

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

I suppose that many of the readers of the articles which I am penning for the Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Newsletter will be wondering how a Yorkshireman, with no connections whatsoever with the County of Kent managed to acquire the “Squireship” of South Ash.

It all began nearly twenty years ago! It was during 1987 that Lord Savile announced that he was to sell a large number of Manorial Lordships within the ancient Parish of Halifax and as a long standing member of the Halifax Antiquarian Society, which I joined as long ago as 1946 and a former Librarian of the Society, I wrote to Manorial Auctioneers requesting a copy of the catalogue and ever since then they have kept me advised as to Lordships that they have been instructed to offer.

It was during 1994 a year or so after the late Sir Denis Thatcher Bt had opened the London Golf Club that they contacted me and obtaining a copy of the appropriate catalogue my eye espied upon: “ Lot 14 – Lordship of South Ash. Held of H.M. The Queen as part of Her Duchy of Lancaster”

Having regard to the fact that the whole of the muniments of South Ash Manor were to be included, as well as my living within the administrative area of the City of Lancaster, I made an offer slightly in excess of the upper estimate and on the afternoon of Thursday 27th October 1994 I was telephoned to say that I had obtained the seignoral rights to South Ash Manor and which were duly conveyed to myself by conveyance bearing the date 12th January 1995. No, the manor is not held of H.M. The Queen as Edward Hasted, the historian of Kent, mentioned in his history parchments dating back to 1561, many bearing the Great Seals of King Charles I, Charles II and King Georges I, II and IV, The Court Rolls and the Court Book of South Ash Manor covering the years 1738 until 1924.

It was in 1924 that Major Charles Hillary Wild placed the South Ash Manor estate onto the market with the proviso that unless it was sold as one complete lot he would retain the Lordship. This he did and is the reason why the Lordship is detached from South Ash Manor and the former South Ash estate. When the Lordship was offered nobody seems to have done their homework for it soon became apparent that I had become “the Squire” of the London Golf Club as well as the whole of the South Ash Manor estate and during the time an exhibition of the Deeds was held at the London Golf Club – with their kind permission – I was offered more than double the amount which I had paid and which, needless to say, I refused.

Yes, through my involvement with South Ash, the London Golf Club and Ash Parish Church my family and I are getting to know the loveliest part of Kent, making new friends and most of all giving me a most unusual hobby to pursue in my old age.

At least I rest content that shortly after my involvement with South Ash I was contacted by a number of Parishioners regarding the Swan Farm Gypsy Site which was causing much concern. Thankfully with gentle persuasion by all concerned a satisfactory settlement was found and my suggestion that the name be "Barnfield" was accepted by the Kent County Council, this being one of the field names on the Swan Farm Estate.

Needless to say any problems which might arise I should be only too happy to learn about and for the next few instalments I will be dealing with the successive owners of Swan Farm, Crooked Billett and Attwood Place, the three properties and estates which can definitely be identified by name, from the Court Rolls.

Best wishes Leslie Morgan.