

## **Halcot**

**Halcot was a house belonging to the Hall Place estate, situated on the north side of Bourne Road, about a quarter of a mile along it towards Crayford.**

It was originally called Mon Plaisir, later Mount Pleasant, and finally Halcot. It was also sometimes referred to as Hall Place Farm. Hasted **(1)** says that it was also built by Richard Simms but there is reason to doubt this statement.

The first mention of it that has been found is in the Marriage Settlement drawn up in 1738 when Sir Robert Austen, the fourth baronet, married Rachel Dashwood **(2)**. It is there spoken of as Mon Plaisir, occupied by Richard Symes, formerly by William Winde and it is evidently part of the estate owned by Sir Robert Austen. William Winde and Richard Symes were related by marriage to the Austen family. Winde, according to Scott Robertson, **(3)**, came from Norfolk but had lived for many years in Germany in attendance of the Electress Sophia, mother of George I. On her death in 1714 he had returned to England and there married Lady Elizabeth Austen, widow of the third baronet. She died in 1725. He was also involved in the Austen estate in another way, for the third baronet, who had died in 1706, had in his will appointed as trustee one Sir Henry Seymour. In 1727 we find William Winde acting as administrator for the late Sir Henry Seymour's goods and as such executing an assignment under the trust. He was then living in London **(4)**.

It is possible that Lady Austen, who was left a widow comparatively young, built Halcot as a dower house some time after her husband's death in 1706 and that William Winde lived with her after their marriage, until her death in 1725, when he moved to London.

The tenant of Halcot in 1738, Richard Symes, or Simms, had married a daughter of the third baronet. They had a son, Richard, who died in infancy in 1735, **(5)** and a daughter, Mary, later the wife of Granado Piggott, of Cambridgeshire. Richard Symes died in 1758, his wife predeceasing him in 1744.

According to Hasted **(1)**, the lease was bought from the Piggotts by Thomas Edsall, who greatly improved the house before becoming

bankrupt in 1778. The next mention of Halcot in the documents is dated 1799, when the house is referred to as "formerly occupied by William Selwyn, but lately by Francis Dashwood himself." (6) The Dashwoods were by this time owners of the estate and Francis Dashwood moved into Halcot on leasing Hall Place for use as a school in 1795. The William Selwyn spoken of as its former occupant occurs in the Vestry Minutes and Rate Books between 1788 and 1795, once as signing a minute and several times as a member of the parish committee to administer the poor-house. His name is not in the Registers of the parish, so he did not die here. Hasted says he was a privy councillor. He may be the William Selwyn, K.C., Treasurer of Lincoln's Inn, who died at Chislehurst in 1817, aged 85. This Selwyn was a cousin of George Augustus Selwyn, whose parents lived at Danson and was grandfather of the Selwyn who became the first Bishop of New Zealand.

Also in 1799 there was a 21 year lease granted of "Hall Place Farm, otherwise Mount Pleasant" to two farmers, Ewers and Stoneham. (7) This may refer only to the land which went with the farm. Francis and Lady Anne Dashwood went to the Cape Colony in 1797 but returned in 1798. Following the recovery of the colony as a British possession in 1806, they again went out to Cape Town and in 1807 Francis Dashwood was appointed Receiver of Revenue, Collector of Customs at Simons Bay and President of the Lombard Bank. In 1819 Lady Anne returned to England with their two sons, who were sent to Eton, and thereafter she lived separated from her husband. She died at Seamore Place in London on the 4 September 1858.

In 1820 Dashwood, then described as residing in the Cape of Good Hope, granted a lease of Halcot for nine years to the Honourable William Fraser. (8) Unfortunately there is a blank left in the document where the lessee's address should occur. The only point of interest here is that Fraser covenanted to install a patent water closet in the house. He had gone by 1822 when the Rate Book gives the tenant as a man called Cleaver. In 1825 Cleaver was followed by Edward Covill, who in turn made way for Edmund Butler.

Francis Dashwood came back to England about 1825 and thereafter settled at Dunbar in Scotland where he died on the 7 February 1828. His Will is held at the National Archives at Kew.

Some years after Lady Dashwood's death Halcot was let to Mr J.B. White. A succession of tenants followed him, including Thomas Holt, a retired Australian politician, and John Bowron, of the Crayford leather mills. From 1914 it was the home of Major H.V.H. Hart-Davis, whose grandson was later to found the well-known publishing house. The Hart-Davis family lived at Halcot until 1927. Finally it was sold in 1935 to Mr W.E. Molins, who intended to preserve it as a private house. But he died soon after completing the purchase and the house was then resold and then demolished. Its site is now part of a housing estate.

Notes based on the documents deposited at Hall Place in 1975 by Mrs Diane Weatherby of Shipstone on Stour.

**References:**

1. Hasted, **History of Kent**, 2nd ed. Vol. 2, p.176
2. L54 in Bexley Library Archives
3. **Archaeologia Cantiana**, vol. 18, p.371
4. P24, L48
5. Transcript of Bexley parish church registers, p.296
6. L113
7. L116
8. L154.