

Paramour Grange

Paramour Grange may appear to be like any other country house, but behind the front door is an incredible array of original historic detailing that is rarely seen. Most notably, Paramour Grange features one of the most unique and rare examples of a Tudor painted room, as well as other historic features including an original Tudor staircase and inglenook fireplaces. Despite these remarkable historical treasures Paramour Grange has in fact remained a quiet farmers' house for much of its history.

1603 – James I and the painted room at Paramour Grange

The Tudor paintings at Paramour Grange are very significant as one of few remaining examples still to be found in situ in a residential home. They were painted in heraldic colours with a bold octagonal design, featuring images of roses, asterisks and ovals. Running along the top is a frieze that depicts inscribed painted verses from the 5th chapter of St Matthews Gospel, commonly known as the Beatitudes. Further decoration includes panels with the crown, the portcullis and the fleur-de-lys and most importantly the date 1603. Above the fireplace are the letters I.R. along with a letter H but with the cross-bar forming a horse's bit and the letters P.H. The I.R. is understood to stand for James I and the other letters were P.H. for Princeps Henricus (Prince Henry, James I eldest son who died in 1612).

Chapel or Royal visitor?

Unfortunately, very little documentary evidence survives to give us a clue to the motivation or reason for the painted room. Various local historians have speculated that it could perhaps have been because the house was used as a chapel-at-ease or it was painted for the newly crowned James I, who visited Sandwich shortly after his coronation in 1603. Members of the King's entourage are believed to have occupied the room at this time. Despite the decorative brilliance of the paintings they are believed to have been covered over only 50 years later during the Civil War – perhaps understandable if there was fear of recriminations for royal allegiances. The paintings remained hidden for the next 250 years and were only uncovered in 1915.

Origins of Paramour Grange

Large sections of Paramour Grange were constructed during the late 16th century, when Queen Elizabeth I was on the throne, however, there are some doubts and discrepancies as to the date of the original construction of Paramour Grange. It is difficult to be certain, but it is likely that sections of the house actually date back to a much earlier date, to around the early 1400s.

Thomas Paramour – Mayor of Canterbury

Paramour Grange and Paramour Street were named after a prominent Kentish family, the Paramour's. The earliest recorded member of the Paramour family at Ash was a John Paramour who was buried in the local churchyard in 1497. However, the most illustrious member of the family, who it is also believed may have been responsible for the painted room at Paramour Grange, was Thomas Paramour, Mayor of Canterbury from around 1607 to 1619. Thomas Paramour was also the first Mayor to commission the making of a sword for the 'Sword Bearer' of Canterbury, granted by James I in 1609.

Paramour family depart

Generations of the Paramour family remained at Paramour Grange throughout the early 17th century and are believed to have stayed until around the 1650s. Between the mid and late 17th century it is difficult to know what happened to the ownership and occupation of Paramour Grange with very few surviving documents or details. However, a good collection of land tax records for Ash show that by the 1690s the house had come into the ownership of a Mr. Foster and was occupied by a farmer, John Foatt.

Farmers and the Fullagars

Records show that Mr. Foster remained the owner until 1733, though all the while the home of farmer, John Foatt. In around 1735 Paramour Grange came into the ownership of a Mr. Fullagar. The Fullagar family had also lived in Kent for generations, being based nearby in Headcorn since the early 17th century. The Fullagars remained the owners of Paramour Grange until the late 1700s with a number of different tenant farmers.



Stephen Wood - Farmer

From around 1747 the house became the home of Stephen Wood and his family, who remained as occupants of Paramour Grange throughout the 18th century. Stephen Wood also owned and farmed a plot of land adjacent to Paramour Grange extending the size of his cultivated land for farming.

Wood family – farming gentry

The house passed to Stephen's son, George in around 1780, who appears to have excelled there, as by 1804, he had in fact purchased the large plot and house of Paramour Grange. The land tax record in 1805 shows Mr. George Wood as the owner and occupier of a section of Paramour Street valued at £65.15. By 1815 George Wood still owned the land but the running of the farm had passed to his son, George junior. Paramour Grange house and neighbouring farm remained in the hands of the Wood family throughout the early 1800s and by 1830 George Wood junior had taken over the whole farm and house. By the time of the tithe survey in 1840 Paramour Grange had passed into the hands of a Lawrence Wood, believed to be George's son. The survey shows that Lawrence Wood's property comprised of a house and garden, an orchard and home field and totalled over 18 acres.

The Bushells

By the time of the 1851 census, however, the Wood family had left Paramour Grange and it had become the home of John Bushell, who farmed over 103 acres. He lived in the house with his two sisters and three servants. However, the Bushell family did not stay long and by the time of the next census in 1861 Paramour Grange had become the home of Daniel Ralph.

Daniel Ralph – farmer and family man

Daniel was recorded as a farmer of 230 acres and employed five men and two boys. Daniel was 34 years old and lived in the house with his wife Hannah and their two young sons, William, aged six and Daniel aged one. Also in the house was Daniel's father, Thomas, a retired farmer, 73 years old, along with three agricultural servants and one house servant. Daniel remained at Paramour Grange for many years and with his wife Hannah raised a large family of nine children. By the late 1890s Daniel was in his 70s and was last recorded at Paramour Grange at the turn of the 20th century, after which time Daniel retired from farming.

Mrs Wakeham and the Fullers at Paramour Grange

Within a few years Paramour Grange became the home of Mrs Susan Wakeham. The 1911 census shows Mrs Wakeham a widow and 'farmer and market gardener' raising two daughters, Clare and Susie. It was around this time, in 1915, that the unique wall paintings at Paramour Grange were uncovered after being hidden for over 250 years. It is uncertain if this was during Mrs Wakeham time in the house, or what is more likely, when the new occupants, Henry and Ada Fuller moved in during the early years of World War I. Apart from a small mention in the Kent Archaeological Society journal very little is known about the discovery. Despite this grand unveiling in their home, the Fuller's continued the farming tradition at Paramour Grange for the next 30 years. However, they also supplemented their income by renting out the house during the tough inter-war years. Advertisements in *The Times* from 1929-1933 show the house publicised as a "Spacious Tudor house, historical interest...all conveniences: home comforts: restful: best food: [and with] bountiful table..."

Exceptional Tudor family home

Today, Paramour Grange has been beautifully conserved, highlighting its amazing historic character with the ornate painted walls and outstanding Tudor staircase, along with inglenook fireplaces, exposed wooden beams and mullion windows. It has also been suggested that a full architectural analysis may in fact find many more historic features that have gone undiscovered for centuries.