

More on Mordington's history



Mordington House (1932)



Old School and School House

William de Morthington held part of the vill of Lamberton, c. 1235, was Chancellor of Scotland in the reign of Alexander II. He and his son, Sir Peter de Mordington, are frequent witnesses to Coldingham charters. The family appears to have ended in an heiress, Agnes, daughter of Sir Peter de Mordington, who married Henry de Haliburton.'

The first mention of Mordington is in a charter of King Edgar (c.943-975) granting various lands in southern Scotland, including Mordington, to Durham cathedral; this grant was confirmed by William Rufus on 29 August 1095 (Durham University Library Archives & Special Collections, Durham Cathedral Muniments, Miscellaneous Charter 559).

A lordship of Mordington, held by the family of that name, is referred to in charters dating from the time of Patrick, 5th Earl of Dunbar (1152-1232). The original charter of erection of the feudal or territorial Barony of Mordington, Berwickshire (which is now a personal title as a consequence of the Abolition of Feudal Tenures etc. Scotland Act 2000), is lost at a date before 1312 to 1329, in which period the Barony was resigned by Sir Henry de Haliburton (a signatory of the Ragman Roll of 1296 as 'tenaunt le Roi du counte de Berewyk') and his spouse Agnes de Morthingtoun (the heiress) to King Robert the Bruce for a re-grant to Thomas Randolph, 1st Earl of Moray, who commanded the left wing at the Battle of Bannockburn (1314) and was Regent of Scotland from 1329.

It seems likely that the barony was granted to Thomas Randolph after he and Sir James Douglas ('the good Sir James') re-captured Berwick-upon-Tweed for Scotland in 1318. In 1335, on the death of John Randolph, 3rd Earl of Moray (who commanded the first Scottish division at the battle of Halidon Hill, above Mordington parish, in 1333), the Barony passed to an heiress. The current feudal baron of Mordington is Graham Senior-Milne, Esq., an armiger and former proprietor of Edrington House in Mordington parish. Mordington remains to this day an agricultural parish. Historically it was entirely possessed by three estates: Edrington, and Over and Nether Mordington.

The southern half of Mordington parish comprised the Edrington estate (of which Edrington House and grounds is now detached) which again was at one time in the possession of Durham, but which, by 1300, had passed into the hands of the Lauder of The Bass family who retained it, its castle and mill, until the middle of the 17th century.

The castle fell into disrepair in the 18th century when Nether Mordington House and lands were added to the Edrington estate, the house being renamed Edrington House. Only a fragment of the ancient Edrington castle remains. The present proprietor is Mr. Michael Thornhill, a retired solicitor, whose local residence is 'Cawderstones', a country house not far from the castle ruin.

When the Nether Mordington estate was absorbed into the Edrington estate, Over Mordington became, simply, Mordington, and during the 17th century was the property of the Douglas family who became enobled as the Lords Mordington. As Jacobites they were forfeited and the Mordington estate in about 1750 was in the hands of the Hay family. In the 19th century it passed to the Renton of Lamberton (later Campbell-Renton) family in whose hands it remained until the 1970s.

During the period dating from The Great War, the Mordington estate was affected by the government's compulsory purchases for smallholdings for returning soldiers. The estate is now largely broken up. Mordington House was originally a tower-house in which Oliver Cromwell stayed while his army was encamped on the estate. It was developed into a very fine and large country house (painted by Frank Wood in 1932) but gradually fell into post-war decay and was tragically demolished in the mid-1970s, replaced by a neo-Georgian house. The present laird is John Trotter, Esq.

Mordington's only hamlet is The Clappers, a couple of hundred yards up the road from the Old School and the Old School House. The Clappers cottages originally belonged to the Mordington estate, and contains the original Smithy. A couple of Holdings houses were added after The Great War and a new build in the 1980s making 8 homes in all. The Jeffrey family have been the blacksmiths here continuously since circa 1700. Douglas Jeffrey is the current blacksmith. Mordington church was taken down circa 1989 but the churchyard is still in use.

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