

## Kent & East Sussex

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KENT

### Ightham Mote, the final phase of repair begins...

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This medieval, timber-framed, moated house has had a complex structural history. This has been painstakingly studied through careful archaeological survey during the course of a major repair programme, which began in 1989. Peter Leach, consultant archaeologist, reports on the most recent discoveries

#### **The Great Hall and Stair Hall**

Conservation of the great hall and stair hall, completed at the beginning of 2002, confirmed the postulated primary kitchen plan (*National Trust Archaeological Review* no. 7) as correct. It also confirmed that a two-storey, probably framed porch (rare in Kent), once existed. Of new features found the most important relate to the roof and windows. The crown-purlin roof, with soot deposits, had evidence of great heat in the centre, the purlin and other members being badly charred; the purlin itself is probably a replacement. Another feature relates to the internal gable end structures, with two arch-braces running from a cranked beam at purlin



*Ightham Mote, interior courtyard, looking northwards.*

ANDREW BUTLER/NTPL



*Scotney Old Castle with the moat in the foreground.*

STEPHEN ROBSON/NTPL

level down to and apparently supported by timber corbels c3 metres above the floor. Dismantling of the roof showed the 'corbels' to be carved terminals of posts hanging from the roof. No similar examples of this are known. The cranked beams of the gable ends carried carved faces, that at the 'high' end of the hall rather regal, and at the 'low' end, a 'green man'. Can this be significant?

Windows of medieval halls are commonly set regularly in each bay. This is not so here, where the remains of a primary window, the twin of one still existing, showed the two windows to be side by side. They share their arch springing with the corbel of the stone arch, dividing the hall into two unequal bays, and creating a powerful and unusual architectural feature. The doors of the hall, of plank construction, are probably primary, c1337, and as such, rare survivals. The stair hall was disappointing; although a primary element, it has undergone many alterations that could not be dated. The 'grand staircase' of Jacobean form, was clearly assembled from three or four different stairs, source unknown. On the other hand, the source of posts supporting the landing is known. These posts, octagonal and showing evidence of mortices for braces, are heavily abraded at the bottom, showing signs of extreme wear. Similar posts, with braces, create an arcade in the visitors' lavatories, previously the stables. The stairs and landing were evidently a cut-price job!

#### **Building symposium at Ightham Mote**

With so much now known of the house, a symposium, attended by specialists in the history of such buildings, was convened in October 2001 to discuss its overall development. Many useful points were made. It was clear however that there must have been more primary buildings on the

north-east of the site for which all evidence is lost. The final phase of conservation of the house started early this year (2002) and should be finalised in 2004, thus completing this important conservation project for the house.

### Scotney Castle, historic landscape survey

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The restrictions and closures as a result of Foot and Mouth Disease had an inevitable impact on archaeological projects in the Region. Nevertheless, a major historic landscape survey was undertaken by Dr. Nichola Bannister and delivered during 2001 for one of its most significant mansion properties in Kent, the Scotney Castle estate. The results of this may be used to feed directly into management plans, countryside stewardship schemes and, potentially, whole farm plans. It will also provide a valuable resource for possible interpretation strategies and learning projects. A further, short report was also produced to provide recommendations for archaeological mitigation for the property in response to potentially damaging works relating to the Lamberhurst bypass proposals.

#### **Background**

Located within the High Weald on the Kent / Sussex border, Scotney's park and gardens were created by Edward Hussey III as part of the modernisation of an ancient manorial estate which had its origins in the eleventh century AD. Christopher Hussey, former editor of 'Country Life' and well-known author on architecture and the 'Picturesque' movement bequeathed the estate to the National Trust in 1970. The focus of this recent survey was not on the house and parkland, but on the landscape, which surrounds them and provides their historic setting and context.

### **Early history**

Scotney took its name from the family who possessed the small manor in the eleventh century. The manor of Courtehope as it was then called was carved from a Jutish den belonging to the lathe and subsequent manor of Hollingbourne. It was a remote manor set in the heart of the Weald, but this did not deter its tenants-in-chief from gradually raising its local status. When the Grofhursts came into possession in the early fourteenth century, John de Grofhurst created a deer park and built a chapel at the manor. It already had a mill recorded in 1285, but it was Roger Ashburnham who made the lasting impression by enlarging the moat and building a castle, a fore-runner to nearby Bodiam. By the time the Darells inherited the property by marriage, the need for castles was over and William Darell substantially rebuilt Scotney in c1630. Like the Castle, the Tudor house was not completed, owing to lack of funds, although some further modifications by George Darell took place in 1720. It was probably in the early seventeenth century that the deer park was disemparked. This may have been ordered by the Parliamentarians in the Civil War, as the Darells were staunch Roman Catholics.

### **Medieval mill site; industrial remains; hoppers' huts and squatters' settlement**

Despite the major landscaping and land use changes designed for Edward Hussey III by Gilpin in the nineteenth century, the park and woodlands preserve many archaeological features. Fragments of the Medieval and Tudor landscape survive as earthworks and possibly as buried deposits. The likely site of the medieval mill was identified on the Sweetbourne, located by field-name and earthwork survey. The medieval deer park pale still remains extant along the National Trust's northern property boundary, part of which will be lost to the proposed A21 Bypass route. Former medieval wood banks were identified in Kilndown, bounding the old coppices, which Edward Hussey III grubbed out. Saw pits and charcoal hearths are also a common feature in the Scotney Woods. In Colliers Wood, which takes its name from the making of charcoal for the iron industry, the remains of brick works, where the bricks for the Tudor and later extensions to the Castle were probably made, lie buried in undergrowth. On the former site of Kilndown Common the building platforms and enclosures of squatters' cottages lie hidden in the chestnut and conifer plantations,



*Built in 1199 as the Church of the Commandery of the Knights Hospitallers and used until the monasteries were dissolved in 1540, it was later converted into a house with private chapel.*

A.F. KERSTING/NTPL

which provided poles for the hop industry. Chingley manor pound survives as a rectangular enclosure adjacent to one of these farmsteads.

At Little Scotney Farm there are extensive remains of the hop industry, which once flourished in this part of Kent and Sussex. An intact tar tank is still used for preserving the ends of poles, whilst an almost complete hop pickers' camp is currently undergoing maintenance work for better presentation for visitors.

At first glance Scotney Castle Estate appears to be essentially a picturesque nineteenth-century landscape, an important and complete example of its type, yet within it, the Tudor and medieval landscapes still lie preserved and readily identifiable. The property contains some important archaeological sites of considerable potential. There is also further scope for more research in the Hussey Family archives to build up a picture of a Kentish working Wealden Estate in the Victorian period.

#### OTHER PROJECTS

(KENT)

### **Scotney Castle estate Lamberhurst bypass**

Following the compilation of the archaeological & historic landscape survey, a short document was commissioned to assess the potential impact of the Lamberhurst bypass proposals on the

historic environment of the estate. Mitigation strategies were recommended (Dr Nicola Bannister).

### **Old Castle Moat repairs**

Watching brief was provided on repairs and repointing to two separate sections of the moat wall of the Old Castle during July 2001 (Archaeology South East).

### **St John's Jerusalem**

Watching brief was provided for repairs to drainage system within the garden. (Canterbury Archaeological Trust).

(EAST SUSSEX)

### **Winchelsea**

Continuing representation by the Archaeological Adviser on the steering group for the English Heritage 'Archaeological Assessment of Winchelsea'. Draft versions of the Extensive Urban Survey and Quarter by Quarter Analysis of the town were produced. These will be finalised and presented early in 2002. Monograph to be delivered towards end of 2002.

Major repairs to the town walls and St John's Hospital Gable were suspended owing to delays caused by the Foot & Mouth epidemic.