

History of **WEST COURT FARM HOUSE** Shepherdswell



Leaflet prepared with assistance from Amenities
& Countryside Committee of Kent County Council

A HISTORY OF WEST COURT, SIBERTSWOLD OR SHEPHERDSWELL

Extract taken from Hasted's History of Kent.-----

"The Manor of West Court, so called from it's situation in the western part of the parish of Sibertswold, was part of ancient possessions of the Priory of St. Martin in Dover before the time of the Norman conquest, perhaps given to it by King Wightred, the Jutish King of Kent, when he removed the Priory in the year 696 from the circuit of the Castle down into the town of Dover to the old church of St. Martin. There, accordingly it is thus entered in the survey of Domesday under the general title of " Terra Canonicorum St. Martini de Dovre. i.e. lands of the canons of St. Martin in Dover. (Three of the canons are mentioned). In Siberswalt, William de Poictiers holds half a sulung and 12 acresworth 55 shillings.

In Sibertswalt Sigar holds one ^{yoke} ~~yok~~ and a half.

In Sibertswalt Ulstan, son of Ulwin, holds one sulung, the canons also, ^holds one pasture in Sibertswalt worth 15 pence.

(Sulung is a purely Kentish term, a self-contained stretch of arable within definite boundaries, the area which could be kept in cultivation by a single plough train of eight oxen. The William of Poictiers mentioned was probably an under ^{gn}tenant, or chaplain, the ~~tenant~~ ^{tenant} is chief being Bishop Odo of Bayeux, a half brother of William the Conqueror).

The above seems altogether to have constituted the Manor of West Court, which during the several changes made in the Priory of St. Martin continued neverthe less part of it's possessions until it's final dissolution in the 27th year of King Henry VIII (1536) when it was by act suppressed as being under the clear yearly value of two hundred pounds, and this it came into the King's hands, where it did not remain long, for, in his 29th year (1538) he granted this manor, together with the site of the Priory at Dover and all it's lands to the Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, in which situation it still continues.

A Court Baron is held for this manor.

The Parkers resided here in King James's reign as tenant to Sir John Boys who held it of the Archbishop, which family of Parker bore for their arms Ermine, six escallops gules, three, two and one, confirmed to John Parker, gent of Sibertswold by Robert Cook, clarenceux, in 1588, anno. 30 Eliz.

The Hammonds of St. Albans were lately lessees of this manor, in which the lease was continued to William Hammond, Esq, who sold his interest in it to John Plumtree, Esq., of Freville, the present lessee of it" (This would be in 1799, when Edward Hasted wrote this history.)

It looks therefore as if the monks of Dover Priory let the lands belonging to West Court as part of their income, but probably used the house itself as a "Grange", that is as a rest-house for old and sick monks, or simply for a holiday.

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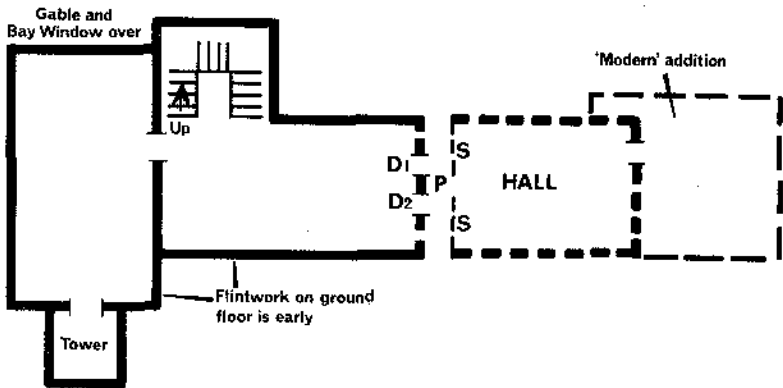
"There are references to West Court manor in the 16th century account rolls, but I suspect that the earliest description of the mansion house is given in the 1616 survey of the archiepiscopal estates. In this it is described as "well repaired and therein are theis romes videlicet: a hall, a great parlor, a little parlor, a kitchen, a buttry, a lardrye, a washhouse, a milkhose, two sellers, nyne chambers over these romes, and a fair gallery with two turrets leaded over" (T.C.2 f.13).

Another detailed survey of the property dates from 1648 and describes the house as 'built partly with brick and partly with timber and covered with tile containing below stayres one parlor, one hall, one kitchen, one washhouse, two sellers, nine.....upper romes and one gallery (Comm xiiia/22.ff341-2).

Mr. E.W. Parkin, an authority on old houses in his area, has visited West Court on several occasions and has kindly given us much of our information on it. He drew, the following sketch and wrote this description for us:

Before 1380 - - - - -

1587 —————



- HALL** Hall with open hearth and Crown posts over.
- P.** The cross passage which always had outer doors front and rear.
- D.1, D.2.** The twin doots to the Buttry and Pantry D1 may still exist.
- S.** The Hall would have short screens here.

"The discoveries we made were most exciting, you will see from my sketch that the old open hall of the monks still survives almost complete, but other rooms from this period have gone.

There is no doubt in my mind that the tower belongs to the 1587 house. Bricks were rarely used for building before 1500, also the windows in the tower are certainly Elizabethan. They had originally mullions made of red brick and then cemented over to look like stone, and this can be seen quite clearly.

A house at Ashford called Bybrook has exactly the same thing and that has a datestone "J. Best 1577".

The stone doorway gives a clue to the date of the monks hall, for pointed arches went out of fashion about 1380, and then became flatter. Also a tall thin Crown post in the roof is usually an early one - in the 15th century Crown posts were shorter and more solid, and they disappeared completely about 1520, when the side purlin type of roof came in, which you have in the rest of the house."

Mr. Robert Redman Brown of Deal has also visited West Court on several occasions. He has told me that his grandmother, Sarah Atkins, was born hereon the 25th of April 1841. Her mother was Ann Buck the lady in the photograph, ~~and~~ her husband was William Licence the gentleman in the photograph, whom ^{she} ~~was~~ married in 1869. Mr. Brown has sent me this old map of Kent and you will see West Court on it as Court.

A Major C. Matson, M.C. of Winchester also tells us that his ancestors were established at Upton Court, Sibertswoid and a collateral line has been located at West Court during the period c. 1680-1780.