

Fig. 1: the Moat at Scadbury and its surroundings.

Scadbury Moated Manor: an interim review

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Introduction

IN 1986 THE Orpington and District Archaeological Society, with the cooperation of the London Borough of Bromley, began a long term archaeological programme at Scadbury Park, near Chislehurst. It seems desirable at this stage in the work to give a short account of the progress made. The present review, while not intended to be a detailed excavation report, attempts to give an overall pic-

ture of the site and the archaeological work carried out so far.

The Manor and its background

Scadbury Park lies about one mile east of Chislehurst and contains a moated area some 51m x 37m (170ft x 120ft) on which are the brick foundations of a manor house complex which was demolished in the 18th century. Most of the ancient founda-

tions are capped by modern brickwork, laid in about 1930 with the intention of conservation. The area is surrounded by a moat up to about 2m (6ft) deep, and from 7m to 17m (23ft to 56ft) wide. To the west of the moat are a courtyard and a walled garden, and nearby are the foundations of a demolished, largely 19th century, house with a much earlier origin. These remains stand in about 300 acres of meadows and woods, the remnant of the lands of the manors of Scadbury and Chislehurst. Fig. 1 shows the setting of the moated island (TQ 459 701) in its surroundings.

The moat lies on the west side of the Cray valley, about 1500m (1 mile) from the river. It is situated on an east-west promontory of the Woolwich Beds, about 100m by 400m (330ft by 1300ft), which rises gently to a capping of Blackheath Beds on the west and falls to Thanet Sand on the other sides. Hence a water supply is available from a spring line along the junction of the Woolwich clays with the Blackheath pebbly sand.

Although the name Scadbury is of Saxon origin, there is presently no evidence of occupation in that period. The earliest documentary evidence shows that a family having the name de Scathebury held land locally by 1257, and their name suggests that they resided at Scadbury. The de Scatheburys continued in possession until about 1369, and after a poorly documented interval, the manor was bought by Thomas Walsingham in 1424. The prominent Walsingham family, whose history is well documented, included Sir Edmund who was Lieutenant of the Tower under Henry VIII and Sir Thomas who was a patron of Christopher Marlowe. The Walsinghams continued in residence until about 1655, when they were succeeded by Sir Richard Bettenson and then his grandson. In 1733 the estate passed to the related Townshend family, and then in 1890 to the related Robert Marsham, inheriting as Marsham-Townshend¹. The estate was purchased by the London Borough of Bromley in 1983 and is currently a Nature Reserve open to the public.

Turning now to the archaeological programme, this takes the form of excavation of adequately large sample areas (currently totalling some 8% of the island area), together with clearing and recording the standing remains. The objectives are to investigate the obscure early history of the settlement and to trace its development into the final

manor house complex. It is fair to state that the work has been considerably vitiated by the well-meant activities, in the years around 1930, of Hugh Marsham-Townshend, who cleared the abandoned island of vegetation, excavated some areas, and laid courses of brickwork on the insecure ancient brick foundations. He also did much constructional work including the re-erection of an imported hall. His work, of which no record remains apart from a plan of the foundations, involved the removal of very many archaeological deposits.

The site contains insecure brickwork and much of the area has shallow archaeological stratigraphy. It was considerably damaged by vegetation, especially tree roots, in the decades preceding the ODAS programme, which has halted further similar damage. The remains of the hall, destroyed by arson and other vandalism, were removed to Singleton. However, long-term conservation of the site is badly needed.

The excavations

The moated island, with its remaining buildings and foundations, is shown in Fig. 2, where the positions of the present excavations are also indicated. Work has been carried out in two main areas, behind the buttressed wall (j) which runs along the western edge of the island (area A), and in the centre of the island between the ruined cellar (f) and the kitchens (h) (areas B, C, and D).

Excavations along the western moat wall

On its western edge the island platform is faced with a substantial brick wall with internal buttresses. It currently stands some 3.5m above the level of the moat bed. The area alongside this wall was excavated with a view to establishing the period of construction and the methods used.

Under recently accumulated topsoil, a clinker path was revealed running alongside the parlour wall, with a cobbled area nearer the bridge end of the moat wall. These features were modern but may have been intended, as in the case of other work of Marsham-Townshend, to imitate originals whose traces he observed.

Removal of the clinker and cobbles revealed natural yellow brown clay, clean or with some small pebbles. In the bays formed by the moat wall and buttresses, around the buttresses, and extending out alongside the path, lay pale brown clay with much broken brick, tile, and other material. Re-

1. For fuller information about the Scadbury families, see Webb's old but well-researched and detailed account in E. A. Webb, G. W. Miller, and J. Beckwith, *The History of*

Chislehurst, George Allen, 1899. For a short but broader account, see S. M. Archer and F. A. Hart, *Scadbury Manor*, Orpington and District Archaeological Society, 1990.

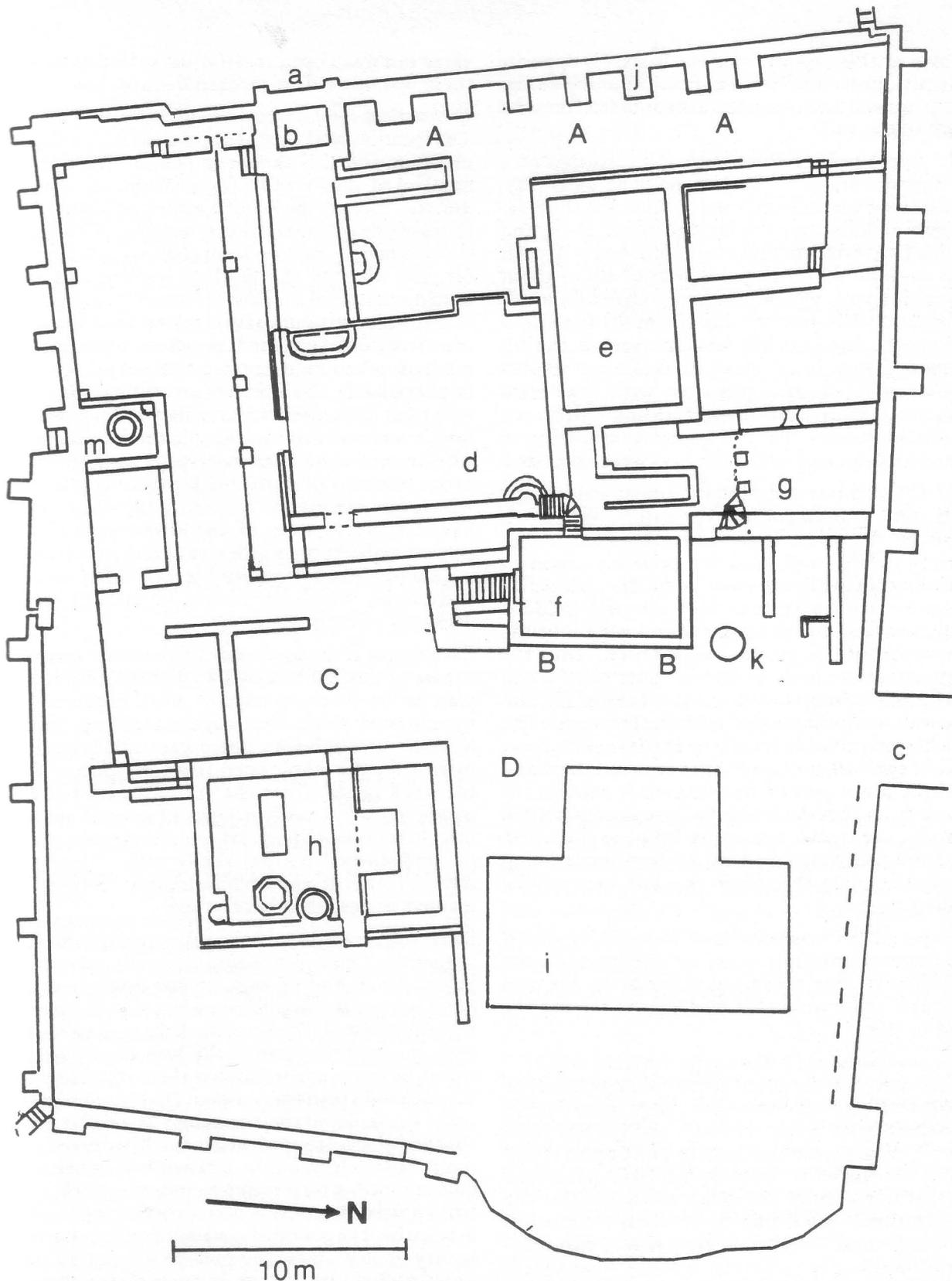


Fig. 2: plan of the ancient and modern foundations at Scadbury. The features are too numerous for all to be labelled, but the following are indicated. a, position of former drawbridge; b, foundations of gatehouse; c, causeway; d, foundations of hall; e, foundations of parlour; f, ruined brick cellar; g, barrel-roofed cellar; h, kitchen area; i, modern apple store; j, substantial buttressed wall; k and m, brick-lined wells.

removal of this deposit from the bay areas opposite the parlour wall revealed a trench running alongside the moat wall whose width extended from the path to the wall.

The upper part of the trench fill consisted of a yellow-brown clay matrix similar to local clay, containing variable amounts of brick and tile fragments, lime mortar, oyster and other shell, and bone. This rested on a thin layer of a darker deposit (up to about 10cm, 4in) at depths of up to about 0.8m (2ft 7in), which contained charcoal, much bone and shell, pottery, and a 1cm diameter lead token of 1425-1490². The lowest layers of the fill consisted mainly of clays of different colours including much dark grey clay, with large brick fragments. Excavation was not possible right down to the bottom of the wall foundations owing to water seepage, and not all the bays were excavated.

The fill of this trench abuts the moat wall on one side and a stepped cut into the natural Woolwich Beds on the other. It is clearly the construction trench of the wall, and the probable stages in building the wall, the moat being dry, are as follows. A vertical surface parallel with the intended wall was first cut along the island edge (but the upper part of the cut was stepped back). Then the buttresses were built with their inner vertical end surfaces touching the vertical clay cut surface, and the wall was built bonded with the buttresses. The bricklayers probably mainly worked from the moat side of the wall, because the gap between the island and the lower part of the wall is not enough for work from the island side to have been practical. Finally, the trench remaining between the island and the wall was filled in, kitchen waste being deposited along the trench at a late stage of the filling.

The period of construction of the wall, of which no records apparently exist, may be dated on the evidence of the excavated material to the 15th century, and within that probably to around the middle part.

Excavations near the large central cellar

In the centre of the island and adjoining the site of the hall (d) on its eastern side is a large cellar (f) (Fig. 2), whose brick walls, stairway, and cement floor are all modern, but are largely built upon crumbling ancient work. Excavations (B,C) have been carried out around the cellar to investigate the original brick-based buildings and any other traces of occupation. A separate trench was also exca-

vated in a small open area (D) just to the east where there was no evident modern disturbance.

Excavations immediately around the cellar

The location of the excavation area (B,C) is shown in Fig. 2, and C is shown in plan in Fig. 3. After removal of shrubs and a few centimetres of accumulated topsoil, the fill of a trench running along the east side of the cellar was removed. This material was mainly various local clays with brick rubble, and abutted the modern walling and contained occasional modern material. It is probable that the eastern boundary of this trench represents the extent of Marsham-Townshend's clearing operations, when he excavated the ruined cellar. It might possibly also represent an original construction trench for the ancient cellar walling, part of which was revealed just outside the modern wall. This ancient work consists of what seem to be the lower portions of three brick pilaster buttresses, which rest against the modern wall, which itself has been built on top of the lowest parts of the ancient wall. At the south end of the trench there is a staddle stone at ground level bedded on clay and bricks, which appears to be ancient work, perhaps a pillar base.

Excavation at the south side of the cellar revealed a mass of ancient brickwork, slightly rounded in plan on its southern edge. A small construction trench runs along that edge, extending to the lowest course of bricks. There was a modern disturbance over the whole open area C to the south of the brick mass, where the entire topmost strata, consisting of a modern layer of closely packed brickbats under clinker, lay in most places directly on undisturbed natural shelly clay. However, some of the deeper archaeological features remained, as described later below.

Some interpretation of the cellar remains may be suggested. The cellar would naturally have been below a building of two, or just possibly three, more storeys. It was connected by a side staircase to the adjacent hall. The brickwork mass on its southern side possibly formed the base of a staircase tower, as stairways are shown there on Marsham-Townshend's plan (the modern flight down to the cellar has replaced their remains). The cellar probably had a barrel roof turned in brick because slight traces of this remain, the modern brickwork contains a motif which seems to mimic a brick arch, and a nearly intact brick barrel-roofed small cellar lies nearby. The period of construction is unknown, as very little undisturbed pottery was found associated with the brickwork. However, the nature of the bricks and mortar and the style of the bricklay-

2. We thank Mr. R. Gladdle for dating the token.

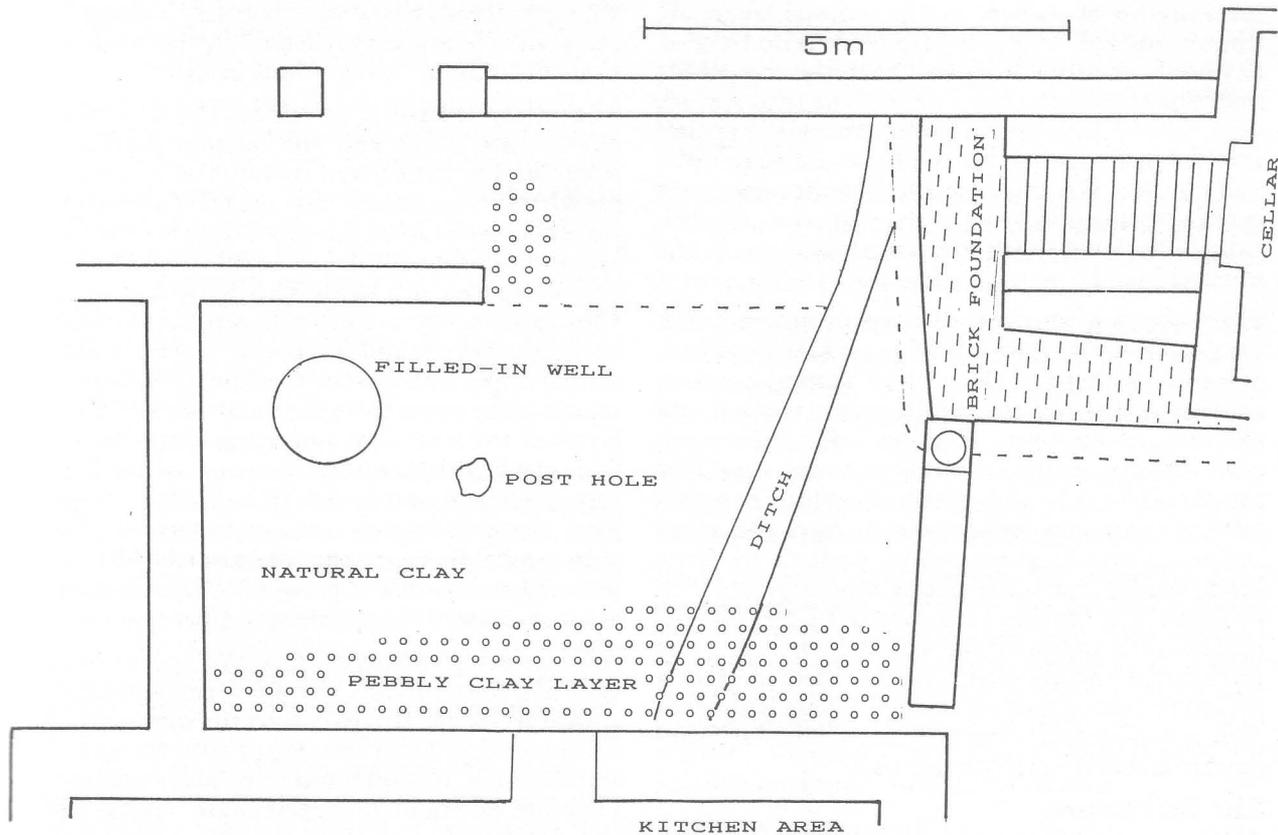


Fig. 3. Scadbury: plan of the excavated area west of the kitchen.

ing would be quite compatible with a period close to that of the moat wall construction.

Excavations in the areas adjoining the cellar and kitchen

As mentioned above, the upper levels south of the cellar had been planed off by modern work. However, a number of interesting features survived in truncated form. A thin very pebbly layer remained particularly in the north-easterly part of the area. Partly under this, a small U-sectioned ditch runs downhill eastwards (Fig. 3). The ditch contained a primary fill of slightly discoloured shelly clay with a few pebbles, and was filled above this by a secondary fill of brown silty clay containing charcoal, shell, and potsherds. The pottery consisted mainly of unabraded large sherds of coarse shelly greyware cooking pots and London-type ware glazed jugs. An early 13th century date may accommodate the simultaneous use of these two types. The size, fill, and position of the ditch would be compatible with use as a drainage ditch to remove rainwater from an early building in the position of the hall area, but there are other possibilities and

there is no other evidence for any such building. The ditch must have been in use before the creation of a hardened levelled surface over the island. It therefore predates a firmly established moated manor settlement, perhaps immediately predating it if the ditch indeed served an early hall.

As mentioned above, a trench which was separate from the other excavated area was dug east of the cellar. This trench (D) is rectangular, 5m x 2m (16ft x 6ft), and its position is shown in Fig. 2. The stratigraphy is straightforward. Under the turf level there are a number of successive deposited layers of different clays, mostly dipping slightly from west to east. The level topmost deposit is very pebbly, suggesting a hardened surface. Though the trench is separated from them by modern intrusions, similar pebbled surfaces are present in other areas, notably on top of the ditch, and probably formed the outdoor walkabout surface over much of the island. The clay layers contained numbers of abraded sherds, mainly shelly greywares. Under the deposited layers is the undisturbed Woolwich Beds clay. The general appearance is of a single

levelling-up operation, as the various layers are undulating and irregular, and there is no trace of any established surface other than the top pebbly one. The conclusion must be that the land surface here, where the island is lower, was raised up and levelled some time after the little drainage ditch had silted up. It seems probable, but of course is not certain, that this was one of the sequence of operations associated with the construction of the moated island.

In the south-west corner of the area shown in Fig. 3 is a perfectly circular cut of 1.43m (4ft 8in) diameter into the natural clay. A half-section has been excavated, showing the cut to be quite vertical, and the feature must be a filled-in well. There is no trace of any lining, though this was carefully sought. The fill, which continues at least to 2.70m (9ft), is composed of very mixed clays and sands including non-local greensand, with a very little brick, chalk, and other debris which places it as probably 15th century or somewhat later. The period of construction of the well and whether it was unfinished and refilled, or was filled in after a period of use, cannot be decided. There is another well, complete and brick-lined and of similar diameter, 20m (66ft) north of this one.

The Brickwork

All the ancient brickwork has been examined, both on the island and around it, where there is an outer brick facing to the moat, a walled garden, and some ancient parts of the present farm buildings and walls. The island moat wall may be dated to around the mid 15th century by its pottery, but the other walls on the island and its surrounding area are of unknown date(s); however their bricks and mortar and the bricklaying are indistinguishable, or almost so, from the moat wall, and the following description largely applies to all the brickwork.

The bricks, laid in English bond with lime-sand mortar, are orange-red, within about 1/4" tolerance of 9 1/4" x 4 1/4" x 2 1/4", and are rather soft. Both chalk and sand are available locally. Below ground, the brickwork is in original condition, but above ground the mortar has decayed and the condition of the upper brickwork varies from very good to absent. There are a few overfired grey bricks with surface glaze, used in part of the walled garden for diaper work. Although the stretcher courses in the moat wall almost always use whole bricks, the headers are mainly brickbats, and some quite small fragments of brick have been used with plenty of mortar to make up the interior of the wall, but in a regular manner. Despite the fragmented internal construction, the surface of the moat wall, where

well preserved, has a very regular, well-laid, appearance. The walled garden is of proper construction throughout, using whole bricks.

The bricks are pallet moulded; the top surfaces have strike marks and the bottom surfaces are irregular. On the broken surfaces of many of the brickbats, it can be seen that the fracture has taken place because of inadequate bonding between separate lumps of sandy clay. The fabric of the bricks contains about 51% sand³. The bricks also contain flint pebbles 1-3 cm (1/2 to 1 in) across, perhaps two or three per brick, and fragments of shell. These are similar respectively to the Blackheath Beds pebbles which occur 300m from the moat and in the upper layers of the local clay, and to the local Woolwich Beds clays which contain amounts of shell from zero to nearly 100%. All this evidence suggests local clamp firing of local clay, tempered with sand probably from the Blackheath Beds after incomplete removal of pebble. Two fields near the moat are named Kiln Field and Chalkpit Field.

An interesting feature of uncertain age is a circular well-like construction, 1.22m (4ft) in diameter and 2.70m (9ft) deep, situated under the west end of the former bridge. After clearing of rubbish and mud, and draining, it was found to be made (except for a top rim of brick) of shaped chalk blocks, with a wooden hoop at the bottom. There is a slightly concave floor of irregular chalk blocks. After emptying, a trickle of water entered from the lower west side, but there is also what appears to be a blocked inlet higher up on the same side.

Description of finds

Pottery, bone and shell form the majority of the finds. The short account given here is subject to modification when excavation and finds processing is complete. Details of finds are recorded on searchable computer databases.

Pottery

The total amount of pottery found so far is 11.5kg (25lb), 978 sherds. Finds from the moat wall construction trench include substantial parts of a Coarse Border Ware pancheon, a small Cheam jug, and a large squat Surrey-type jug, together with individual sherds from other similar vessels. The pottery as a group would seem to fit most comfortably into the earlier to middle 15th century.

The sherds from the separate eastern trench and pebbly layers were mostly coarse shelly greyware and coarse greyware with a minority of London-type ware. One might place the pottery itself at

³ Details of chemical analysis of the bricks, local clays, and excavated pottery will be reported elsewhere.

around the earlier 13th century, but in assessing the probable date of deposition, one must consider the small size and abraded condition of the sherds.

The pottery from the drainage ditch contained large unabraded sherds of very shelly greyware cooking pots (many from a single large pot) and similar but abraded sherds from many vessels, together with a few large unabraded slipped and glazed London-type jug sherds. Tentatively, the late 12th to early 13th century seems most probable for deposition of this group. The ditch pottery appears to be generally similar to the levelling deposit pottery from the separate eastern trench, but much fresher.

Animal remains

Bone The bone from the moat wall trench is very well preserved and has a total weight of 6.54 kg (14 lb). The most numerous bones are of cattle, with nearly all parts of the skeleton present. Expressed in terms of the amount of meat associated with these bones, cattle would have been even more predominant. Sheep/goat and pig are moderately numerous, and fallow deer is present, as are avian and fish bones. The larger bones have been chopped, and while most of the remains are good meat bones, there are phalanges, metapodials, and mandibles also. Thus it appears that whole carcasses were brought onto the island for butchery.

Wet sieving of a sample of the moat wall trench fill yielded a few rodent and other bones, a number of fish vertebrae and spines, and small land snails.

Shell Many shells were recovered from the moat wall construction trench. They consisted of common oyster, 1234 shells (individual valves); common mussel, 149 shells; common cockle, 3 shells (with well developed summer edges); and common whelk, 1 shell. The comparatively large numbers of oysters suggests that they formed a significant part of the local diet of the period.

Letter

IN THEIR interesting survey of Roman villas (LA 7, no. 2), Harvey Sheldon et al point out the complete absence of villas in the central part of the Weald, and quite reasonably attribute this to avoidance of heavy clay soils. There are, however, at least two other factors to consider.

Oliver Rackham¹ used Henry Cleere's work² on Roman ironworks to estimate that at least 23,000 acres of coppice-wood would have been needed to maintain the many known ironworks in the Weald. His map³ of areas of woodland in AD 1086, as recorded by Domesday Book, shows that the Weald was the most heavily wooded area near London at the later time.

Since even today, country houses, "villas" and farms are not located in industrial areas, perhaps the villa owners in Roman

Summary

Scadbury is a moated manor house associated with well documented family histories, especially in its later period, but with very little if any documentation regarding the constructional history of the settlement.

The island and its surrounding areas have been cleared and surveyed, and the remaining brick foundations and other structures have been examined in some detail and recorded.

Two areas have been excavated⁴. Excavations along the moat wall have revealed the method and period of construction, and given dietary information. The dating evidence from the excavation would suggest that the moat wall, and by extension perhaps the other brickwork of similar nature, was built near in time to, or during, the ownership of the second Thomas Walsingham (1457-67).

Excavations in the centre of the island have increased understanding of the ruined foundations there, and revealed a filled-in well. More importantly, evidence has been discovered for earlier occupation, in the form of a drainage ditch and levelled ground. These phases may be correlated with the documentary evidence relating to the de Scathebury family in the 13th century.

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4. At present, excavations are also taking place just east of, and within, the kitchens.

times were avoiding the Weald not only because of the difficulty of working clay soils, but also because the Weald was heavily wooded and under intensive industrial use for iron-working.

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1. O. Rackham *Ancient Woodland: its History, Vegetation and Uses in England* (1980); O. Rackham *The History of the Countryside* (1986).

2. H. Cleere 'Some operating parameters for Roman ironworks' *Bull Inst Archaeol* 13 (1976) 233-46.

3. *Ibid.*, 77.