
Aspects of Chilham



The Stables In Front Of The Castle

At the head of the old road to Shottenden (enclosed in 1777 within the castle park) stands the castle's 19th century stable block. Across the road is its modern replacement built in 2003/4

Of their predecessors, there are no remains above ground.

We know nothing of the stables in the mediaeval castle, but records do survive of the stables which stood on the castle forecourt until about 200 years ago.

Including coach house, grooms' quarters & granary, the building, shaped like a huge capital F, lay just inside the castle gate. Though convenient for the transfer of its main product to the adjacent gardeners' yard & the kitchen garden beyond, the building's location would have been all too obvious to those in the house when wind blew from the north-east.

Clearly the stables were in the wrong place, but until Thomas Heron bought Chilham in 1774, they were at least screened by an avenue of lime trees between the entrance from the square & the castle's grand gated forecourt.

Influenced by Lancelot "Capability" Brown, Heron preferred an open circular drive. He destroyed the gated forecourt & felled the lime avenue, exposing the nondescript hotch-potch building to stark prominence, spoiling the front prospect of the house & the skyline of the view from the valley below.

Having realised his error, Heron found himself unable to afford the stables' removal. Improvising a cheap alternative, he screened them from Colebrooke's vista (but not from the house) with a clump of trees planted beside the bowling green - the quiet garden as it is now called.

The valuation of the estate made in 1792 for James Wildman, prior to his purchase from Heron reads: *"The whole of the Buildings are in good repair except the Coach-House and Stables, which are too near the House, and probably have been neglected, owing to the removal of them being under consideration"*

Wildman executed the plan, building a new block tucked away behind the keep; enlarged in the 1860s by Charles Hardy, it was sold off years ago & converted to dwellings now called Stable Court.

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June 2008