

Kearsney Manor

Derek Leach

With the recent closure of Kearsney Manor Nursing Home, its sale and reopening by Channels and Choices as a centre for looked after children with learning difficulties providing a school for those fostered and a residential home for others, it seems an appropriate time to make use of Joe Harman's research some years ago into its history.

The estate was originally known as Kearsney Court and dates from William the Conqueror's time. Soon after 1070 it was listed as part of the Barony of Saye held by Dover Castle. The property eventually came into the hands of Thomas Biggs in 1788, who sold 11,000 acres to Peter Fector in 1792 for £72,000. Peter's son, John, decided to move over the road and built a new mansion, which was completed in 1822 and named Kearsney Abbey even though there had never been an abbey on the site! The original Kearsney Court was not named Kearsney Manor until 1880, although a Manor Court was summoned for Kearsney in 1830.

Mrs Fector Senior was living in the house in 1843, but the family sold the estate for £57,000 in 1844 to Mr. E. C. Jones. He sold Kearsney Abbey in 1870 to Joseph Churchward for £10,500 who owned the mail packet service between Dover and the French ports. According to the 1881 Census he had moved from Kearsney Abbey to Kearsney Manor where he died in 1901.

By 1908 the Manor was a private boarding school called Les Dames Augustines du Précieux Sang. The chapel was built in 1913 and the property converted into an Augustinian convent in 1924. Later, a

nursing home and maternity unit were added. The French nuns retired to France in 1981 and another order took over.

The lake was the mill pond for a corn mill on the site leased by Mr Pilcher from John Fector. Apparently the mill did not work after March 1902 and by 1935 was demolished. The name Kearsney Court survives, but is now the name of the once grand house, now partitioned into separate homes that overlooks its former gardens (including Russell Gardens) laid out by Thomas Mawson, a leading landscape designer of the time. It was built in 1900 for Alfred Leney, the Dover brewer, but was purchased almost immediately by Edward Barlow, managing director of Wiggins Teape at Buckland Paper Mill. In 1927 this property was sold and became a private mental convalescent home. During WW2 it was commandeered by the War Department as was Kearsney Abbey.

It is great that Kearsney Manor is, once again, being put to such good use.



Kearsney Manor and Chapel © Tersons