

# RANDALL MANOR CALLING! AN UPDATE FROM OUR COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY EXCAVATION IN KENT, 2013

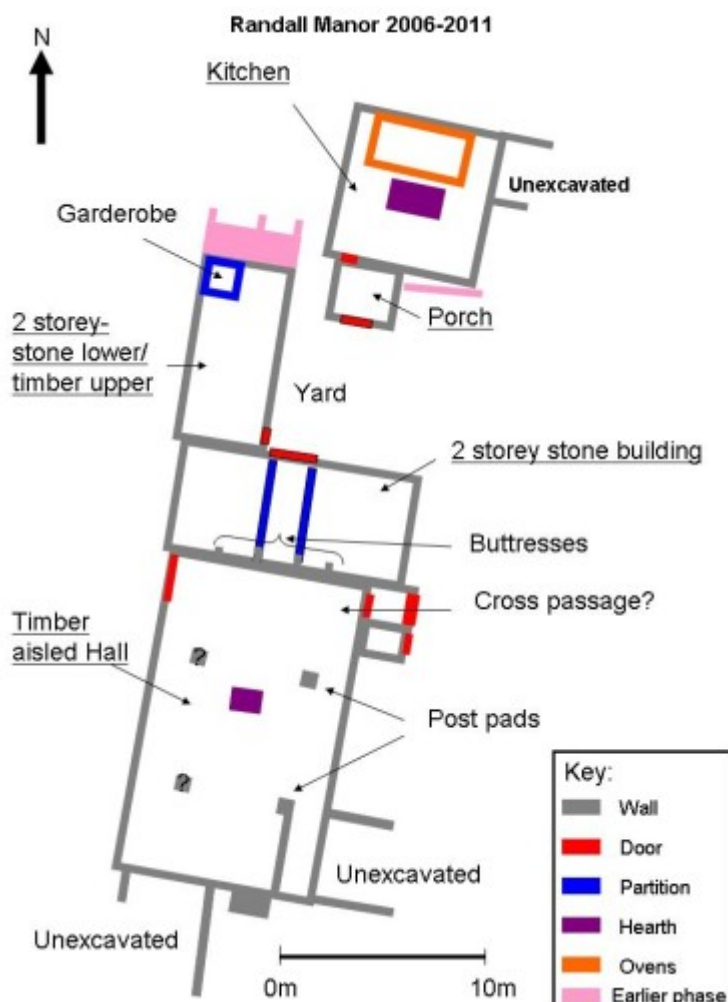
July 30, 2013 Andrew Mayfield Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011, Day of Archaeology 2012, Day of Archaeology 2013, Excavation, Finds, Landscape Archaeology, Medieval Archaeology, Cobham, Cobham Hall, Excavation, Gravesham, Heritage Lottery Fund, Kent Association for the Blind, Kent County Council, Randall Manor, Shorne, [www.facebook.com/archaeologyinkent](http://www.facebook.com/archaeologyinkent)



*Randall Manor, Kent, 2013*

Not so much a day of archaeology, as a short review of a month of community archaeology at Shorne Woods Country Park, Kent! This was our eighth year of excavations on the site, making it the longest running community excavation of one site in the County! I planned things carefully this year so that we would dig through a heatwave! In total we worked for 27 days on the site, with over 20 people on site on most days, rising to over 40 on our busiest days! I'm very much a believer in Pat Reid's description of community archaeology as being done by the people, for the people. Everyone on site is a volunteer, apart from me and my post is part funded by the National Lottery and partly by Kent County Council. All site supervision is undertaken by volunteers, as are responsibilities for finds, records, plans and sections...I just keep the juggernaut that is the Randall Manor dig rolling!

This year we wanted to answer some final questions about certain key areas of the site, before we backfill and also try to gain more evidence for the early use of the site, pre the buildings' construction. We had four areas open, one at the south end of the site, one across the junction between our putative aisled hall and cross wing, one across the kitchen and we opened up a big new trench to the east of the kitchen.



*Randall Manor, Kent*

Historically, our research suggests that there is a principal building on the site by the second half of the thirteenth century, with high status use of the site for around 100 years. After this the buildings are left to tenants before all occupation dramatically ends in the late sixteenth century, when the site is comprehensively demolished, perhaps as a source of stone for the construction of Cobham Hall.

Excavations this year have added to our growing understanding of the site. In the southern trench, it is now apparent that there was substantial attempt to expand the building platform to the south, burying a soil horizon in the process. Conversations with David and Barbara Martin (medieval building experts) also point to this end of the site forming the high end to the first high status building on site, complete with chimney and private garderobe? All built over an early gully in which we have some good pottery evidence (to be analysed). There also seems to have been an attempt to create a revetted occupation area, outside the building.

In the trench over the aisled hall/cross wing join, we sunk a series of test pits that came up trumps with a ditch running under the buildings. This ditch had early thirteenth century pottery in its lowest fills...

The kitchen continues to provide fascinating evidence for the remodelling and phasing of the site. We now have a hearth and possible bread oven that lie under the later kitchen walls. This is in addition to a

sequence of two tiled hearths and a stone hearth, all replacing each other and a series of patched and replaced kitchen floor surfaces....it will all take further teasing out!

Finally our new trench for this year! We suspected we might have another building, but have actually encountered a series of levelling layers, a trackway and occupation surfaces. Bags and bags of pottery from these and 3 lovely whetstones...

Just to add to the mix we also had a very nice Roman coin from one of the tile demolition layers and a pendant that needs conservation and cleaning work.

A really successful season with all credit going to the incredible amount of hard work put into the project by the many volunteers involved, both existing and new for this year. 5 schools dug with us, 2 on repeat visits through the dig; we also had a local Scout troop and 3 YAC groups digging on site. We organised and ran a weekend for visually impaired volunteers, in conjunction with the Kent Association for the Blind. Over 1,000 visitors had a guided tour of the site.

And....over our last weekend we had medieval re-enactors in the Park!

Lots of pictures at <http://www.facebook.com/archaeologyinkent>. Contact [andrew.mayfield@kent.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.mayfield@kent.gov.uk) for further info!



*Possible Bread Oven*





*Knighting at Shorne Woods with the Woodvilles*