

MANORIAL HERITAGE REGISTRY HISTORICAL RECORD EXTRACT

MHR-M-0003316 • MANOR
AGNEY MANOR

Evidence status: Unverified
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Location: Old Romney, Kent
Associated places: Old Romney, Kent

LORDSHIP / TITLE ASSOCIATIONS

ABOUT THE MANOR

Agney Manor was the principal manor of Old Romney and extended into the adjoining parish of Midley. Historical spellings and aliases include Aghne Court, Agne Court, Agene, Hagene, Agnes Court and Agney Court; the manor was also associated with its manor house, Agney Court or Court Lodge, situated about a mile south-west of Old Romney church. The estate comprised demesne land around the court lodge and extended marshland holdings. Its early medieval identification is not entirely certain: a charter of King Offa dated 785 grants land between the stream called Heorat Burnan and Hagana's tree to Ealdbeorht and Seledhryth, and Christ Church later associated that estate with Agney, but modern scholarship cautions that the charter does not identify the place securely. The manor is not separately named in Domesday, although unnamed archiepiscopal properties in the Old Romney area are recorded. By the early thirteenth century Agney was an occupied and managed Christ Church estate; an account for 1225 records substantial livestock taken to Agney. The court lodge was rebuilt or repaired after the great storms and inundations of 1287-1288. The manor remained an ecclesiastical estate, first of Christ Church Priory, Canterbury, and after the Dissolution of the Monasteries of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral. The Dean and Chapter granted leases for lives to successive private lessees, including members of the Thornhurst, Jennings and Spencer-associated families. The freehold inheritance and the leasehold interests must therefore be distinguished: the Dean and Chapter remained the recorded institutional owners, while the named individuals generally held leasehold or life-interest rights rather than an outright freehold

estate.

OWNERSHIP / HOLDER ACCOUNT

The earliest ownership is traditionally traced to a late eighth-century royal grant later attributed by Christ Church to its estate at Agney, but the identification is expressly uncertain in modern scholarship. Hasted records that Agney Court was given by King Offa to the Priory of Christ Church, Canterbury, and that Christ Church held it until the Dissolution in the thirty-first year of Henry VIII, 1539. The estate was then surrendered to the Crown and, under Henry VIII's endowment or dotation arrangements in the thirty-third year of Henry VIII, 1541, settled on the newly founded Dean and Chapter of Canterbury. The Dean and Chapter retained the inheritance thereafter. From the sixteenth century onward, the manor was commonly occupied under leases for lives. The most securely documented private interests include the Thornhurst leaseholding line, Frances Thornhurst and her descendants, a lease to Ralph Jenyns in 1663, a counterpart lease to Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, in 1728, and a lease or counterpart to the Earl Spencer in 1783. These instruments demonstrate successive leasehold interests but do not establish every intervening transfer or prove that each named lessee held the entirety of the manor at the same time. The public evidence therefore supports a continuous institutional freehold in the Dean and Chapter, with a partially recoverable sequence of leasehold occupants and beneficiaries.

CONVEYANCE / DESCENT

- late eighth century; traditionally 791 in Hasted, but the underlying charter is dated 785
- 1539 | Priory of Christ Church, Canterbury, represented by the prior and convent | Traditional attribution of the Agney estate to a grant by King Offa; the identification of the charter estate with Agney remains uncertain in modern scholarship. | | Edward Hasted, The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent, vol. 8, 1799, Old Romney, p. 441; Nicholas Brooks, 'Romney Marsh in the early Middle Ages', Archaeologia Cantiana, discussion of the 785 charter and Agney.
- 1539 - 1541 | The Crown | Christ Church Priory surrendered Agney with its other possessions at the Dissolution; the manor passed into the king's hands pending settlement on the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury. | | Edward Hasted, The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent, vol. 8, 1799, Old Romney, p. 441.
- 1541 - latest securely documented historical sources; inheritance stated by Hasted to continue thereafter | Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral | By Henry VIII's dotation or endowment charter in the thirty-third year of Henry VIII, Agney was settled on the newly

founded Dean and Chapter of Canterbury. | | Edward Hasted, The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent, vol. 8, 1799, Old Romney, p. 441; Hasted's index identifies Aghe-court Manor in Old Romney among the possessions of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury.

- middle of the sixteenth century - before succession by his son William Thornhurst; exact date unknown | Sir Stephen Thornhurst | Lease for lives or related leasehold grant from the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury; exact instrument and date not located in the sources reviewed. | | Edward Hasted, The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent, vol. 8, 1799, Old Romney, p. 441, for the Dean and Chapter's inheritance; modern summary of the Agney leaseholding sequence corroborated by later scholarship on the Thornhurst family.
- after Sir Stephen Thornhurst; sixteenth or early seventeenth century - before succession by Sir Giffard Thornhurst; exact date unknown | Sir William Thornhurst | Succession to the Agney leasehold interest within the Thornhurst family; the exact legal instrument and date are not established. | | Modern historical summary of the Manor of Agney, citing the Agney leaseholding tradition and Hasted's account of the Dean and Chapter inheritance.
- after Sir William Thornhurst; before 1622 - 1627 | Sir Giffard Thornhurst | Succession to the Thornhurst leasehold interest in Agney; the exact date of the lease transfer is unknown. | | Modern account of the Manor of Agney, Kent; Hasted's index records Giffard Thornhurst of Agnes Court; Cambridge University Press, The Jacobite Duchess, chapter on Frances Thornhurst and Agney.
- 1627 - until Frances Thornhurst came of age; exact end date unknown | Susan Temple, later Susan Lister | Temporary possession or management of the Agney leasehold after the death of Sir Giffard Thornhurst, pending the minority of their daughter Frances. | | Modern historical summary of the Manor of Agney, Kent; Cambridge University Press, The Jacobite Duchess, chapter on Frances Thornhurst's inheritance of a lease of lives in Agney.
- after reaching majority; after 1627 and before 1663 - before or by the creation of later Jennings and Spencer-associated leases; exact date unknown | Frances Thornhurst, later Frances Jennings | A new lease was prepared for Frances Thornhurst after she came of age, following her father's death and her mother's interim possession. | | Modern historical summary of the Manor of Agney, Kent; Cambridge University Press, The Jacobite Duchess, chapter identifying Frances Thornhurst as inheriting a lease of lives on Agney.
- 1663 - after the 1663 lease term; exact end date unknown | Ralph Jenyns | Lease and counterpart from the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral, recorded in Canterbury Cathedral Archives as U63/64651. | | Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U63/64651, Lease and counterpart to Ralph Jenyns, 1663, as cited in the published study of the Thornhurst and Temple families.
- 1728 - after the 1728 lease term; died 1744 | Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough | Counterpart lease from the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral, recorded in Canterbury Cathedral Archives as U63/64614. | | Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U63/64614, Counterpart lease to the Duchess of Marlborough, 1728, as cited in the published study of the Thornhurst and Temple families.
- 1783 - after the 1783 lease term; exact end date unknown | John Spencer, 1st Earl Spencer | Lease and counterpart to the Earl Spencer, recorded in Canterbury Cathedral Archives as U63/69865. | | Canterbury Cathedral Archives, U63/69865, Lease and counterpart to Earl Spencer, 1783, as cited in the published study of the Thornhurst and Temple families.

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