

# CROWHURST PARK AND THE PAPILLONS



The last 'county' family to own Crowhurst Park was that of Papillon, and effectively the last of those was Pelham Rawsthorn Papillon, of whom more below.

Although there were Papillons in England before the sixteenth century, their connection with the later family remains obscure and very distant – if it exists at all. They were mentioned in connection with William I (1066-1087) and Edward I (1282-1307), but then there is a considerable gap until the Huguenot immigration. Thomas Papillon arrived as early as 1588, during the religious wars in France. He had been Captain of the Guard for the man who inherited the throne in 1589: Henri of Navarre, Henri IV of France, who would become famous for sacrificing his Protestantism to become king ("Paris is worth a Mass") and thus to end the wars.

The Papillons did well in England. Thomas's son David became an expert on fortification and built Papillon Hall in Lubenham, Leicestershire, an unusual octagonal house constructed according to his own theories. He married as his second wife Anne Marie Calandrini, whose family had fled Italy as Protestants. Papillon Hall remained in the family until 1764, and remains the centre of at least two stories of hauntings associated with one of the family. By marriage they inherited the substantial Rawsthorn property at Lexden outside Colchester, where today some of the streets refer to the family and the parish church has memorial windows to them.

Thomas, the eldest son of this marriage, purchased Acrise Park in Kent. Acrise is a sparsely-populated parish south-east of Elham and north of the Channel Tunnel entrance. This Thomas also had a substantial house in Fenchurch Street in the City of London, and his son Philip was baptised in the City in 1660. Philip became MP for Dover in 1701 and remained so until 1720. Like his father he was a prosperous merchant, a member of the Levant Company, and held several public offices. He married well in 1689.

John Rawstorn Papillon, a great-grandson of the Philip above, became the Vicar of Tonbridge in 1791 and then of Chawton in Hampshire in 1802. This village has of course become famous through its connection with Jane Austen, but her family did not arrive there until 1808. There was some closeness between the families, but whether John was about to propose to Jane is not wholly clear. It seems that she expected his proposal but died shortly after putting her expectation into a family letter. Instead, in due course Jane's nephew married John's nephew.

The family continued to prosper. Another Kentish Thomas had married Anne Pelham in 1791. She was the sister of the somewhat unreliable (and sometime certified lunatic) Cresset Pelham (c1769-1838) who was a long-time MP and owner of large houses, one in Shropshire and the other at Crowhurst Park. The Pelham line is too well-known to justify detailed description; suffice to say that it had been in Sussex since the thirteenth century, having probably grown to wealth in Hertfordshire, and was one of the best-known families of the county. Earls of Chichester since 1801, they had their main residence at Stanmer near

Brighton, which they retained until after the second world war when it went to Brighton County Borough Council, and (most of it) later to the new University of Sussex. They had been granted the manor of Crowhurst in 1412. When Cresset died at Mauritius (or rather, when the news of his death arrived much later) the Shropshire house went to one daughter and Crowhurst Park to Anne.

The Papillons already owned houses at Lexden, Acrise and were about to obtain Catsfield Manor, but Crowhurst now became the seat of the family. Thomas's descendant Philip Oxendon Papillon is recorded living there from 1851, and among his family was Pelham Rawsthorn Papillon (1864-1940), who would inherit the house. He attended Winchester College and University College, Oxford, and went on to study law.



This Papillon played a long part in the affairs of the locality, being a magistrate from 1884 to his death – some 56 years, a local record. He and three of his brothers played cricket for Sussex. He dabbled successfully in archaeology.

**Crowhurst Park today**

He wanted a military career and joined the Royal Sussex Regiment. He was promoted Second Lieutenant in 1889, and served in the Boer War of 1899-1902, being promoted to Captain. As a reservist he was one of the first to join up after the declaration of war in 1914, although by then he was already 50. His appointment as temporary Captain in the Essex Regiment was on 2 February 1915. This was a new battalion drawn from West Ham. One report states:

The Volunteers would have got to know Papillon, from that first parade at St Luke's Church, West Ham on February 7th 1915, or over on Wanstead Flats for the initial training sessions - where I imagine he probably showed great 'public school' & Army enthusiasm, gave encouraging speeches and did equally as much hard graft as he expected others to: in other words he 'mucked in'.

The response was enormous: word went around and the West Ham Battalion were overwhelmed with fresh volunteers - so many, in fact, they even considered raising a second "Hammers" Battalion.

His battalion went to the western front, where he was seriously wounded at Delville Wood on the Somme. The citation for his DSO states:

TO THE LONDON GAZETTE, 20 OCTOBER, 1916.

scattered parties in the firing line, repelled a counter-attack, and brought back valuable information.

Temp. Lt.-Col. Pelham Rawstorn Papillon,  
Essex R.

For conspicuous gallantry during operations. When leading his battalion a shell burst in front of him, knocked him down, and cut his eye, but he carried on with the greatest coolness. Next morning another shell severely bruised him and broke the drum of his ear, but he refused to leave his post. He set a fine example to his command.

When the war ended he reformed Crowhurst Cricket Club in 1919. Committed also to West Ham, he renamed one of the properties on his Crowhurst estate Green Street Farm. He was the British Legion Crowhurst Branch President and Battle Branch vice President.

In 1940 his son John inherited Crowhurst Park and, almost inevitably for that time, put it up for sale in 1942: the house itself, a park of 240 acres and four farms. The house became a hotel.

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