

SOUTH LYTCHETT MANOR

# A Brief History



With thanks to June King who wrote (Memories of a Dorset Parish  
Bygone Lytchett Minster) and Jane Brian  
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## South Lytchett Manor

The first house was built by John Jeffries on the site of the present Manor House and was called "Sans Souci", which means without a care!

The Manor House has a rich and intriguing history, believed to have been connected with helping and sheltering members of the French Aristocracy from the guillotine during the French Revolution. It is thought that a secret tunnel connected the house to Lytchett Bay, which the escaping French would use to reach safety. Another theory could be that the tunnels were used for smuggling, which was rife along the Dorset coastline at the time. The tunnel is now filled in, as it was deemed too dangerous for over enthusiastic adventurous children and adults alike.

## The Lees Family

In 1821 the property was sold to Sir Claude Scott, who made some alterations before selling the property in 1890 to the Lees Family. The Lees family were country landowners from Oldham in Lancashire with business interests in the Lancashire Cotton Industry.

Elliot Lees enlarged and transformed the Manor House into the structure that you can see today. In 1905, the Lodge, which can be seen at the entrance to South Lytchett Manor Campsite today, was built and in 1907, he had the road moved away from the house. This is now Dorchester Road, which can be found from the entrance to the pub St Peter's Finger. The old road still exists below the campsite, straight on from the middle amenity block, across the field to the cottages on the far side of the campsite.

## First World War

During the Great War, the Manor House was used as a hospital for the wounded brought back from the battlefields of France. Lady Madeline Lees was a nurse and living in the house at the time. She then converted the

Manor House into a school for children of professionals throughout the 1930's until the Second War.

## Second World War

From 1939-45, British Military Officers commandeered the Manor for Military purposes. However, the current grounds of the campsite were used as an American Tank base. If you look carefully at the main driveway through the park, you can see that it has been carefully reinforced with concrete to support the weight of the tanks. A local farmer states that once peace had been announced in 1945, the Americans and their tanks completely disappeared overnight!

The area around the Manor House was heavily bombed just before D-Day and if you look carefully at the side of the Lodge building on the campsite, you can see the shrapnel holes near to the top window overlooking the shop. No humans were killed but a number of cows were fatally injured in the blast.

## Lytchett Minster School

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, who established a Comprehensive School. Lytchett Minster School is now an established school with strong academic and sporting facilities. They are even licensed for weddings!

Interesting fact: the school section of the buildings has burned down twice, once in 2000 due to arson and once in 2012 due to a lightening strike!