

Ownership of the Southover Manor demesne and the Priory site based on <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/sussex/vol7/pp45-50> and other sources - research by Chris Grove, 5 October 2024

Date	Priory site (Upper Lord's Place, comprising north and south [of the railway] sites, and Lower Lord's Place) See also references to Lord's Place Farm and Place Farm under demesne column.	Priory Grange Farm/ Demesne of Southover Manor • Bullet points are rental/ leasehold transactions taken from Colin and Judy Brent's Lewes House Histories, volume 4 Southover [additional square bracketed comments added by C Grove].
1066	William de Warenne and son William	William de Warenne and son William
1095	The Priory of St Pancras	The Priory of St Pancras
1095-1537	There was regular tension between Crown, the Priory, and the motherhouse at Cluny because Lewes was an "alien priory" whose status was unacceptable during times of war with France. Also, Cluny had the right to appoint the priors, annual payments had to be made to Cluny, and debt owed by the Priory to Cluny increased as the Priory grew. The damage caused by occupation of the Priory by the King's soldiers during the 1264 Barons' War required additional debt for repairs and was the start of decline leading up to the Dissolution.	There was regular tension between Crown, the Priory, and the motherhouse at Cluny because Lewes was an "alien priory" whose status was unacceptable during times of war with France. Also, Cluny had the right to appoint the priors, annual payments had to be made to Cluny, and debt owed by the Priory to Cluny increased as the Priory grew. The damage caused by occupation of the Priory by the King's soldiers during the 1264 Barons' War required additional debt for repairs and was the start of decline leading up to the Dissolution.
1537	On dissolution, surrendered to the Crown	On dissolution, surrendered to the Crown
1538	Granted to Thomas Cromwell	Granted to Thomas Cromwell
1539	Upper and lower crofts within the Priory precinct leased to Nicholas Jenney (lease confirmed in 1540 on the execution of Cromwell). Ownership remained with the Crown.	Thomas Cromwell then the Crown on Cromwell's execution.
1540	Freehold with the Crown on downfall of Cromwell	Freehold with the Crown on downfall of Cromwell
1541	Marriage annulment gift to Anne of Cleves	Marriage annulment gift to Anne of Cleves
1557	Returned to Crown on death of Anne of Cleves and granted to John Kyme III and Richard Kyme ¹	Returned to Crown on death of Anne of Cleves and granted to John Kyme III and Richard Kyme
By 1580	Acquired by John Stempe ²	Acquired by John Stempe
1582	Sold by Stempe to Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst and descended within the family of the Sackvilles, Lords Buckhurst and Earls of Dorset. ³	Sold by Stempe to Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst and descended within the family of the Sackvilles, Lords Buckhurst and Earls of Dorset.

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1624	The site of the priory of St. Pancras was also held "of the King", but by knight's service, and to it pertained the 'Southey', the 'Ryes', the 'Hammes', and the 'Broches'.	Passed to wife of Richard Sackville, 3rd Earl, who was holding the manor of the king in socage (a feudal tenure of land involving payment of rent or other non-military service to a superior).
1643	As the Manor, based on subsequent transactions	Richard's widow Anne and her husband, Philip, Earl of Pembroke, were still holding the manor in 1643, but it passed subsequently to the Earl of Dorset's elder daughter and coheir Margaret, who in 1629 had married John Tufton, Earl of Thanet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1684 part of "great farm" (240 acre Place Farm) leased to Mr Lane and rest by M Shelley) 1692 R Shelley took over lease of whole farm 1703 W Wood lease
1710	Thomas, Earl of Thanet, with his wife Katherine, sold the manor and Priory site to Nathaniel Trayton	Thomas, Earl of Thanet, with his wife Katherine, sold the manor and Priory site to Nathaniel Trayton (incl W Wood lease)
1714	Passed to Thomas' elder son Edward Trayton	Passed to Thomas' elder son Edward Trayton <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1725/6 W Winton leased Place Farm 1732 Joseph Winton leased house and garden
1761	1827 ⁴ and 1828 ⁵ newspaper articles confirm Samuel Durrant ownership following Edward Trayton bequest on his death.	⁶ Samuel Durrant inherited the manor by legacy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAS ACC 1244 map of 1762 shows large building to the east. [This is the Budgen map – buildings to east of manor house – immediately east probably stable block, then Proctor Barn on Cockshut Road; unclear evidence of further building(s) south of St John the Baptist Church.] 1769-80 occupied by Stephen Towner [manor house of farm?]
1782	Based on 1827 and 1828 articles above, Samuel Durrant of Robertsbridge, inherited from his cousin, Samuel Durrant.	Samuel Durrant of Robertsbridge, inherited from his cousin, Samuel Durrant

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1783	<p>John Mercer Bosville Durrant, inherited the manor from his father Samuel Durrant of Robertsbridge in 1821.</p>	<p>John Mercer Bosville Durrant, inherited the manor from his father Samuel Durrant of Robertsbridge in 1821.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1783 SD of Robertsbridge children occupied [did they all reside?] as tenants in common: John, Samuel, William Mercer-Durrant, and Elizabeth. • 1786 Stephen Turner died. • 1798 advertised 3-7 year lease of stone and brick manor house. • 1798 J Dunmell Mercer releases Southover Manor House, stables, and barn in occupancy of Samuel Durrant to Mary Mercer Durrant and Elizabeth Durrant. • 1799-1818 Lord's Place Farm occupied by Count Bourbel, followed by W Gladman and James Morris. • In 1819 Manor House, described as a big white house supported by row of pillars in the front, was rented out⁷; from 1819 to 1829, to John Ellman who then moved to Glynde Place after inheriting from his father.
1828	<p>Newspaper article confirms a Mr Durrant (presumably JMB) as owner of the Priory site and Lord's Place Farm) arranging for levelling of the former Lord's Place site which was demolished in the eighteenth century so that a large farmhouse could be built using stone from the Priory.⁸</p>	<p>The Malthouse was built in 1828 ⁹for William Verrall in the grounds of Southover Manor demesne indicating that Verrall purchased at least that portion of land from John Mercer Bosville Durrant but did not purchase the Manor House and the remainder of the demesne until 1839 – see below.</p> <p>John Mercer Bosville Durrant rented out the Manor House to the Rev Henry West, rector of Berwick, from 1829 until the sale by Durrant to William Verrall in 1839.</p>
1835	John Mercer Bosville Durrant	John Mercer Bosville Durrant was still Lord of the Manor

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1839	John Mercer Bosville Durrant sold the site to Miles Verrall, imposing a restrictive covenant over the former Priory lands preventing the erection of buildings. As Miles Verrall wanted to develop the land he sold the Upper and Lower Lord's Place sites to Henry Humphrey Jackson. ¹⁰	William Verrall bought Southover Manor demesne with all rights (as Lord of the Manor) but did not buy the Priory site. ¹¹
1840	HH Jackson or his estate	The existing manor house demolished, rebuilt, and occupied by William Verrall ^{12 13}
1845	By 1845, HH Jackson had died and his executor disposed of the whole of the north site to the Brighton, Lewes, and Hastings Railway Company for the railway construction. ¹⁴ Railway companies would not generally purchase land beyond the intended route's lines of deviation. The fact that the whole of the north site was acquired, indicates that the Brighton, Lewes, and Hastings Railway Company planned to dispose of spoil waste from the nearby cutting across the north site. Need to examine the company's records at The National Archive to confirm that this actually depositing occurred.	William Verrall
1847	North site sold by the railway company (now the London, Brighton, & South Coast Railway Company) to John Blaker by the railway company for £250. South site still owned by the estate of HH Jackson. ¹⁵	William Verrall
1853	On the death of Mrs Jackson, the Priory site (south site and Lower Lord's Place) is auctioned and purchased by Frank Langford. £730 was paid for the Priory site and £850 for Lower Lord's Place. ¹⁶	William Verrall

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1855	John Blaker purchases south site for £760 at auction to add to the north site. ¹⁷ Lower Lord's Place purchased by William Verrall for £800.	William Verrall
1874	John Blaker died in 1864 and, in 1874, his widow Mary Blaker rented the north site to Amram Kenward as an orchard. ¹⁸	William Verrall
1884	North and south sites still owned by Mary Blaker. North site leased to Amram Kenward, now as a market and nursery garden, and erected hot beds, greenhouses, and cold frames on the site. ¹⁹	William Verrall
1890	North and south sites still owned by Mary Blaker. North site still rented to Amram Kenward as a market and nursery garden.	Frank Verrall inherited on death of his father William ²⁰
1898	By 1898, Mary had died and bequeathed north and south sites to her son Evelyn. In 1898, Amram Kenward purchased the north-east corner of the north site. ²¹ The remainder of the north site continues to be rented by Amram Kenward.	Frank Verrall – Court Leet events continued until near the end of the nineteenth century but none were reported in the twentieth century so the Lordship of the Manor appears to have quietly stopped.
1902	Remainder (eg excl the north east corner owned by Amram Kenward) of north site and the south site leased to Frederick George Courthope who farms the south site (photographic evidence of market garden crops being grown in the lower field in early twentieth century). Freehold for both sites continued to be held by Evelyn Blaker. North east corner of north site owned by Amram Kenward. On Amram Kenward's death in 1915, ownership passed to his son John Charles Kenward. ²²	Frank Verrall moved to Eastbourne but no information about who he rented/ leased the manor to.

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1923	North site owned by John Charles Kenward. By 1923, Robert Dendy, Evelyn Blaker's nephew, had inherited the remainder of the north site and the south site and sold both to John Charles Kenward. ²³	Frank Verrall still owned from Eastbourne but no information about who he rented/ leased the manor to until Southover Manor School moved in in 1925 paying rent of £300 per annum. ²⁴
1930s	North and south sites owned by John Charles Kenward and passed to his son John Thomas Kenward.	Sometime between 1931 and 1937, the estate was purchased by Southover Manor School, a girl's boarding school which was recognised as a Public School in 1930. ²⁵
1939-1945	John Thomas Kenward	Southover Manor School evacuated to and rented part of Firle Place from Lord Gage. In 1940 the school moved to Holt Castle, Worcestershire and remained there for the rest of the war ²⁶ . A report in the Hampshire Telegraph in September 1939 ²⁷ states that Stubbington House School, the boy's preparatory school with links to the Royal Navy, was to move to Southover Manor for the duration of the war but there is no other record of this. However, we do know that the school's buildings in Lewes were taken over by the 6th Field Regiment of the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery.
1945	John Thomas Kenward sold the south site to Lewes Borough Council for the sum that his father had paid in 1923 (£850). He retained ownership of the north site for the market and nursery garden business. ²⁸	Southover Manor School returned from Firle. The school was never financially strong ²⁹ , with pupil numbers never above 134, and would have closed in the 1960s without additional support from parents. The majority of the pupils were boarders housed in properties purchased by the school along the western end of Southover High Street, creating pastoral and oversight challenges. In the mid 1980s, the school looked, without success, at the purchase of a new more manageable site. The school closed in 1984.

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1986	Lewes Town Council owned south site. North site still owned by Kenward family.	The school sold the site and its remaining properties along Southover High Street (it had sold Southover Old House and Southover Cottage as part of its plans to move to a new site) to Barratt (South Eastern). Barratt built 70 new houses. Another builder converted the Malt House, Southover Manor House, the gatehouses, and the Bothy into private dwellings. ³⁰ The proceeds of the sale of the school were used to establish a new charitable trust, the Southover Manor General Educational Trust, supporting local educational needs.
2003	Lewes Town Council owned south site. Kenward family closes Southover Nurseries and sells the north site.	Multiple properties all privately owned
Today	Lewes Town Council owns south site. The north site remains in private ownership but as a scheduled ancient monument, it cannot be developed. Most of the Priory buildings in the north site were cleared following the Dissolution leaving a tiny fraction of remains above ground level. Below ground level, there are extensive foundations of the buildings and a large number of graves. It is likely that the railway company deposited spoil on the site during its period of ownership when the railway was being constructed. The site is now a large meadow.	Multiple properties all privately owned

¹ <https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1509-1558/member/stempe-john-1530-82-or-later>

² Ibid 1

³ Ibid 1

⁴ British Newspaper Archive - Brighton Gazette - Thursday 04 October 1827 page 3

⁵ British Newspaper Archive - Brighton Gazette - Thursday 07 February 1828 Page 3

⁶ British History Online at <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/sussex/vol7/pp45-50> within the Manor section, confirms that the Manor was sold by Thomas, Earl of Thanet, and his wife, in 1710 to Nathaniel Trayton but does not mention the Priory site. However, subsequent newspaper reports confirm that ownership of the Priory site was the same as ownership of the Manor.

⁷ Recollections Of A Sussex Parson by Rev. Edward Boys Ellman

⁸ British Newspaper Archive Brighton Gazette - Thursday 04 October 1827, page 3 and Brighton Gazette - Thursday 07 February 1828 Page 3

⁹ Keystone over rear entrance of No 6 The Malthouse is inscribed "W.V. 1828"

¹⁰ ESRO ACC7937 10-28 (document 10 in the bundle) described as Priory Garden and Priory Ruins, purchased by J C Kenward in 1923 but actually an abstract of Durrant transactions until 1847 when the north site was sold by the railway company to John Blaker.

¹¹ Lewes House Histories by Colin and Judy Brent, Part 4 Southover Volume

¹² British Newspaper Archive - Sussex Agricultural Express - Tuesday 14 January 1890 Verrall obituary

¹³ ESRO ACC 3450-44 Dilapidations - tenant the Revd Harry West and the proprietor William Verrall, esq

¹⁴ Ibid 10

¹⁵ ESRO ACC7937 10-28 (document 11 in the bundle) Indenture for sale by railway to Blaker 1847

¹⁶ British Newspaper Archive - Brighton Gazette 3rd November 1853 page 7 col 5

¹⁷ Particulars for auction held at The White Hart Hotel on 15 June 1855 – original held by Tom Sholl, former Chairman of Lewes Priory Trust

¹⁸ ESRO ACC7937 10-28 (document 16 in the bundle) Rental agreement Mary Blaker to Amram Kenward 1874

¹⁹ ESRO ACC7937 10-28 (document 17 in the bundle) Evelyn Blaker lease to Amram Kenward 1884

²⁰ Ibid 11

²¹ Memorandum added to ESRO ACC7937 10-28 (document 11 in the bundle) Indenture for sale by railway to Blaker 1847 (the conveyance document is missing) and confirmed by manuscript note added to the end of ESRO ACC7937 10-28 (document 25 in the bundle) abstract of Dendy title 1923 (NB the note [probably] incorrectly shows 1888 as the conveyance date).

²² ESRO ACC7937 10-28 (document 20 in the bundle) Evelyn Blaker lease to Frederick George Courthope for 21 years, 1902

²³ ESRO ACC7937 10-28 (document 27 in the bundle) sale in 1923 of remainder of north site (for £400) and the south site (for £850) to Kenward

²⁴ ESRO AMS 6799-15-2 Photocopy of various pages regarding history 1923-1983 at the Keep, Brighton

²⁵ Ibid 24

²⁶ Ibid 24

²⁷ Hampshire Telegraph – 22 September 1939

²⁸ Sussex Express & County Herald (appears under Sussex Agricultural Express in BNA - Friday 05 January 1945 page 1 and ESRO ACC7937 10-28 (document 28 in the bundle) copy of sale of south site to Lewes Borough for £850.

²⁹ Ibid 24

³⁰ ESRO AMS 6799/14/11 Sale particulars of Southover Manor, Southover High Street, and grounds, for sale by Clifford Dann and Partners