

Hardwick House and its estate

Hardwick House is a historic Elizabethan manor overlooking the River Thames in the parish of Whitchurch. The house and its surrounding estate are privately owned. The Estate is organically managed and run by Sir Julian Rose.

Beech woodlands rise majestically up behind Hardwick House and are particularly popular with riders and walkers who use the many public rights of way that criss-cross the Estate.



Short tours of the house and grounds, guided by Sir Julian, can be booked. The grounds can be hired for small celebrations. Organic allotment plots and smallholdings can be rented, subject to availability. Seasoned hardwood logs are available from the sustainably managed woodlands and can be delivered to your door.

For any of the above, contact the Estate Office at 0118 984 2955 or hardwickestate@btinternet.com

History of Hardwick

At the time of the Battle of Hastings in 1066, Hardwick and its lands were owned by Wigod, the Saxon Lord of Wallingford. In the thirteenth century the house and grounds passed into the hands of a Norman French family called the de Hardwicks. They would have ownership until the middle part of the following century when Alice de Hardwick was widowed. Subsequently, she married another influential resident of Whitchurch, Sir Thomas Walysh or Walsh who settled in Whitchurch in the 1420s.

In the early 16th century virtually all traces of this Saxon building vanished when a Tudor mansion now known as Hardwick, was built over it.

In 1527, the Estate was purchased by Richard Lybbe, a wealthy landowner, whose descendants would own Hardwick for the next 203



years. During the mid 1500s, Hardwick had the honour of hosting Queen Elizabeth 1st on one of her many grand tours of the Kingdom. To mark this Royal visit, Lybbe had the Queen's bedchamber richly decorated with magnificent plasterwork, which survives to this day.

During the English Civil War, Hardwick was considered to be a Royalist stronghold by the Parliamentarians who tried to destroy the house with canon fire – much of the South Wing was destroyed, to be subsequently rebuilt circa 1620. In the

course of recent reparations, holes resembling the effects of canon balls were found in the South wing brickwork.

In 1730 Isabella, the last remaining member of the Lybbe family married Philip Powys a member of a Welsh family who had made their fortune in sheep hides. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the long decline of the family fortunes began. Gradually, the large Estate that had originally stretched as far as Wallingford shrank, as the family sold off parcels of land to keep financially afloat.

By 1870 the Lybbe Powys' were no longer in residence at Hardwick, having rented the property to Charles Day Rose, a British-Canadian banker. Finally, in 1909 Hardwick was sold to Rose, shortly after this he was awarded a Baronetcy, Sir Charles Day Rose of Hardwick.

In 1871 Rose had married Eliza the daughter of John McClean the Member of Parliament for East Staffordshire. Whilst Sir Charles' interests

lay in horse racing, real tennis [*the court at Hardwick is still used today, right*], cars and planes, it is believed that under his wife, Eliza's influence, Hardwick became a magnet for the literary community of the day. Among the regular visitors to the House were Henry James and Kenneth Graham. It is likely that the ebullient character of Toad was an affectionate pen portrait of Graham's friend Charles. Like Toad, Charles was a larger than life personality, indeed there is strong circumstantial evidence pointing to Toad Hall being Hardwick House. Toad Hall is described as "A handsome and dignified old house of mellowed red brick, with well kept lawns reaching down to the water's edge."



In 1913 after going for a flight in an aeroplane at Hendon aerodrome, Rose suffered a fatal heart attack brought on by the excitement of the flight.

In 1910 their surviving son Frank had married Daphne Gaskell and although he died in the First World War, their four year marriage was a happy one. Frank's son Charles inherited the title from the father he never knew, and proved to be an extremely diligent and capable manager of the Hardwick Estate. In the 1930s he was awarded a number of international citations for his work in forestry.

During World War Two, the family vacated Hardwick which was taken over by The Anglo Argentinian Tramway Company. They moved back in the mid 1940s with their three children. Charles and his wife, Phoebe, two daughters and one son. The current owner Sir Julian Rose was born in the house in March 1947.

In 1962 Peter, the eldest son, who had a passion for car racing, was killed in a high speed crash at Silverstone. Thereby, Sir Julian Rose inherited the Estate upon the death of his father in 1966.

History provided by the Hardwick Estate Office, October 2012.