

Source: Michael B. Petrovich et al., *People in Time and Place: World Cultures*, Silver, Burdett & Ginn, 1991

# **A History of Lords of the Manor Of Eastbourne Medsey (formerly Medes or Meades) Sussex**





## Lords of the Manor of Eastbourne Medsey, formerly Meades, Sussex



**1st Gilbert II**, 4th Baron de l'Aigle (1120)

**2nd Richer**, 5th Baron de l'Aigle (1176)

**3rd Richard**, 6th Baron de l'Aigle (1186)

**4th Gilbert** 6th Baron de l'Aigle  
and Lord of Pebensey (1231)

Who in 1229 founded and endowed

**5th The Augustinian Priory of the Holy  
Trinity** Commonly called Michelham Priory,  
Upper Dicker, Sussex

Which Monastery did hold the Manor until the  
Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1537.



**6th Thomas Cromwell**  
(briefly, 1st Earl of Essex) (1540)

**7th Anne of Cleves**  
(sometime Queen of England) (1537)

**8th Thomas Sackville**,  
1st Baron Buckhurst, created 1st Earl of Dorset  
(1608)

**9th Robert Sackville**,  
2nd Earl of Dorset (1609)

**10th Richard Sackville**,  
3rd Earl of Dorset (1624)



**11th Edward Sackville**,  
4th Earl of Dorset (1632)

**12th Richard Sackville**,  
5th Earl of Dorset (1677)

**13th Charles Sackville**,  
6th Earl of Dorset (1706)

**14th Lionel Cranfield Sackville**,  
7th Earl of Dorset, created 1st Duke of Dorset.  
(1765)

**15th Charles Sackville**,  
2nd Duke of Dorset (1769)

**16th John Frederick Sackville**,  
3rd Duke of Dorset (1799)

**17th George John Frederick Sackville**,  
4th Duke of Dorset (1815)

**18th Elizabeth Sackville-West**,  
Countess De La Warr (1870)

**19th Charles Richard Sackville-West**,  
6th Earl De La Warr (1873)

**20th Reginald Windsor Sackville-West**,  
7th Earl De La Warr (1896)

**21st Gilbert George Reginald Sackville-  
West**,  
8th Earl De La Warr (1915)

**22nd Herbrand Edward Dundonald  
Brassey Sackville**,  
9th Earl De La Warr (1976)

**23rd William Herbrand Sackville**,  
10th Earl De La Warr

Who did, on 18th August 1986, convey the Manor to

**24th Jack Gardener, Esq** (2000)

Whose Lordship was conveyed, via his executors,  
to the **25th**, and Current Lord of the Manor, in  
direct succession:

The Right Reverend  
**Damien Steven Robert Mead**



# Lords of the Manor of Eastbourne Medsey (formerly Medes or Meades), Sussex

## Introduction

**The Lordship of Eastbourne Medsey**, also formerly known as Meades, or Medes, this manor formed one of the four divisions of the ancient parish of Eastbourne. Eastbourne Medsey lies in the area of the town now known as Meads, which is south of the town centre between it and the famous cliffs of Beachy Head. Until the middle of the 19th century this was open country with a few farms. Records show that the downlands known as Bullock Down and South Down were used by the tenants of Medsey to pasture their livestock. Until the town of Eastbourne was developed in the 19th century, this area was distinctly rural. In a description for visitors written in 1858,

Homely Herbert writes

*“...the small village at the foot of the lofty hill through which we are passing in The Meads.; it consists, as you see, of a few scattered houses, inhabited chiefly by farmers and fishermen.”*

As you will see in the following brief history, this description suited the Manor up until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when Eastbourne expanded and enveloped this area.

## History

### Stone Age to Iron Age

There is evidence of a substantial Stone Age settlement in the area which survived the transitions through the Bronze Age to the Iron Age.

### Roman History

Local Romans ruled from their sea view villa and developed the existing farm economy. Roman baths and pavements were exposed in 1712 and 1841 near the site of the Queens Hotel, Marine Parade, Eastbourne, slightly to the north of what became Meades.

## Anglo Saxon Period

Eastbourne circa 500AD. There is reference in the Anglo-Saxon charter to Burne or Bourne. An Anglo-Saxon cemetery overlies the Iron Age settlement on St Anne's Hill where weapons, jewellery, glass and pottery were recovered.

## The Early Manorial System

*From A History of Lordships of the Manor (The Manorial Society of Great Britain Website)*

LORDSHIPS of the Manor are among the oldest titles in England and pre-date the Norman Conquest in 1066.

Historians are not agreed on how the word Manor originated. It has been suggested that it was an import, *manoir*, or perhaps even older, from the Latin, *manerium*. Nor are historians sure whether it was a purely Saxon concept, its origins perhaps lying in the need for self-defence down the east coast against succeeding incursions by Germanic tribes and later Vikings. There was a correspondingly similar development across Western Europe.

They are agreed, however, that the Manor was the pivot of the Feudal System, defined in the 11th century *“by certain ecclesiastics who propounded the theory that human society was divided into three orders, the oratores, the bellatores, and the laboratores: those who protected (the Kingdom) with their prayers and their swords, and those who tilled the earth to support the other two classes”* (Dr A P M Wright, Senior Assistant Editor, VCH writing in the Bulletin of the Manorial Society of Great Britain, 1981).

By the time of Edward the Confessor (1042-66), the Lords of the Manor, be they the local leaders, or some great suzerain, such as Earl Godwinson of Wessex, were the most important person in village affairs, whether it be collecting taxes for the King or dispensing 'high justice', the power to inflict death in his courts.



## The Domesday Book



Historians are also agreed that the Normans institutionalised the Manorial System in The Domesday Book, compiled for William the Conqueror in 1086 and listing 13,418 Manors and their owners.

It was an inventory of the wealth of the new kingdom and a 'list' of the principal landowners. It is still a government document, housed at the National Archives, Kew (formerly the Public Record Office), where it is known as Public Record No 1. The conquerors also introduced the word feudum, from feuum (the Latin form of the Old English feoh, cattle, money, possessions in general); either a landlord's holding, or lands held under the terms of a specific grant.

## The Manorial History of Eastbourne, Sussex

The **Manor of Eastbourne Medsey**, was not mentioned by name in the Domesday Book, however, Eastbourne or East Bourne is mentioned and was divided into three manors at that time, each unhelpfully referred to by the same name.

**The first two Manors of Eastbourne** in 1086 had as The Tenant-in-Chief, (Robert) Count of Eu. They also had the same Lord, Reinbert (The Sheriff). The first was valued at 1 pound in 1086 and consisted of 4 households and ploughland (measured by 3 men's plough teams). The second was valued at 2 pounds 5 shillings in 1086 and consisted of 5 households, 3 Lord's plough teams and one fishery.

**The Third Manor of Eastbourne** belonged to **Count Robert of Mortain**, half-brother to William the Conqueror. It appears to have been the most sizeable having an annual value of 43 pounds 7 shillings in 1086. 79 households, 5.5 Lord's plough teams, 23.5 men's plough teams, meadows running to 25 acres, 1 mill and 16 salt houses.

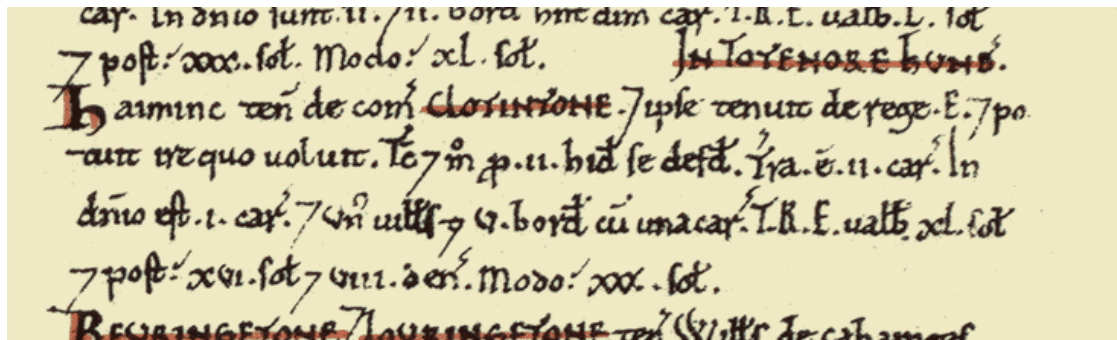
It is possible that this Manor was subdivided into 5 Sub Manors, because the Lords of this Manor in 1086 were listed as Alfred (the

butler); the Castle Wardens; William (of Keynes); Roger the cleric and Count Robert himself.

## Geographical Location of Eastbourne Medsey

There is another contender for the origin of what was to become known as Eastbourne Medsey. **The Manor of Chollington**, occupied the area now known as Meads in Eastbourne. This Manor was also held by **Count Robert of Mortain** as Tenant-in-chief in 1086 and was adjacent to his Eastbourne lands.

The Lord of the Manor in 1086 was **Hemming of Branston**, a local Saxon Lord who had also held the Lordship when the Saxon King Edward was Overlord prior to the Conquest. Although Hemming of Branston is thought to have retained Chollington, he lost his 13 other Manors to the newly arrived Normans.



In The Domesday Book, Chollington was valued at 1 pound 10 shillings in 1086; 16 shillings and 7 pence when acquired by the 1086 owner; although 2 pounds in 1066. (The entry is reproduced above). It consisted of 1 villager (Householder), 5 smallholders, 1 Lord's plough team and 1 men's plough team.

## The Norman Barons de L'Aigle

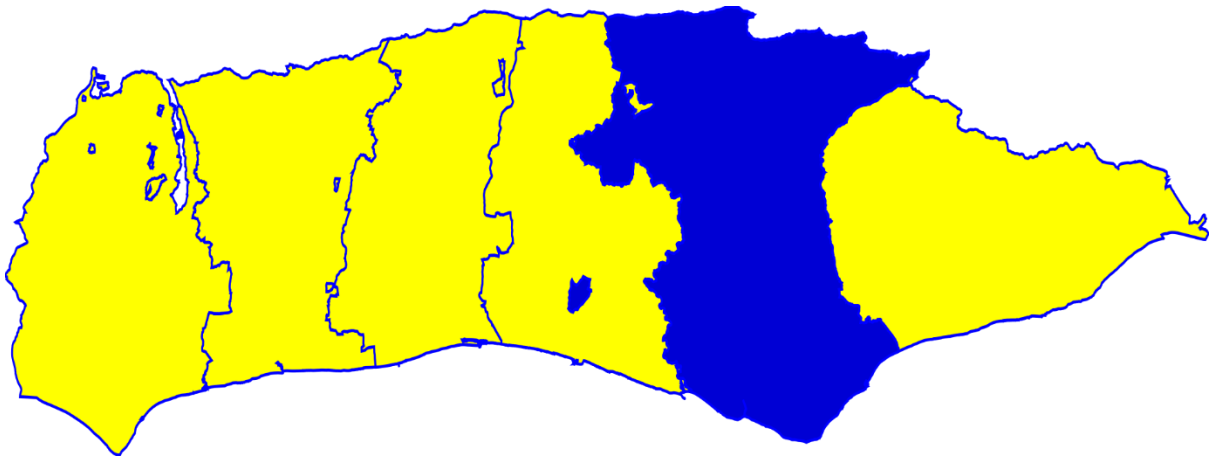


Our story begins with **Engenulphe de l'Aigle (Circa 1010 – 1066)**, who had the unfortunate distinction of being the highest-ranking Norman noble to lose his life during the Battle of Hasting. He died chasing after fleeing Saxons.

Engenulphe's son, **Richard (Richer) de L'Aigle, Seigneur de l'Aigle (1050 – 1085)** lived and died in Normandy. His absences from the newly conquered Kingdom of

England, is perhaps the reason that he was only awarded a couple of English Manors by the victorious William the Conqueror, despite his father's sacrifice.

Richer's son, **Gilbert de L'Aigle, II** (circa 1073 – circa 1120) <sup>1</sup> (Hereafter superscript reference numbers in red denote succession of Lords of Eastbourne Medsey) Conde de Perche, Sieur, de Pevensey, was awarded considerable lands in England including the **Rape of Pevensey**, (**Rape** being the term for a County subdivision – marked blue in the illustration below) from King Henry I of England, as a reward for his loyalty to the King in his struggles with his brother, Robert of Normandy. Gilbert died in the infamous sinking of the White Ship off the coast of Barfleur on 25<sup>th</sup> November 1120 while travelling to England. This was one of the greatest disasters England has ever suffered. In one catastrophic night, the king's only heir William Ætheling (or Adelin) aged 17, and the flower of Anglo-Norman nobility were drowned, and the future of the crown was thrown violently off course.



**The Manor of East Bourne Medes / Meades / Medsey**, which is on the coast, in the middle of the Rape of Pevensey's lands, just north of the promontory now known as Beachy Head, was one of the Manors he received.

Gilbert's son, **Richer de l'Aigle, 5th Baron de L'Aigle** (circa 1090 – 1176) <sup>2</sup> inherited his father's Norman and English possessions, although, initially, Kent Henry I had other plans for his Pevensey lands. Richer was to lose and regain his Norman lands several times due to war with the French King. It was presumably during a visit to administer his English lands that he stayed with Gilbert Becket, a prosperous London

merchant, and became friends with the latter's son, Thomas Becket, the future Archbishop and Saint, who perhaps even served as Richer's notary.

During his lifetime, at various times, he fell in and out of favour with the King, notably when King Stephen took the throne, but was seriously threatened by his cousin and rival, the Empress Matilda, whose son Henry II succeeded Stephen on his death. He lost and regained his Sussex lands a number of times from the King.

### **Richard de l'Aigle** (circa 1100 – circa 1186) <sup>3</sup>

Richer, (Richard) lord of L'Aigle, the son of Richer, would succeed his father, but he and his wife Odelina left little documentary record. He appears to have spent his time primarily in and around his Norman lands. He disappears from English scutage records (a tax levied on knights for service to the King) in the mid-1180s, and is thought to have died around 1186

Richer's son, **Gilbert de L'Aigle** (1170 – 1231) <sup>4</sup>, Lord of Pevensey, inherited his fathers' lands. During his lifetime he had to make a decision as to whether he retained his Norman lands or his English possessions. He opted for England and abandoned his family's Norman lands, including L'Aigle. Gilbert was to die in 1231 having outlived all of his children and his only grandchild, at which time the L'Aigle properties in England reverted to the crown.

## **Michelham Priory, Upper Dicker, East Sussex<sup>5</sup>**



Before his death, Gilbert supplied the land and endowments for the **Augustinian Priory of the Holy Trinity**, which was founded at Michelham, Sussex in 1229. These endowments of the Priory included

**The Manor of Medsey, Sussex.** (Note: The Arms of Michelham Priory are lost to history, there is only a fragment of the Priory's Seal in existence. This Shield displays a generic image depicting the Doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity.)

NB: The Priory is the holder of the Lordship of the Manor, rather than the individual Priors.

The following priors are recorded at **Michelham Priory**

- 1229 Roger
- 1239 Peter
- 1248 Roger (II)
- 1273 William



- 1278 Nicholas
- 1287 Roger (III)
- 1290 Luke de la Gare
- 1302 John de Echingham
- c.1322 William de Shelvestrode
- c.1376 John Leem
- c.1434 William London
- 1438 Laurence Wynchelse
- c.1450 Edward Marley
- 1482 John West
- c.1518 Thomas Holbeme
- 1533 John (the last prior)

## Dissolution under Henry VIII

In 1537, during the reign of Henry VIII, **Michelham Priory** was dissolved. The Priory's lands and property were confiscated to bolster the King's coffers.



When the house was dissolved in 1537 its lands and estates were granted to **Thomas Cromwell**<sup>6</sup>.

Upon Cromwell's fall from grace and execution in 1540 many of his possessions, including it is believed former Manors originally belonging to **Michelham Priory** reverted to the Crown (**Henry VIII**).

They were included in the Settlement made to **Anne of Cleves**<sup>7</sup> upon the annulment of her marriage to Henry VIII.

Upon Anne of Cleves death in 1557 her possessions reverted to the Crown, briefly to **Mary I** and then, in 1558, **Elizabeth I**, which also included the manor of Brighton Michelham.

This Brighton Michelham manor was granted to **Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst**,<sup>8</sup> by Queen Elizabeth, so it seems that **Eastbourne Medsey** was granted to him at the same time. Still later Elizabeth granted him further formal property of Michelham Priory including the remaining buildings.



## The Sackville Family



Born in 1536, Thomas Sackville was the son of Sir Richard Sackville, a first cousin of Anne Boleyn and a privy councillor to Edward VI. Thomas excelled in public finance but was also a poet of some repute. His play, *Gordoduc*, was first performed in 1560 and was a source of inspiration for Shakespeare's *King Lear*. His literary career went hand in hand with his political. He sat as an MP for Westmorland in the 1550s and was employed as a diplomat in

the 1560s. In 1566 he was appointed to negotiate a marriage between the Queen and Archduke Charles of Austria, but this came to nought. He remained a favourite of Elizabeth (often a perilous position) and she was said to enjoy his company. Thomas Sackville Earl of Dorset, was described by a contemporary as "*judicious but yet wittie and delightful*".

In 1567 he was knighted and then created Baron Buckhurst. He was rich, handsome, intelligent, and talented, all attributes which endeared him to the Queen. At this point he began to buy land in his native Sussex.

Like many courtiers his relationship with Elizabeth waxed and waned but he proved himself a steady hand in organising the defence of the vulnerable Sussex coast against the Spanish Armada in 1588.

Lord Buckhurst took his title from his estate at Buckhurst Park in Withyham, southeast of East Grinstead. By the end of the 16th century this had become too small for Sackville and when he was created **1st Earl of Dorset** in 1604 he had moved to Knole, near Sevenoaks, Kent.

### The Earls of Dorset (1604 – 1720)

**Thomas Sackville, 1st Earl of Dorset** (1527–1608)

**Robert Sackville, 2nd Earl of Dorset** (1561–1609)<sup>9</sup>

**Richard Sackville, 3rd Earl of Dorset** (1589–1624)<sup>10</sup>

**Edward Sackville, 4th Earl of Dorset** (1590–1652)<sup>11</sup>

**Richard Sackville, 5th Earl of Dorset** (1622–1677)<sup>12</sup>

**Charles Sackville, 6th Earl of Dorset** (1638–1706)<sup>13</sup>

**Lionel Cranfield Sackville, 7th Earl of Dorset** (1688–1765)<sup>14</sup>

(created **Duke of Dorset** in 1720)

## The Dukes of Dorset (1720 - 1815)



**Lionel Cranfield Sackville, 1st Duke of Dorset** (1688–1765)

**Charles Sackville, 2nd Duke of Dorset** (1711–1769) <sup>15</sup>

**John Frederick Sackville, 3rd Duke of Dorset** (1745–1799) <sup>16</sup>

**George John Frederick Sackville, 4th Duke of Dorset** (1793–1815) <sup>17</sup>

On the death of the fourth Duke in 1815, Much of his estate, including the **Manor of Eastbourne Medsey** was inherited by the late Duke's sister, **Lady Elizabeth Sackville** <sup>18</sup>. (1795 – 1870) She was the wife of **George West, 5th Earl De La Warr**, who assumed the additional surname of Sackville.

## The Earls De La Warr (1815 – 1986)



**Charles Richard Sackville West, 6th Earl De La Warr** (1815–1873) <sup>19</sup>

**Reginald Windsor Sackville, 7th Earl De La Warr** (1817–1896) <sup>20</sup>

**Gilbert George Reginald Sackville, 8th Earl De La Warr** (1869–1915) <sup>21</sup>

**Herbrand Edward Dundonald Brassey Sackville, 9th Earl De La Warr** (1900–1976) <sup>22</sup>





There is a conveyance of the Manor dated the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1963 to the son of the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl de la Warr, **William Herbrand Sackville**, who was to become **10th Earl De La Warr** (1921–1988)<sup>23</sup>

In a survey of the manors held by the 3rd Earl of Dorset in 1613, **Eastbourne Medsey** is included. It continues to be mentioned and accounted for in the Sackville Estate papers into the 20th century. In 1699

for instance, it is recorded in the papers of Mr Medley, the Sackville's steward.

In 1906 it was included in a mortgage of the estate to raise £9,000 for the 8th Earl de la Warr, whose family had inherited the Sackville estate. His father had used **Medsey** in a similar arrangement in 1877.

Throughout the centuries the manor is included in court rolls, rentals, stewards accounts and surveys. A rental of the Duke of Dorset in 1720 noted several rents which emanated from the manor. These included an annual £2 8s 4d from the Bailiff for rents of Assize. Courts, continued to be held into the 19th century, but sporadically.

At a court held for the manor in September 1740 "*Reiner Winter of Pevensey, a cordwainer, was admitted as the tenant of land at Yarborough furlong in **Medsey in Eastbourne** in 2 parcels, formerly Crundens.*"

## Ancient Manors in the Modern World

From the Manorial Society Website: "In 1922, the Government of the day enacted the most thoroughgoing legislation touching property in England and Wales. So far as the Lord of the Manor was concerned, the Law of Property Act abolished copyhold tenure, taking away his right to be Lord of the soil save that which he owned directly. He was compensated and the copyholds were converted on 1 January 1926 into freehold, or 999-year leasehold.

But the Act went on to confirm many of the historic rights, general and special, long enjoyed by the Lord of the Manor: the right to market and fair, mineral excavation (subject to the enfranchisement of the copyhold, the subsoil still belongs to the Lord of the Manor), fishing rights, sporting rights, manorial waste (principally the verges of the road and those areas in rural Manors which do not appear to belong to anyone), common land rights (subject to the Common Land Registration Act 1965), the village green.

Some Lords today can receive substantial sums (known as wayleaves) for the footings of windmills on wind farms, since these 300 or 400ft machines require footings considerably deeper than the topsoil (3ft) owned by the landowner. Other Lords operate markets or grant the right to a market operating company for a fee. Still other Lords, where they do not own the land – although needing the cooperation of the freeholder, can employ mineral excavation companies to take out gravel, sand, limestone, granite if the subsoil contains a commercially exploitable deposit.

The operable historic rights associated with their Manor must be legally established by each Lord or an intending purchaser. To recapitulate, those relating to Manors in the past included:

*The right to hold market and fairs*

*The right to common land and manorial waste*

*The right to all the usual manorial incidents such as merchets, heriots, wardships, tolls, and escheats, pickage, stallage, turbary, and pannage*

*The rights to mines and quarries within the Manor*

*Fishing rights*

*Rights of free warren, free chase, and free forest*

*Timber rights*

*Rights over rivers and foreshore.*

## Legal Position

UNDER the laws of real property in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Irish Republic, Lordships of the manor are known as ‘estates in land’ and in Courts, where they may crop up in cases to do with real property, they are often simply called ‘land’.

They are ‘**incorporeal hereditaments**’ (literally, property without body) and are defined from the English and Welsh point of view in Halsbury’s Laws of England,

vol viii, title Copyholds, which is available in most solicitors' offices or central reference library.

It is perhaps obvious to state, but for the avoidance of doubt, *real* property is property capable of physical possession, such as a house, a field, a forest, a painting, furniture, and so forth.

*Incorporeal property* is incapable of physical possession. As already noted, Lordships of the Manor are incorporeal property ('incorporeal hereditaments' - literally property without body). Other forms of incorporeal property, with which readers might be more familiar, are copyright, patents, and intellectual property rights."

### **The Current Lord of the Manor of Eastbourne Medsey, (formerly Meades), Sussex**

On 18<sup>th</sup> August 1986, The Manor of Eastbourne Medsey (Formerly Meades) was conveyed by **William Herbrand Sackville, 10th Earl De La Warr** to **Jack Gardener, Esq.** <sup>24</sup>. In 2000 Mr Gardener died, and his estate passed, via his executors, to the current Lord:



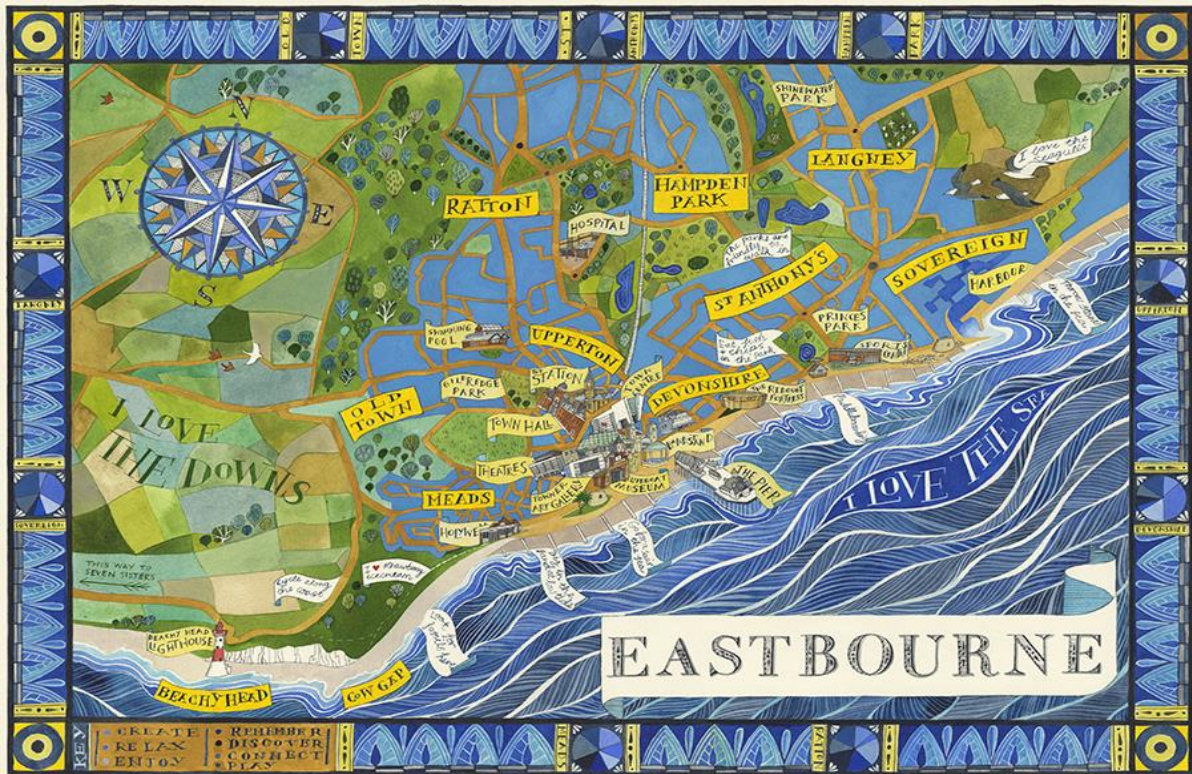
The Right Reverend  
**Damien Steven Robert Mead**

*KStG, DipTh, Hon.DD, FVCM(Th).  
Honorary Kentucky Colonel & Aide de Camp to  
the Governor of Kentucky, USA.*

**25<sup>th</sup> Lord of Eastbourne Medsey.**







Copyright to the above map is being verified

## Notes:

As the reader will see from the history above, Eastbourne has at various times been divided, and possibly subdivided, into different Manors. The history of the Manor of Eastbourne Medsey, before it came into the hands of Lord Buckhurst (Thomas Sackville) in the 16th century is complicated by the existence of a second Manor in the area also sometimes also referred to as Meads, which belonged to the Cavendish family, the Dukes of Devonshire, who were the power behind the expansion and development of Eastbourne as a holiday resort in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, an estate rental held at East Sussex Record Office (AMS/ 7072/3/1/5) notes payments of heriots made by freeholders in the manor, including one from the Duke of Devonshire, who paid 6s on presentment of three freehold tenements at the court of 1860. This clearly indicates that the Duke was a free hold tenant of this (Sackville) manor as well as owning his own Manor(s) in the same district.

Many of the manors held in the area by the Sackville family were granted to them after the estates of the Bishops of Chichester were seized by Queen Elizabeth I, but Eastbourne Medsey appears to have formed part of the estate of Michelham Priory and became separated from the Priory at the Dissolution.

## Documents associated with this manor in the public domain

1571-1668: survey, annotated to 1668 British Library

1613: estreats, with other manors (1 vol) Kent History and Library Centre

1618: rental, with 17th cent copy

1654-1656: rental

1656: list of quit rents

1618-1619: rental of demesne leases, with other manors East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office (ESBHRO)

1682: rental

1751: minutes

1829: rental, with other manors

The documents above are referenced as “*Eastbourne Medsey Sackville Manor*” in the records to avoid confusion with the Duke of Devonshire’s Manor of the similar name which are referenced “*Eastbourne Medsey Burton Manor (Cavendish)*” or “*Eastbourne Medsey otherwise Lamport, Clapham otherwise Chambers, Meads otherwise Brode and Sessingham otherwise Sands. Devonshire Manors*”

Compiled by the current

Lord of Eastbourne Medsey, 2022

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