



A Brief History of Ditton Manor

There has been an estate at Ditton Park since before 1066. After the victory at Hastings, William Fitz-Ansculf was given the use of the estate by William the Conqueror. Ditton Manor was first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 and valued at approximately 30 shillings. Ansculf also owned an area of land north west of Ditton Park his descendents had called themselves de Stoke. When the de Stokes married into the de Poges family that estate took the name, Stoke Poges. In 1325 Gille de Poges married John de Molyns, and they inherited Ditton Park in 1331. In the same year de Molyns, who was the Supervisor of the Queens Castle's and Marshall of the King's Falcons as well as being the Kings Treasurer, was granted a licence by Edward III to fortify 'his mansun at Ditton'.

The estate passed down through the family to John's great-great granddaughter, Alianore, who inherited the estate at the age of 3 years. Alianore was betrothed to Sir Robert Hungerford who was granted control in 1441. Sir Robert supported the Lancastrians during the War of the Roses and was beheaded in 1464 in the Tower of London. In 1472 the Manors of Ditton, Datchet and Riding Court became crown land under Edward IV.

From 1472 Ditton was owned by the crown and most probably sublet. There is evidence that Henry VIII spent money on Ditton Park and his eldest child, Mary (later Mary I), spent much time at the Manor. In 1532 keepership of the park was granted to Anne Boleyn as part of her endowment to Henry VIII though there is no evidence of her having lived at the Manor.

In 1615 the Keepership of Ditton Park estate and the Manor of Datchet was granted to Sir Ralph Winwood who was Secretary of State to King James I. During this time the house was renovated and a more extensive moat was built. Sir Ralph died in 1617 and the estate passed to his son Richard. Richard Winwood was a Parliamentarian during the English Civil War. He was a moderate in this cause but had associations with Cromwell. Despite this difficult period, during the reign of Charles II, in 1680 Richard was re-elected to Parliament having successfully ingratiated himself with the new monarch.

After Richard Winwood's death in 1688 the estate passed to Ralph Montagu. Ralph's mother was Sir Ralph Winwood's daughter who had married Edward Montagu, 2nd Lord Montagu of Boughton. Ralph had a colourful life and married well – twice! His son, John, 2nd Duke of Montagu inherited the estate with his wife, daughter of the great Duke of Marlborough, in 1709. John held various high profile roles under the command of King George I and was well-known as a generous and eccentric man. He left no male heir so his estates were divided between his two daughters, Mary and Isabella. Lady Mary Montagu inherited Ditton in 1749. In 1730 she had married George Brudenell, the 4th Earl of Cardigan. George was created 3rd Duke of Montagu in 1766 to prevent the title lapsing. He was tutor to George III's children and frequently inhabited Ditton Manor to be conveniently near Windsor Castle. The Dukedom of Montagu became extinct upon his death in 1790, as his only male heir had died in 1770. The estate passed to his daughter, Elizabeth, who was married to Henry Scott, the 3rd Duke of Buccleuch (the great-great grandson of the famous Duke of Monmouth). In April 1812 there was a fire at Ditton Manor. George III apparently crossed the river from Windsor especially to watch the blaze! Many possessions were saved and no lives were lost but the House was devastated. The House was rebuilt by 1817 for the Dowager (Henry had died only months before the fire), Lady Elizabeth, to the designs of the architect, William Atkinson. Atkinson's design for the new house was heavily influenced by the former building, and he included many features found on the original.



Ralph, 1st Duke of Montagu

Served as British Ambassador to Louis XIV at the Court of Versailles from 1669 to 1678

Some time after this the Dowager gave the use of the house to her second son, Henry James, Lord Montagu of Boughton. Henry did not have children himself so the house reverted to the Buccleuch line, to his nephew, Walter Francis Montagu Douglas Scott, the 5th Duke of Buccleuch. Walter gave Ditton Park to his son as a wedding present in 1867. The estate stayed with the Montagu family until 1917 when it was compulsorily purchased by the Admiralty under the Defence of the Realm Act during the Great War.



The Ditton Park island (Manor House and Moat) cost the Admiralty £20,000 in 1917. Two years later the remainder of the park was bought for a further £24,000. The Admiralty then built their Compass Observatory within the grounds where 470 people were employed at the manor. Their main tasks were to design and provide navigation equipment (other than radio equipment) for the Royal Navy. In February 1935 a draft memo entitled "Detection and Location of Aircraft by Radio Methods" was presented by Robert Watson-Watt. The theory leading directly to Radar had been born!

Computer Associates purchased the Estate in 1997 specifically for CA's Europe, Middle East and Africa Headquarters. That building occupies the west side of Ditton Park, whilst Ditton Manor remains at the centre of a 200 acre estate with a traditional English landscape, and with views across the moated island to parkland, woodland and lakes.

Ditton Manor Timeline

* Denotes a full size copy of an original portrait is on Display within Ditton Manor

