Lampport Court



Estimated reading time: 19 minutes

Lampport Court, The Street, Stinchcombe

"*I would like to dedicate this article to Nigel Cant, who sadly passed away recently (June 2021). He was an inspiration to me and my family and a wonderful neighbour at Lampport Court.*" – John Pinch

Introduction

It is thanks to Kate and Andrew Longstaff who lived at Lampport Court in the 80's that Joyce and I now live at the adjacent ***Court Barn***, or ***Lampport Barn***, as it was originally known.

Joyce was attending a book group meeting at Lampport when Kate announced that 'the barn is on the market again…' More information regarding the consequences of this announcement can be found in my previous account of the history of Court

Barn.

The history of Lamport Court is close to my heart since our house was originally belonging to Lamport Court, despite us buying it from an owner of Melksham Court.

Listing Description for Lamport Court:

Listing NGR: ST7338998861

The former Listing has it as ‘Lamports’. Grade II

Dwelling, formerly farmhouse. Mid C18. Squared and coursed marlstone but parapet rebuilt in brick, 6 courses to coping, tile roof. Ashlar stacks to coped gables, plus stack off-centre, left. Relvin wing, back right, includes large 3-light C19 casement under segmental arch. Main street front two storeys and attic, 6-windowed, sashes with glazing bars, in broad sash boxes, stone cills and wood lintols; small dormer between bays 1 and 2. 6-panel fielded door in bay 2 approached by flight of 3 semi-circular stone steps. Interior: C18 shutters at front.

(Note: Relvin? It seems to be the only time Relvin has been used in the English Language. Cills? Lintols? – editor)

Lamport Court is a Grade II listed property and it is interesting that the Listing details of Historic England date the house as Mid C18, but it is also believed to originally date back to the 11th century with extensions in the 15th and 18th centuries. It is reputed to be the oldest house in the village.

The dwelling was a safe house for Puritans, and the ***pollarded*** lime trees that border the front of the house with the main road symbolically indicate this. Apparently, an ancient suit of armour was once discovered in the cellar but has since

disappeared. (A brief history of Stinchcombe – Author unknown)



The front of the house during the 1960s

Although unlikely, the reference to the armour might well have been dated back to around 1645, when it is reputed that Prince Rupert put 40 soldiers of the parliamentary army to the sword, and this became known as 'the ***Stinchcombe Quarter***'. If this was the case, it is very strange that there is no reference in the parish records to these 40 men being buried. Rev T W Webb (ed) says in the 1879 book "The Civil War in Herefordshire" that the story came from a report by a hostile journalist. This implies it was possibly Parliamentarian propaganda. The only contemporary reference that Kath Hudson has found is to Col. Morgan, Governor of Gloucester, threatening the occupants of Chepstow Castle with Stinchcombe Quarter in 1645. Col. Fitzmorris replies from inside the castle that he doesn't know what is meant by the term.

One of the traditions that died out after the civil war under the government of the Puritans was the 'Stinchcombe Revels'*. This occurrence happened on the second Sunday after the feast

of Pentecost and was something like a village fete. The boys and girls of the village and neighbouring area would dance, sing, wrestle and enjoy themselves well into the evening. The location for this event was at Blu meade (Blue Mead), which is the area now occupied around the Old Vicarage and Stinchcombe nursing home.

* Source: Sutton Alan and Hudson, Alan Sutton on Publishing, pp.44/88.

Most of the farming land belonging to Lamport Court was situated on the other side of the main road, adjacent to the Malt House, but it also had some land to the rear and a large barn, now Court Barn. It is believed that the barn dates from the 15th century, possibly constructed at the same time as the current Lamport Court.

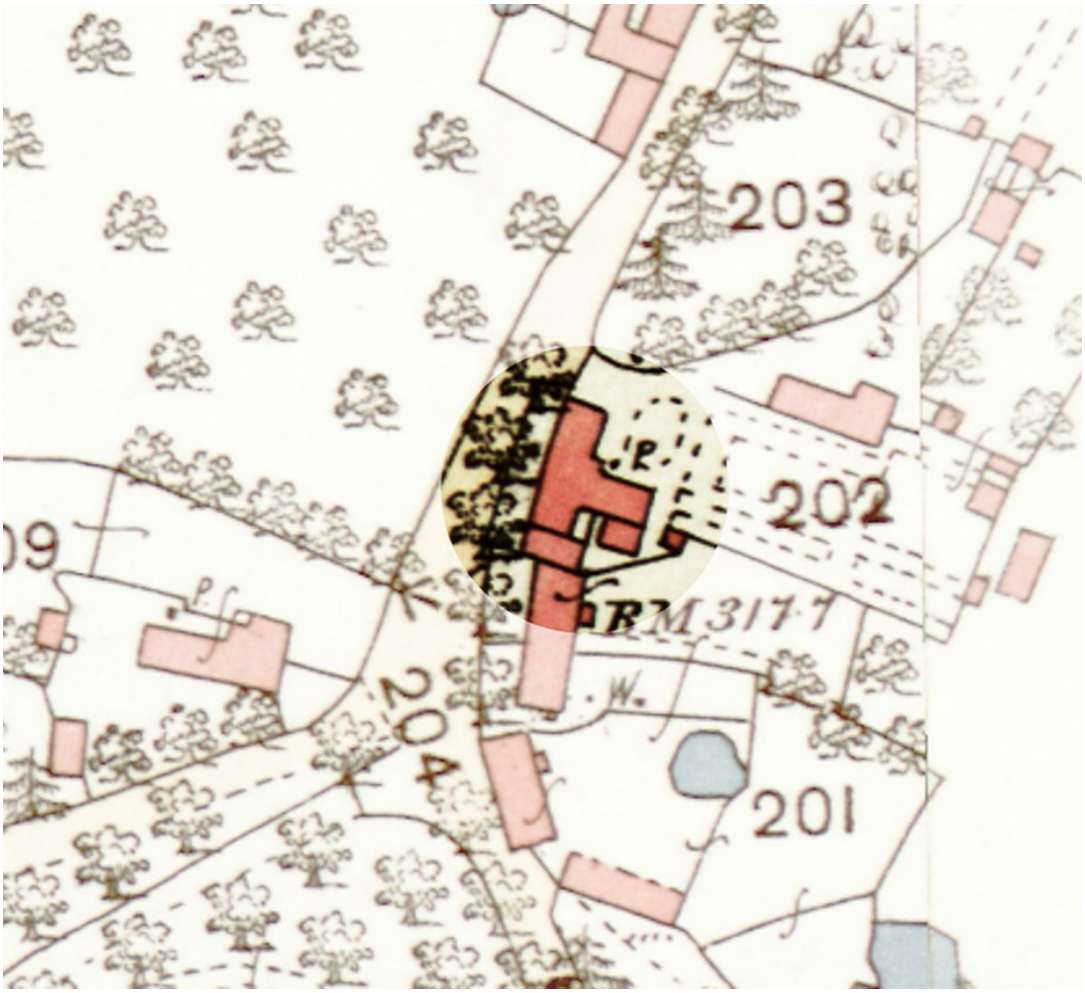
Lamport Court was the only original courthouse in the village and possibly built expressly for this purpose.

How it has changed over the years:

Looking at the exterior of the house as it stands today, the architecture suggests it was originally a much smaller facade. The left section of the frontage that comprises three sash windows and front door might have terminated on the right of the door since the two chimneystacks would have defined the two original gable ends. Further, this is made more evident by a straight joint in most of the stonework. Another indication is the spacing of all the other windows to the right of the front door is smaller. I have found no evidence to support this so this is purely my own idea, except that the house was certainly divided into two dwellings in the C20.

Although there is no apparent recorded evidence of how the house has physically changed over the years, the small brick extension at the rear is likely to be the 18th century addition with the precariously leaning brick chimneystack!

However, a map of the village in 1873 shows Lamport Court with more buildings around the house than what we see today.



Lamport Court from 1873 map

Despite the outline of other buildings to the south of the main house as illustrated above I have reason to believe there was another house on this site long before what we see today.

The previous owners, Phillip and Elaine Berrington had cleared the area to the rear (south) of the house and small back porch, in readiness to lay new slabs. I was invited to see what they had discovered because the ground under some of the original stone slabs revealed the footprint of another building. The surprising revelation was that of the clear outline of ancient truncated stone walls including a niche in what must have been either a cellar cupboard, or window. The perplexing issue is that this was now well below ground level and on a completely different axis to anything shown on the above map or what we see in the form of the house today. This

suggests that another house was formerly on this site and might possibly be the 11th Century house alluded to earlier? It could have been that the original house was demolished, or burned in the same way that Melksham Court and Piers Court were during the civil war in the mid 17th century? This is pure speculation though.

The evidence of a narrow old spiral staircase in the kitchen to the right of the chimneybreast suggests this was the oldest part of the existing house.

The utilisation of the main attic spaces is more recent. Access is via the current staircase from the first floor but has been unfortunately constructed in front of a window on the rear of the main north wing. Nigel Cant developed the attic into more habitable areas, for use as office space for his planning business. More recently the Berringtons have continued to develop the house, and especially the attic space to provide more sleeping accommodation with en-suite bathrooms.

The frontage is likely to be the original existing 15th century courthouse built at the same time as the east wing since it runs parallel with the road and comprises the cellars.

The line of pollarded lime trees between the front of the house hardly have any of the heartwood remaining as most of the trees are virtually hollow, yet they are all alive.



The above photograph shows the well and pump outside the back door.
There is a well adjacent to the back door where once stood a hand pump on top, similar to that which still exists at the **Malthouse** over the road.

Lamport Court is reputed to have been a Parliamentary stronghold in the civil war, and more than one of my sources of information have made reference to a tunnel that was supposedly built between this house and another in the village, presumably as a means of escape. I believe there is evidence of this in the cellars under the house and I can only speculate this must have led to either the Malthouse, ***Melksham Court*** or but much further away, ***Piers Court.*** I have plans to enlist the help and special ability of a friend who is a diviner and who may well is able to determine if there is a subterranean anomaly.

Past residents

- **Adam de Lamport** – C13 (*Adam de Laumpert).*

Mention is first recorded in the reign of Henry III where Adam is a witness:

*"Grant from John, son of Walter de Lorwyn to Roget de Tumberleye of that acre of land, which he acquired by grant from the said Walter, lying in Le Northfield of Stinchcombe. Witnesses: William de Burgo; **Adam de Laumpert**; Maurice de Camme; Henry de Camme; Richard de Melkesham. Temp. Hen.III. Lat.*

(NB – Henry III's reign was 1207 – 1272)

- **John Smyth** 17th century historian of the Berkeley family and their estate says that the last of the Lamport line, also Adam, died in the reign of Edward II (1312-1377).
- **Thomas de Bradston**

Not long after, Lamport Court was owned by Thomas de Bradston, who held the manors of Stinchcombe, Breadstone and others. It is believed he died about 1374. In the Inquisition Post Mortem there is a long description of his Stinchcombe estate. It (or part of it?) passed to his wife, Ela and then to their daughter and heir Elizabeth and her husband, Walter de la Pole. Ela died about 1410 and the whole manor of Stinchcombe was then worth 40 shillings.

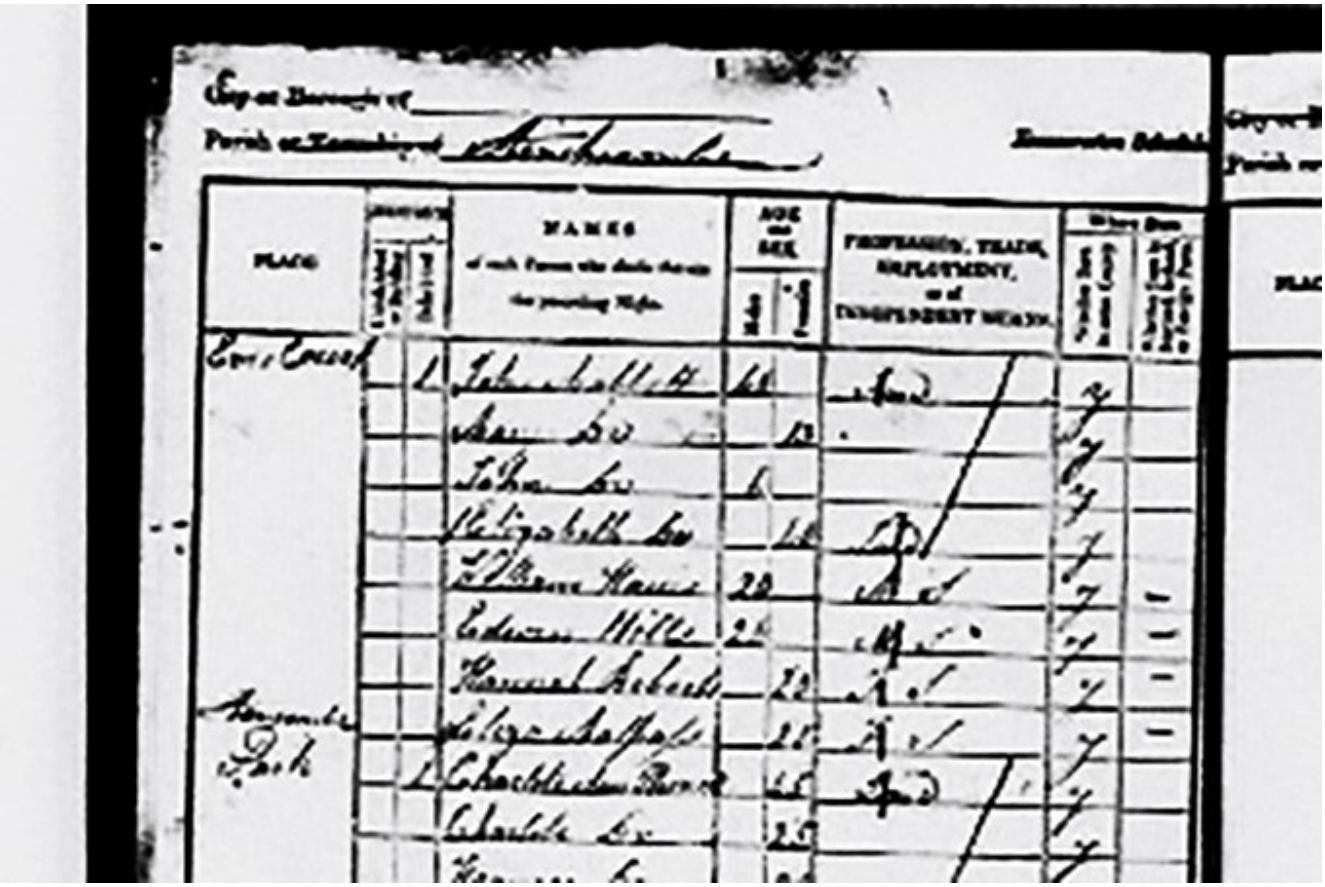
- **Edmund Ingoldisthorpe**

From old transcripts it is thought that Edmund Ingoldisthorpe (1421 – 1426) took possession of the Manors of Bradston and Stinchcombe with the courts of Mulksham (Melksham) and Lamport and the hamlet of Stancombe after the death of Elizabeth wife of Walter de la Pole.

It is likely that Lamport Court changed hands as part of the manor of Stinchcombe for a long time. Its chain of ownership will therefore be the same as for Piers Court, which is known.

- ***John Mabbett*** – mentioned in the 1839 Tithe map and apportioned as plot 358.

Confusingly, in the 1841 census, John Mabbett and his family are quoted as living at ‘Eves Court’.



Confirmation that John Mabbett was living at Eves Court in 1841, It is presumed Eves court was in fact Lamport Court

This might have been linked to the old farm buildings opposite Lampport that are still today known as Eaves Barn and Eaves Cottage.

Mention is made of situations that involved John and Mary Mabbett.

1877 – Two men fined for stealing 3 shillings worth of swede tops from J Mabbett of Stinchcombe.

1880 – Small fire at Mary Mabbett’s house caused by servant boy.

1882 – Mary Mabbett appointed as one of the Parish Overseers of the Poor.



The Mabbett table tombs at St Cyr's church in Stinchcombe

There are three table tombs close to the porch at St Cyr's church in the village. Four earlier members of the Mabbett family are recognised here:

John Mabbett 1721, aged 71

John Mabbett 1722, aged 26

Thomas Mabbett 1731, aged 26

John Mabbett 1792, aged 72

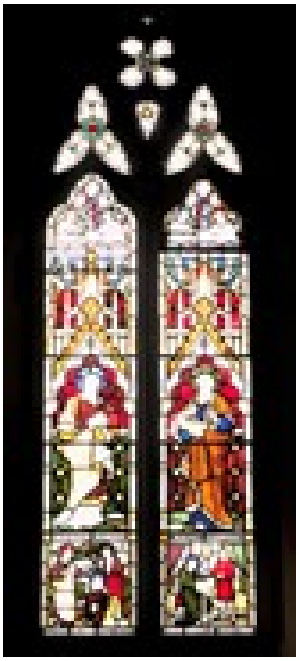
- **Mary Mabbett**, 1828 – 1890 was daughter of one of the later John Mabbett, not listed above.

Mary Mabbett's charitable bequest, which has now been linked to the Stinchcombe United Charities was phrased as;

"to relieve either generally or individually persons resident in the area of benefit who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress."

The charity is still active in the village and I am one of the trustees. Part of the United Charities is the Matthew Tyndall Education Foundation that provides grants for students to help

purchase books and materials for their apprenticeship or academic courses.





The Mabbett stained glass window and inscription in St Cyr's church in Stinchcombe

- **Dr T W P Leighton**, 1938 – 1956 (see article on the family ***here***)

Dr Leighton moved from Lancashire to Lamport Court in 1938 until his death 1956.

He served in the RAMC during WW1 and was awarded the OBE in 1920 for his services in a POW camp in Germany. He later became choirmaster and organist at St Dominic's Catholic church in Dursley. He laid out the original garden at Lamport Court where he "died in the beautiful garden that he made and loved".

T. W. P. LEIGHTON, O.B.E., M.B., Ch.B.

Dr. T. W. P. Leighton died suddenly on October 2 at his home at Stinchcombe, Gloucestershire, at the age of 79.

Thomas William Parkinson Leighton was born on November 18, 1877, and was educated at Ushaw College, Durham, and at the Victoria University of Manchester, where he graduated M.B., Ch.B. in 1904. He practised for 34 years in the Withnell district of Lancashire, where he was medical officer to the urban district council. Having served in the first world war with distinction, he was appointed O.B.E. in 1920 for his services while a prisoner of war in Germany. A sincerely religious man, he was choirmaster and organist at St. Dominic's Catholic church at Dursley, in Gloucestershire. He enjoyed music, gardening, and sport, and was captain of the Withnell cricket club for many years. When he retired from general practice in 1938 he moved from Lancashire to Gloucestershire, but on the outbreak of the second world war he resumed professional life and acted as locumtenent for general practitioners in the neighbourhood. He also served on the Gloucester medical recruiting board and subsequently became the permanent chairman, an appointment he held until his death. He died in the beautiful garden he had made and loved.

An obituary of Dr Leighton

Apparently, Dr Leighton lived in the house with his sister. Kate Longstaff, a subsequent owner of Lamport Court, explained to me that her predecessor, Pam Heard had told her that;

"A doctor and his wife lived there and lived separately from each other. Didn't get on, so one in the front of the house and the other at the back… might explain the number of doors and that the house was divided into two parts?

- ***Sir Maxwell Joseph:*** 1956 – 1964?

It was Sir Maxwell Joseph who was also the owner of Melksham Court in the 1950s that purchased the house from the estate of Dr Leighton. Maxwell used Lamport Court as accommodation for his workers at Melksham. The house was divided into two discrete parts, each with their own main doors and separate bathrooms, bedrooms and kitchen.

When the next owners, Pam and Bob Heard took over the house it was in a very poor state of repair. The paneling from the

sitting room had been dismantled and installed in the sitting room of Melksham Court. The paneling included shell recesses that were used to decorate niches that still exist in the south sitting room but are now simply left plastered with an arched top.

It is believed the house was left empty for approximately 5 years before the next occupants.

- **Pam and Bob Heard:** 1969 – 1982

Pam and Bob Heard bought Lamport Court in 1969.

Pam Heard noticed the rather dilapidated Lamport Court and, eager to see who owned it she knocked on the door of the Old Post Office where Sally Whittal was living. Sally explained to Pam that the owner was Sir Maxwell Joseph who lived at Melksham Court. Despite the fact that the house was not on the market and although the owner was not intending to sell it, Pam was very persuasive! She was rather surprised that Sir Max called her back personally and took pleasure in being able to close the deal. Apparently, He would only deal directly with Pam.

"The other thing I remember was that there was supposed to be a ghost. I think she was called Elizabeth and roamed around the house looking for her child. Mum was quite taken by the story and was definitely strongly drawn to the house. And the funny thing was Sir Max would only ever deal with mum, not dad!! They bought it for £5000.

It hadn't been lived in for some years and never modernised. So mum and dad had to make it habitable. We also had to find a house suitable for an organ. Oh and us!"

Alison Heard – Pam's daughter.

Bob Heard was passionate about organs. He was adamant that wherever they were to live near his new employment at Listers

in Dursley, the house must be able to accommodate the organ.



Bob with the organ that was installed in the rear room at Lamport Court



The organ, disassembled and removed from Lamport Court

The organ was already installed in their house in Worcester after Bob bought it from the ABC cinema in Hereford. The room at Lamport Court that is now the kitchen was where Bob installed all the pipework and ‘gubbins’ and the actual organ was in the room above, accessed via the very old narrow

staircase in the corner of the kitchen by the range.

Visitors accessed via the main staircase when they came to the occasional concerts that were attended by locals and even hosted celebrities including Nigel Ogden of ‘The Organist Entertains’ on Radio 2. Pam would make refreshments and ticket proceeds went to a charity. Three current residents in the village, Margaret Wannell remembers her parents attending the concerts, along with Russ and Jill Holloway.

Coincidentally, I remember seeing two other similar organs on the mistral balcony in the big barn at Melksham Court in the 1970s. It is believed that one of the Joseph’s installed them.

Matching Bob’s enthusiasm for his organ, Pam was a passionate gardener as well as being a magistrate. Following in Dr Leighton’s footsteps, she re-designed the garden at Lamport Court in the 1970s as was the winner of the Bledisloe award for the best small garden in Gloucestershire 3 times! She also authored a column in the Gazette on gardening for a short time. Sadly, the photograph below suggests this was the state of the garden when Pam and Bob bought Lamport Court, but the other celebrates Pam’s transformation.



The sadly neglected garden at the rear of Lamport Court (1962)



The garden after being tended by Pam Heard (1970)

Bob and Pam Heard's son, Tim explained to me that he remembers the existence of two very large metal water tanks in the attic. This concurs with further evidence from the late Rex Wood who lived at various houses in and around the Malthouse along the Street in the village. Some thirty years ago, Rex explained to me that these were ex-submarine ballast tanks and were installed in the attics of the house after the second world war, where water was collected off the roof of the barn (now Court Barn) and piped up to the tanks. This was gravity fed since the gutters of the barn are above the attic floor level of Lamport Court. This has since been confirmed by Kate Longstaff;

" There was a v large water tank at the far end of the big attic at the front of the house and another in the attic above the kitchen. It (the house when Pam and Bob Heard bought it) was in a bit of a state I remember her (Pam) saying, that there was ivy growing out of the windows etc. so I don't know if had been empty for some time."

- **Andrew and Kate Longstaff**: 1982 – 1987

Kate and Andrew Longstaff moved into Lamport when Pam and Bob Heard moved over the road into Eaves Barn, following the conversion from old farm buildings.

Kate explains that…

"I don't remember being told it was Max Joseph who divided it (Lamport Court) up. He did however carve up the land when he owned it all, making the new drive next to you (Court Barn). The old entrance to Melksham was down the road on the corner. I believe your garden, Court Barn, was Lamport's kitchen garden but not 100% sure. There was a tennis court too running parallel to the road up towards Post Office Cottage. We took off wood, painted black, which had been nailed over the right hand window in the middle front bedroom and spent a lot of time releasing the shutters in all the rooms… they had been nailed in place and wouldn't open. I stripped the sitting room floor and the elm floor boards in two of the front bedrooms and polished them up. In '85 we took off plastic "panelling" which covered the walls in the room at the other end of the house, over the cellar. In the process we found two recesses which had obviously been windows looking to the rear of the house. Apart from the expense we felt that putting the windows back wouldn't be an improvement. Taking the panelling off by the fire surround we could see another fireplace behind but short of hacking a huge hole we couldn't get in there…"

- **Nigel and Yvonne Cant**: 1987 – 1999

Nigel was a Planning Consultant and used the attic rooms for his offices.

Yvonne explained to me that

"I believe Lamport was called Eaves Court at one time, I think that is why Pam and Bob called their house Eaves Barn."

Following the Longstaffs, the new owners of Lamport Court, Nigel and Yvonne Cant, also described to me that in addition to Elizabeth, there was the existence of a second ghost at the house. This presence is distinguishable by a smell of body odour on the second flight of stairs! It is likely that this might be related to the occasional sound of clanking armour. I do recall having dinner with Nigel and Yvonne and all of us hearing the sound of someone in the room above the dining room. Yvonne suggested it was just the dogs, but at the same moment both dogs leapt out whining from under the table! However, subsequent owners have had no experience of any such presence.

- **Phillip and Elaine Berrington**: 1999 – 2021

The Berringtons renovated and created more accommodation by converting some of the attic space into more bedrooms. They improved and made reparations to the building, preserving the structure for future generations both inside and out.

- **Ben and Rosie Craggs**: 2021 –

The current owners of Lamport Court are Ben and Rosie Craggs with their two boys, Oscar and Auden, who took up residence in May 2021.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank Kath Hudson and Trudy Chinn for their continued support and offering their extensive knowledge of local history. Also, my grateful thanks go to:

Alison Cullen, Bob and Pam Heard’s daughter

Tim Heard, brother of Alison

Kate Longstaff

Nigel and Yvonne Cant

Russell and Jill Holloway

Margaret Wannell

John Pinch