

Village Echoes

Manors of Goudhurst (part 1)

In June 1919 Colonel Campion sold by auction the Combwell Estate, including Combwell Priory. That ended the Campion association with Combwell that had started when the family had acquired the property from the Culpeper family of Bedgebury in the late 16th century. The estate was also an ancient manor where, in about 1160, Robert de Turneham had established, at a spot called Henle, the Abbey of St Mary Magdalene.

Most people living in medieval England were subjects of a manor under the jurisdiction of a manorial court. After the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, Combwell Manor was granted by the Crown to the Culpepers 'in capite by knight's service'. 'In capite' meant that the land had been granted directly by the monarch and 'by knight's service' meant that the Culpepers had, in return for the grant, to perform military service for the King.

Combwell Manor was clearly of some importance, as a court leet and court baron were held, at the 'hamlet of Stonecrouch', a part of the estate. A court leet tried, with a jury, and punished, all crimes committed within its jurisdiction; more serious crimes being referred to the King's Justices. Combwell's court leet claimed jurisdiction over the whole of the Hundred of West, or Little, Barnfield (roughly that part of the Parish of Goudhurst south of Risebridge). The main business of the court baron was the resolution of disputes involving the lord's tenants and to enforce the feudal services owed to the lord by them.

But Combwell was not the only manor in the area. The Manor of Chingley dated from the time of Edward I and had originally been possessed by the Cistercian Abbey of Boxley, Kent. As with Combwell, it was granted at the time of the dissolution to the Culpepers again in capite by knight's service. During the reign of Elizabeth I, half of the manor was sold to the Campions, who continued to own it until 1919, with the other half passing through various owners until it came into the hands of the Hussey family of Scotney.

Other nearby manors were Bedgebury, where a court baron was regularly held, and Twysden (although it was only reputed to be a manor). In the late 18th century, it was said that the manor was usually called Burrs Farm. Nowadays it is known as Twyssenden. It was originally owned, at the time of Edward I, by Adam de Twysden but was sold to Roger Riseden at the time of Henry VI. It then passed through many hands to the Beresfords of Bedgebury.

Lastly we have the manors of Pattenden and Lilsden. Pattenden was granted to Maurice Berkeley, who was the standard bearer to Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth I. Although, like Twysden, it was only reputed to be a manor because the manor of East Farleigh claimed it as part of their land. Lilsden was situated between Marlingate and Twyssenden and today is only recognisable from the wood called Lillesden Wood. Both these manors also came into the hands of the Beresford family.

The Tenures Abolition Act 1660 replaced various types of military and religious service tenants owed to the Crown and compensated the monarch with an annual fixed payment of £100,000 to be raised by means of a new tax on alcohol. It was, interestingly, the first Act to also impose a tax on tea and coffee.

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