

Oxford Grange

Oxford Grange, within Peper Harrow Park, but in the parish of Witley, was a part of the manor of Witley until Richer de Aquila granted it to the abbey of Waverley early in the 12th century. (fn. 105) His gift is mentioned in the bull of Pope Eugenius III, dated 1147, confirming to the abbey all its property, (fn. 106) and the grange of Oxford with land at Rihella was included in the lands confirmed to the abbey by Richard I. (fn. 107) Richer's grandson, Gilbert de Aquila, in confirming his grandfather's gift, mentioned the right of the abbot to inclose so much of Witley Park as belonged to Oxford. (fn. 108) In the 'Taxatio' of 1291 Oxford was rated at £1, (fn. 109) and the abbot seems to have objected to paying the tenth for it, (fn. 110) but his claim to exemption was disallowed. (fn. 111) The grange remained among the possessions of the abbey till the Dissolution, at which time it was valued at £4 13s. 4d. (fn. 112).

It was included in the grant of the site of Waverley to Sir William Fitz William, (fn. 113) with which it descended to Anthony, first Viscount Montague, (fn. 114) who died seised of a messuage called Oxford, 9 October 1592. (fn. 115)

His son by his second wife, Sir Henry Browne, sold to Sir George More of Loseley in 1609. (fn. 116) Sir George, his son Sir Robert, and their respective wives, levied a fine to John Hone in 1613, (fn. 117) and Bartholomew Hone his son, of Oxford, and others conveyed to John Chesterton of St. Giles in the Fields in 1619. (fn. 118) After his death in February 1624–5, it was held by his wife Anne for life, who survived her two sons, Walter, who died in 1638, (fn. 119) and John. (fn. 120)

The reversion became divided among the three sisters of John and their representatives, namely, Mary wife of Henry Fox, Jane wife of John Smith of Riehull, and Martha wife of Antony Covert. On 8 February 1667 Antony Covert and his son conveyed their third to John Platt of Westbrook and his heirs, (fn. 121) and in 1676 his son Sir John Platt, and John Smith son of John and Jane, conveyed two-thirds to Denzil, Lord Holles, (fn. 122) from whom it passed as Peper Harow (q.v.). This portion included the grange itself.

Chesterton Fox, son of Henry Fox and Mary, was possessed of the other third in 1680, (fn. 123) and in 1705 it was sold by Mary Horish and Anne Fox, daughters of Chesterton Fox, to Edmund Stillwell of Thursley. (fn. 124) His descendants sold to Viscount Midleton c. 1822.

The remains of the Grange are now included in Peper Harrow Park. They consist of only part of a cottage, the rest having been pulled down in 1775 when the present mansion-house at Peper Harrow was approaching completion. The fifth Viscount Midleton employed Mr. Pugin to build an imitation 13th-century farm here. The land of Oxford is counted now in Witley parish. It was apparently, when in the hands of Waverley, extra-parochial, and is tithe-free. In 1802 and 1803 the inhabitants successfully resisted an inclusion for rateable purposes in Witley. (fn. 125)

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