

ANCIENT IFIELD



Two thirds of a mile east of the church is another medieval moated site; Ewhurst Place just off of modern day Ifield Drive.

The name Ewhurst ("Yew Wood") is one of the area's oldest farm names, first documented in a taxation document of 1247 awarding the tithes of Ewerthe to Rusper Priory, and the site may have originally had a smaller outer ditch which could have pre-dated the main moat. Various members of the Ewhurst family (hereditary surnames didn't widely exist until the late 14th century and given names were embellished with reference to their farm or their trade; the original source of many surnames that we still see today) were recorded locally in the medieval period, including William, who was dealing with 1/2 yardland (a land tax unit) in Ifield in 1273, Thomas, who was taxed in Ifield in 1332 and another William who held a 'quarter fee' in Ifield in 1368, a fee (or 'fief', from where we derive fiefdom) being a unit of land deemed sufficient in size and productivity to support a knight! In 1447 a William Sidney was farming 800 acres at Ewhurst in Crawley and elsewhere. Whilst no physical evidence of a previous building on the site has ever been discovered (though the Victoria County History of Sussex suggests foundations from an earlier building exist in the northern section of the moat) it is clear from documentary evidence that Ewhurst has existed since at least the 13th century and, indeed, most moated sites date from between 1250 and 1350.

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