



Homewood



The Rear of Homewood

The present three-story Homewood House, situated about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile outside Tenterden on the A28 road to Ashford, was built by James Haffenden in 1766, who had been Mayor of Tenterden in 1753. The earliest mention of Homewood occurs in the Black Book of the Abbey of St Augustine, Canterbury (the register of the property of the Abbey) published by the British Academy in 1915. This register was written up from 1290 onwards and states the following: "On June 24th 1350 is a list of woods in Tenterden belonging to the Abbey, including Holmewood (Homewood), Daybourne (Dawbourne) and La Eythe (Boresisle Heath), all pertaining to the Manor of Northbourne (a manor in the possession of St Augustine's Abbey) to which they had to provide so many faggots of wood annually."

Hasted records: "The Haffendens had lived at Haffenden Quarter between Biddenden and High Halden since the fifteenth century and later at Bugglesden in the north west of Tenterden. In 1662, Richard Haffenden, a clothier, who had been Mayor of Tenterden in 1654, was removed from the office of Jurat for refusing to renounce the Solemn League and Covenant as required by the Corporation Act of 1661. His grandson, James, bought the Homewood estate which had at one time been in the possession of St Augustine's Abbey and built the main part of the house." James had been Mayor of Tenterden in 1753 and like his near contemporaries the Curteises of Heronden and the Blackmores at Westwell felt it time to move into the ranks of the landed gentry. (At the time of Hasted's writings in 1798, James's son Richard, Mayor of Tenterden in 1776, resided at Homewood).

The House appears on an estate plan of 1775 with an area for the estate of 29 acres. By 1843, according to the Tithe Schedules, the Devises of James Haffenden owned the Homewood House and Estate but it was occupied along with the Henley Farm Estate by Thomas Buss Shoobridge, farmer and grazier, and consisted of 36 acres. In 1848 Alfred Haffenden, the last Haffenden in the direct line to live at Homewood House, had to mortgage the property and moved out, leasing the house for a time to the Misses Johnson, who ran a Dame School there before moving it to Clifton House on the Ashford Road. In 1879 John Wilson, a retired clergyman, married a Miss Haffenden, taking the name Wilson-Haffenden, and moved into Homewood. They lived there until 1882. In 1882 the house was bought, together with Mill Farm, by a Mr Albert Dixon of Teddington, Middlesex. Thomson's Directories show that Joseph Skelding and his wife were living there from 1890 to 1906, possibly as tenants.

In 1910 the house was bought by Admiral Sir Charles Drury of Admiralty House, Chatham and he settled there in 1911 on his retirement. Charles Carter Drury was born in New Brunswick, Canada, on 27 August 1846. He entered the Royal Navy in 1859 and became an Admiral in 1908. He held many important commands in various parts of the world, various foreign orders and in England he was awarded KCSI (1903), KCB (1905), GCVO (1907) and GCB (1911). He became a member of the Tenterden Borough Council on 1 November 1913 and a week later was chosen mayor. He died from an apoplectic seizure on 18 May 1914 and was buried in Tenterden Cemetery. In an effort to provide peace and quiet during his illness, a long section of the Ashford Road outside Homewood House was heavily sanded to deaden the noise of the horses' hooves as they passed the house. His funeral attracted a great deal of

attention and people lined both sides of the High Street. Various photographs and cards exist of the funeral procession showing the bier being pulled by a contingent of Sea Cadets as befitted a man who had spent over 52 years in the Royal Navy, which he had joined when only 12 years of age. During his time, new additions to the original house were built on the first floor. These were later known as the Geography Room and the Girls' Cloakroom. Lady Drury continued to live at Homewood and the grounds were used for fetes, pageants, etc and the Women's Institute met there regularly. The War Hospital Supply Depot set up in Tenterden in October 1915 was situated at Homewood before moving in May 1916 to the Tenterden Conservative Club (now Tenterden Club) in Church Road.

In 1911 the London County Council introduced Central Schools, providing secondary education with a slight commercial or industrial bias and these became general throughout the country. The nearest one to Tenterden was in Ashford. Between the two World Wars there were always plans to build a Central School in Tenterden to cater for children from the surrounding villages. In 1937, nine acres of land was purchased on the Appledore Road for such a school but war intervened and the proposal was not taken up afterwards. (These two fields, on the left hand side of the road just before William Judge Close, have been used as playing fields in later years).

During the Second World War, Homewood was taken over by the military. However, in June 1947 Lady Drury sold Homewood to Kent County Council Education Committee. She was fond of children and her wish was that the house should be used as a school rather than a roadside hotel or nursing home as had been proposed. Alderman Mrs E A Adams, the first lady mayor of Tenterden (1937-1939) and the prime mover of a Central School before the War, together with other local residents supported her and she sold the house with its 50 acres for £10,000. With numerous additions, extensions and adaptations (the wartime wooden huts erected by the Army were used as classrooms) Homewood School opened partially in 1948 and fully in April 1949 with pupils of secondary age transferring from the schools around. Mrs Adams became the first Chairman of Governors. To mark Tenterden's Quincentenary of being a Borough, Homewood launched the town's week of celebrations in the summer of 1949 and presented a splendid pageant as 400 pupils enacted in the school grounds 800 years of Tenterden's history. Mr H L Warren (Headmaster 1949-1955) and Mr Alan Holden, the School's History Master, devised the Pageant. Lady Drury died at Hawkhurst in 1953, a few months after presenting the prizes at the School Speech Day, and is buried in Tenterden Cemetery with her husband. She kept in touch with the school and gave her own library of books to the school having taken a keen interest in the Rural Science work, as she was fond of flowers and animals.

Mr Leslie Warren left in 1955 and was succeeded by Mr John Matthews as Headmaster. In 1966 a Georgian Ball, in the presence of the Mayor, was held at the school to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the building. All the guests made an effort to come in Georgian apparel. During Mr Matthews' time a swimming pool was built with money raised by pupils and parents. On a dreadfully wet day in May 1968 Mr David Frost (now Sir David), famous as a television personality on both sides of the Atlantic, opened the pool. His father, the Rev Paradine Frost, was Methodist minister in Tenterden, living in the Manse at 24 Oaks Road and David was born at Kench Hill Nursing Home at Leigh Green. On his retirement, Mr Matthews was presented with a copy of the Haffenden coat of arms which carries the Latin motto 'Ostis Rationi Hostis Dei'. This, translated, means 'An Enemy of Reason is an Enemy of God' (a rather good motto for a house that was to become a school)!

In 1976 Mr Brian Duncan took over as Headmaster to be replaced by Mrs Jackie E Kearns in 1990. Initially a Secondary Modern School, Homewood became a Wide Ability School (ages 11-18) in 1978. Wide Ability was Kent County Council's name for a Comprehensive School. In 1992 Homewood opted out of Local Education Authority funding and became a Grant Maintained School, wholly funded by Government. In early 1995 Mr Derek Adam became Headmaster, Mrs Kearns having departed at the end of December 1994 to head up the International School in Düsseldorf, Germany. On the retirement of Mr Adam in 2007, his deputy of several years, Mr William Cottrell took over as Principal. In September 2010, Mrs Sally Lees became Principal, after six years as head of Dover Grammar School for Boys. To-day, the School is a Foundation School for Performing Arts, controls its own budget, policies and day-to-day running. It is also a Community Education Centre and has a theatre named after Sir Donald Sinden, the famous actor, who lives locally. The old house remains and is used for administration. Over the years many buildings have been added as the school roll reached 2000, making it the biggest school in Kent.

References

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Colin Young