

THE HISTORY OF PRESTED HALL

Prested Hall in the Snow 1928

When Mike and I first visited Prested Hall in 1994, writes Celie Parker, it had been empty for seven years and was forlorn and virtually derelict. It was owned by the Sherwood family, (who continue to live and farm locally), but they had been forced to move out in 1939 when the Hall was requisitioned by the army, and had never moved back at the end of the war.

Prested (variously known as Prestwood, Perested, Peresteda and Porsted) has ancient origins. The first known named occupant was one Bricmar (or Bricmarus) and, in 1086, the Domesday Book tells us that the owner of Peresteda was Ralph Peverell, who had two beehives, a mare and a foal. After his son Brien, came Nicholas Engaine of Colne Engaine, politician and Sheriff of Essex and Herts.

The Weston family lived at Prested for many years. Michael was the first, followed, in 1258, by his son Humphrey de Persted. Eventually, the estate passed, by marriage, to the Tindall family of Great Maplestead in 1678. At this time, the manor of Prested Hall was described as having “appurtenances and divers lands and tenements in Feering, Messing, Inworth”.

In very early times Prested was referred to as one of Feering’s “two capital maners”, and by the late 18th century it had become a “mansion-house”, so was always a house of some standing. As for its age, English Heritage visited in the 1990s and identified roof timbers dating back to the 15th century.

In the 19th century the local area was known for its seed production, and Nathaniel Newman Sherwood, partner of the Hounsitch seed company Hurst and Sons, was a regular visitor to his trial grounds in Feering. He decided to buy Prested Hall for weekend parties, but soon moved the family full time from Streatham to Prested, in 1890.

Visitors at that time would have enjoyed lots of shooting, lawn tennis, good meals, laughter and musical evenings. Edward, the younger of Nathaniel’s two sons, was a talented musician and wrote and conducted for Hurst’s Music Society, and the company cricket team famously defeated Sutton Seeds on the lawn at Prested in 1895. In 1912, Nathaniel celebrated the 50th anniversary of his association with Hurst’s with a large garden party at Prested. The staff from the Feering trial grounds gathered with the London staff, who were collected from the station in farm wagons.



A bit of Prested’s fine stained glass



The two Sherwood children in the brougham in front of Prested Hall, at The General Election in 1929