

THE TOMB IN THE CHURCHYARD

When the large raised tomb to the west of the church was being repaired the following inscription was revealed:-

In a vault beneath are deposited the remains of

TM DENNES

Who died 11th April 1811

Aged 57 years

Also of Henry his son

Who died March 1806

Aged 12 years

Anne Dennes his wife

Died Dec 20 1813

Aged 55 years

Intrigued by this inscription, Judith and I began to investigate the Dennes family . To our great surprise we discovered that Thomas Martin Dennes once owned large parts of Kettlestone and the Snorings.

On Saturday 29th May 1813, the following notice appeared in the Norfolk Chronicle

To be sold by auction

In the month of June next, at the Red Lion Inn at Fakenham in the county of Norfolk by order of the trustees under the will of Thos. Martin Dennes, gentleman, deceased [unless previously disposed of by Private Contract]

The valuable manors of Great Snoring, Cantlow Netherhall, and Snorings, in Great Snoring, in the county of Norfolk with their Quit-rents, Fines, [arbitrary] Rights, Royalties and Privileges.

Also a most substantial brick Mansion-house, with commodious attached and detached offices, a good farmhouse with barns, stables, and other outbuildings in excellent repair and about 300 acres of rich arable meadow and pasture land in well-formed enclosures, in Kettlestone, in the said county, late in the occupation of the said Thomas Martin Dennes

We have discovered that Thomas Martin Dennes was born in Great Fransham and for a large part of his life he lived at East Barsham Hall as the tenant of Sir Edward Astley of Melton Constable Hall. In 1785 he married Anne the daughter of Thomas Edgar a Fakenham doctor, and together they had eight children. Some time after 1800 he became owner of all that is listed in the sale notice.

We are trying to discover how he had sufficient money to leave Barsham Hall and become a wealthy landowner. His father John Dennes farmed at Mintlyn near King's Lynn and in his will had left Thomas some money, but it was probably not enough to acquire so much. There are further questions

Who owned all the land before Thomas bought it?

Where was the mansion house situated and has it been demolished?

Who bought the property in 1813 when it was sold?

We are planning a trip to the county archive to see if we can find out more!

Bridget Fielden and Judith Kilbourn