www.moylescourt.co.uk

A Brief History of the Site and Occupants at Moyles Court, Rockford

There has been some kind of Manor or Hall on this site since the Middle Ages. Various historical references include Cola the Huntsman, for example in the 1086 Doomsday survey but there is little detail beyond that until one comes to the 1600’s, when the now famous Alice Lisle resided here.

After the death of King Charles II (1685) James II succeeded to the Crown but, as most successions were, this was disputed by James, Duke of Monmouth.

On 20 July 1685, a fortnight after the Battle of Sedgemoor, John Hickes, a fugitive belonging to the rebel’s Monmouth’s army, sought refuge at Moyles Court near Ringwood. Dame Alice Lisle consented to shelter him. Hicks brought with him Richard Nelthorpe, also a partizan of Monmouth, and already under sentence of outlawry. The two men passed the night at Moyles Court, and on the following morning were arrested by the King’s men led by Colonel Penruddock.

Dame Alice, denied knowledge of the presence of the men as traitors in the house. Although Dame Alice knew Hickes was wanted she thought this was for religious dissent and not treason. Hence there is evidence to suggest she was simply acting as a good Christian, giving shelter to men in times of need.

Nevertheless, Dame Alice was charged with the treason of harbouring the King’s enemies. During her trial at Winchester the infamous Judge Jeffreys - of the Bloody Assizes - sentenced Dame Alice to be burned at the stake. This only happened after the jury found her innocent three times during the course of the trial. Each time, however, Judge Jeffries refused to accept the verdict. Only after much coercion, and probably in fear for their own lives, the jury found her guilty.
After the intercession of the Clergy of Winchester, James II commuted the sentence to beheading and Alicia was put to the sword on 2 September 1685 in Winchester market square. She was beheaded.

Extracts from her final speech gives us an indication of the person Dame Alice was:

“The crime was” she said “my entertaining a Non-conformist Minister, who is since sworn to have been in the Duke of Monmouth's army. I am told, if I had not denied them, it would not have affected me: I have no Excuse but Surprise and Fear; But I forgive all persons that have wrong'd me; and I desire that God will do so likewise. I forgive Colonel Penruddock, altho' he told me, He could have taken those Men, before they came to my House. I acknowledge his Majesty's Favour in revoking my Sentence; and I pray God he may long reign in Peace, and that the true Religion may flourish under him.”

To the very last we may say that Dame Alice was a lady of grace, humility, dignity, human and Christian virtue. She saw others in need and offered them shelter. She opened her house and heart to them.

Each September we at Moyles Court School celebrate and commemorate the life of Dame Alice Lisle at Elligham Church where her remains still lie. Members of the Parish are most welcome to join us, from 2.30pm on Friday 21st September, 2013.

Many of the features of Moyles Court which Dame Alice would have enjoyed every day here remain, including the hearth plate dated 1674 in the drawing room. Dame Alice used to sit there by the fire of many an evening and she refers to this in her letters.

Alice Lisle’s property was confiscated by the crown following her beheading but was restored to her family in 1688 after the “Glorious Revolution”. In 1721 the Ellingham Estates were given to Edward Lisle, elder brother of Dame Alice’s widower whose descendents sold the estate – including Rockford – to Henry Baring Somerly in the 19th Century.

In the early part of the 19th century, Moyles Court was converted to a farmhouse after being uninhabited for nearly half a century “the house was given up to bats and owls” according to Frederick Fane, a tenant of the Somerly estate charged with the restoration. He noted “some of the panelling said to have been in the chapel attached to the house (now the school dining room) have been restored to the walls.” These panels and some fine contemporary carvings can be seen in various parts of the school, now used as classrooms, the Headmaster’s Study and a gallery upstairs.
Federick Fane wistfully comments in one of his letters that “the history and sad fate of Alicia Lisle will, it is hoped, be preserved in connection with the old house on the borders of the Forest for many generations”.

And of course we at Moyles Court School now are very proud to do just that.

It has been home to some exotic tenants whilst owned by the Somerly estate including Colonel Reginald Barclay and the Duke of Valderano and his family, who in turn leased it to the Streim family who, it is said vacated the premises shortly before the second world war by way of a moonlight flit. Thank goodness none of our boarders did that during the recent school inspection!

In 1940 Moyles Court was requisitioned by the RAF as the station Headquarters of the Ibsley Airfield. Derequisitioned in 1946. Whilst they resided here the officers clearly had time for recreation since they used the lawn for tennis.

Since they left there has been a school at Moyles Court ever since. In 1962 the 53 acre estate was sold at an auction advertised and conducted by Wooley and Wallis. In all 10 lots were sold, including the one containing the current school and the 14 acres which we enjoy today. This building which was listed as having a “Reception Hall, 3 receptions, domestic offices, 6 principle bed and dressing rooms, 3 bathrooms, 6 secondary bedrooms.” Not many bathrooms then compared to modern day standards.

So the seeds of the present school were sown by miss Wilde at a Manor House in Dorset and on her death control passed to the Manor House Trust Ltd, the trustees of which since and today are also the governors of Moyles Court School. I am the ninth Head of this school, the most famous and long serving being Vesper Hunter who oversaw the move of the school here in 1962. She was head for 17 years and it is her vision which most informs the Moyles Court Ethos.

More than anything, Moyles Court is a friendly, welcoming, inclusive school with traditional family values. Quality of education and the learning experience starts with the beautiful grounds and travels through every aspect of a child’s experience here. Qualifications are important and we do that well with 37% of all GCSE grades gained last year being A or A*, well above the national average. Pupils also take more vocational or life skill qualifications including Personal Finance. But perhaps more important is the personal development of children; without the ability to be confident, communicative, engaging and able to work with others and understand their views, it does not matter how many qualifications a young person may have, they are not likely to have a successful and happy adult life in the challenging world we live in. Moyles Court pupils know that manners cost nothing yet will take you far in life.
The school was inspected last in November 2012 and I feel the most valuable comment within the 21 page report was this one:

“Pupils’ moral development is strong. A sense of fairness and justice is demonstrated throughout the school. Throughout the school, pupils show a high degree of tolerance towards others. Pupils of all ages understand the difference between right and wrong, and this promotes a sense of mutual respect for one another as individuals. Pupils are confident in sharing their individual views and are secure in the knowledge that others respect their right to be different. Pupils show a keen sense of fair play. In several age groups, pupils expressed clear moral views regarding charitable giving and showed appreciation of a need to support those less fortunate than themselves.”

We are proud to support local community aims and take these responsibilities seriously as exampled below.

1) Moyles Court School is a registered charity Manor House School Trust Limited Charity No. 307347.
2) The school passed the Charity Commission Public Benefit Test in 2008-2009, the main finding being “We concluded that Manor House School Ltd is a charity and is operating for the public benefit.”
   http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Charity_requirements_guidance/Charity_essentials/Public_benefit/assessmanor.aspx
3) The school is a significant employer of local residents, with 70 full and part-time staff on the payroll.
4) The school provides fee assistance for a significant number of disadvantaged children in the Parish Ringwood and the surrounding area, allowing them to benefit from very good levels of Learning Support and Pastoral Care, as well as a good quality of education. The annual value of this fee assistance is a strong five digit figure. The benefit to local schools from the provision of places for pupils in need of learning support was highlighted as particularly significant in the Charity Commission report.
5) The school has supported for many years and continues to support the Ringwood Town Carnival, as a sponsor.
6) The school has supported and continues to support 1st Poulner Scouts’ fundraising for the Multi Activity Centre in Ringwood by
   a) Sponsoring the Ringwood Rabbit run each year
   b) Providing a free Park and Ride service from the school to the start of the run at the Red Shoot Inn.
   c) Entering teams of pupils and staff for the run each year and raising funds through sponsorship
   d) Providing a marquee and other facilities for a fund raising ball in 2011
7) The school also supports 1st Poulner Scouts via free use of the school minibuses, sports hall and games fields.
8) The school hosts – at no cost - the Ringwood Rotary bike, walk and horse ride each year.
9) Local businesses in are supported as exclusive suppliers to Moyles Court School including Furlong Pine, from whom we purchase all furniture for the boarding houses and have done so for years, New Forest Wine Company, Ringwood Fabrics and others.
10) In addition to these businesses and others, the school engages a significant number of contractors from the area for works at Moyles Court, and has done so for many years.
11) Moyles Court hosts a number of sporting events each year which local schools are invited to and compete at.
12) The school provides work experience placements in Health and Social Care for pupils from local state schools as part of their studies.
13) Parents wishing to send their child to the nursery are able to take advantage of the Government’s Early Years Entitlement (EYE) grant.
14) A number of local groups use the school’s facilities for their meetings and activities.
15) Moyles Court School supports the Ringwood Town Guide each year with a significant advertising inclusion.
16) We have just started a Beavers and Cub Scout group which we are opening to local children as well as Moyles Court pupils from September 2013.

We are all lucky to share a wonderful Parish in a beautiful part of England. I greatly value our links with the local community and feel privileged that Moyles Court School is at the heart of the Parish at this wonderful site.

The Lisle family motto is “Resurgam” which means ‘to rise above’ or ‘to rise again’ and this has been adopted by the school. Given that the house has survived a Civil War, a rebellion, two World Wars and economic recession, anybody who has been associated with Moyles Court can look to the future with much pride and optimism.

Yours sincerely,

Greg Meakin
Headmaster
Moyles Court School  “An educational gem in the heart of the New Forest”
Rockford
Ringwood
Hampshire BH24 3NF
01425 472856
Charity No. 307347
www.moylescourt.co.uk