

South Lytchett Manor (a brief history)

With thanks to June King who wrote (*Memories of a Dorset Parish Bygone Lytchett Minster*) and Jane Brian (Daughter of Lady Madeline Lees).



The first house to be built on the site of the present Manor House (now a comprehensive school) was called "Sans Souci" ("without a care").

It is believed that it was connected with helping and sheltering members of the French Aristocracy escape the guillotine during the French revolution.

It has been told that a secret tunnel connected the house to Lytchett Bay in which the escaping French would use to reach safety.

Unfortunately, we may never know the truth, as the tunnel is now filled in. It was thought to be dangerous to over enthusiastic exploring children.

Or could it have been used for smuggling? There was much smuggling in this area in those times.

John Jefferies built "Sans Souci" and in 1821 it was sold to Sir Claude Scott. He made many alterations but in 1880 it was left unoccupied. I have seen an etching of this house and it was truly beautiful with magnificent views.

The Lees Family bought the house circa 1890. They were country landowners from Oldham in Lancashire with business interests in the Lancashire Cotton Industry. Elliot Lees was the first of the family to live at The Manor.

Elliot enlarged and transformed "Sans Souci" into The Manor House that you can see today. In 1905 the Lodge was built and in 1907 he had the road moved away from the house. The Dorchester Road from the entrance to St Peter's Finger is the road he had built. I believe that the old road used to go straight on from the Middle toilet block, across the field to the cottages on the far side of the camp site. This road still exists below the fields.

During the 1914-1918 war the Manor was used as a hospital for the wounded brought back from the battlefields of France. Lady Madeline was a nurse in the house at the time.

Lady Madeline Lees then ran a school for children of professional people at the Manor in the 1930's

Again in the 1939-1945 war the Manor was commandeered for military purposes and I believe was used by British Military Officers. The Caravan site was an American Tank base. If you look carefully you can see how the driveway has been reinforced with concrete to support the weight of the tanks. I have been told by a local farmer that the whole camp just "disappeared" overnight.

This area was heavily bombed just before D-Day and if you look carefully at the side of The Lodge you can see shrapnel holes near to the top window overlooking the shop. No humans were killed by this bomb but a number of cows did suffer fatal injuries.

On the death of Sir John Lees, the Manor house was sold in 1957 for £10,500, together with 13 acres of land to Dorset County Council. A Comprehensive school was then established.

I hope that you found this brief history interesting.

By Dane McFarlane