



HO CHEE, John Fullerton ELPHINSTONE and The LOWDELL Family

Ho Chee was born in 1789 at Hyan-Shan in Canton, China (now known as Guangzhou in the province of Guangdong). His date of birth was confirmed by Ho Chee in his application for U.K. Naturalisation. He was the son of Ho Foo, a mandarin. It is likely that Ho Chee worked with or for the East India Company (EIC) in Canton and Macao. Ho Chee's role with the Company is not known but his mandarin status could mean that he had an official Government sponsored post.

Foreign trade in China was confined to, at most, 4 months of the year, between October and March when the winds of the South China Sea allowed. For the remaining 8 months the Chinese authorities insisted that all foreign traders should leave Canton. All staff then retired to the Portuguese colony of Macao, at the mouth of the Pearl River on which Canton lay (8 months of leisure followed).

Nothing is known of the meeting between Ho Chee and Elphinstone, suffice to say, considering the age difference between them, they probably struck up an enduring friendship sometime after 1803.

John Fullerton Elphinstone was born in 1778, the eldest son of William Elphinstone a Director of the EIC. He went to Canton in 1794 where he was employed by the EIC as a 'Writer' (or clerk).

In 1800, then at 'Supra Cargo' rank he was covenanted with others for a return voyage to China with a cargo of 'Goods and Treasure and to dispose of said outward-bound cargo to the best advantage of the Company. Then to invest the proceeds in such wares, Merchandizes, Goods and Commodities of China on the cheapest and best terms procurable. Those goods to be laden on ships of the EIC and delivered in the Port of London.' All Supra Cargoes were to keep Books of Account and after the sale in London a percentage of the proceeds was distributed according to rank/seniority: John Fullerton Elphinstone was to receive One shilling and One Penny for every One Hundred Pounds computed and reckoned on the net produce...after the payment of all duties and customs, all Freight, Demurrage and all other sums of money payable to the Owners of the ships, for Warehousing, Allowances and Deductions made by the Court of Directors to the Buyers at the sale...etc.!

'To encourage them to be faithful and diligent servants they may carry in the said ships Goods to the value of £150 sterling each procurable in the East-Indies, excepting Tea. John Fullerton Elphinstone has liberty to bring home One Pikul of Tea and no more.' [As defined by: Ukers Tea and Coffee Trade Journal, 'Malay pikul, a load or burden; the Chinese hundred weight = 133 and 1/3rd lbs avoirdupois'.]

Elphinstone was clearly unhappy with his life in China and wrote as much to his father early in 1801:

'My dear Father

The power you have entrusted me with to raise funds in this Country being almost the only mode of adding to my Commission in such a way as to enable me to retire sooner to which period I look forward with great impatience being by no means reconciled to my situation here...nothing but the impossibility of being provided in any other way prevents my bidding it adieu, I hope for ever.'

To his mother he wrote: 'in this civilised and enlightened Country where oppression is not known and where bribery is un-thought of here all ideas are confined to a Tea Chest or should ambition operate they probably may aspire to a Bale of Cotton...how to remain I scarcely know and assure you were any tolerable prospect open I would bid a final adieu to this terrestrial Paradise however I am perfectly aware of my situation, I must remain.'

Elphinstone was regularly afflicted by illness as a result of his time in China. His correspondence is full of detail of his various disabilities: 'I have had a return of my bowel complaint. I apprehend no immediate danger, very far from it, but it proves to me the absolute necessity there will be for my remaining some time in England to recruit. I fear it will be necessary to absent myself at least three years.'

He continued to serve the Company until his retirement then as President of China Select Committee, on 18 March 1818.

In August 1819 Ho Chee arrived from Canton to live in Elphinstone's household in England. Whatever their professional connections had been in China from then on Ho Chee assumed complete administrative responsibility for Elphinstone's estate; as is evidenced from Elphinstone's will. At about that time Ho Chee acquired an additional first name, 'John', his Chinese family name 'Ho' was joined to his personal name 'Chee' thus Ho Chee became 'John Hochee'. He married Charlotte Mole in the Parish Church at Braughing, Herts. on 9th January 1823. John and Charlotte Hochee had two daughters born at Braughing, although the younger daughter was baptised at Lingfield Church in July 1826 following their move to Lingfield with J F Elphinstone. They had six more children, all born in Lingfield and baptised in the Parish Church.

In 1826 Elphinstone had purchased the Ford Manor Estate from Col. Henry Malcolm (also a retired 'servant' of the EIC). He remained a bachelor and depended increasingly on Ho Chee. Two other Chinese employees came to join Elphinstone's household, 'John' Sue Achow, employed as his Butler and 'Sam Ford'.

The household led a fairly secluded life; Elphinstone's poor health continued to cause him great concern. The affairs of his estates in Lingfield kept him occupied (all those lands are now part of Dormansland parish, which was created out of Lingfield Parish).

He wrote to his cousin, Mountstuart Elphinstone 'I busy myself by endeavouring to drain and fence this place of mine'. He later reflected that he had planted many trees, perhaps too many,

He wrote again to his cousin of his concerns over the disturbances over the price of corn and that some hay stacks had been deliberately set alight in the area of Lingfield, fearing for his own hay ricks. Mr Rose the Godstone Postmaster informed the General Post Office in London, 7th Nov 1832: 'I consider it my duty to inform you that a Fire took place last night at a Farm called Wintersell in the parish of Crowhurst nr. Godstone, undoubtedly the work of an Incendiary – 3 barns and several hay ricks were consumed. The Home stable, Granary and a Wheat Rick were saved. Mr R Kelsey the Occupier has offered a Reward of £200 on conviction of the Offender'. Some days later an arsonist struck again. Mr Rose wrote to his employers: 'I am sorry again to have to inform you that another incendiary Fire again took place last night in the parish of Lingfield, a very short distance from the one I reported last week which consumed a Barn filled with Corn and 2 sheds.

Elphinstone wrote again to his cousin 'I have some Wheat Stacks that would make a pretty Blaze and now that I have limited my donations to a certain quantity of Bread instead of money, it is received with grumbling, for Gin and Tobacco are preferred and so in spite my Stacks may go.'

Elphinstone and his household servants, including his trusted Assistant, John Hochee, John Sue Achow his Butler and Sam Ford regularly travelled between Dormans Land and Elphinstone's London property, 23 York Terrace, Regents Park.

Elphinstone purchased Nortons in Dormansland in 1831 and leased the property to Ho Chee. As early as 1839 Ho Chee knew of his expected inheritance from John Fullerton Elphinstone. His Denization papers reveal that he had reason to believe that he might become entitled to an Estate of Inheritance or a Lease for Life of Lands in the County of Surrey. Being born an alien he could not possess land or real property without Letters of Denization. By that time John Hochee and his family were living at Nortons.

By 1850 the price of oak was so low that Elphinstone complained that 'he was forced to sell the bark for tanning' as that was the only market.

Thursday 12th June 1851 was a day to be remembered through history when a party of 780 people from Lingfield, Crowhurst, Felbridge and Limpsfield visited the 'Great Exhibition' in Hyde Park. The cost including travel was 3/2d each [16 new pence]. Local landowners and employers contributed to the costs of the day and some provided transport to the station at South Godstone. Included in the list of contributors are John F Elphinstone and John Hochee.

After September 1852 John Fullerton Elphinstone never returned to Ford Farm, or to York Terrace, preferring to live in a leased property called 'Stafford House' in Junction Road, Brighton, on the sea front. He died in Brighton on 12th March 1854 aged 75 and is buried in the Extramural Cemetery, Brighton. Ho Chee was the main beneficiary under the terms of Elphinstone's Will, inheriting Ford, Hoopers, Crosses and Milkhouse farms as well as Nortons; a total of over 550 acres.

On 26th July 1854 John Ho Chee signed his Naturalisation Declaration. His application was supported by Mr Aston of Brighton and George Lowdell, Surgeon: 'We George Lowdell of Cannon Place Brighton Surgeon and George Henry Aston of Regency Square Brighton Gentlemen do solemnly declare that we well know and have been personally acquainted with John Hochee of Ford Farm Lingfield Surry for many years who is a Chinese subject about sixty five years of age and is engaged in Farming his own land as an amusement is married to an Englishwoman and has a family of seven children [daughter Jane died in 1846] and has resided for many years past at Nortons in the Parish of Lingfield Surry, which property as well as Ford Farm Lingfield Surry he at the present time occupies as owner, and that we have implicit faith in his veracity and much pleasure in vouching for his thorough respectability and Loyalty'.

The application was granted on 30th Nov 1854.

John Hochee died at Brighton on 1st March 1869 and was buried at Brighton in the plot next to his patron and benefactor, John Fullerton Elphinstone. The plot having been purchased soon after Elphinstone's burial, 15 years earlier. Hochee had disposed of Ford Manor, Hoopers Farm and Milkhouse Farm before his death. He left his wife a life interest in Nortons and an annuity. Ford Manor was sold to Norman Morris who in 1868 commissioned Robert Kerr to design a new house on the dry land to the north-west. Morris never lived in the house which he sold to Joseph Spender Clay.

Shortly after Hochee's death his widow Charlotte built a double cottage on land which was inherited from John Elphinstone, situated at the Cross roads at Dormans Land; a small piece of land formerly planted with fir and anciently the site of a lime kiln. In May 1874 the cottages were given by Trust Deed to the Vicar and Churchwardens of Lingfield, with an Endowment of £50 and were to be known as The Hochee Almshouses, in memory of her late husband. The Hochee Almshouses stand prettily today at the crossroads. A bust of Hochee stands on a plinth in the hallway, a constant reminder of Hochee's life in the village.

Charlotte Hochee died on 1st July 1882 and was buried in Lingfield Churchyard with John & Charlotte's daughter, Jane, who had died in 1846. A memorial to John Hochee, in Chinese text, is on the tombstone:



[CHEE]

[HO]

John and Charlotte Hochee had two sons, the elder son, **John Elphinstone Fatqua Hochee 1828 - 1883** (otherwise known as Lieutenant John Elphinstone Milton) was born on 12 June 1828. In 1844 on the recommendation of John F Elphinstone, he entered the East India Company's Military College at Addiscombe but under the name John Elphinstone MILTON; it seems likely that his Chinese name would have hampered his career with the East India Company so John adopted his maternal grandmother's maiden name. His application stated that he was the son of John Milton, farmer of Nortons, East Grinstead. John E Milton was commissioned Ensign on 11th December 1846.

Before joining his Regiment, the 9th Regiment of Madras Native Infantry, John presented his parents with a family bible. In April 1847 John joined the Regiment in Madras but did not take to the climate and took sick leave between August 1848 and the beginning of 1851. Two further periods of sick leave caused him to retire from the service on 27th August 1855, with the rank of Lieutenant. John was with his Regiment for about 28 months out of a total of 8 years in the Madras Army.

In 1882 John Elphinstone Milton gave £100 towards the fund for building the new Church at Dormans Land. John Elphinstone Fatqua Hochee (otherwise John Elphinstone Milton) died on 22nd April 1883 at Wimpole St, London; he is buried in Lingfield Churchyard.

James Hochee who was born in 1832 became a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons. He married Emma Fry and lived with his family in Finchley. After his death in 1897 their home was advertised for sale in *The Times*:
'...approached by a long drive. Freehold residence of late J Hochee Esq with fine billiard room, stabling and charming old-time garden, the like of which there are but few left near London.'

Two of the John and Charlotte's daughters married two of George and Jessamine Lowdell's sons. The Lowdell family lived at Baldwins Hill, Lingfield. Sarah, the eldest daughter married Thorold Lowdell and Henrietta Hochee married Sydney Poole Lowdell.

The Lowdells of Baldwins Hill

Isaac Lowdell was the first member of the family to hold property in Lingfield; the family were originally from Brighton. Indeed the family retained their links with Brighton throughout their time at Baldwins Hill, Lingfield. Isaac Lowdell built a house on 'Baldwyns' Hill, on an area of land of about 88 acres, which is now part of Chartham Park Golf Course. He also purchased a plot of land on what is now Mutton Hill at the time of the Enclosure Award in 1809; it seems likely therefore that the land at Baldwins Hill was acquired at about the same time.

Isaac Lowdell's will was unsigned at the time of his death. His nephew George, surgeon of Brightelmstone (Brighton) swore on oath that Isaac died on or about 18th day of February 1831, that he was a bachelor, without a parent surviving him, that he was a surgeon, that George Lowdell, Joseph Lowdell, Stephen Lowdell and Mary Ann Lowdell, spinster, were his lawful nephews and niece, the only persons who would have been entitled in distribution...had he died intestate. The total value of the estate was between ten and eleven thousand pounds. The day after Isaac's death the

unsigned 'Will' was found in a drawer in the bureau in the deceased's house with his ready money. Also that George's wife Jessamine was from infancy brought up and educated by Isaac as his adopted daughter. That at her marriage with George Lowdell, Isaac had given her money and frequently thereafter intimated that he had made his will in their favour. That a diligent search had been made for any other Will and Testament but none had been found. Two witnesses swore that in all their communications with the deceased he had led them to believe that George and Jessamine Lowdell would inherit his estate.

The unsigned Will was proved at London on 18th July 1831.

Isaac Lowdell of Baldwyns Hill, Surgeon, but late of Brighthelmstone bequeathed all his possessions to George and Jessamine Lowdell.

William Figg Junior drew a sketch of George Lowdell's new property on 31st March 1831; a total of 88.26 acres at Baldwins Hill including the House and surrounding parklands, an orchard and pasture lands.

George Lowdell, by then a highly respected man of property in the area, was active in the restoration of Lingfield Church in 1847. He was a friend of Ho Chee; a descendant of both Lowdell and Ho Chee has a photograph of the two men playing chess together, the portrait is known in the family as 'The Two Grandfathers'.

George Lowdell died at Brighton in 1853. His wife died at Baldwins Hill in 1862 but is buried in the family tomb at Brighton. There is a beautiful stained glass window in the North wall of Lingfield Church to the memory of George and Jessamine. George Lowdell's will is very long and complicated, in contrast to his Uncle Isaac Lowdell's brief and unsigned will twenty years earlier.

His seven surviving children are named, his sons: George, Thorold, Charles, Isaac, and Sydney Poole, and his daughters Emily and Louisa.

After Jessamine's death the house at Baldwins Hill was taken over by their son Sydney Poole Lowdell and his wife Henrietta (nee Hochee). The only other son to stay in the Lingfield area was Thorold Lowdell who first farmed at Apsleytown, then at Woodgates Farm.

A Charitable Fund was established by the two brothers, Sydney Poole and Thorold Lowdell for the relief of poverty and to further the religious and other charitable work of the Church of England in the parish of St Saviour's Church, Baldwins Hill. Following the closure and demolition of St Saviours, the Charity Commission transferred the administration of that charity to the Parish of St Mary the Virgin, in the Counties of Surrey and Sussex, (Windmill Lane, East Grinstead).

William Thorold Lowdell R.I.B.A. was the third child of Thorold and Sarah (nee Hochee) and therefore the grandson of John and Charlotte Hochee and also the grandson of George and Jessamine Lowdell. His address on all architectural plans is London but he must have had property in the area as he was a member of the PCC of Lingfield Church in 1938 and a sidesman of St Saviour's, Baldwins Hill, a Chapel of Ease to Lingfield.

In 1913 William Thorold Lowdell, produced designs and plans for ‘additions and alterations to the Parish Church of St John’s’ – namely the South Aisle, Porch and adjoining Room as well as a Tower and Spire. Insufficient funding meant that the Tower was not built but the new Aisle and Porch were finished in 1914.

William Thorold Lowdell set up a fund for the benefit of Lingfield Parish, that fund is now part of the Lingfield United Charities.

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