

The house was probably built in 1582; this date was carved into one of the gateposts alongside the old summer house. Celia Fiennes (1662-1741), in her fascinating account of her travels around late seventeenth century England,⁴ described Adderbury as '*a pretty, neate vilage where are two or three good houses; one of Sir Thomas Cobbs...*'. Celia would have known the Cobb Mansion, as her uncle Richard Fiennes's second wife was Susanna Cobb (1629-1712).

Although the family originated in Sandringham in Norfolk, William Cobb from London was the likely builder of the house; he was a freeholder and lessee of New College, Oxford. The college owned the 'Winchester' manor in Adderbury, and the rectorial advowson. The Cobbs seem to have acted as the college's agents or representatives. The Cobb family also owned land scattered all over England. William died in 1598; his wife Alice (née Wyld) lived on at Adderbury until her death in 1627. Of their sixteen children, only one son, William, and two daughters, Catherine and Christian, survived to maturity.

The second (Sir) William (d.1658) married Susan Floyd. Knighted in 1634, he had eight children, of whom seven survived childhood. Sir William's son Thomas (1627-1699) had two wives; between them they had twenty-one children. One of these was the Susanna who married Richard Fiennes, fourth son of William Fiennes, 1st Viscount and 8th Baron Saye and Sele of Broughton Castle. Thomas Cobb was created a baronet in 1662. His eldest surviving son, Sir Edward (1669-1744) died without issue so the title went sideways to his brother George. Sir George (1672-1762) married Ann Langdon from Somerset. They had three children, with one surviving son, Charles. He died, unmarried, before his father, so the family name and title died out.

During the English Civil war Adderbury suffered/experienced a great deal; the Cobb Mansion too had its share of the excitement. On the 26th October 1642, three days after Edgehill, the first battle of the Civil War, Prince Rupert, King Charles' cavalry commander, billeted himself on the Cobbs for a night. Later in the war, on 9th February 1645, Sir Samuel Luke in his letter-book reported '*That there is a Dutch troope at Kings Sutton about 50 or 60.....that there is another troop at Adderbury about 40 at Sr Wm Cobbs howse, & have made some small fortifica'cons about the howse*'.⁵ The Cobb family themselves, like the

⁴ C. Morris, ed., *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, 1947, p.26.

⁵ Alfred Beesley, *History of Banbury* (1841), p.394.