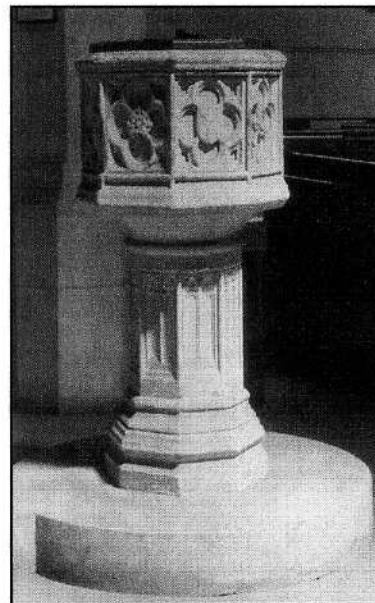


Mortlake Manor and its Manor House

For more than 500 years, from before the Conquest in 1066 until the late 16th century, Mortlake, with the manor house at its centre, was a place of great importance. The manor included what are now Putney, Mortlake, Barnes, Roehampton and Wimbledon. By 1086 Mortlake manor was already well established and is described in the Domesday survey of that year as a prosperous manor of some 8000 acres.

At some time before 1066 the manor passed into the hands of the archbishops of Canterbury and they used the manor house as a country retreat. It was positioned on the river for easy access to London and was a good stopping off point for those travelling between the palaces at Westminster and Greenwich, Richmond and Hampton Court.

Thomas Bouchier, archbishop from 1454 to 1486, was the great-grandson of Edward III and a very wealthy and powerful man. He was also a man of culture and a great builder of fine houses. He enlarged and extensively improved the manor house during his tenure. Bouchier also gave a stone font to Mortlake parish church, where it remains today. Mortlake manor house resembled in style and size a typical grand house such as Knole House, Woking Palace and Fulham Palace, and was built in brick. It would have been an impressive building; no expense would have been spared to ensure the archbishop had every comfort. Archbishops frequently resided in Mortlake, and three of them died in the manor house.



Several English monarchs from Henry III and John to Edward IV made the journey by river to visit the manor house. Henry VII and Elizabeth of York stopped at Mortlake on their wedding day en route to Richmond Palace.

Thomas Cromwell became Lord of the Manor of Mortlake in June 1536. No longer did the manor belong to the archbishops of Canterbury – Archbishop Cranmer was the last to hold Mortlake. Cromwell (not one to scrimp with splendid buildings) improved and extended the manor house. It has been said that Mortlake was the residence closest to Cromwell's heart because of his family ties here, so no doubt he would have created an impressive building. Cromwell often visited Mortlake; his son Gregory was baptised in the manor house chapel and was married there in 1537 to the widowed sister of Jane Seymour.

Cromwell fell from favour with King Henry VIII and was beheaded in 1540. In February 1544 the Manor was granted by the king to Catherine Parr but it fell into a poor state of repair. In 1551 Edward VI allowed Lord Edward Clinton to "have the brike, stone, and tymber, and other things at his choice, of the dekaied and uncovered house at Mortlake, and of the ruined church there". The choice remains of Mortlake manor house therefore may well have been despatched to Lord Clinton's home in Lincolnshire.

The manor of Mortlake remained in royal hands until 1576 when it was granted to Sir Thomas Cecil. Cecil chose to build a grander manor house in Wimbledon. What was left of Mortlake's manor house was still standing in 1663, and there is evidence that its gatehouse was used as an inn, but by the 18th century all that remained were derelict ruins. In 1817 Sir Richard Phillips described how he walked westwards along Mortlake High Street and saw (facing what is now Mortlake Green) "the ancient gateway then bricked up, and the ruined walls" of the Palace. The site was by then occupied by a market gardener called Penley. The brewery, which had occupied the eastern part of the grounds since the early 18th century, spread slowly westward so that by the end of the 19th century, it covered the entire manor house site from Ship Lane to Bulls Alley, and from Mortlake High Street to the river.