

The 16th century dovecote sits behind the Turf Labyrinth. Labyrinths were particularly popular garden features in medieval times. The reason behind them is unknown, although they may have been used as an aid to meditation as they were walked.



Originating in the Mediterranean, the wild *Peony mascula* flowers for just one week of the year, in May or June in Britain.

HOME WITH HISTORY

The Manor is sited opposite the Church of St Mary and All Saints, on slightly elevated ground. Both buildings date from the early 13th century, constructed from the honey-coloured stone typical of the area. Each replaces an earlier Saxon construction.

For centuries, Nassington has been recognised as a strategic location. The navigable, meandering River Nene provided easy access to the sea, while Peterborough, Oundle and Stamford are each approximately 10 miles away. Ermine Street, the ancient route between London and York, is less than three miles away. Archaeological and documentary evidence suggest a Roman farmstead was probably built on the same site.

In the Domesday Book of 1086, Nassington was described as belonging to the King, and valued at £30, with 2 hides of land, enough for 16 ploughs. There were 24 villagers, two smallholders, a priest and two mills. In the early 12th century, King Henry I gave the Manor and some land to the Bishop of Lincoln for the endowment of a prebend. This is an estate belonging to the church, usually granted to a cleric in high office to provide him with income. The cleric would be described as a prebendary and the estate as prebendal. The Manor would have included a Great Hall, where local disputes relating to the Manor were tried and settled in a court of law.

In the mid 16th century, Elizabeth I sold all her land in Nassington and nearby Fotheringhay. This may have been designed to distance herself from the area and its connection with her cousin Mary, Queen of Scots. The latter was imprisoned and executed at nearby Fotheringhay Castle.

Apart from a brief period during the English Civil War, the Manor remained in church ownership until 1836. At this time, an Act of Parliament finally dissolved the Nassington prebend. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners sold the Manor and its grounds to private owners.



Vineyards were not uncommon in medieval England, with the Domesday Book listing 42. The vines at the Manor are 'Madeleine Angevine', a sweet, citrus-flavoured grape, which can be eaten or used to make wine. They are underplanted with sweet rocket, *Hesperis matronalis*, its leaves edible but bitter. The lilac and white flowers were valued in medieval times for perfuming, and as a salad ingredient.