

Blendon

Blendon probably got its name from Henry and Eadwin of Bladindon who were prominent tenants of Bexley Manor before King John signed the Magna Carta.

Robert served on the jury at Canterbury Assizes in 1241. In 1283 John, Reeve of Bexley, earned five shillings (25p) for organising the workers on the manor farm. Agnes, probably John's widow, paid the highest tax in Bexley. A subsequent John of Bladindon was a lawyer and he and his wife Maud were wealthy and influential people in the area. They would have lived in a timber framed hall house like the one found on North Cray Road, which is now sited at the Weald and Downland Museum.

By 1400, Henry of Castelayn, Keeper of the Archbishop's Forests, held Blendon on cornage, or horn tenure. The Horn Brass in St Mary's Church, Bexley, commemorates him. In his will he left his bees to the church to supply wax for candles on the altars there. He also provided for a new west window and for the repair of two roads leading from Blendon towards the royal palaces of Eltham and Greenwich.

In 1538, Henry VIII bought from Archbishop Cranmer the whole manor of Bexley. It was divided into several properties, from each of which the King drew quit-rent. Management of these properties varied, their value fluctuated and estates changed hands frequently in Tudor times.

When James I sold the fragmented manor in 1608, Sir Thomas Wroth already held the Blendon estate for his nephew Peter, whose son eldest John was already fighting for Charles I when Peter died in 1644. During the Commonwealth John Wroth was obliged to mortgage the Blendon estate, but after Cromwell's death he became a Commissioner of the Militia and, at the Restoration, he was created a baronet. He died in 1671 and six years later, the second baronet died, leaving an infant son to inherit the title, but not the estate. This became the home of the royalist hero, Sir Edward Brett, who left it to his nephew's son, John Fisher Brett. After letting it for some years, John Brett himself lived in Blendon Hall for over twenty years. His heir let the property to a sugar importer, Thomas Delamotte, J.P. and his son's friends, the famous preacher John Wesley, Charles Wesley and

George Whitefield were frequent visitors. In 1739 Whitefield preached to 300 people in the courtyard of the old Blendon Hall.

A new Blendon Hall was built in 1763 for Lady Mary Scott. It was a castellated, three storey building with a canted bay on either side of the ground-floor main entrance and was described by Hasted as "a neat mansion". Fifty years later, the banker John Smith ordered some alterations and employed the well-known landscape architect Humphry Repton to redesign the grounds. John Smith's nephew, Oswald, inherited the improved estate, as well as property in the fast developing area of Bexleyheath. At St Mary's Church in 1853 Claude Bowes-Lyon married Oswald's daughter, Frances Dora Smith from Blendon Hall, Queen Elizabeth II is her great grand-daughter.

As in many other areas of the Borough the hamlet of Blendon had been established to house employees of large country houses nearby. In about 1860 Mr Pickersgill Senior built a bailiff's house in the heart of the Blendon estate and his grand-daughter Anna Jay was the last occupant of Blendon Hall. She died in 1929. In the 1930s the Blendon Hall Estate was purchased for development by D C Bowyer and the house was demolished in 1934. The lakes, survived until after the war when they were drained and built upon but some of the trees put in by Repton still survive today.