



c/o The Reading Room
12 High Street, Barkway, Hertfordshire, SG8 8EE
info@barkwayhistory.com

The Balding Family

The late Georgian house on the corner of Royston Road and the High Street in Barkway is known as the Flint House, but for most of its life was known as the Chestnuts. It was built by James Balding, a medical practitioner, and member of the Royal College of Surgeons, from where he ran his medical practice until retirement.

James was born in Norfolk, and married Susan Barley in Barley in 1829. They moved into their new Barkway house in 1835. They had 9 children, several of them going into medicine. On acquiring the land for his new house, James also took on the ownership of a pair of cottages abutting the road to Barley.

James died in Barkway in 1883 at the age of 86. A vault in the churchyard records the burial of his wife and 5 of his children, as well as his wife's sister Ann, who lived with them for 30 years. Three others of the children are buried elsewhere in the graveyard, with only eldest son Daniel missing.

Daniel was educated at Middlesex Hospital where he was resident Medical Officer. He practised at Royston for 40 years, being superintendent of Royston Hospital. He was an army Surgeon Lieutenant-Colonel and died in Royston in 1923 at the age of 92. James's sons Charles and Mortimer also pursued careers in medicine. Charles served in the Crimean War.

There was an amusing anecdote recorded by Sarah Cornwell, living at the Red House. She recalls viewing a scene across the street by the village pump as Doctor Balding was passing. A village woman picked up a pail of water and emptied it over him. It seemed he had caused great annoyance in the neighbourhood by some sanitary improvements he had insisted on, and probably made some unwise remark to this angry woman.

James was involved with repairs to the church, and acquired a pair of stone corbel heads, which he had mounted on the end wall of the flint cottages by the roadside. One has gone but the second remains in situ.

James's son John Johnson Balding was a brewer, running the business at the Brewery House in the High Street, demolished a few years back. Following his retirement, the site was sold in 1922. After John's death his wife Marian carried on living at the Chestnuts with her sister until her death in 1940.