

# The Lordship of Aldons, County Kent



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The history associated with this Manor was compiled by Manorial Auctioneers LTD.

**Documents associated with this Manor can be located at the Kent Archives Office.**

The Lordship of Aldons is situated in the Parish of Wye and was anciently part of the Royal Manor of the same name. References to the Lordship of Wye can be found dating back to 762, when it was in the possession of the Abbey of St. Augustine. William the Conqueror gave the Lordship to Battle Abbey after his success at Hastings.

Though the Lordship of Wye remained the property of the Abbey until the reign of Henry VIII, Aldons became separated sometime in the 13th century. By 1370, it was possessed as a separate Manor by Thomas de Aldon, from whose family the Manor is named.

By 1387 it had passed to Sir Robert Belknap, or Bealknap. Sir Robert was descended from the Belknap who came to England with the Conqueror, and is found in the Battle Abbey list of Norman nobles present at the Battle of Hastings. Nothing is known of the family until Sir Robert, who is first mentioned in 1362. In 1365 he was appointed as a commissioner for surveying the coast of Thanet. Seven

years later he was entrusted with the defence of the Kent coast against invaders. In 1374 he was sent as an envoy to the Papal Court and took part in discussions on the respective rights the Church and Crown in England. During the insurrection led by Wat Tyler, in 1381, Belknap, having made Chief Justice, was sent to Essex to ensure the observance of the law but was lucky to escape without injury after rebels compelled him to make an oath not to enforce his orders. In 1386 a council of nobles, led by the Duke of Gloucester, impeached the King's Chancellor, Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk on charges of corruption and installed a council of 11 nobles to oversee the King's activities.

King Richard II summoned a council of Judges, Belknap, among them, who, on his thinly veiled orders, declared the Nobles actions to be treasonable. In 1388, Richard was forced to back down and the judges were removed from their position, exiled and their estates confiscated. Belknap was banished to Drogheda but was later reinstated by Henry IV, though he did not petition to have his lands returned.

Aldons then came into the possession of the Pyrie, or Perry family, from which is received its other name of Perry Court. It remained with this family for a short while before being bought by Cardinal Kempe, later the Archbishop of both Canterbury and York.

Kempe was born in the Parish of Wye, and showed a fondness for the area all his life.

Kempe was one of the most prominent ecclesiastical statesmen of his age. He came from a humble background and trained as an ecclesiastical lawyer to become a diplomat under Henry V. On the accession of the infant Henry VI in 1422, Kempe was appointed Archbishop of York and Chancellor of England. He was created a Cardinal, in 1439, one of the few Englishmen ever to receive this lofty recognition. In 1450, Kempe once more became Chancellor and was a leader of the Lancastrian party of Henry VI against his Yorkist rivals. He died shortly before the civil War of the Roses began in 1455. During his lifetime Kempe established a college at the Parish Church of Wye, and, before his death, gifted the Lordship of Aldons to this college, where it remained until the Dissolution, under Henry VIII.

Henry VIII gave the Lordship to Walter Bucler, secretary to Queen Catherine. Bucler, in turn alienated the Manor to Sir Maurice Dennis. From them it passed to William Damsell. By the marriage of his female heir, Aldons passed to the Burston family, a descendent of whom sold it to John Moyle during the reign of James I. Moyle's son, Captain John Moyle, passed the Manor to Thomas Finch, 2nd Earl of Winchilsea.

The Earls of Winchilsea continued to hold Aldons until 1769. The family continued its prominence in politics throughout the period. Daniel, the 6th Earl of Winchilsea was a member of the council of nine ministers, left by William

III, in 1790 to advise Queen Mary while the King was in Ireland.

Though influential, he was not a popular man, loathed by his enemies, and not much loved by those who supported him. In 1692, after a military failure in Ireland, the 6th Earl was blamed by an angry public and demoted. Under Queen Anne (1702-1714) he was Secretary of State, but as a staunch Tory was increasingly side-lined by Whiggish influence. As a man he was tall and thin, with a very dark complexion. He was solemn in manner and was so lugubrious in his speech that he was given the nicknames of Don Diego and Don Dismal.

On the death of the 8th Earl of Winchilsea, the Lordship of Aldons was passed to his kinsman George Finch Hatton. The Lordship came into the possession of the Waley-Cohen (BT) at the beginning of the 20th century.

The Lordship was conveyed by Lady Waley-Cohen in June of 2001 to the current owner.

