

# History of Ashton Court Estate

The first owners of Ashton Court Estate, as we know it, was the family “de Lions”, originally from Lyons in France.

In 1495, the estate changed hands and was bought by John Smyth, a wealthy merchant from Bristol. However, he never took up residence at Ashton Court Estate and it was the later Smyths who developed the estate to its present appearance. Thomas Smyth, MP built the new south facade in 1632 and Sir John Hugh Smyth built the Neo-Gothic North West Wing in 1770 after demolishing the medieval domestic wing.

Clever marriages, land investments, mining and overseas trading secured the estate for over 400 years in the hands of the Smyths. They became one of the wealthiest families in the area and were far away from the original hard-working merchant John Smyth, living in Small Street, Bristol.

During the 1st World War, Ashton Court Estate was used as a military hospital and in WWII Ashton Court Estate was acquired by the War Office as a transit camp.

In 1946, Dame Esme Smyth, the last resident of Ashton Court Estate, died and the mansion and estate remained abandoned for 13 years before it was purchased by Bristol City Council in 1959.

Since 1959, Bristol City Council has restored sections of the mansion. More recently, Ashton Court Estate benefited from an extensive landscape restoration project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Bristol City Council.