooms and the new brick frontage rooms, and setting a pretty niche at the turn of the stairs. The doorcases are reeded with the corner roundels that would become fashionable in the 1830s, while the six-panel doors and staircase handrails were made from Cuban mahogany. Surely Mr Andrew senior, very much alive at the time of rebuilding, will have lent his hand to this fine, delicate woodwork.<sup>21</sup>



On the southern garden side, the two principal rooms to the west retain their cross of ceiling beams, raked in the bedrooms above, and decked out in Grecian plaster in what is today the living room, while the rear room to their east, which was the kitchen for many years (and would have been the kitchen for the inn), has inherited from somewhere in the older inn a later 17<sup>th</sup> century oak overmantel. Likewise several earlier oak panelled doors were incorporated into the new house.

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas Andrew senior died in 1824.

Elsewhere the cellars downstairs attest to the earlier building and to its use as an inn, while panels of 17<sup>th</sup> century leaded glass and their iron frames and furniture are reused with obvious pleasure in the windows of the belvedere. Here the interior woodwork is beaded and refined, indicating that this structure, too, was the work of Thomas Andrew. The belvedere is just that, not a lantern for the house below, nor a 'captain's walk' for counting in your ships, as in Maldon; it is approached through a re-used two-panel door, up secret steep steps, and the deeper window towards the garden suggests it was Thomas Andrew's headquarters when planning his garden, and his retreat from which to take pleasure in its colours.

For servicing his new house, Andrew had the benefit of the old Green Dragon yard, immediately to the east, and because twice the depth of the new house to the right and Beaumont House to the left, it afforded access to the garden via a gate in the wall. There is evidence that Thomas Andrew altered the yard's existing arrangements; the frame and clapboard sheds that survived until the early 21<sup>st</sup> century could have been of any age and could have served many uses, including trap-house and stables for the Andrew household. Whether in old or new stables, horses produce muck, and muck makes gardens.

Thomas Andrew was a passionate gardener, and his garden at Coggeshall is the second half of his legacy. He transformed a plot of just under one acre into a floral mini-park, which he surrounded with a brick wall; it was an accomplishment that earned him high praise in *The Gardeners Magazine*, launched in 1826 by John Claudius Loudon for the growing number of horticultural enthusiasts in Britain, a periodical which

anticipated the changes which would create the great Victorian gardens with their concentration of planning and all-year-round interest.

“Thomas Andrew Esq, of Coggeshall, Essex, was an enthusiastic and skilful florist, who succeeded in collecting most of the finest foreign and British florist’s flowers. Notwithstanding an extensive business as an attorney, he contrived, the greater part of the summer, to spend from ten to twelve hours a day among his flowers. Having built a handsome house, laid out the grounds with great taste, and got together an astonishing assemblage of tulips, ranunculuses, anemones, and geraniums, he was called suddenly from his family and friends.”<sup>22</sup>

This was an obituary notice. Although he had lived long enough to enjoy his new gentleman’s residence and its maturing garden, Andrew died suddenly in 1826 aged 52. The memorial to him in the parish church states that he was “removed from the midst of health ... in the 53<sup>rd</sup> year of his age,” implying that he died suddenly, possibly from a heart attack or even as a result of an accident.<sup>23</sup> He left a widow, Mary, a son, Thomas, and a daughter, Eleanor (b. 1816), and another son, whose name is not recorded. Mary, born in Coggeshall in 1786, was 12 years younger than her husband, and by a curious coincidence, a Baynes – a name that would

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<sup>22</sup> *The Gardeners Magazine and Register of Rural and Domestic Improvement*, Vol 2, 1827, p 255.

<sup>23</sup> A tablet on the wall of the north chancel in the parish church commemorates him: "Sacred to the memory of Thomas Andrew, Esq., of this town, Solicitor, whose mortal remains lie deposited in a vault near this spot. He was removed from the midst of health, enjoyment and prosperity, by an instantaneous death, without one previous fear or moment's warning, on the 27th June, A.D. 1826, in the 53rd year of his age. Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the son of man cometh."

return to the house two centuries later.<sup>24</sup> From his will, first drafted in 1812 and then supplemented with four codicils, it is evident that Thomas Andrew died a wealthy man: addition to The Cedars, he owned Cuckoos Farm in Great Tey, another farm at Great Leighs, a share in a farm at Bures, two other properties in Coggeshall and an estate in Southminster on the Dengie Peninsula, not to speak of several annuities. He left the bulk of his estate to his wife and provided well for his children and his (by 1826) widowed mother.<sup>25</sup>

The same issue of *The Gardeners Magazine* also carried notices of sales of Andrew's tulips and other specimen plants. H. Dunn, auctioneers in Saffron Walden, advertised the sale of "the truly valuable and well selected tulips of the late Thomas Andrew" which it said had been acquired with "taste and judgement and with no expense spared".<sup>26</sup> The auctioneer's notice also announced the sale the following day of "a single-horse chaise, a very neat four-wheel pony chaise and an excellent finger organ".

A second Saffron Walden auctioneer announced a parallel sale of Andrew's "highly valuable assortment of ranunculuses and anemones ... consisting of the most highly prized and valuable sorts which were collected by him with great taste and at a very considerable expense".

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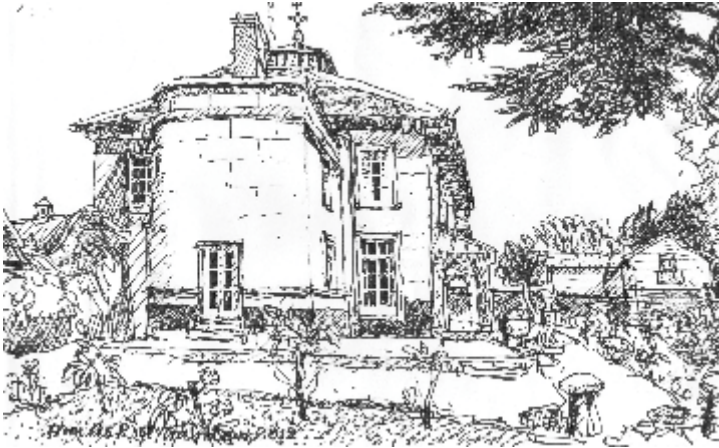
<sup>24</sup> Her brother, Richard Baynes, was a farmer living at Rayne Lodge Farm, in Rayne, at the time of the 1841 census.

<sup>25</sup> Will of Thomas Andrew, Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, held in the National Archives, Catalogue Reference PRB 11/1716. Thomas Andrew's brother-in-law is named in the will as Richard Baynes.

<sup>26</sup> *The Gardeners Magazine*, Vol 2, p 382.



One further snippet in what was only the second issue of this new magazine shows Andrew, so to speak, at work in his garden where, in addition to his flowers, he almost certainly planted the principal trees – among them, two cedars of Lebanon (one still flourishing in 2012), a holm oak and a judas tree.<sup>27</sup>



In an article by his neighbour Mr G W Johnson of Great Totham on ‘the employment of salt as manure in gardening’, Andrew is cited as an innovator.

“The late T Andrew Esq. informed me that tulip seedlings sooner acquired their perfect colour if the beds were manured with salt.”<sup>28</sup>

After Andrew’s sudden death, his attorney’s business was carried on in Coggeshall by Samuel Waylen, but not under the same roof, although the Beaumonts established a successful law practice next door not long after.

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<sup>27</sup> See below Appendix II, Origins of the Name of The Cedars.

<sup>28</sup> *The Gardeners Magazine*, Vol 2, p 3.

The Cedars appears to have acquired its name only after Andrew's death – perhaps a final tribute to Andrew. For some years, as the children grew up, it remained the Andrew family home. Mary Andrew was still living there with her daughter in 1841,<sup>29</sup> and it remained in her possession until at least 1854.<sup>30</sup> But by then, Thomas's widow had moved to the Isle of Wight together with her daughter Eleanor, then in her late 30s and still unmarried. The 1851 census records them at 11 John Street, Newchurch, Ryde, together with two female domestics. Ten years later, they were still living in Newchurch with a housemaid and cook, their address now Oxford Lodge.<sup>31</sup>

The Cedars had evidently been let, and for a while the house was the rented home of a prosperous silk velvet manufacturer from Worcestershire. This was Thomas Westmacott who had married a Braintree girl, and by 1851 he was employing 56 workers. The Westmacotts had seven children, in 1851 aged from three months to 12 years, of whom all but one was born in Coggeshall.<sup>32</sup> However, ten years later, the family had moved to East Street. A succession of further owners in the latter half of 19<sup>th</sup> century is listed in the Deeds – Fuller, Denton, Rudkin and Unwin – but they appear to have left little lasting mark on the property, except in one respect: the

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<sup>29</sup> 1841 Census records.

<sup>30</sup> Mary Andrew was registered as living there with her daughter Emma in the 1841 census, and she was entered as owner of the property in the tithe list for 1854. Thomas Westmacott was entered as the occupier.

<sup>31</sup> Census returns 1861.

<sup>32</sup> Census returns for 1851.

garden, with its twin cedar trees and division of pleasure grounds and vegetable and fruit areas, continued to be cherished as an object of pride and investment.

The garden wall along Church Street and down Horn Lane appears to have been rebuilt, or at least part of it, during the early 1860s – “WW 1862” is inscribed next to the second pier by the rose garden – and it also appears to have been extended upwards, with an additional layer, at about the same time. The wall is initialled “RS 1870” at the end of Horn Lane, presumably likewise by the bricklayer who worked on increasing its height. The same initials and date are on the wall of the garden opposite on the west side of Horn Lane.

This work on the wall took place around the start of the long stewardship of two spinster sisters, Elizabeth and Esther Unwin, both born in Little Coggeshall and brought up in Grange Farm, and members of a wealthy family of local brewers.<sup>33</sup> It is possible that Esther had already moved into The Cedars in the early 1860s, being registered as Head of Household at an address in Church Street in the 1861 census.<sup>34</sup> The two sisters were certainly sharing house by 1871 – Elizabeth then aged 60 and her younger sister Esther, 52. Elizabeth described herself as Head of Household; she wrote that she and her sister were living off “interest of money”. They had one servant. Twenty years later, they were both still living at The Cedars: in the 1891 census returns, Elizabeth, aged 80, described herself as living on her own means. By then, they had two servants.

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<sup>33</sup> Grange Farm was their residence in the 1841 census.

<sup>34</sup> The census records that she had two live-in servants and two female guests were staying. Esther described herself as a “fund holder”. The house in Church Street is not identified.

These two comparatively wealthy ladies will have grown old together gracefully and in comfort at The Cedars in the closing years of Queen Victoria's reign. They would have seen, and perhaps even been involved in, the building of the clock tower in Market Hill commemorating Queen Victoria's jubilee in 1887. From the list of ornaments that they left, including carriage clocks and vases, they were both refined; Esther was something of an artist.<sup>35</sup> Elizabeth was first to die, and the house was then taken over by Esther. She in turn died aged 79 on 20 September 1897, instructing in her will that all her real estate be sold and the proceeds divided into three equal parts to be shared between her brother Joseph and her nephew George and niece Emma Simpson.<sup>36</sup> George, the eldest son of Joseph Unwin who had farmed Bouchiers Grange before retiring to Hillside Villa on Kelvedon Road, was appointed executor. By then in his late 30s, and himself farming at Topcroft Hall in Bungay in the Waveney Valley, George duly sold The Cedars to an energetic young doctor, under whose ownership the house was to see its first major transformation since Napoleonic times.

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<sup>35</sup> In her will, she bequeathed two pheasants "painted by myself" to her brother, Joseph.

<sup>36</sup> The gross value of Ether Unwin's estate was £4,930.6.11, according to the probate registered on 27 October 1897.

## The 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Francis Henry Bernard Caudwell was a surgeon and physician, admitted to the Royal College of Physicians from Charing Cross Hospital in 1888.<sup>37</sup> By 1897 he was 32, married with two children and a third on the way, and he must immediately have warmed to the house as a potential family home, which it hadn't been for some 50 years, as well as for a surgery, for which purpose it was ideally located. He paid George Unwin's solicitors £1,102 for the house.<sup>38</sup> The Deeds also show that he took out a mortgage of £1,000 from his next-door neighbour, Eliza Beaumont, to purchase the house and also, presumably, to carry out a comprehensive programme of improvement – doubtless timely after the quarter century occupation by the Unwin sisters. The mortgage was duly repaid in 1920.

Francis Caudwell owned The Cedars for 27 years, and his practice evidently prospered in the house. He had two live-in domestic servants, for whom he installed a new electric bell system.<sup>39</sup> Under his ownership the eastern side of the house was extended with a two-storey range to the street, the ground-floor rooms (with their own street entrance) serving as waiting room and surgery.<sup>40</sup> The back yard entrance was given privacy and status, the gates upgraded with two tall brick pillars. Within the house itself, he undertook other changes, flooring the main hall with encaustic tiles and erecting a

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<sup>37</sup> *The British Medical Journal*, 11 August 1888.

<sup>38</sup> The Deeds to The Cedars. Unwin was registered as living at Bungay in Suffolk.

<sup>39</sup> Census returns for 1901 and 1911.

<sup>40</sup> He was one of several local doctors; many death certificates during his time were signed by him.

draught-proof glass screen inside the front door, and, from the westernmost of Andrew's new frontage rooms, building out in the lee of the high wall between rose garden and street a modest single-storey extension for a downstairs lavatory. This served successive households faithfully until the autumn of 2011, when it was demolished to make way for a more imposing structure (see below).

In the garden, though, Dr Caudwell made more radical changes, levelling the lower lawn to create a tennis court, and between the two lawns, just out of the shade of the by then one remaining cedar tree, building a gem-like circular summerhouse with expensively kilned segmental bricks.<sup>41</sup> He must have liked these: his eastward extension steps forward of Andrew's front elevation with a curved corner of similar bricks. It may be surmised that Dr Caudwell also built, or rebuilt, the greenhouse attached to the wall abutting the Beaumont House garden.

Before training in London, Francis Caudwell had grown up in Cornwall; his wife, Mary Gertrude, whom he married in 1892, was from Kent.<sup>42</sup> Francis and Mary brought their two daughters, Phyllis, 4, and Violet, a year old, to the house, and their son Hugh was born in Coggeshall the following year, 1898. Dr Caudwell's reign at The Cedars would far exceed Thomas Andrew's; and yet he too never reached 60, dying aged 59 on 30 December 1924. He is buried in the newer part of the cemetery at St Peter ad Vincula.<sup>43</sup> The following year,

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<sup>41</sup> The three 'alps' at the bottom of the garden are the waste from this excavation. The tennis net and other vestiges of the court were still in the outhouses when Gail Turner first came to live in The Cedars.

<sup>42</sup> Cornwall would figure again in the story of The Cedars with the arrival of Lady Baines and her son Frank in 1936. See below.

his widow Mary sold the house to another GP, Dr Frederick Roberts Sleigh, for £1,400.

In partnership with Dr John Moffat, Dr Sleigh continued to practise from the house, also taking on the post of local medical factory inspector – an appointment eminently suitable for a doctor who resided and worked opposite a factory.<sup>44</sup> Hollington Brothers clothing factory was on the other side of the street.<sup>45</sup> A notice seeking application for his replacement as Certifying Surgeon under the Factory and Workshop Acts at Coggeshall was published in the *London Gazette* in January 1936, presumably to coincide with Sleigh's retirement.<sup>46</sup> His partner, Dr Moffat, relinquished the surgery – he died in Coggeshall as late as 1973 – and once again, in 1936, the house was for sale.

The next occupant was Lady Rhoda Baines, who bought The Cedars for £1,350 – £50 less than Dr Sleigh had paid 11 years earlier; but then the house had been empty for six months, and this was the Great Depression. Times were hard.

The sale was handled by the auctioneering branch of Harrods of London, who issued a brochure giving a good picture of the house at the time, describing The Cedars as a “charming old-fashioned freehold residence”, with ample and spacious accommodation, along with a wine cellar, a 10-ton coal cellar, an attic beneath the belvedere suitable for a billiards room,

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<sup>43</sup> A granite cross marks the grave, plot A49.

<sup>44</sup> Dr Moffat died aged 74 in 1973 and is buried in Coggeshall church cemetery.

<sup>45</sup> Hollingtons took over from Moses.

<sup>46</sup> *London Gazette*, 21 January 1936.

and a doctor's surgery and waiting room ideal for a servants' hall or children's playroom.<sup>47</sup>

"The Cedars is a pleasant, old house in one of the most picturesque villages of Essex, lying in a countryside which is notably one of the prettiest in the Eastern Counties. It is a property which should strongly appeal to anyone seeking a residence of character with an old world garden, within 45 miles of London."



The brochure flagged the red-brick walled-in garden as "enchanted": it gave complete privacy, "with beautiful ornamental lawn and herbaceous borders, shaded by a magnificent cedar, and unique Judas tree, and an evergreen oak. Beautiful flower and rose garden of between 300 and 400 roses; first-class Tennis Court; brick-built Summerhouse, with tiled roof small vinery on the south side. Masses of wall fruit and quantity of well-bearing fruit trees, productive kitchen garden, with asparagus beds, soft fruit, etc ..." The gardener at the time was Mr Hitchcock, who lived just down the road.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The Cedars, Coggeshall, Essex, Auctioneers: Harrods Limited, Brompton Road, SW1. Catalogue in possession of Brian and Gail Mooney.

<sup>48</sup> The Harrods brochure said Mr Hitchcock, of 4 Albert Place, held the keys to the property. He was one of a long line of gardeners who have worked at The Cedars for more than two centuries.



A century after his death, Thomas Andrew's garden was both blooming and bearing fruit, and his trees had come of age.

And so Lady Baines, whose story is told elsewhere, moved into The Cedars with her son, Frank.<sup>49</sup> Their arrival in Coggeshall followed the virtual bankruptcy and sudden death of her husband, the architect Sir Frank Baines KCVO. His death had forced the sale of a prime estate in southern Cornwall, and they brought with them a few Cornish mementoes, including the gilded iron 'Grecian' head knocker on the front door, a number of old stone sinks, and some of the shrubs in the garden.

Lady Baines was to enjoy a long reign at The Cedars – 27 years – but she does not appear to have done much to the house itself, apart from installing a second bathroom, although she did a great deal to the garden. She had stones collected from the recently demolished medieval church at Marks Hall to create a rockery wall in the flowerbeds between the upper and lower lawns; among the stones is the old holy water stoup. She installed statues in the garden, and had the lower gate onto Horn Lane bricked up. To celebrate VE Day at the end of the World War II, Lady Baines planted two roses, one pink, one yellow, in the curving flower bed at the north-western corner of the house, in Church Street. They still flower. Other mementoes of World War II were the chicken hutch in the yard (demolished in 1985) and the graffiti scratched on the garden wall in Horn Lane – some of it carved, according to Frank Baines, by U.S. servicemen to commemorate their trysts with local girls.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *Frank Baines – A Life Beyond the Sea*, Brian Mooney (Thorogood, 2010).

<sup>50</sup> Frank Baines in conversation with the author.

On his mother's death in 1963, Frank gave the stucco a fresh coat of white paint, renewed the black paint of the plinth, rendered the dark window frames pink, and had the railings and front doorknob gilded in 22-carat gold. But it was time for him to move on. He held a sale of all the furniture, fittings, paintings, books and ornaments, raising an estimated £10,000, and then sold the house to Mrs Phyllis Storey for another £10,000.<sup>51</sup>

Phyllis Storey was a well-to-do widow from Cottingham near Hull. Her decision to move to one of the south-eastern counties was spurred by the desire to be nearer to her two children – Ivan, a psychiatrist and restaurateur who lived in Kensington,<sup>52</sup> and Prue, married to Major Roy Turner, and also living in London. Roy was on the point of exchanging his military career for one in the wine and spirits trade. Her youngest sister, Dorothy Butterfield,<sup>53</sup> already established in Coggeshall, and a neighbour and friend of Frank Baines, had noted the similarity between the Cedars and her sister's Georgian house in the East Riding, and felt it would be ideal for her. Frank, a professional wanderer, had returned to The Cedars to care for his ailing mother and, once she was gone, was rattling about in the house, anxious to be on his travels again.

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<sup>51</sup> Auction catalogue of Philips, Son & Neale Ltd, in possession of Brian and Gail Mooney.

<sup>52</sup> Ivan Storey was, with Terence Conran, a co-founder of the Soup Kitchen chain of restaurants.

<sup>53</sup> Dorothy Butterfield was a professional artist living in the Guild House, now part of the White Hart Hotel.

Dorothy had judged right; her sister bought The Cedars and moved in together with Roy and Prue Turner, and with their children Gail and Nicholas, and once again The Cedars became a family home. All the dark brown paintwork inside the house was painted white, and while there were no major structural additions to the house, it was re-roofed with new slates, rewired, buffed up and even carpeted in parts. Roy Turner kept the capacious cellars stocked with the wines from his business, and Nicholas founded a transport business from the house, a company that came to be called Top Trucks, while Phyllis, the matriarch, installed the daughter of a whaler from Hull as housekeeper, Lilian Widdup, the last of a long line of servants to live at The Cedars. After nearly 20 years with Mrs Storey, she retired to Hull, dying there in a nursing home aged 100 in 2009; but she requested that her ashes be interred in Coggeshall.<sup>54</sup> Roy Turner died in 1982, and Phyllis Storey and Prue Turner continued living in the house.

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<sup>54</sup> Her ashes are under a memorial tablet on the north side of St Peter ad Vincula.

## Through the Millennium

Brian Mooney, a Reuters correspondent born and brought up in leafy Buckinghamshire, had known Gail Turner since their Oxford days; their wedding was celebrated in the garden at The Cedars in 1977. By 1985 Brian was in a position to buy The Cedars from Gail's grandmother for £120,000, with the stipulation that she and Gail's mother continue to live there until circumstances demanded otherwise. In the event this was closer at hand than anyone anticipated: Phyllis Storey died in February 1986, and later the same year Prue Turner moved to her own house in East Street, Coggeshall. And so the three Mooney children – Sophia (b.1980), Marina (b.1983) and Julius (b.1985) – had the chance to grow up under the broad slate roof of The Cedars in rural Essex, at least in the spaces between Brian's foreign assignments. Once again, The Cedars proved ideally suited to its role as a family home. Brian's overseas postings took the Mooney family to places as far apart as Warsaw, Madrid, Stockholm and Tel Aviv – Spain becoming a special place in Gail's work as a painter and art history lecturer, and their eldest daughter Sophia went to live there in her late twenties.

Twenty five years into Gail and Brian's occupation of The Cedars, major improvements were carried out by the Mooneys: in 2010 a third new bathroom was installed above the dining room on the south-east corner, down steps from the main bedroom to the right of the staircase;<sup>55</sup> in 2010-2011 the old sheds and stables in the yard were demolished and a two-storey garage-flat was built in their place; its white boarding and oak post already looking settled in a year or two

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<sup>55</sup> This entailed cutting through one of the original outside wall studs (it was left in situ) and involved some hard negotiation with Essex's Listed Buildings authorities.

later. During the excavations for its foundations a cache of old medicine bottles was unearthed, presumably from Dr Caudwell's time.



Harder to get right, and more ambitious, was the creation in 2012 of a new garden studio for Gail to the west of the house, with bathroom above to serve the western bedrooms (initially just one of them). This was a great improvement, for a light-loving painter, on the cramped former surgery on the street; and the swap, which entailed knocking down Dr Caudwell's lavatory, allowed for the conversion of the surgery into a more convenient downstairs loo, with sauna and shower alongside, and for the installation of a larger, more practical pantry, and for the kitchen to be extended to the back staircase.

The garage annexe was designed by the former County Architect James Boutwood, renowned for rescuing Coggeshall's mighty Grange Barn from terminal ruin,<sup>56</sup> and built by the four hands of Neil Marshall and his son Loyd. Neil, the son and grandson of skilled carpenters, was responsible for almost all the major work carried out by the

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<sup>56</sup> Now owned and run by the National Trust.

Mooneys during their ownership – removing dry rot and strengthening the main beam in the master bedroom, fitting a new kitchen and extending it, upgrading the existing bathrooms with showers and cupboards, creating the new bathroom on the south-eastern corner, building bookshelves and cupboards in most of the rooms, creating the new pantry and sauna, restoring Thomas Andrew’s garden verandah and making good the house’s crowning belvedere.<sup>57</sup>

Neil, interpreting the ideas of the owners and drawings by the artist and architectural historian Jon Harris, and guided by the advice of a young conservation officer Libby Kirkby-Taylor, also designed and built the new west wing, which to be in keeping with – and subservient to Thomas Andrew’s side elevation – had to be in stucco over a timber structure, and with its parapet sliding in comfortably underneath the wide eaves of the main block.

A team of Polish workers, led by Gregory Izbrecht, repainted the house on a number of occasions and restored the greenhouse against the east garden wall. Gregory rebuilt the retaining walls between the lower flower beds and the vegetable and fruit gardens, imaginatively incorporating some of the original stones from Marks Hall Church in the eastern section. Gregory also landscaped the sloping ground by the extended terrace and remodelled the flower beds by the verandah. A succession of gardeners worked for them – among them Mr Leatherdale, Mr Martin, Terry Rutterford, David Ricks, Dan Tunnell, and Nik Johnson. Mac Weir, a brick expert and conservationist, carried out extensive repairs to the walls and rebuilt the retaining wall at the bottom of the garden after it caved in following torrential rain and flooding in 2001 and

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<sup>57</sup> The only structural alteration not carried out by Neil Marshall was work to reinforce the plastered cross beams in the drawing room which was done by local builders Birkin & Son because they had worked on it in the 1960s.

spilled out into the Recreation Ground, a former section of Starling Leeze. In addition to filling the passages with the light of her paintings and some of her great aunt's, Gail transformed the former kitchen door by the backstairs with a view of the courtyard of the Bishop's palace in Córdoba (subsequently moved to the new wall by the back staircase) and enlivened the bathrooms with her murals – a wonderfully perky up-scaling of the Bayeux tapestry, a view of the Alhambra, and a panorama of Jerusalem.<sup>58</sup>

The Mooneys held a number of large parties and family celebrations at The Cedars, both in the house and in the garden – from christenings to funerals. Memorable occasions included the wake for Frank Baines in 1987, a lunch for their own 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in 2002, when they planted the silver birch in the lower flower bed (a gift from all three children), a launch in 2003 for *Frontier Country*, a jaunty account by Brian and Jon Harris of their walk around Essex, an exhibition of Gail's paintings in 2005, Sophia's wedding in 2007, a launch for *Frank Baines – A Life beyond the Sea* in 2010,<sup>59</sup> and the party after the baptism of their first grandchild Isabella in 2011.<sup>60</sup> The Mooneys continued a tradition, handed down by Phyllis Storey, of dressing in black tie for dinner on Christmas Day.

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<sup>58</sup> Gail Turner (as she was known professionally) read History at Oxford University (St Hilda's 1969-72), and studied for an MA in Art History at the Courtauld Institute (1972-74). She also took a diploma in fine art at Colchester Institute. Her paintings and etchings sold widely.

<sup>59</sup> The launch was also for the posthumous publication of Frank's own personal memoir of his war service in South-East Asia, where he served as a Chindit in Burma, *Chindit Affair* (Pen & Sword 2010). Frank's other books were *Look Towards the Sea* (1958), *In Deep* (1959), *Culture of Bacillus* (1962) and *Officer Boy* (1971), the latter in which he writes about The Cedars.

<sup>60</sup> Isabella Sordo Mooney, born in Santander August 2011.

The house and garden always seemed to resonate and buzz on festive occasions – a trait of its character noted by Frank Baines in his memoir of living there (see Appendix IV); and perhaps in some way deriving from its time as the Green Dragon.<sup>61</sup> The Cedars, it can be said, gives a good party, not least because of the easy movement provided for by Thomas Andrew’s French windows and verandah between inside and out, and the inviting shape of the garden, and the cool shade of the one remaining cedar tree.

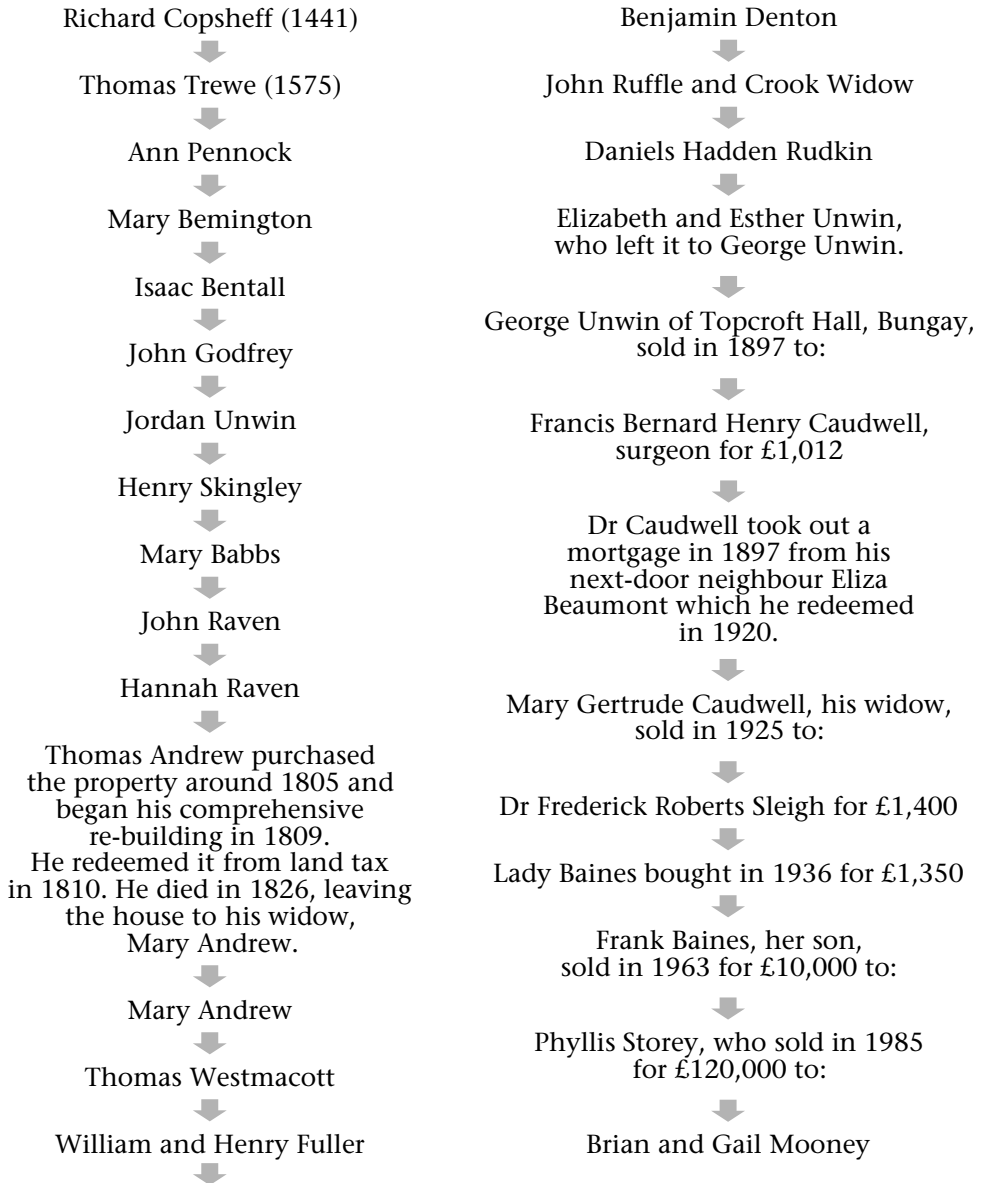


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<sup>61</sup> *A Memoir Concerning The Cedars, Appendix IV.*



## Timeline



## Appendix I

### English Heritage Grade II listing of The Cedars – October 1966

Inn and house, now a house. C17 and c.1800, extended in early C20. Timber framed, plastered, roofed with hand-cut grey slates. C17 range aligned NE-SW with axial stack one bay from NE end. Parallel range to NW, c.1800, with internal stack to rear of right part. Early C20 extension to N, projecting forward of main elevation, and of irregular plan to align with street, with one internal stack. 2 storeys and belvedere. NW elevation (to street), 2-window range of original sashes of 12 lights with false flat arches and projecting keystones, and one sash over door with semi-circular false arch and keystones, and interlaced Gothick tracery in upper sash. Central 6-panel door, bottom panels flush, raised ovals in middle panels, top panels glazed, in doorcase with engaged columns, triglyph frieze and moulded pediment; 4 moulded stone steps with 2 wrought iron bootscrapers. Long projecting eaves with paired brackets, hipped roof of shallow pitch with central well. Stacks of gault brick above roof. Central belvedere, early C20, rectangular with shallow hipped roof, weatherboarded below continuous glazing, with iron finial.<sup>62</sup> Cast iron railings along boundary with street, returning to house each side of door and to connecting brick wall at right end, and connected to projecting extension at left end; 8 stanchions of cruciform

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<sup>62</sup> The dating of the belvedere is almost certainly wrong, and this apparently inaccurate dating is reproduced in Pevsner's *Essex* (2007). After climbing up inside it for the first time, Jon Harris observed: "This dating seems highly unlikely. Though we might need dendrology analysis to prove it, given the subsequent owners and the re-used 17<sup>th</sup> century or early 18<sup>th</sup> century casement glazing – and the deeper glazing on the garden side – this surely has to be Thomas Andrew's perch above his own developing garden, for which he carefully saved up the windows he was stripping out of the old Green Dragon."

section to right of door, 5 to left of door, and 2 rails of diamond section. The left extension incorporates an earlier brick wall to first-floor level. The rear elevation has 3 French windows with marginal lights and a half-glazed door under a latticed wooden canopy with glass roof, and 3 first-floor windows similar to those at the front. In the right return one window on each floor in front of the brick wall is similar to those at the front. Much original crown glass in all windows. The central entrance-hall extends through the house, with a richly ornamented semi-circular arch at the junction of the 2 ranges. The geometrical stair is probably on the site of an original axial stack, demolished when the house was remodelled c.1800. Wreathed and moulded mahogany handrail, stick balusters, scrolled tread-ends, Gothick niche with fluted jambs and ogee head in upper wall. Moulded 6-panel mahogany doors to all adjacent rooms. White marble fireplaces, c.1800. Plaster ceiling cornices. Storey height approximately 3 metres. The rear left room has an early C18 dado of fielded pine panelling, a C17 oak overmantel, and alcoves with semi-elliptical arches each side; the cast iron grate is reported to be introduced from Yorkshire in the late C19.<sup>63</sup> On the first floor of the stair hall is a plain semi-elliptical arch. Rooms of the rear range have moulded oak beams; C17 6-panel oak doors. The belvedere incorporates C18 wrought iron casements, moulded mullions and saddle bars. The rear range survives from the Green Dragon inn, the remainder demolished in 1809 by Thomas Andrew, solicitor (G.F. Beaumont, *A History of Coggeshall in Essex*, 1890, 237). RCHM 34.

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<sup>63</sup> Phyllis Storey brought it from Yorkshire in 1963, possibly to fill a gap left by the old kitchen range.

## Appendix II

### Origins of the name The Cedars

The house has been known as The Cedars since the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and the name could well have originated as early as Thomas Andrew's ownership; he almost certainly planted the two cedar trees in the garden. His neighbours either side seem to have copied him: there are cedars in the grounds of both Beaumont House and Coggeshall House.

The cedar of Lebanon, *Cedrus Libani*, was first introduced to Britain in 1638. These large conifers were already familiar through numerous references in the Bible. Their popularity was well established by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in part thanks to the 18<sup>th</sup> century landscape gardener Capability Brown who designed more than 170 parks and gardens in England, many of them featuring a cedar or two, as a foil to the main house or to enhance a distant seat or temple.

Frank Baines in his memoir of the house recalls the stool of a second cedar tree in the flower bed opposite the drawing room, which his mother had grubbed up to make room for shrubs she had brought from their former home in Cornwall.<sup>64</sup> Legal documents refer to the house as "The Cedars" from 1897 onwards.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> *A Memoir Concerning The Cedars*, Appendix IVI.

<sup>65</sup> The Indenture of 17 December 1897 recording the purchase by Francis Caudwell refers to the property.

## Appendix III

### Daniel Whittle Harvey and his litigation against Thomas Andrew

Daniel Harvey's claims about Thomas Andrew's character and professional conduct cannot at two centuries' distance be challenged – but they are almost certainly groundless. Harvey had a reputation for being an argumentative and awkward man, and a review of his litigations against Thomas Andrew by the Law Society was pretty conclusive.

“No one can accuse Mr Harvey of acquiring too good a character at any period of his life,” *The Law Magazine* stated in its lengthy assessment of his various appeals, the implication being that he was little better than a rogue and swindler.<sup>66</sup>

The review, and a highly unusual Parliamentary enquiry, came about as a result of Harvey's political career. Despite his humiliating spats with a rival provincial lawyer and subsequent but coincidental near bankruptcy – a family-owned business, the Rochford and Billericay Bank, collapsed in 1814 – he went on hold a number of public offices. He became a member of the Common Council of the City of London and was soon elected Member of Parliament, first for Colchester, and later for Southwark, and in 1821 he founded *The New Observer* which would evolve into *The Sunday Times*. Newspaper ownership cost him a spell in prison for libelling King George IV, whom he had branded as insane. In the final reckoning Harvey never quite achieved his ambitions, and to make ends meet, he accepted posts as the first Commissioner

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<sup>66</sup> *The Law Magazine or Quarterly Review of Jurisprudence*, Vol XII, 1834, p 398. Appendix III has more details of the litigation between the two rival attorneys.

of the City of London Police and as chief regulator of London's public carriages. He died aged 77 in 1863.

The accusations of slander arose from a case in which Thomas Andrew represented a widow, Mrs Rudkin, against her son-in-law, Mr Shelley. Andrew claimed that Harvey had deliberately purloined a crucial document, and Harvey retaliated by suing him for slander.

In part of his long submission to a House of Commons Select Committee eight years after Thomas Andrew's death, Harvey complained that in one case he had been stitched up by Andrew, principally on the evidence of Andrew's brother John, his clerk, whom he described as a "man of vicious and depraved habits, as his subsequent life fully testified".<sup>67</sup>

"On the part of Mr Andrew, an unfriendly spirit early manifested itself, which ripened into open hostility, which neither party lost any opportunity in openly displaying," Harvey stated.

Harvey, a Unitarian and a political Radical and reformer, and thus on three counts out of sympathy with much of the local Essex gentry, argued to the House of Commons committee that had the jury known the truth in 1814 about Thomas and John Andrew he, Harvey, would have won.

"At that time," he said, "there was no available evidence to impeach the character of either the defendant or his brother. Subsequently there were serious imputations upon the

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<sup>67</sup> Select Committee hearing House of Commons 1834.

character of both, sufficient to have reversed any verdict obtained on their evidence.”

The most serious bone of contention between the two lawyers involved the purchase of a sizeable estate in Coggeshall – 16 acres of land comprising The Mount, Braziers and Starling Leeze. Harvey seems to have struck a deal to make a ‘fast buck’, buying the property from John Wall Frost for £950 and selling it on a few weeks later to Henry Skingley for £1,450. Once again there were imputations about Harvey’s character and accusations that he had cheated Frost and fraudulently pocketed some of the proceeds from the sale. But many years later, in 1834, Harvey produced a document to the Select Committee which he said “proved” that Andrew had been dishonest in concealing a sale agreement drawn up by Frost. The document was allegedly found posthumously among Andrew’s papers after his death.

“That a portion of this copy of the said agreement is in the handwriting of the said Thomas Andrew, deceased, affording conclusive knowledge of the existence of the original, which knowledge he fraudulently, as your Petitioner contends, withheld, whilst your Petitioner’s character and fortunes in life were deeply prejudiced by the imputation resting solely upon the presumed non-existence of such agreement.”

Harvey also produced a statement by another lawyer, Samuel Rigg, who at the time had been his clerk, in which Rigg suggested Andrew had acted improperly because he and some of his clients had wanted to purchase land from the estate, “because it carved into their gardens”.

At this distance it is impossible to apportion blame. It may well be that Harvey’s grievance was genuine, and that a

quarter of a century on he felt he could expect a fairer hearing, and not to be met with the same prejudices twice running. But he was the one who continued to make a fuss – like an angry squirrel – while his rival turned his back on all this, and grew his garden.



## Appendix IV

***A Memoir Concerning The Cedars, No 80 Church Street, Coggeshall, written by a former occupant, namely Francis Baines, sometimes called Frank Baines, November 1986.***

Everything in the following memoir, apart from one or two trifling anecdotes, is drawn from internal indications existing to this day with the house itself, consequently the conclusions arrived at are not the result of occult wisdom or esoteric knowledge, but are available to anyone reasonably observant or well-informed, which the present owners of the house certainly are. Thus it is with a measure of astonishment that this writer accedes, more or less under duress, to their request to produce this record, for he was always under the impression that they were more capable than he was of drawing out from the abundant evidences easily accessible within the house's fabric, something of its early lay-out, purpose, and history.

The Cedars was always known as the best house in Coggeshall. Probably it still is! Its prestige and pre-eminence have in no wise diminished, during these latter degenerate days, for the fact that it is still among the small number of "great houses" still in private occupation, whereas so many of them have been divided, demolished, vandalised, or become business premises and offices, continues to assure its distinction! Its prestige, in fact, is presumptively now far higher than it has ever been, for when my mother bought it in 1936 and moved-in in February 1937, she paid £1,350 for it, and it had been empty for over six months, for it was not considered

a desirable residence. Mother thought it was rather a come-down, although quite in keeping with an impoverished widow's status, and moving to Essex was naturally an admission of failure, too, for although the county was crammed with an incredible assortment of idiosyncratic squirearchy, the departure from Liverpool Street was not considered at all fashionable, and the passage through the smoking chimneys of the East-End was not thought to be very nice either. The train stopped for a considerable time at Harold Wood where they coupled-on a second engine to get it up the Brentwood Bank. And when you got down at Kelvedon Station, it was like descending at the end of the world.

Mother arrived by train with twenty-three railway waggon loads of possessions. These consisted of nineteen waggon-loads of furniture and household accoutrements, four waggon-loads of shrubs and plants, twenty chickens, three geese, and one horse. The cortège created quite a sensation. I mounted the horse and rode into Coggeshall.

By moving to The Cedars, mother had steeled herself to adapting to a sort of lower-class kind of life. She considered the house to be the very minimum requirement consonant with any sort of social respectability, and really only appropriate to small-time doctors or curates.

It's funny how things have grown! Now, The Cedars is thought of as a big house. Then, it was only regarded as a glorified villa (villa used in the 1930s pejorative sense, and not in the sense of Lord Burlington's villa at Chiswick!).

Mother possessed £800 a year, and settled down at The Cedars to genteel poverty, with two maids and a gardener, and managed very well!

But even then it was best!

And in this context, best means facilitating an ease of living with regard to basic domestic requirements, and doing this with a certain unselfconscious dignity more universally associated with a somewhat grander conception.

Of course, modern occupiers are always complaining that the house is cold. Naturally it will be, if the only attempt at heating is to warm the ample internal spaces by means of a floor-level pocket-size fan-heater which blows the dust from out the carpets and from between the floor-boards to every part of a room. We never found it cold, but then we maintained thumping great fires. Modern caloric theory, bedazzled by commercial television advertisements for central heating, claims that an open fire causes all the heat to disappear up the chimney. It's absolute balls, but people actually believe this! They seem incapable of understanding that a house such as The Cedars was made thermally habitable by heating the bricks of the chimney-breast – right up to the first storey – by means, at the beginning of the cold weather, of initially large fires ... none of your spluttering handful of twigs, or your few smouldering logs, but a blaze of radiant coals! The bricks of the chimney-breasts then acted in the same manner as the bricks in the night-storage heaters; they radiated their warmth for twenty-four hours. As long as a reasonable alternation of fires was kept going in all the downstairs rooms, the house remained comfortable.

In this respect, a side-glance at psychology is unavoidable, for it is a demonstrable fact that the temperature required from an invisible central-heating system in order to maintain people at what they consider at a comfortable warmth, is in fact far greater than that demanded from an open and visible blaze. It seems to be incontrovertible that merely looking at a fire (for instance, imitation electric smouldering coals or logs without calorific, so long as the deception is effectively maintained) can contribute significantly to a feeling of comfort and warmth, merely on account of hallucinogenic suggestibility!

But back to best!

A superficial scrutiny of the arrangements at The Cedars will confirm its reputation for graciousness of living and its habitability for domestic issues. It lends itself with perfect adaptability equally to “grand” celebrations like weddings, christening and funerals, and to formal entertaining on quite an exuberant scale (Mother once threw a ball-dance and supper for 100 guests to which the house responded with palpable pleasure), yet it is just as much at home to intimate occasions. I don’t think, during our occupancy, that anyone ever actually made love on the drawing-room sofa, but it’s not something that the atmosphere of the house irrevocably rejects. Here, then, is a suggestion to the present occupants for the future ... if they haven’t already tried it!

The imposing Tuscan front-door case and pediment sets the tone for the whole. It is acknowledged by Pevsner (page 184 in the Penguin edition).<sup>68</sup> An entrance vestibule (a later – and

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<sup>68</sup> Nikolaus Pevsner, who was dismissive of Coggeshall, referred to a three-bay Georgian house with a Tuscan doorway and a belvedere on the Early Victorian roof. *The Buildings of England – Essex* (Penguin, 1953-54, p 184).

not entirely felicitous – division from the main hall, as an examination of the partition separating it from the main hall, and the placement of this partition with regard to the plaster enrichment decorating the central light-fixture in the main hall, will corroborate), as well as the main hall itself, the curved staircase leading from it to the upper hall, and the flattened “Regency” arches supporting the ceilings in both these chambers, together with the double cube proportions of the principal saloon on the ground floor, with its delicate plaster enrichment on the ceiling ... all these testify to a quite unusual – almost disproportionate – degree of care in the planning and execution of unequivocally elegant features in which is, after all, a comparatively unpretentious house.

It is all rather bewildering and mysterious!

In fact, the general lay-out and plan of The Cedars as at present constituted, is a fairly ubiquitous one for a commodious, gentlemanly-like dwelling of around the year 1830. Another example of the same, on a slightly larger scale, happily survives quite near at hand, at Glazenwood Hall, Bradwell. Here, the accommodation almost exactly reduplicates that of The Cedars, as also does the general elevation and pitch of the roof, although lacking the charming rooftop gazebo. Parenthetically, in respect of this gazebo, the present owners would do well to consider very seriously all aspects regarding its preservation. It represents an unusual quirk of architectural fashion which, for a brief period between 1820-1850, took possession of England. Specifically, the roof-top belvedere or gazebo was adapted particularly in this quarter of the country, and for a short time became such a feature that it is always associated characteristically with Essex. It derives from the typical

Tuscan farmhouse, examples of which anyone can see while driving around the Tuscan countryside. Italianate buildings, of course, have always been fashionable in England, from Vitruvius through Palladio to splendid palazzi like the Reform Club in Pall Mall, date (I think, without reference books) circa 1837 or is it 1834? The Cedars is also an Italianate building – the idiomorphic pitch of the roof descending directly to the outer edge of the broad, overhanging eaves, being an essential constituent of this style – and the house reflects very accurately the Italianate taste of its period expressed by humble admirers and practitioners of this modality, of which the Reform Club is a culminating and quintessential illustration.

Recently, the rooftop belvedere of Essex has more and more frequently been demolished on account of the pusillanimity of owners, as its structure deteriorates and requires replacement (although there is still a fine example on the right hand side after you cross the Blackwater and go up the hill to Maldon). It is to be hoped that the present owners of The Cedars would never allow such a thing to happen to their house.

The present owners would also do well to take note of, and to study in depth, the general layout of their house's domestic arrangements. These are something which one is inclined to take for granted and to accept without that feeling of marvel or wonderment which the domestic arrangements of such a house deserve. The period during which the present house was reconstituted probably represents the apogee in the planning and lay-out of domestic arrangements – a high point in general classicising tendencies – and these were unquestionably inspired by the Prince Regent, later George

IV, and by his cadre of exceptionally talented planners, which included Wyatt and Nash. All of George IV's palaces are still extremely liveable-in, which is more than can be said for Versailles or Hampton Court. From the middle of the century onwards, however, an opposing "romantic" tendency gradually became pre-eminent, in which the emphasis moved from "Hellenistic" orderliness and serenity towards "medieval" clutter and muddle. This was naturally reflected in the planning of the house, and you get those gigantic, gloomy parsonages, full of disproportionate rooms and foetid corners, reeking of ghosts, furtive concupiscence, rancid babies, sour-smelling skivvies and boiled cabbage!

The Cedars is not like that!

Particularly worthy of remark is the manner by which service access is assured to all parts of the house by means of two chambers – the main central staircase-hall and the upper hall, and by means of two long internal corridors leading out of these, the ground-floor corridor to butler's pantry, kitchen and larder, and the first-floor corridor to bathroom, night-stool convenience, and servants' sleeping quarters in the attic ... both corridors lighted by windows at the end (the first floor corridor's window now obscured by its incorporation into a later bathroom).

Finally, it should be borne in mind that all of the foregoing applies to The Cedars as maximally re-built and reconstituted about 1830. I say "re-built and reconstituted" because, although the present edifice appears to be almost entirely of that date – a near-perfect example of a small-scale gentleman's townhouse of the late George IV period – there are indications, some in the garden, others within the house

itself, which lead on to suppose that the house's foundations was of a considerably earlier date, and that its status – no poky little converted cottage here – was always that of a gentleman's residence.<sup>69</sup>

The first of these indications is to be found in the overmantel surmounting the dining-room fireplace. This is unquestionably Jacobean in inspiration, is constructed of oak and certainly dates from the first quarter of the seventeenth century. It is sufficiently impressive to imply that this room (once the kitchen during our occupation) was a principal apartment, probably the master's private chamber or solar, adjoining what at that period must have been the main house living-room next door, now the saloon – extensively redecorated and brought up to fashionable standards (vide the plaster enriched ceiling, an exceptionally well executed and elegant feature of genuine artistic merit) during the decade, probably of the 1780s.

The other indication, slender in itself, but significant as evidence towards what I am suggesting, consists of two doors, also probably of early seventeenth century. One of these is to be found leading into the powder closet of what was my mother's summer bedroom (bedroom No 2) and it is painted. The other, reduplicating in design the former, admits to bedroom No 5 from the corridor, and has been stripped, revealing an exceptional sturdy oak construction of massive, rather clumsy, mouldings and fielded panels. There is no doubt in my mind that these very fine doors, with their massive, heavy mouldings, derive, equally with the

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<sup>69</sup> Frank Baines was only guessing here and in other sections of his essay. He is a few decades out with his dates, and also he had no knowledge of the Green Dragon and other dwellings on the premises. It suited him to believe that the house had always been a gentleman's residence. But he was the son of a distinguished architect and he had a good feel for buildings and their history.



overmantel in the dining room, from the original house. Their solidity, substance (oak, as opposed to fine panels used at the end of the century when oak became difficult to obtain, consequently more expensive, or as opposed to simple adzed planks) ... imply that the house was a dwelling of consequence and no mere yeoman's or artisan's croft.<sup>70</sup>

A further factor in this exploration of origins consists in the very indisputability of The Cedars' name. The house takes its name from a huge, ageing Cedar of Lebanon in the garden. There was, in fact, another tree of the same species placed geometrically exactly in relationship with it, in the shrubbery and flower bed in front of the saloon windows, and abutting the lawn. The roots and trunk of this tree were very visibly in evidence when my mother took up her residence, exemplified by a large hump or mound. This hump Mother had dug out and levelled, in order to give room for the shrubs she had brought from Trenoweth.<sup>71</sup> During the process, the smell of the decaying cedar-roots was very pronounced and quite unmistakable.

Now the Cedar of Lebanon was introduced into this country about late 1730, and immediately captivated the aristocracy. Planting of two trees in the garden of The Cedars must coincide fairly closely to this date. I myself would guess that the present tree is about two hundred years old. This gives a date of about 1780 for its placement. It accords very well with an upgrading and gentrification of the house which seems to have taken place at that date – vide the plaster-enriched

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<sup>70</sup> Without being aware of it, Frank is almost certainly referring to bits of the former Green Dragon which Andrew re-used in his new house.

<sup>71</sup> *Frank Baines – A Life Beyond the Sea*, Brian Mooney (Thorogood, 2010) has a full description of how Lady Baines and Frank moved from Cornwall and came to live at The Cedars.

ceiling of the saloon, remarkably well-executed and elegant features of genuine artistic merit, which looks to have been executed around about the 1780s.

Young cedar trees, of course, were highly desirable, expensive and rather difficult to obtain. Moreover, an awareness of their availability in this county implies a degree of culture, a standard of education, and a level of taste considerably above that of the yeoman. It is an additional indication that the house was always the residence of an informed, sophisticated class!<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Frank is being lyrical again, but, without knowing the history, he has divined Thomas Andrew's presence.

The Cedars, Coggeshall – June 2012

Revised – November 2012

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