

EST. 1705

# FETCHAM

PARK

## A SHORT HISTORY OF FETCHAM PARK



### *Eighteenth Century Construction*



*Fetcham Park is a very special Grade II listed house, which was built in around 1705 and was designed by one of the leading architects of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, before it was remodelled in the late 1870s and early 1880s.*

The house was sympathetically restored in the 1980s. Until 1924 the house was used as a family home. From 1924 to 1965 it was used as a school (apart from the Second World War years when it was an outpost of London University).

Arthur Moore commissioned the building of Fetcham Park from William Talman in around 1705, to replace the former Fetcham manor house he had bought from one of the Vincents of Stoke D'Abernon.

The traveller and writer, Celia Fiennes, called it “Mr Moore’s fine house on a hill” following a visit in 1711. Arthur Moore was a self-made man with a mysterious background, who epitomised the colourful characters that appeared in the eighteenth century.

He was an M.P., held a number of lucrative public offices and was a director of the notorious South Sea Bubble Company, until he was accused of corruption and sold out before the crash. Obviously a man of great ability, he was friends with leading politicians and figures of the day and sufficiently well known to be mentioned in popular public satires.

He spent lavishly on the house and bought large tracts of land in Fetcham and other parts of Surrey. A park of about 60 acres was created to surround the house and frame the view down to the River Mole by buying up large parts of the common fields.

The village street then ran between the house and the church to Lower Road. Moore enclosed this and persuaded the Church to give him the old rectory, which was close to the church, in exchange for a new one away from his house (now Ballands Hall). By 1720 he was in financial trouble as a result of his spending and litigation and after he died in 1730 the house and estate had to be sold to repay his debts.

## *The Revell Family*

### *1737 - 1792*

William Talman, who was commissioned to build the house, was Comptroller of His Majesty's Works to King William III from 1689 to 1702, the position generally given to the leading architect of the day. Known as "the first Baroque country-house architect" and more accustomed to working on a grand scale as at Chatsworth House, the home of the Duke of Devonshire, Fetcham Park shows his work in a more accessible and intimate setting.

Talman worked with Louis Laguerre, a leading French artist who painted the murals that still survive and George London, the most famous garden designer of his time, who is believed to have designed the ornate gardens, which contained elaborate water features with water pumped from the River Mole, designed to rival those at Fontainebleau. The interior of the house still displays the work of Talman and Laguerre, but the exterior façade was remodelled in the late 1870s/early 1880s.

Talman's design (shown in the photograph above) was more austere and consisted of a three storey central brick building divided into three bays with stone capped windows and two single storey wings. Talman's magnificent staircase can be still be seen in the house and Laguerre's beautiful murals around the staircase walls and particularly in the Shell Room are also still visible.



Thomas Revell, who bought the house in 1737 was another financier, public official and M.P., who managed to amass (and keep) great wealth, only for his daughter and heiress to elope with a fortune hunter. His widow, Jane, a niece of the Duke of Bridgewater, inherited Fetcham Park and the estate on his death in 1752, but the rest of his vast fortune was left to their only daughter, Jane.

She eloped in 1758 with George Warren, an army captain from Cheshire (who was knighted in 1761 after becoming an M.P.). Whitworth's Manchester Magazine reported his marriage to "Miss Revel, a Lady of fine accomplishments, with a fortune of £300,000: and on Wednesday last they arrived at his seat in Stockport where he was congratulated by the whole town, by Bonfires, Illuminations, Ringing of Bells for a week etc".

Her £300,000 would be worth over £22 million today. Jane died three years after the marriage. Her only daughter, Elizabeth Harriet grew up to be a reputed beauty, was painted by George Romney as "Hebe" and married Viscount Bulkeley.

In 1769 Sir George Warren inherited the Fetcham Park estate for his lifetime, following the death of his mother-in-law. Sir George also had extensive estates in Cheshire and his ambitions were to increase the wealth and standing of himself and his family. Fetcham Park was not his main residence and his priorities seem to have been to extend and reorganise the estate and enclose the park around the house, possibly in preparation for its sale.



Thomas' son, John  
Barnard Hankey



## *The Hankey Dynasty*

### *1792 - 1924*

Thomas Hankey bought the house and estate in 1792. He was the wealthy senior partner of the family bank of the same name, founded in 1685. The bank remained independent until 1865 and has since been absorbed into the Royal Bank of Scotland. Thomas lived only until 1793, seeing the completion of a major renovation begun in 1788, ahead of his purchase.

The exterior brickwork was probably stuccoed over at this time. There were also a two storey servants' wing and stables, coach house and other buildings.

Thomas Hankey's family would own Fetcham Park and live there until 1924. It was their main residence and they became the "squires" of Fetcham, providing most of the employment and patronage in the parish and treating it benevolently like a small fiefdom. A newspaper reporting the marriage of a daughter of the family in 1896, called it a "quaint village" and reported that its inhabitants had lined the streets to cheer the marriage procession.

Thomas' son, John Barnard Hankey inherited the house at the age of nine and died there at the age of 86. He had 11 children. He bought back the manor, so that the house again became the manor house.

During his tenure the estate owned 60% of Fetcham. Some building work on the house was undertaken by Thomas Cubitt in 1837. However, the major rebuilding programme was undertaken by his grandson, also called John Barnard Hankey, who inherited the house in 1875.

He used the society architect Edward l'Anson, who completely changed the exterior to its current appearance. It was remodelled to resemble a French chateau, with mansard roof and window-heads in ornamental terra-cotta and a new Flemish-style grand entrance porch, with the stucco being removed and replaced by new brick and stone work.

A second floor was added to the north wing and the south wing was rebuilt in two storeys to match the rest of the house to include a ballroom with a grand master bedroom suite with balcony above. The house reached its apex as a fashionable venue at this time, becoming a centre of Surrey high society.

John Barnard died in 1914 shortly before the outbreak of World War I, one result of which was to make such estates more financially unviable, following changes in the tax system and the economy. In 1920, George Hankey, the great great grandson of Thomas Hankey, put the estate up for sale. The sale of the house in 1924 ended 132 years of Hankey ownership in Fetcham.

In 1920 most of Hankey's land in Fetcham was sold off either privately or by auction, excluding the house and about 130 acres surrounding it. This was the park in the Triangle of land between The Ridgeway, Lower Road/Cobham Road and Guildford Road and 20 acres to the west of The Ridgeway.

Following the sale, the rest of the estate was sold by Hankey to Percy Portway Harvey, the developer of Great Bookham, who sold 100 acres of it as building plots and constructed The Mount to provide a road through the middle of the land.

## *Badingham College 1927 - 1939 and 1949 - 1965*

The house and 30 acres of land were bought in 1927 by the Rev. J.G. Wilkie to house Badingham College, a school he had set up in the grounds of his rectory in Badingham, Suffolk. The house for the first time obtained exclusive use of the entrance from Lower Road by agreeing a new access for the church from The Ridgeway and a new exit to Lower Road.

In 1950 there were 70 boys paying £84 per term with about 10 staff. By 1957 the number of pupils had increased to 100 boys paying £126 a term, with 17 teaching and other staff. In 1965 the school moved to Norwich, but closed three years later due to falling numbers.

## *University College 1940 - 1946*

The house was leased by the University College, London, Departments of Anatomy and Physiology, after its London buildings were bombed in the Second World War. About half the staff and students lived in. Laboratories were added.

## *1965 - 1979*

In 1965 the Ideal Development Company Ltd. bought the house and park from the College Trustees and reduced the area around the house to 4½ acres. The Badingham estate of 100 properties was built on the other 25½ acres. The house was left empty, unheated and not maintained. As a result of vandalism, deterioration and a fire in 1970, the north wing buildings were demolished. In 1971 the Vincent Development Company Ltd. bought the house and remaining grounds to convert into prestigious offices.

A new two storey north wing was built in a style matching the rest of the house, some restoration was carried out and a new entrance from Badingham Drive with a car park was created. The house was sold in 1975 to CR Roberts for use as offices, but by 1979 it was again derelict.

## *Restoration of the House 1979 - 1986*

The fortunes of the house changed for the better, when in 1979 the house was bought by UTG, a Middle Eastern based company with the desire and resources to restore the house, which was to be the headquarters of its UK subsidiary, Murray Clayton Ltd. It was renamed UTG House. The restoration cost over £4 million, resulting in the appearance of the house as it is today. The mansard type roof was extended over the two wings with dormer windows to make the house's appearance more uniform and provide more accommodation.

Inside extensive renovations and repairs were made. The Laguerre murals were found under the panelling and false ceilings which had probably been installed in 1971. These were restored and new ceiling paintings commissioned for the old ballroom, now called The Salon. Panelling was added to two ground floor rooms and a new timber floor laid in the entrance hall, after relocating the massive fireplace surround. Other work was undertaken to make the basement useful as accommodation.

## *1986 - 1999*

In 1986 the house was sold to the Property Security Investment Trust plc and renamed Fetcham Park House. However, the house again entered an uncertain period when the trust was taken over by MEPC and sold the house to Prestbury Group plc, which never actually occupied it.



## *Laguerre's murals at Fetcham Park*

Louis Laguerre (1663 – 1721) was born at the court of Louis XIV at Versailles in Paris, where his Catalan father worked as Master of the Menagerie. Educated by Jesuits, following the discovery of his talent for drawing, he studied under Charles Le Brun at the French Academy. In 1683 he came to England as an assistant to the painter Antonio Verrio (1639- 1707) working on paintings for Windsor Castle, St Bartholomew's Hospital and Blenheim Palace.

By 1687 he was working on his own commissions in the houses of the nobility, becoming their most popular decorative painter. He was employed by William III at Hampton Court (where he was given apartments), to repair Mantegna's cartoons and then to paint The Twelve Labours of Hercules, which unfortunately no longer exists. He may have met Talman when he worked at Windsor Castle, as he later worked with him on many of his projects, the most important being Chatsworth House between 1689 and 1694.

He also worked at Sudbury Hall, Burleigh, Marlborough House, Petworth and Blenheim Palace. Some of his best regarded works at Buckingham House were destroyed when Buckingham Palace was built. He spent the rest of his life in England dying at Lincoln's Inn Theatre, whilst watching his son performing.



There are five wall and ceiling murals painted in oil on plaster and seven decorative panels painted in oil on wood by Louis Laguerre. They are painted in his typical baroque style, depicting mythological themes. Laguerre, like other artists of his time, often painted his own interpretation of a theme painted by earlier artists.

## *The Shell Room*

The Shell Room opposite the main entrance has a ceiling mural which is considered to be the best in the house. It depicts the Marriage of Cupid and Psyche, performed by Zeus, the father of the gods, after he had ordered Venus, Cupid's mother, to stop persecuting Psyche because of jealousy of her beauty.

The elaborate plasterwork framing the mural, which includes shells giving the room its name, was added in the nineteenth century remodelling.

## *Main Staircase*

On the right hand wall of the main stairs is a mural depicting Neptune and Amphitrite. Neptune (or Poseidon in Greek) was god of the sea and earthquakes. He married Amphitrite, a sea-nymph, who he won by using a dolphin to court her on his behalf. "The Triumph of Neptune and Amphrite," was painted by Nicolas Poussin in 1610 for Cardinal Richelieu's palace in Paris (later the Palais Royal) and also as a wall mural by Charles Le Brun at the Louvre Palace in 1661.

On the half landing wall is "The Choice of Hercules," after the painting of the same name by Annibale Carracci in 1596. The painting shows Hercules flanked by two women who represent his two choices in life. Virtue is on his left urging him to glory through hardship, whilst Pleasure on his right offers him an easier path.

The mural on the first floor landing is believed to be of Minerva, Venus and Mercury. Minerva was the daughter of Zeus, king of the gods and the goddess of wisdom. Venus was the goddess of love and beauty and Mercury was the messenger of the gods.

The ceiling mural depicts The Assembly of the Gods, a popular theme and the title of a fifteenth century poem.



### *The Salon / Ballroom*

The ceiling mural was painted in 1981 by the West of England Restoration Studios to complement the Laguerre murals in the rest of the house.

### *Second Stairway*

The six decorative panels are of painted statues of mythological subjects in green-grey monochrome with yellow. They were originally ten in number and sited around the walls of the hall.



### *The Wilky Group 1999 - the present day*

The family-owned Wilky Group bought Fetcham Park in 1999 to add to its investment portfolio. The building now offers fully serviced offices with state of the art facilities, as well as event and entertaining space for private and corporate functions. The house was licensed for weddings in 2011 and has regained its place as part of the Fetcham community.

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Photographs courtesy of John Barnard Hankey and other members of the Hankey family, Pip Moon, Leatherhead & District History Society (postcards of Fetcham Park and Badingham College), Surrey County Council (house when derelict).

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