

# THE COCKPIT

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The Cockpit, on Chislehurst Commons, has been the traditional meeting place for the Chislehurst people on all great occasions from time immemorial

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## Scadbury Special



*Scadbury Hall, c. 1960, view of south end roof.*

It has been a long time since we heard anything about Scadbury, for which the Editor must take the blame. This report reviews most of the interesting discoveries and developments made since 2007, and also takes a backward glance at some history. Scadbury, remote though it may appear, especially to those who live in the High Street area, is nevertheless a highly significant factor in the history of Chislehurst. We are grateful to Orpington & District Archaeological Society (ODAS) for permission to raid their quarterly journal, *Archives*, for news of this fascinating area of the parish, and for their helpful advice regarding this article. Any reader eager to find out more is recommended to consult the ODAS website at [www.odas.org.uk](http://www.odas.org.uk) Copies of *Archives* are available at the Bromley Local Studies Library.

*Go online to the Society's website at [www.chislehurst-society.org.uk](http://www.chislehurst-society.org.uk)*

## Scadbury Before the Twentieth Century

To set the scene for this update, some preliminary history might be of interest. Scadbury appears to have been settled originally in the late 12th century by the De Scathebury family. There was almost certainly a timber-framed moated house at that time, but it has not survived. We have no drawings or paintings of the old house, only written records in the form of inventories made after the Walsinghams left, about 1655. The first, in the time of its new owner, Sir Richard Bettenson, was a detailed valuation of the mansion and estate, which included a sum of £800 for ‘*Repairs and new built since the purchase*’. Much later, in 1727, there was an inventory of the contents of the house, room by room, and lastly, made in 1734, following the death of Sir Edward Bettenson, an estate



*Hall roof after fire damage, revealing tie beam and crown post.*

agent’s valuation in which the house was described as ‘*A large old timber building of no value more than as old materials*’. Scadbury’s new owner, the Honourable Thomas Townshend, demolished the old house about 1738, intending to rebuild it, but the death of his young wife in 1739 deterred him and he moved to Frognal. Scadbury was left to become an island wilderness in the heart of an already ancient farm.

## The Reconstructed Manor House on the Island

What we see today at the moated site is a rather confusing mixture of ancient and modern. There is genuine brickwork from the mid-15th-century and a certain amount of reconstruction using old bricks, attempted in the early 1920s by the Lord of the Manor, Hugh Marsham-Townshend, who came with his family to live in a large Victorian house that had been developed from a Tudor gatehouse

by the moated site. Hugh enlarged the house, improved the grounds and did a great deal of clearing up on the moated site. He had known the island site as a boy, and was fascinated by it. He made it into a garden, rebuilt much of the collapsed brickwork, and scored concrete with lines to look like stonework. He wanted to re-create something of what Scadbury manor house might have been, but in the process of tidying up the old foundations he probably unwittingly destroyed much archaeological evidence.

In the 1930s the Cray valley was being developed as an industrial estate along a new road between Foots Cray and Orpington. About 1936 Manor Farm in St Mary Cray was to be demolished. It stood by the railway line, where the Nugent Shopping Centre is located now. Philip Street, the grandson of the celebrated Victorian architect George Edmund Street, saw the farmhouse and photographed it before and after demolition. He told Hugh Marsham-Townshend about it, and many of the ancient timbers were brought to Scadbury and were reassembled on what seemed likely to have been the site of the original

hall. Because they appeared to fit this space so well in length and breadth, and perhaps also because the quality of finish of the tie beams and crown posts spoke of something other than an ordinary farmhouse, Hugh began to theorise that perhaps they were the original timbers from Scadbury, taken down to St Mary Cray and used to build Manor Farm. His own words defined his idea: ‘The intention has been to re-erect a Manorial Hall of the 14th century, such as might reasonably be expected to have occupied this site at that period, hoping that the bulk of the material now used may in fact be the original material used on the same site.’ That was his sincere belief, but later archaeological evidence proved that what



*Dismantling Hall Roof, 1987. Richard Harris nearest camera.*

became Manor Farm was originally the Manor House of Sandling Manor, and had always been on that site.

Hugh's restored old manor house was his refuge and also served as a local meeting place at various times. After his death in 1967, his only surviving son John, born in 1905, became Lord of the Manor. He died in November 1975 and in January 1976 the big house near the moat was destroyed by fire. In the same month, Thomas Bushell, the well-known Chislehurst historian, died. It was also at this time that Orpington & District Archaeological Society came into being.

### ODAS' 30 Years of Activity in the Cray Valley

**I**n October and November 2005 there was a 'People of Scadbury' exhibition in the Bromley Museum celebrating 30 years of ODAS' activity in the Cray Valley area. The Society was founded in 1975 to try to do something about the numerous ancient artefacts that were being unearthed following the rapid development of the Cray valley at that time. Every period from the Old Stone Age onward was represented. Before Bromley Borough purchased the Scadbury estate, thus recognising its immense historical and environmental importance, ODAS conducted a survey of the island in 1982. It had become badly overgrown, and a veritable jungle had to be cleared. Scadbury Park was opened to the public in 1985, and in April 1986 excavation of the moated site began and is still continuing. Five detailed reports are now available, relating to various areas of the island and surrounding land, and at fairly regular intervals a short history of Scadbury Manor is updated for sale. (Please see the ODAS website for details).



*General view of  
island from south  
west, 1991.*

*New Trail signboard funded  
by the Chislehurst Society.  
The paving stones behind  
cover a 12th century trench.*



After excavation had begun it was decided to dismantle the ruins of Hugh's Manorial Hall. Because the whole structure was unsafe, and because of its potential historical importance, the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum at Singleton in Sussex, came in November 1987 and dismantled the whole of the remains. Richard Harris, a leading specialist on ancient timber buildings, supervised this work. The most important timbers were taken away for assessment and possible preservation. Mr Harris found no evidence to support Hugh Marsham-Townshend's theory about the movement of the timbers, which were dated to 1371. More recently, ODAS members discovered an 18th-century estate plan of Sandling Manor, or 'St Lyne Oakmere' as it was styled on the plan, which suggested the correct identification of Manor Farm as the Manor House. (See *Archives*, Vol 28 No.3, pp.57-8, with a colour reproduction of the plan.)

Also on the island, and still to be seen, is a former apple store, which was part of a scheme for commercial fruit growing, which Mr Marsham-Townshend started at Scadbury in the 1920s. This building is now used to store ODAS equipment.

## **Fortress Scadbury in World War II**

The last news of any significance from Scadbury, which appeared in the Spring 2006 *Cockpit*, was about some of the work done during the 2005 season, mainly relating to the Second World War bunker that still remains near the moated site. Summer 2007 *Cockpit* included a very brief piece that mentioned investigation of the associated trench system in the woods nearby. These trenches were difficult to trace because of the extensive growth of trees that had covered the site. Elsewhere, smaller trenches along the drive, and what appeared to be a small gun emplacement



*Air raid shelter,  
2009. Is the  
mound some sort  
of gun placement?*

site with surrounding trenches, were also found. This emphasises one of the main problems of this complex site; it is akin to a large garden, which needs constant attention to prevent it from reverting to primeval woodland. A wary eye must also be kept upon the brickwork, much of which shows signs of serious deterioration.

### **Dating Scadbury Manor**

**A**rchaeological evidence from fragments of pottery found in a 13th-century drainage ditch on the island suggests that the moat and the original house are of late 12th- or early 13th-century, i.e. the late 1100s or early 1200s. (*Archives*, Feb 2007 refers to the conclusion of this excavation in 2006). The people who took their name from the place, and styled themselves ‘De Scathebury’, that is ‘of Scathebury,’ are probably the family who lived there. This was a common form of personal name at that time. ‘Scathebury’ is a more accurate rendering of the Anglo-Saxon name than ‘Scadbury’, and appears to be a reference to the shadowy, tree-covered hilltop as it might have been seen from the Cray valley.

The Walsingham family purchased a lease on the estate in 1424. It is clear that Thomas Walsingham II considerably improved the moated house in the 1460s. Webb’s *History* arrived at this conclusion in 1899, and ODAS have confirmed this in their report (*Excavations at Scadbury*, Part 1, October 2000, by Dr Alan Hart), reflecting that ‘the second Thomas Walsingham is usually credited with the rebuilding of Chislehurst parish church (Webb et al., 1899)’ and ‘It would be consistent with the present archaeological evidence that substantial rebuilding work on the moated area may also have taken place about then.’

*Remains of cellars:  
roofed Undercroft in  
rear, flooded cellar in  
foreground. Much  
of the brickwork was  
restored by Hugh  
Marsham-Townsend  
in 1930s.*



### Survey of the brickwork at Scadbury

**B**rickwork forms a large part of what can be seen at Scadbury, not only on the island but also on the land surrounding it. The Western wall of the island that formed the smartest side of the Manor house had been dated to about the middle of the 15th century, and there were other areas of a similar age. Hugh Marsham-Townshend restored some of this brickwork in the 1920s, but he used cement mortar, not the traditional lime mortar. Much of this old brickwork had collapsed. The ODAS ‘Thursday Group’ of workers have been doing urgent repairs with carefully compounded lime mortar, but they cannot possibly tackle all that needs to be done. Full repair would need major work costing many tens of thousands of pounds. A bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund may be the only way of securing this. ODAS is working with the Council to see what can be done. In the meantime, ODAS members are clearing vegetation from the brickwork so that it can be photographed as a preliminary to a survey. (*Archives*, August 2010, by Janet Clayton and November, by Val Satterthwaite.)

### Restoration of ‘The Avenue’

**A**s we have seen, the last resident Lord of the Manor, John Marsham-Townshend, lived in a large Victorian house on the ‘mainland’ near the moated site. Near the house a Tudor archway in the garden wall led to a grassy area extending to the moat. The house was destroyed by fire in January 1976, and the archway suffered



*Restored section  
of causeway seen  
in 2009.*

badly from old age and vandalism. ODAS began to excavate the grassed area and discovered a cobbled causeway, believed to be of 17th-century date, possibly relating to the Bettenson family who succeeded the Walsinghams. This ornate causeway, of cobbles and coloured stone pieces laid in semicircles and dubbed 'The Avenue' by ODAS, has now been uncovered and a section of it has been restored to something like its original state. An earlier causeway was discovered beneath it, and it seems likely that Queen Elizabeth's feet trod this earlier path when, in July 1597, she visited her servant Thomas Walsingham and knighted him for services rendered to her and the country. This scene is depicted on the Village Sign in Royal Parade, designed by the Bushell family, and the image of the moated house on it is derived from Ightham Mote, as there are no known drawings of the original house. Elsewhere in this particular area, a Tudor surface has been found beneath the later built-up surface. (*Archives* for May 2009 covers the excavation, (mostly just photographs), with a long article by Alan Hart in the Nov 2007 edition, with drawings and photographs).

### **Scadbury Silver Jubilee: a year-long celebration**

**S**cadbury Nature Reserve, which had been officially opened to the public on 30 April 1985, marked its Silver Jubilee in 2010. Cllr Richard Foister, the newly appointed Mayor, officiated at the ceremony by planting a tree. A year later, in 1986, at the end of his term, he formally opened the moated site to the archaeologists.

Councillor Julian Benington, who holds the portfolio for Renewal and Recreation that covers Scadbury, was keen to ensure that the public should know more about

the Scadbury Nature Reserve and the moated site within it. ODAS suggested this might be achieved if the Council commemorated the Silver Jubilee of the opening of the Reserve. The Council agreed, and organised a tree-planting on Saturday 19 June by the current Mayor, Cllr George Taylor, to which representatives from the Council, the Friends of Scadbury, ODAS, the Chislehurst Society, Mr and Mrs Hamblin (who are the tenant farmers at Scadbury), Council officials and many others, were invited. The visitors then went back to the TrEE centre, for refreshments. On display there were ODAS panels about the history of Scadbury, and panels about biodiversity and the work of the Friends of Scadbury. Later, the Mayor and Mayoress and other visitors were given a tour of the manor site, where they saw the new Scadbury Trail information panels made by ODAS and financed by a grant of over £2000 from the Chislehurst Society.

During the May half-term week, ODAS put on an exhibition to celebrate the Silver Jubilee, 'Scadbury: History in the Landscape', in Bromley Museum at The Priory, Orpington. The Deputy Mayor, Cllr Ruth Bennett, attended a private view at the Museum. ODAS also organised a History Walk at Scadbury in April.

The Silver Jubilee was a major theme of ODAS' Open Weekend at Scadbury on 11th and 12th September 2010. There were 441 visitors, more than in recent years, and sales of publications and refreshments did well.

It was a satisfactory conclusion to a very good year, and public awareness seems to have been raised. This includes Councillors' awareness too. In recent years ODAS has been fortunate to receive a small grant to help with their work at Scadbury and they are keen to ensure that Councillors understand how the money has been used, and what more remains to be done, for this ancient site is definitely something of a jewel in Bromley's crown!

### *Restoration of the Shepherd's Hut*

**T**his interesting relic of bygone days had stood alone and forlorn, in a field beside the drive from Perry Street, rather remote from the moated site and farm, a target for vandals, even at some time occupied by someone sleeping rough. It is not certain that this particular one was used as a shepherd's hut; it is known that it was used as a gamekeeper's hut in the 1920s, but it is probably older than that, and it is very likely that it was originally a shepherd's hut, which was recycled for use by the



*Hut as restored by ODAS members. Thanks to Janet Clayton for the photograph.*

gamekeeper when Scadbury no longer had much in the way of sheep, because of the conversion to commercial fruit growing. The Scadbury archive records of the 1830s refer to a shepherd's hut on wheels, though that is probably not the one that has been restored. It is constructed of wood with corrugated iron side panels, and a domed roof, and is on wheels for mobility. There is a good restored example of one at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, at Singleton in Sussex. First it was moved nearer to the island, in August 2009, hoisted aboard a low-loader lorry, so that the farmer, Neil Hamblin, could keep a better eye on it. Bromley Council paid for the move. (*Archives*, Nov 2009). ODAS treated it as an archaeological specimen, trying to find out what they could about its history, and members practised their DIY skills on it. Peter Rogers, husband of ODAS secretary Brenda Rogers, did a brilliant job of restoration, which took many weeks during 2010. Final coats of paint were completed in time for its official opening by Cllr Benington at the September Open Weekend 2010. (See report in *Archives*, Nov 2010). Finally, did you know that it is now possible to buy a replica shepherds hut from certain suppliers, to create a garden shed with a difference? (There is a website, [www.shepherdshuts.co.uk](http://www.shepherdshuts.co.uk))

### *Looking to the future*

**W**ork at Scadbury is likely to continue for many years to come, and there are two distinct areas of activity. These are the history of the estate and its archaeology, and the natural history of the estate and its environmental aspects. These two areas are quite separate entities.

If, after reading through this roundup, anyone would like to be more closely involved in archaeological work associated with the ancient manor, they might be interested in joining Orpington & District Archaeological Society, who always need more support and practical help. You can get involved with excavation, cleaning of finds, researching, maintenance of the site (which can be like gardening but on a larger scale, and can involve using a variety of hand and machine tools), or any of the other activities that come the way of amateur archaeologists. If you have watched any television programmes about archaeology you will have seen something of what archaeologists do. It will not be at all like an Indiana Jones film, or the instant action of Time Team, but you will be involved with doing something to make this ancient site more accessible and understandable. No previous experience is required, but you may have skills that could be of use to ODAS. Think about it!

If natural history is more your line, and you would like to support environmental work promoting biodiversity on the estate, you might be interested in joining the Friends of Scadbury. This group exists to help with the management of the modern environmental and biodiversity aspects of the estate, outside the archaeological area where ODAS works. It might involve bat watching, moth and butterfly counting, repair and replacement of nest boxes, pond maintenance, pruning and trimming and other activities to maintain the parkland.

### Access to Scadbury

**S**cadbury Open Weekend in 2011 will be on Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 September. It is free, though donations are always welcome. The site is open from 2p.m. to 5p.m., last entries 4.30p.m. Access is from the circular public footpath; the shortest walking distance is via the footpath entrance at 14 St Paul's Wood hill. Parking at the site is limited, but if anyone needs car access, e.g. because of disability, they can apply to ODAS, 27 Eynsford Crescent, Petts Wood, BR5 1DP, with SAE, for a free ticket. At the Open Weekend there is a great deal to see: visitors follow a guided trail round the site, go on to the moated island, see the latest excavations, the Second World War bunker, the exhibition about Scadbury, and the restored shepherd's hut. They can also buy ODAS publications, and other books at the bookstall, and finish up with tea and cake at the refreshment stall. Scadbury Park is open throughout the year and the landscape is always varied and interesting. At

times, bad weather may reduce access, and it can be very muddy and wet underfoot. The island site is closed to the public except for ODAS' Open Days, but you can still see something of it from Post 11 on the Circular Walk round the park.

The ODAS website is at [www.odas.org.uk](http://www.odas.org.uk) - This gives details of publications about Scadbury and how to join ODAS. For further information please contact Mr J. Stiles, the Membership Secretary: e-mail: [orparchsoc@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:orparchsoc@yahoo.co.uk)  
Friends of Scadbury: [www.scadbury.net](http://www.scadbury.net)

### **MORE ABOUT THE MYSTERY PIPE (from Cockpit 94).**

**A**ndrew Belsey, who first raised this enquiry, has now turned detective, and after investigating the relevant area of the Common is sure that this pipe has nothing to do with the actual drainage of the common, as was at first assumed. Nonetheless, his researches have uncovered an interesting history of the local hydrology, which could feature in *Cockpit* at some future date. He is interested in the past and present watercourses of Chislehurst, and he asks if any reader has any knowledge about the stream mentioned by Arthur Battle on page 119 of his *Edwardian Chislehurst*.

He quotes from Battle: 'A tributary of the Ravensbourne ran alongside [The Annunciation] vicarage fence and out to Belmont Lane.' He continues in his letter to the Editor: 'Ravensbourne cannot be correct, because this area is on the Darent side of the Ravensbourne/Darent watershed. Also such a stream could have been connected to the Red Hill Farm pond and the ditches in the Recreation ground, thought this point needs checking against the contours.'

This stream that Mr Battle mentions as running out to Belmont Lane, would probably have continued to join the stream that runs through Foxbury ground, and eventually becomes the Wyncham Stream that flows into the River Shuttle in Holly Oak Park in Sidcup, where I played with my friends as a child.

Anyway, if any reader can throw any light upon this or any other aspect of Chislehurst's watery past, Mr Belsey would be pleased to hear of it.

*You can contact The Chislehurst Society by email: [membership@chislehurst-society.org.uk](mailto:membership@chislehurst-society.org.uk)*

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