

The Gill Family & Beech Hill Farm



Roger Gill is the present tenant of Giants Hall Farm where his family have resided for over a hundred years. Prior to that the Gills lived at Beech Hill Farm on the corner of Beech Hill Ave and Beech Hill Lane. On the earlier census's it was known as Beech Hill Farm but at some point after 1911 it became just Beech Farm, but now it's reverted back to it's original name, Beech Hill Farm.

The building dates back to the late 1600's, about the same age as Beech Hall that stood on the site where Cherry Grove is now situated.

The Gill family originate from Wrightington and the furthest I have got back is Roger's great, great, great, great, great grandfather Jacob Gill who was born in 1710.

Prior to St. James the Great CE Church being built in Wrightington in 1857 the Gills were baptised, married and buried at St. Mary's CE church in Eccleston, one of the oldest churches in Lancashire.

The name Eccleston comes from the ancient British word for church 'egles' to which was added the Old English word 'tun' meaning place or town. Therefore, Eccleston means 'churchtown'. Although there has been a church on this site since 1094 AD, the present building in its original form was in existence in 1182, and it is believed that there may have been a Saxon church on this same site.

Jacob's great grandson Joseph Henry Gill (Roger's great grandfather) was born in 1846 at Tanners Whaley Farm in Carr House Lane, Wrightington where his father Joseph farmed 15 acres.

Joseph Henry married Jane Marks who came from Blackrod in 1869. They then moved into Beech Hill Farm in Beech Hill Lane with it's 40 acres of land. The 1871 census finds them living there with their 10 month old son Joseph, Jane's sister Mary who was employed as a domestic servant, Jane Wareing their five year old neice and John Astley a 19 year old farm servant.



Joseph Henry and Jane went on to have seven children, four boys and three girls, all were baptised at the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Station Road, Wigan. Jane died in 1893, but Joseph was to marry for a second time in 1889 to Elizabeth Taylor.

Of the seven children, two died in childhood, Joseph the eldest in 1881 aged 10 and Susannah the youngest in 1885 aged 18 months. They were both buried in Wrightington.

John Henry the second son married Minnie Hickson in 1898 and shortly after took over Daylight House Farm, a dairy farm on the corner of Beech Hill Lane and Woodhouse Lane.

The 1939 Register taken at the start of WW2 shows John had moved on and was an arable farmer at Firs Farm, Hindley. He died in 1967 in Shevington aged 95.

Martha Ann the eldest daughter married John Arthur Smith in 1899 and died in Urmston in 1951 aged 76.

Mary Ellen married Thomas Hidden in 1900 and died in 1969 in North Wales, aged 90.

Robert the third son married Fanny Elizabeth Fairhurst, who hailed from Standish in 1903. He emigrated to America on 26 March 1907, sailing on the SS Caronia from Liverpool on the 10 day voyage to New York. His occupation on the ship's manifest is shown as carpenter. Robert settled in the State of Michigan where Fanny joined him at a later date.

On 12 Sept 1918 as WW1 was coming to a close Robert had to undergo a mandatory US Military Draft Registration Board interview. At the time he was aged 44 and the records show that he had a crippled knee and an artificial eye so was classified as unfit for military service.

On 6 Nov 1922 he applied for an American passport as a Naturalised Citizen in order to visit England on a two month long trip with his wife and two daughters.

The UK & Ireland Incoming Passenger Lists show that on 11 Aug 1949 Robert and Fanny arrived in Liverpool on the SS Franconia from New York via Quebec. Their destination address in England was Giants Hall Farm so obviously Robert was staying with his younger brother Alfred.

Robert died on 1 Jan 1961 at Ferndale, Oakland County, Michigan aged 87. Fanny died ten years later.

Alfred Gill, the youngest son and the grandfather of present tenant Roger Gill married Eunice Morris in 1906, they were to eventually have six children, three boys and three girls.

By the time of the 1911 census the family were living at 106 Beech Hill Lane and Alfred's occupation was farm bailiff. Alfred purchased Giants Hall Farm in an auction held in March 1921 at the Empress Hall in Wigan when the Standish Hall estate was sold off.

The 1939 Register shows Alfred and Eunice at Giants Hall with and their three sons, Geoffrey, Alfred Jnr and Maurice who all worked on the farm. Alfred died in 1961 and the farm was passed onto his eldest son Geoffrey, Roger's father.

Joseph Henry Gill who had first moved into Beech Farm 50 years previously died at his son John Henry's home, Daylight House Farm in Woodhouse Lane, on 22 Feb 1922 aged 76. He was buried with his ancestors three days later at St. James the Great church in Wrightington.

In more recent times Cliff Belshaw the wrestler lived at Beech Hill Farm and the property was used as an undertakers and also a coal merchants.

Beech Hill Farm was deemed of architectural and historical importance and was made a Grade 2 Listed building in 1983.