

IGHTHAM MOTE: TOPOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LANDSCAPE

Matthew Johnson, Timothy Sly, Carrie Willis¹

Abstract. This chapter reports on survey at Ightham Mote in 2013 and 2014, and puts the survey results in the context of a wider analysis of the Ightham landscape. Ightham is another late medieval building surrounded by water features, whose setting might be seen as a ‘designed landscape’. Here, we outline and evaluate the evidence for the landscape as it developed through time. As with the other buildings and landscapes discussed in this volume, rather than argue for either an exclusively utilitarian or exclusively aesthetic view, we provide an alternative framework with which to explore the way that barriers and constraints on movement in physical space reflect boundaries in social space. Rather than labelling a landscape aesthetic or practical, we can identify the practices and experiences implicated in landscapes, and their active role in social relations.

Ightham Mote is the fourth late medieval building and landscape to be discussed in this volume (Fig. 8.1; for location see Fig. 1.1). Like the others, Ightham is a National Trust property. The buildings consist of an inner and outer court, whose ‘footprint’ and external appearance was probably substantially complete by the end of the Middle Ages. The standing structure is a patchwork of different building phases from the early 14th century to the present day. Most recently, the building went through a comprehensive conservation programme costing over ten million pounds, and involving the controlled disassembly and reconstruction of large parts of the house. The information revealed by this process enabled others to put together a very detailed outline of the development of the house from the 14th century to the present (Leach n.d., a-f).



Fig. 8.1: The inner court of Ightham Mote, from the south-west.

The buildings at Ightham sit within a very distinctive landscape. The house is placed at the bottom of a narrow valley running north-south. The inner court is moated, and there is a series of artificial ponds to both the north and south of the inner court. The present form of these water features is the result of post-medieval landscaping, and there is no direct physical

¹ The topographical and geophysical survey work reported on in this chapter was carried out under the direction of Timothy Sly. The ‘grey literature’ and contextual information on Ightham was collated by Matthew Johnson, Ryan Lash and Carrie Willis. The first draft of this chapter was written by Carrie Willis, with additions and revisions by Matthew Johnson and Timothy Sly.

evidence for their medieval form. However, most if not all of these water features probably existed in some form in the later Middle Ages.

The Southampton/Northwestern team worked at Ightham in the summers of 2013 and 2014. We wanted to reconstruct and understand the form of the landscape at Ightham as it might have appeared in the later Middle Ages. To this end, in 2013, Timothy Sly and a team of Southampton and Northwestern students did a complete topographical survey of the valley area (LiDAR data not being available for the site), while Ryan Lash and Matthew Johnson collated and digitised the relevant archival and ‘grey literature’. In 2014, we returned to do a geophysical survey of the orchard. During and after the 2014 field season, Carrie Willis worked up the data into the geospatial models that are

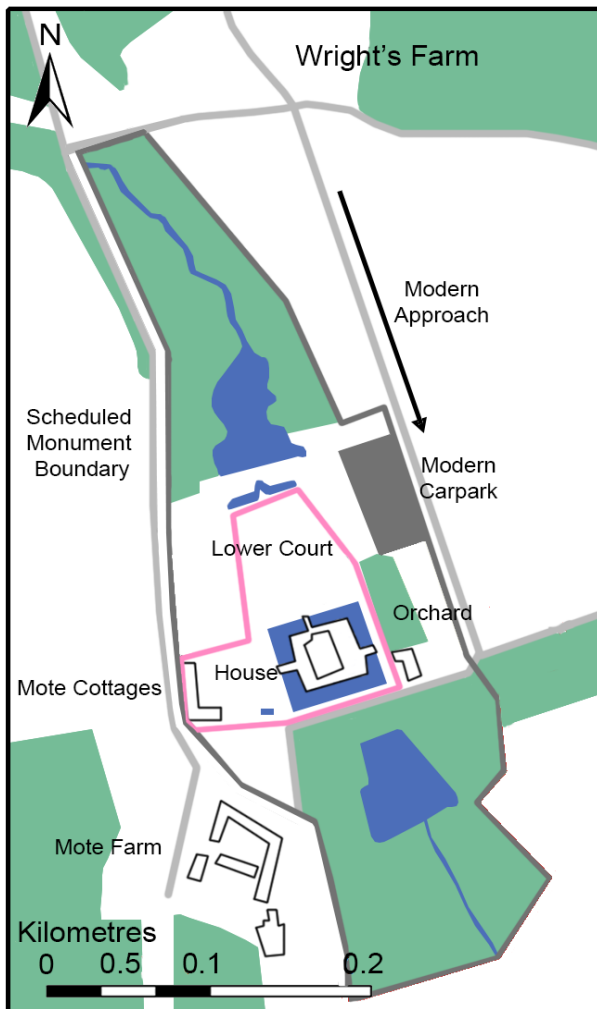


Fig. 8.2: A simplified diagram of Ightham Mote as it exists today, with key features indicated. The northern pond, fed by the Mote Stream, appears at the north, with the house in the middle of the diagram, and the south pond and farm courtyard complex to the south-west and south-east respectively. Diagram by Kayley McPhee.

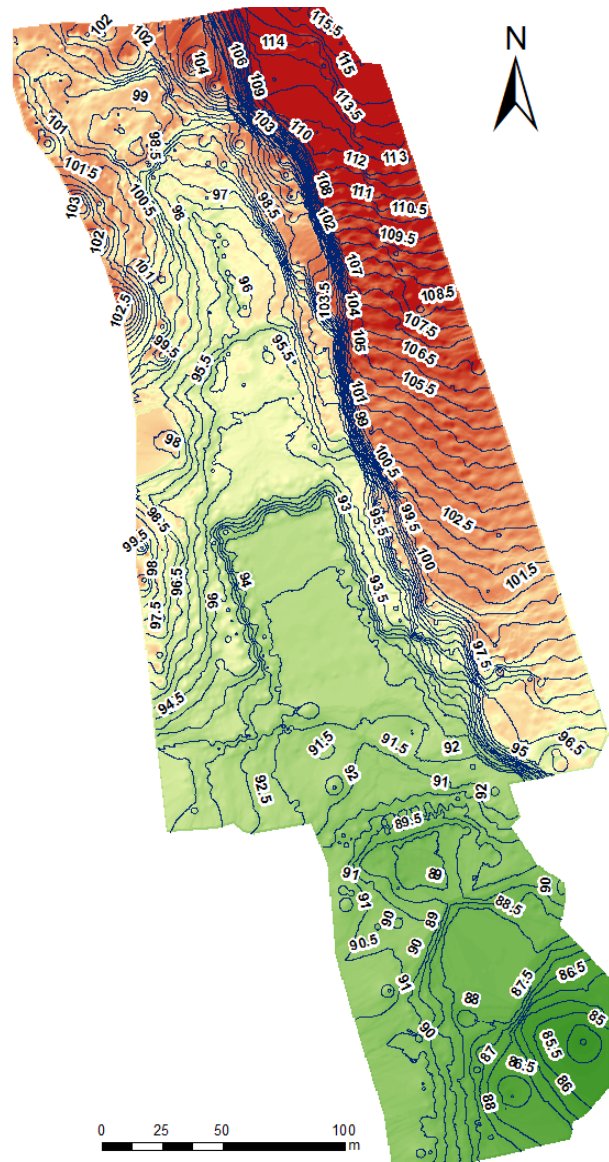


Fig. 8.3: Contour map of the area surveyed at Ightham Mote. The eastern and western ridges are higher than the centre of the valley, and descend in height from north to south. Note that the highest point in this surveyed area is the northern extent of the western ridge, shown in red. Rendered by Carrie Willis.

presented below, and put together the first draft of this chapter as her Senior Thesis at Northwestern.

Ightham Mote's landscape offers an opportunity to investigate some of the ideas of 'lived experience' first raised in the Introduction. Specifically, it offers insights into embodied daily practice and the constraint and control of movement throughout the environment. The Ightham landscape inspires questions that throw into perspective the traditional conception of designed landscapes in the medieval context (Liddiard & Williamson 2008, Creighton 2009). How does the landscape at Ightham help us to understand what it

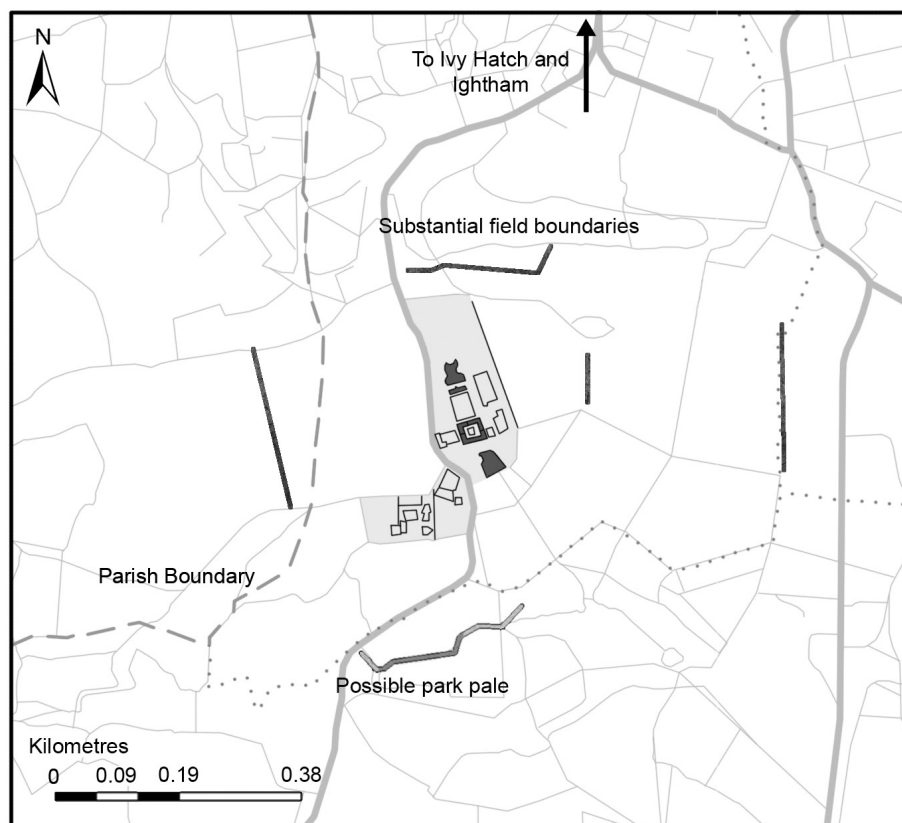


Fig. 8.4: The wider landscape of Ightham Mote, with the location of possible sections of park pale and other substantial field boundaries indicated. The dotted and dashed lines indicate the parish boundary; the dashed line is also the district boundary. Drawing by Kayley McPhee.

means for a landscape to be ‘designed’? Likewise, how does the landscape at Ightham enter into the discourse of landscapes as places of work, pleasure grounds, or reflections of social status?

The concluding discussion in this chapter will investigate the ways in which the landscape at Ightham Mote reflects and reinforces ideas of practice and lived experience. Through the analysis of three-dimensional models of the topography, we examine the way the features of the landscape, both natural and modified, constrain and express movement throughout space, and how this movement both reflects, reinforces and renegotiates ideas of status and social identity.

Ightham Mote: Description and History

Ightham Mote is a moated manor house owned and managed by the National Trust. The site is located 8 km east of the town of Sevenoaks in Kent, and 7 km east of the Knole Estate and deer park discussed in the previous chapter. The house is located within a north-south oriented valley, which decreases in elevation from north to south (Figs 8.2 & 8.3). The estate currently includes the two-storey house, its outer courtyard and stables, an orchard, gardens, farm complex, and surrounding fields and woodland (see Figs 8.3 & 8.4). The water features that exist today include one large and two small ponds

towards the north of the house and one large pond towards the southern extent. The inner court of the house is oriented with its main entrance facing west, facing directly towards the outer court.

The estate is composed of 208.42 hectares (515 acres), including 149.74 hectares (370 acres) of farmland and 58.68 hectares (145 acres) of woodland. The site is located at the junction between the Upper and Lower Greensand on the edge of the Weald. Geologically, it is built on a combination of loam, sand, and mudstone, phasing into the Wealden clay towards the southern extent of the property. The property contains multiple springheads feeding into a stream which runs through the property on a north-south axis.

Human occupation in the vicinity of Ightham has been dated to as early as the Mesolithic period. At Oldbury, a site to the north of Ightham Mote, occupation scatters have been dated to 100 BCE (Thompson 1986). Nicola Bannister (1999: 21) and Peter Rumley (2007) suggested that a previous settlement may have existed at the site of Ightham Mote before the manor house was built. However, archaeological excavations undertaken during renovations of the house in 2003 did not indicate any pre-existing structures below the site of the house (Leach n.d., a&b). In the 8th to 12th centuries, when many English villages were created and much of the agricultural

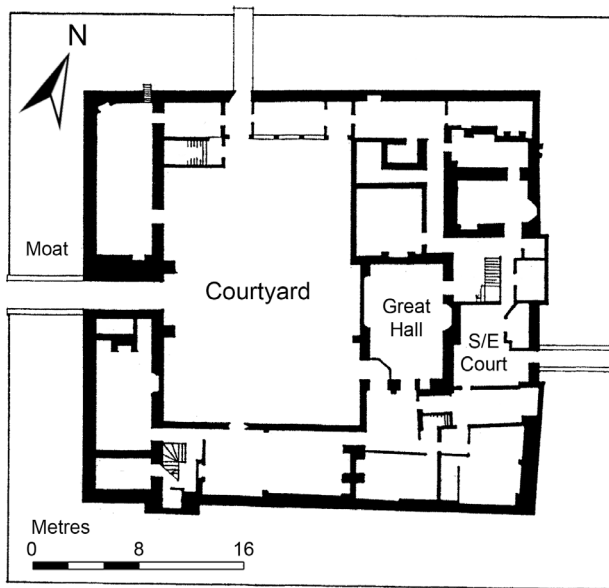


Fig. 8.5: Ground plan of the inner court as it exists today. The bridge at the left centre of the image, crossing the moat, lines up with the opening of the outer courtyard, allowing for a processional approach. The bridge at the right, just below the centre of the image, would have allowed for a rear approach to the house. Drawing by Kayley McPhee, after Nicolson 2005 [1998], inside front cover.

landscape reorganised, Wealden Kent was less affected by this process than, for example, the Midlands or North of England. The Wealden landscape exhibited continuity and piecemeal change rather than large-scale transformation during these centuries (Cantor 1982; Everitt 1986; see also Chapter Twelve, this volume).

It is not possible to associate a name with the initial building of the present structure of Ightham Mote, as documentary records from the very earliest phases of the house do not exist or have not been located. An entry in the Assize Rolls for Kent from 1371 lists Ightham Mote as belonging to Sir Thomas Couen (variously spelt Coven, Couen or Cawne). Additional documentary evidence lists Couen as a resident from 1360 to 1374 (Minihan 2015). Prior to this, there is some evidence that the estate was owned by a widow, Isolde Inge, in the 1340s.

The best published account of the structural history of the house itself can be found in Anthony Emery's gazetteer of later medieval houses (Emery 2006: 257-64). In its earliest phases, the house consisted of a kitchen-service-hall-solar block in one range; successive generations extended this into a courtyard house, with the addition of the second courtyard in the later 15th century. Tree-ring dating performed on roof timbers in the solar, hall, and chapel of the house dates these areas to 1340, 1344 and 1347 respectively (Leach n.d., a).

The very earliest standing fabric probably dates to the 1320s. The outer court was added towards the end of the 15th century. While the footprint and external walls of the inner court are mostly medieval, the room interiors have been adapted and transformed over the centuries in a continuous, generation-by-generation process that has left the built structure of Ightham as a patchwork of different phases and periods from the 14th to 20th centuries (Figs 8.1, 8.5 & 8.6).

The experience of the modern visitor to Ightham Mote is quite distinctive. Most visitors arrive from the north, along some kilometres of narrow, winding country lanes flanked by hedgerows, small fields and woodland. The road forks north of the house, and the eastern branch leads down through woodland to the visitor car park, partly housed within the walls of a former orchard. From here, two routes lead steeply down, either a path through the modern ticket office or a road winding round to the south. The overall impression is of a small-scale, occluded landscape, without sweeping views (though these may be obtained by a short walk east or west, leading to commanding views over the Weald). Ightham Mote affords a strong subjective impression of a tucked away, forgotten place, unlike other grand country houses.

However, this modern visitor experience has to be 'thought away' before an understanding of the earlier landscape can be attempted. The modern visitor's approach to the property, culminating in parking within and to the north of enclosed garden walls, may well not have been the approach of most medieval visitors (below we argue for the possibility that this was a high-status, perhaps exclusive, route of approach to the house, with most traffic approaching the lower court via a western route). Much of the woodland, orchard and garden walls are products of the last two centuries. Beyond this, it is difficult to make definitive statements

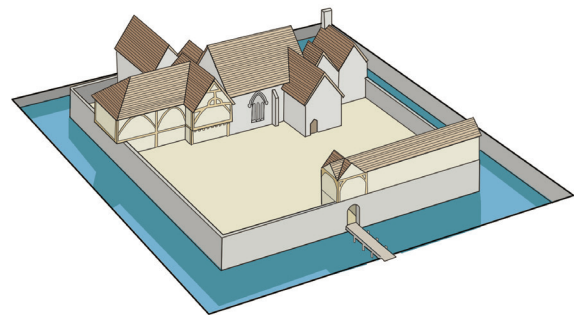


Fig. 8.6: Reconstruction of the inner court in the 14th century. This reconstruction shows the house without the outer court, which was added towards the end of the 15th century. Drawing by Kayley McPhee, after Nicolson 2005 [1998]: 6.

about which features of the modern landscape may have existed when Ightham Mote was first created. The stables at Ightham Mote are dated to the 19th century, while the farm complex dates from the post-medieval period. The surrounding copses of trees immediately adjacent to the valley on either side are primarily composed of mature trees planted between the 16th and 19th centuries, with some old growth scattered throughout (Bannister 1999; Rumley 2007). Historic maps only reach as far back as the late 17th century. The wooded areas that appear in these maps had not been natural forest for some millennia; in common with virtually all woodland in the lowland British Isles, they would have been humanly managed to a greater or lesser extent from prehistory onwards (Rackham 1990).

If the existing field and forest boundaries can be extrapolated further back into the past, we can use 17th through 19th-century Tithe maps, Ordnance Survey maps, and other documentary evidence to approximate landholdings in the first few years after Ightham Mote

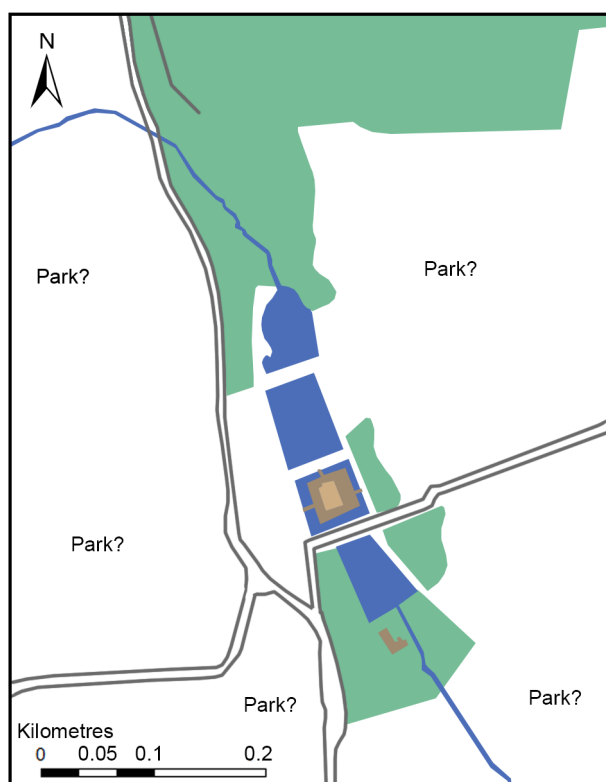


Fig. 8.7: Possible layout of landscape and water features around the house in the 14th century, before the addition of the outer court. The area between the house and the north pond would have been used as a middle pond for the storage of fish bred in the north pond. The south pond may have functioned as a mill pond, drawing water away from the house via the Moat Stream. The possibility of a park beyond is discussed in the text. Diagram by Kayley McPhee, after Rumley 2007: 42.



Fig. 8.8: Water features north of the house as they exist today, with valley sides and woods beyond, viewed from the gatehouse tower. Photo by Matthew Johnson.

was erected. It is clear from the Ordnance Survey and Tithe maps and other documentary evidence that by the 18th century, Ightham Mote's holdings included the house, farm, gardens, orchard, southern meadow, a significant expanse of fields to the east and west, and tracts of Scathes Wood and Martin's Wood. The earliest map known of Ightham Mote and its surrounding land, a 1692 estate map by Abraham Walter, confirms these landholdings in the 17th century, though the whereabouts of this map is currently unknown.

The wider landscape context of the house is well known from estate maps dating to the 17th to 19th centuries, but is less clear for the later Middle Ages. The general pattern with later medieval houses of this status would lead one to look for the possibility of surrounding water features, and possibly a wider landscape setting such as a deer park. The evidence for a deer park is fragmentary at best; that for water features circumstantial but very likely (Figs 8.7-8.9).



Fig. 8.9: Dam, of post-medieval form but possibly of medieval origin, between the two ponds north of the house, looking east. Photo by Matthew Johnson.

Seven hundred metres south of the house, towards and just below the summit of a slope, there is a section of an earthwork now used as a modern field boundary (Fig. 8.10). It is possible this earthwork represents part of a park pale. It has a ditch on the 'inner' side, and faces up the slope. Elsewhere, however, it is very difficult to trace a hypothetical deer park. There are substantial field boundaries north, east and west of the house, but none have the appearance of a park pale, and nor can they be easily joined up to form the classic oval shape of a deer park. The boundary on the shoulder of the rise to the west is quite massive. However, it has no trace of an accompanying ditch. The boundary to the east is wide but of little height, and the trees upon it are of no great antiquity. The existence of a deer park at Ightham must therefore remain unproven one way or the other; the lack of intensive survey, excavation, and coring done on the earthworks surrounding Ightham Mote limits our ability to make claims about park boundaries based on these features.

Documentary sources indicate that there was a watermill at Ightham, and the ease with which the valley could be dammed to create a mill pond is quite apparent. However, the date of its foundation remains uncertain and while the ideal location for a mill somewhere in the vicinity of the dam for the south pond is clear, its precise site is a matter of debate. The belief that a mill existed at Ightham Mote stems from a church record from the parish church of Shipbourne, which details that 'John sonne of Samuel Lyn, the miller of Mote in Ightham' was baptized on 16th November 1583 (Bannister 1999: 21; Rumley 2007). Despite the documentary record of the existence of a mill at Ightham Mote, and the general plausibility of the presence of a watermill at a site of this kind, no archaeological or geophysical evidence exists to validate its existence. Likewise, no other documentary evidence, including building permits or maps, list the mill or its location on the property.

North of the house itself, there are a series of banks retaining bodies of water. The modern form of these banks is the result of the post-medieval landscaping of the area, and there is no direct evidence that these banks existed in the Middle Ages. However, given the form of the valley, and the position of the house, it is unlikely that a medieval owner would have forsaken the opportunity to create a series of fishponds or other water features. Ightham Mote may have had four bodies of water in the Middle Ages, each fed in turn by the Mote Stream that originates to the north in the Upper Greensand and runs down the length of the valley on a north-south axis (Rumley 2007; see Figs 8.7-8.9). The last bank would have stopped the



Fig. 8.10: An earthwork ditch, now used as a modern field boundary, 700 m south of the house (see Fig. 8.3). This earthwork may be the possible remnants of a park pale; it also marks the parish boundary. Photo by Matthew Johnson.

Mote Stream at its southern extent, creating what is now known as the south pond. In 2003, N. Griffin and colleagues undertook geophysical survey in the north lawn to determine whether this area was in fact a lake in the past. The results of this geophysical survey were inconclusive (Griffin 2003; Rumley 2007). Additional auguring or coring in this area may prove beneficial in identifying whether this lawn may have constituted a 'middle pond' in the early or middle medieval period. If these bodies of water existed in anything like their present form in the Middle Ages, one would expect them, in parallel with similar features elsewhere (Creighton 2009), to have practical as well as visual purposes: the north pond and middle pond would have been used to breed and store fish, respectively; the moat would have been used for the discharge of refuse from the kitchens and garderobes; and the south pond would have functioned as a mill pond. It is likely that the whole valley was set up as an hydraulic system: as water flowed from the moat into the south pond, the watermill would employ the water flow, discharging it into the Moat Stream at the southern extent, away from the house, flowing southwards towards the Low Weald.

Fieldwork at Ightham Mote

An intensive programme of restoration and conservation has taken place at Ightham Mote since its acquisition by the National Trust in 1984. Since then, multiple geophysical, topographical, and building survey methods have been applied at Ightham Mote (see Leach n.d., a-f; Bannister 1999; Rumley 2002; 2006; 2007; Griffin 2003; Leach & Rumley n.d.). The systematic taking-apart and reconstruction of the house was accompanied by detailed record-keeping; a series

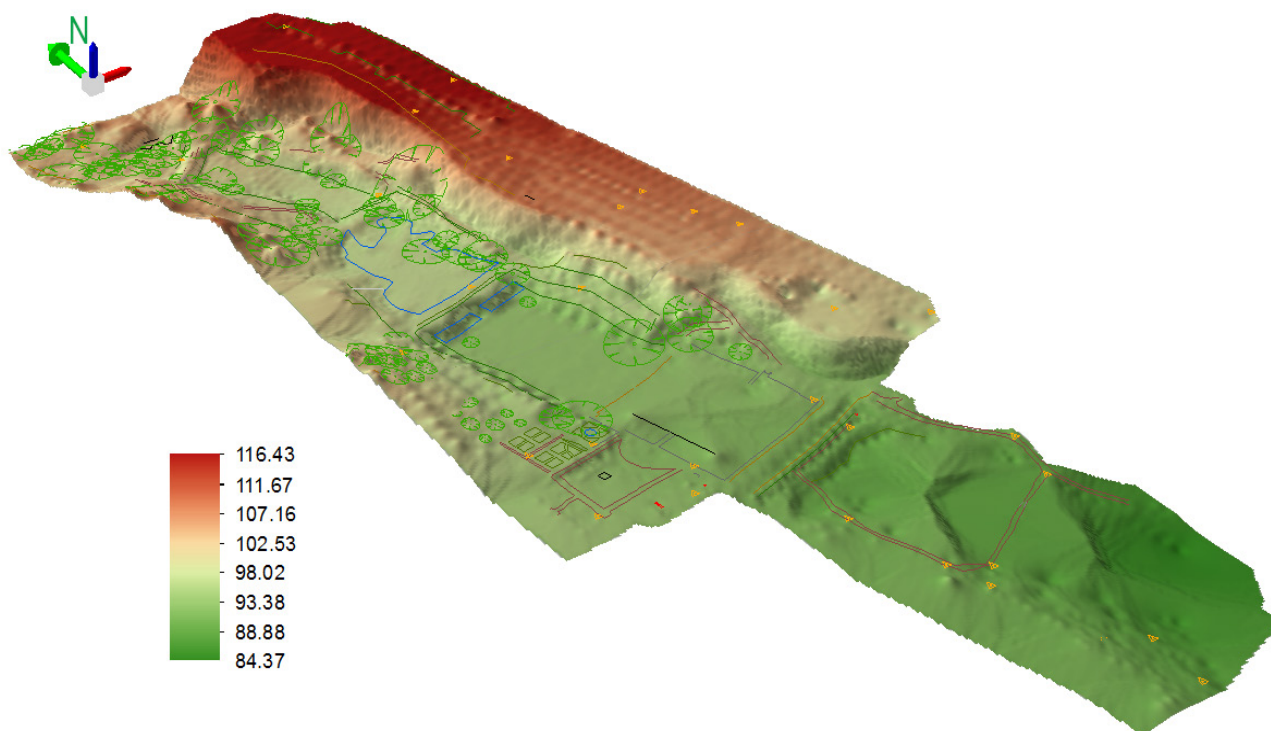


Fig. 8.11: (Above) Three-dimensional topographical model of the landscape at Ightham Mote, rendered in ArcGIS. Drawn to the same scale as the contour map (Fig. 8.3). The slopes of the eastern and western ridges are more visible here, as well as the lookout point created by the elevation of the northern extent of the eastern ridge. Vertical exaggeration is 1.76, calculated from extent. The lighting angles are 319.7 degrees (azimuth) and 31.9 degrees (altitude). Contrast is 50 (default). Rendered by Carrie Willis.

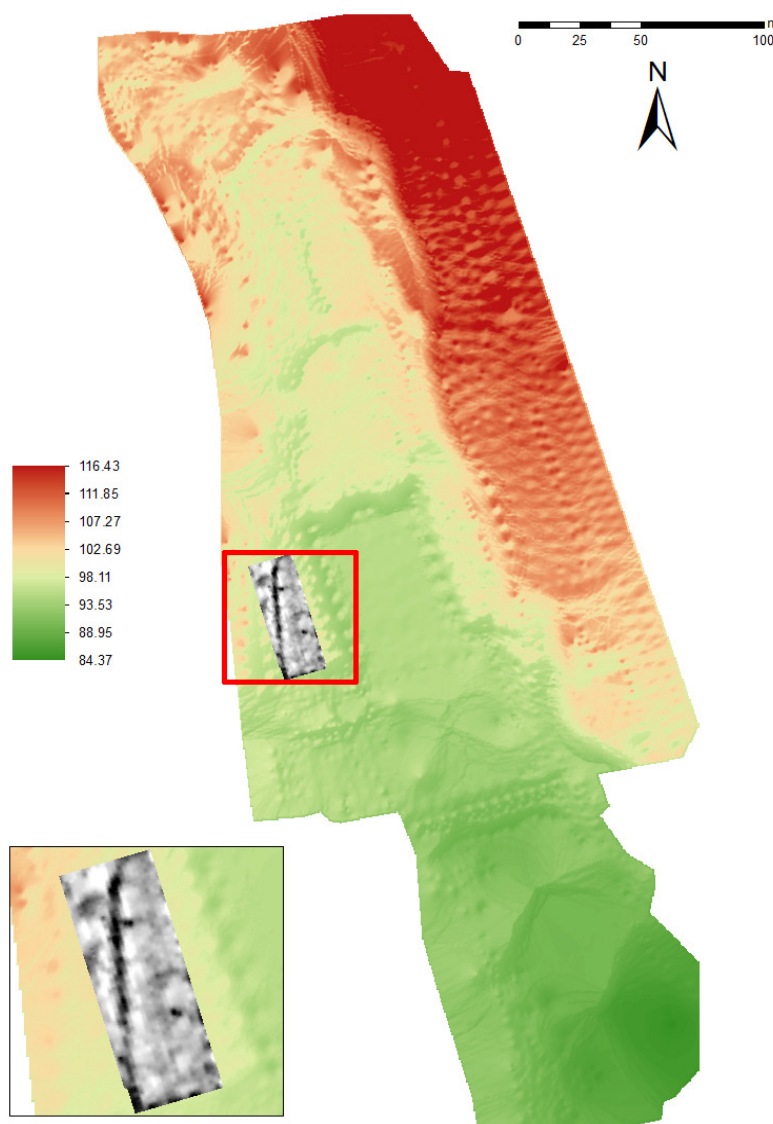


Fig. 8.12: (Right) GPR results from survey in the orchard at Ightham Mote. The thick black line at a north-south axis indicates that the material here is more densely packed than the surrounding white areas; we believe that this indicates a densely-packed or even-paved path cutting through the orchard on a north-south axis. Rendered by Carrie Willis.



Fig. 8.13: View north-west from the gatehouse tower towards the orchard, with modern reconstructed gardens in the foreground and the valley sides beyond. Photo by Matthew Johnson.

of unpublished volumes of recording and analysis were produced by Peter Leach (Leach n.d., a-f) before his untimely death. At the same time, a variety of traditional craftsmen were employed in the reconstruction work; the lively interactions between members of the conservation and restoration programme, and their different viewpoints on the work, were recorded in a special episode of the Channel 4 TV documentary series *Time Team*. An account of this work, and the insights it provided on the development of the house and on medieval buildings generally, remains unpublished, but is of great significance, not simply in telling us about the history of the building, but also in terms of method – a very rare opportunity to take down a medieval house and build it up again.

The most recent round of fieldwork on the immediate landscape around Ightham Mote was conducted between 2012 and 2014 as an international collaborative effort between the National Trust, the University of Southampton, and Northwestern University.

Fieldwork by Northwestern and Southampton Universities at Ightham Mote commenced in 2013. A team of six Northwestern undergraduates and six Southampton undergraduates conducted topographic and geophysical survey at Knole, and topographic survey at Ightham. Rotating teams of three undergraduates under the direction of Timothy Sly used a total station to plot and code over 500 three-dimensional points. The work progressed at a much faster rate than anticipated, and the bulk of fieldwork at both Ightham and Knole was completed in the 2013 season. At Ightham, this work consisted of a detailed topographical (contour) analysis of the area of the property owned by the National Trust.

The 2014 season was initially planned as a second and final season for the work at Ightham and Knole. However, the success of the 2013 field season left little additional survey to be done, particularly at Knole, and thus the 2014 field season was used for more analytic work. The 2014 team was much smaller, composed of two Northwestern undergraduates, two Northwestern graduate students, and one Southampton graduate student. The team was tasked with completing additional geophysical survey at Ightham, preparing geospatial renderings of the Ightham and Bodiam landscapes, and compiling copies of the grey literature for previous seasons at Bodiam, Ightham, and Knole. The team created three-dimensional topographic renderings of the Ightham Mote landscape, which are presented in this chapter.

Figs 8.3, 8.11 & 8.12 are different views of the results: a three-dimensional model of the immediate valley landscape of Ightham Mote. The model shows the narrow valley in which the house is located. This valley runs from the elevated Upper Greensand ridge at the north all the way through to the rolling clay hills of the south, where the land is considerably lower. The house is located at the southern end of the valley, where the valley widens out. One can see the higher ridges at the north and east of the valley. Mote Stream, which feeds the ponds at Ightham Mote, begins somewhere over the top of this northern greensand ridge, and follows the slope to the south to fill the northern ponds, then the moat, then the southern pond.

Geophysical Survey of the Orchard, 2014

The plan set for the 2014 field season was to conduct Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) in the orchard, outer courtyard, and an area near the south pond. Time permitting, our team were in discussion with the National Trust to potentially use GPR in the Great Hall. The area near the south pond proved too difficult to work with. The area was being treated for an invasive strain of weed, and the team was not able to remove weeds from the area as this would have hastened further spread of the species. This would have made it impossible to use the GPR unit, and thus the decision was made to abandon that area and go on with the rest of the survey as planned. Survey commenced with the orchard area, and a significant amount of this area was surveyed. Logistical difficulties, however, meant that further plans to survey the outer courtyard and other areas could not be carried out.

The results of the GPR survey in the orchard contain the clear signature of a path cutting running across it. The results show a well-delineated linear anomaly crossing the survey area on a north-south axis, curving to the east

at its northern extent (see Figs 8.12 & 8.13 for a general view of the area). The darkness of the line in Fig. 8.12, at the 5-8 ns level, indicates that the material which composes the anomaly is dense. The GPR results of this area at a shallower depth shows the line, particularly at the northern extent where it curves east, in a much lighter shade. This indicates that the material here is much looser. We suggest that these findings represent a well-packed or even-paved path cutting through the orchard, overlain by looser soil.

Images and maps of Ightham Mote from the 1800s indicate a curved footpath cutting through the garden. In 2015, gardeners at Ightham Mote removed the top layer of soil from this area and exposed a linear row of stones or paving slabs. We suggest that this finding corroborates the existence of a path in this area of the orchard. However, further investigation into the soil composition of this area is necessary to confirm whether the anomaly represents a formally constructed path or one created by consistent use.

Topographic Analysis: Possible Routes of Approach

The topography of the site, as revealed both through the 2013 topographical survey and the map evidence of the surrounding area, gives some indication of the different possible routes of approach to Ightham Mote. Analysis of these different routes offers an initial understanding of different possible experiences of the place in the Middle Ages. This may have been very different from the modern experience, conditioned as it is by large areas of more recent woodland and vegetation.

The contour survey clearly depicts the very steep slope of the western and eastern ridges that form the valley. These slopes would be difficult and costly – in terms of energy – to scale, and potentially hazardous for carts or other vehicles. It is unlikely that travellers to and from Ightham Mote would have used paths that went straight up and down these ridges. It is more likely, based on the topography of the landscape, that travellers would

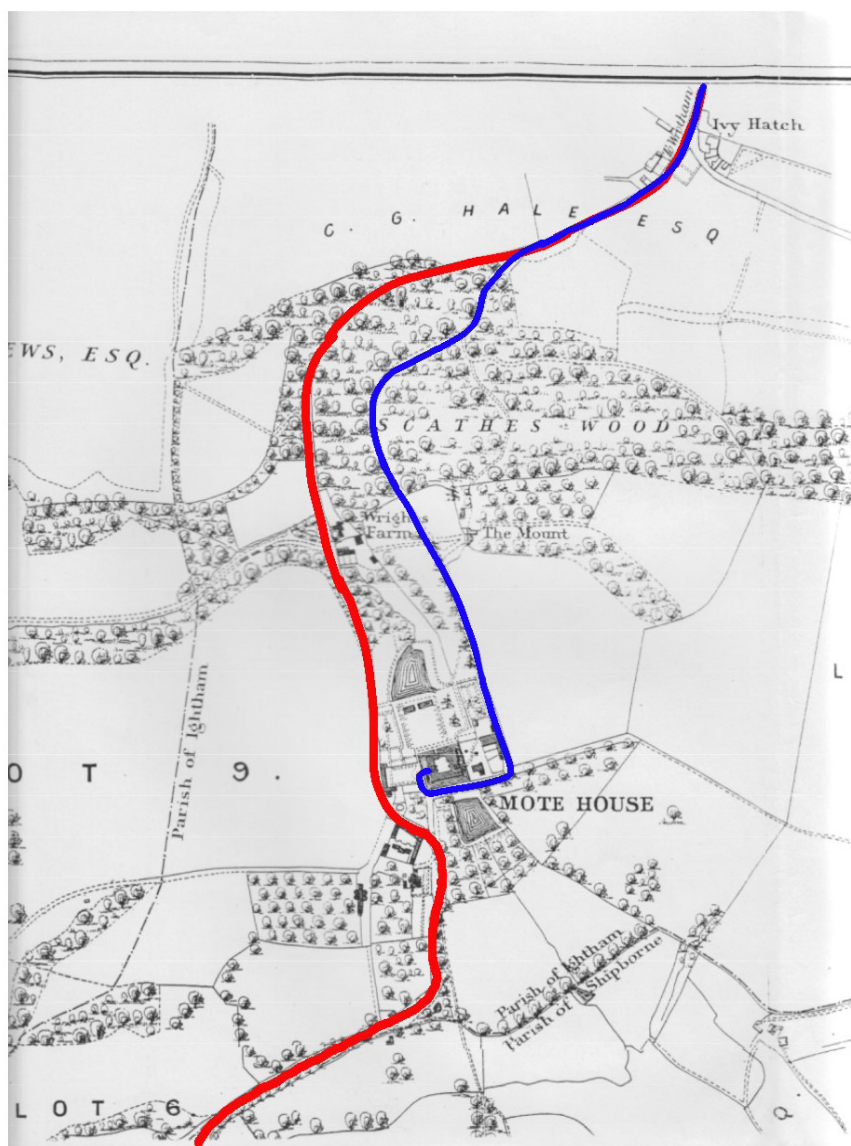


Fig. 8.14: The route of approach to Ightham Mote from the eastern side of the valley (blue line) and western side of the valley (red line), superimposed on the 1889 Sale Particulars map. The red line indicates the public path, serving traffic through the area, while the blue line represents a more private path, serving traffic to the house. Routes of approach to Ightham Mote from the eastern and western sides of the valley. The western route served general traffic through the area, while the eastern route may have been a more exclusive approach, serving traffic to the house. Drawing by Carrie Willis.

have walked down the gentle descent of the eastern or western ridges to approach the property from the north, or up the gradual incline from the south.

19th-century Ordnance Survey, estate, and Sale Particulars maps, can be used to indicate former routes that may have been used to reach the property. From the Sale Particulars map, one can see two routeways lead directly to Ightham Mote (see Fig. 8.14). Both run south from the hamlet of Ivy Hatch; one runs along the eastern ridge and the other runs along the slope of the eastern side.

Approach via the western side of the valley

The 19th-century Sale Particulars map indicates that a north-south route runs south from Ightham village and divides to the south-east and south-west (see Fig. 8.14). The western branch of this main road continues south-west, through the hamlet of Ivy Hatch, and cuts through Scathes Wood to the north of Ightham Mote, almost on the outskirts of the wood. The road then continues south along the western side of the valley which houses Ightham Mote. The road extends south, past Ightham Mote, past Budd's Green, and continues south towards Hildenborough. Topographically, the energy cost of using this road is minimal; the land decreases at varying degrees of steepness as one goes south. The road is a route that connects up a range of places across the landscape; although it passes Ightham Mote, and indeed may have been diverted to accommodate the new outer court in the later 15th century, it is not intended as a route specifically for travellers to Ightham Mote. It serves major foot and horse traffic from wider areas of the region, with Ightham Mote as only one stop along its path.

A visitor travelling south on the major road would first come through the outskirts of Scathes Wood to cross fields and a minor wooded area (see Fig. 8.14). The age of Scathes Wood is not known for certain, so the visual effect of this approach may have varied over time. An earlier map by Andrews *et al.* dated to 1769 does not appear to show the wood, although it does appear to show the major (western) and minor (eastern) roads that cut through it. The woods appear in the subsequent 1801 Ordnance Survey map, which suggests that the shape of the wood as it appears on later maps through to the present time was the result of 18th-century landscape modifications.

The traveller would then proceed south along a slight incline and through a smaller copse of trees before the property was revealed to their left. Because the land

decreases in elevation from north to south, the visitor would have a clear view of the property, slightly from above, viewing it from across the area now occupied by the north pond and lawn, and probably the site of water features in the Middle Ages. The visitor would continue south with the house at their left, along the side of the west front of the outer court, and would then either turn into the outer court through the western gate, or continue around to the south-west corner of the south pond. From this position, the visitor would turn sharply left and head north, viewing the house's southern aspect, with the north lawn and pond providing a backdrop, to come to the entrance between the inner and outer courts. Alternatively, such a visitor would continue on the road as it veered to the south-west towards Nuttree Green and the intersection with what is now Hildenborough Road.

A visitor travelling north-east on the major road, from Nuttree Green and the Low Weald, would also first see the house framed by water features; the land increases in elevation when coming from the south, so the individual would come north through a copse of trees and initially see the tower, roofs and upper parts of the house from across the south pond. The mill may well also have been highly visible from this angle of approach, to one side of the south pond and between the house and the road. As the house was approached, visitors would have the pond on their right and see the house with its northern water features in the background before turning right into the western courtyard.

Approach from the eastern ridge

To return to the northern side, a route now forks from the major road where it meets the northern extent of Scathes Wood, cutting through an area of woodland (see Fig. 8.14). This is the approach taken by contemporary visitors to the Trust property. It then moves south through the wood, curves slightly to the west, then comes south along the eastern valley ridge. It continues south until parallel with the south-east corner of the house, and then turns westward at a sharp right angle.

It then moves west along a tightly defined causeway between the south pond and the southern aspect of the house, before turning north, through the perimeter of the outer court, to terminate at the space between the outer court and main entrance. Topographically, this route of approach would also be a convenient one; the eastern ridge of the property, though steep on its western face, is a gentle and manageable descent moving from north to south.

The approach from the western side of the valley covers additional ground by running along the northern and western outskirts of Scathes Wood, and is also the main routeway running north-south between Ivy Hatch and Nuttree Green. The minor road affords more direct access from the north, cutting through Scathes Wood on a direct path to the more gentle eastern face of the valley at Ightham Mote. The major road does provide access to Ightham Mote, but the minor road appears to be less heavily trafficked, more private, and with more direct access to Ightham Mote.

The Scathes Wood route is listed in a 19th-century map as a 'carriage drive'. It may have been created in the 1600s by the Selby family (Rumley 2007: 58), and it may have been either created or modified at some other date in the post-medieval period. However, it may well be earlier. It may be that rather than the trees being planted to create the carriage drive, the trees were planted to accentuate an existing routeway, and that this routeway was the most common route of access from the northern villages to Ightham Mote.

A visitor travelling south on this route would be in the woods for slightly longer, emerging at the north-east corner of the property (see Fig. 8.14). Upon exiting the woods, a visitor would emerge at the top of an elevated area of the eastern ridge. The north-east point of the property is much higher than the surrounding land; from this point, the visitor would have been able to see the entire property, including the south pond, from this vantage point. As the visitor descended the slope to the south, a full view of the eastern face of the house would be visible. At the base of the slope, the visitor would turn sharply to the west, and either enter the house across the bridge and through the small eastern entrance, or proceed with the south pond to the left and the house to the right. Another right turn would deliver them almost immediately into the space between the outer and inner courts. The minor road appears to join up with the major road at the south-west corner of the south pond. Therefore, a southerly approach is not possible from the minor road.

Both roads lead through Scathes Wood, the minor road more deeply through the wood and the major road on its outskirts. From the point where they fork, the minor road is a shorter distance and time to Ightham Mote. While the northerly approach from the major road would have gradually revealed first the north pond, then the middle pond or north lawn, then the house, the high elevation of the northern aspect of the eastern ridge would have made the entire property visible upon



Fig. 8.15: The outer court, probably added in the 1470s, as seen looking west from the summit of the gate tower. The ground rises beyond the road to the edge of the parish and a substantial field boundary beyond, indicated in Fig. 8.4. Photo by Matthew Johnson.

exiting Scathes Wood. This would have had the effect of emerging from the limited visual range of the enclosed wood to be immediately met with an impressive view of the landscape in its entirety. While the major road leads past the outer court to the south-west corner of the south pond and back up, the placement of the main entrance away from the eastern ridge would have forced the traveller using the minor road to come across the southern face of the house, lengthening the travel time.

The two routes of approach appear to be complementary: the western route is that of an everyday route, along with the main traffic through the valley on the way north to Ivy Hatch and south to Nuttree and the Low Weald, and leading to the lower court and the service activities housed therein, while the eastern route is more specialised and possibly restricted to household staff and/or visitors.

Discussion

To summarise the evidence that we have for the later medieval landscape at Ightham Mote:

- The house itself, and the moat surrounding the inner court, date back to at least the 1320s.
- The outer court was added in the later 15th century.
- There is no direct evidence for a series of ponds or water features north and south of the house, but the existence of most or all of these is probable given the context and parallels with other late medieval sites.
- Similarly, there is no physical evidence for medieval gardens, but one would expect a house like Ightham to have one or more gardens after the medieval pattern, that is small enclosed spaces.

- There is documentary reference to a mill; the pond to the south probably served as the mill pond.
- The approach along the western side of the valley is part of a route likely to be early medieval in origin, but was probably diverted to run around the new outer court in the later 15th century.
- The approach along the eastern side of the valley may well also have existed in the Middle Ages.
- Both approaches would have afforded impressive views of the house in its landscape setting that are now not possible due to tree planting and other post-medieval modifications to the site.
- There is at least one fragment of what appears to be a park pale to the south of the house.

To these observations, we add a further speculative point:

- The addition of the outer court in the later 15th century, under the Hautes, was a major transformation in the scale of the house (Fig. 8.15); it is possible that insofar as there was ever a designed landscape at Ightham Mote, it may have been created or enlarged at this point.

How best to interpret these observations? It is very tempting to note the likely existence of a series of water features, combined with approach routes that probably afforded views over the valley and the house therein, and the possibility of a deer park beyond, and conclude that Ightham Mote is an example of a designed landscape. This was the view taken in the 2007 archaeological assessment of the garden, in which Peter Rumley joined together the field boundaries outlined in Fig. 8.4 to postulate the presence of a deer park (Rumley 2007: 51). This view was sharply rebutted by the landscape archaeologist Chris Taylor in an appendix to the Garden Conservation Plan of 2008 (Ford & Rutherford 2009: 120). Taylor pointed to the lack of physical evidence at Ightham for medieval gardens, and that the field boundaries marked in Fig. 8.4 could not be plausibly joined up to create the oval form characteristic of medieval parks. However, as we have seen with Bodiam and Scotney in earlier chapters, the underlying problem here is the use and definition of the term 'designed landscape'. This has a series of issues, both in terms of the concept, and in terms of the evidence that might be marshalled in support of it.

Despite its extreme popularity in landscape archaeology, the phrase designed landscape has some problematic conceptual baggage associated with it. Primarily, it is a difficult term to define within the medieval context. As Creighton (2009) explains, the phrase designed landscape was not originally created

to describe features of medieval landscape archaeology. The phrase is typically used to describe post-medieval parks and gardens surrounding large country homes, beginning in the Tudor period and popularised in the 19th century (Johnson 2002; Liddiard & Williamson 2008; Creighton 2009). Using the term designed landscape in the medieval context indexes 19th-century ideas of the role and experience of landscape, which may not match medieval perceptions and understandings of the landscape (Smith 2003). Furthermore, as Creighton (2009) mentions, the boundaries of the designed landscape are hazy at best; where does the designed portion of the landscape end and the 'natural' part begin? Are designed and natural landscapes mutually exclusive (Edgeworth 2011)? Furthermore, how complex does a landscape have to be in order to be considered designed (Creighton 2009)? Can vernacular, peasant landscapes also be designed?

The word 'design' also implies a governing scheme or concept in which there is an *a priori* blueprint or template and construction takes place, for the most part, in one phase. At Ightham, the different elements of the landscape strongly suggest a piecemeal evolution. The wider structure of the landscape – the north-south routeways, the overall dispersed nature of the settlement – was of some antiquity by the 1300s, and the house was fitted into it. The origins of the house itself are unclear, and the form of the immediate landscape in its initial phases must remain uncertain. As stated above, it is very possible that the addition of the outer court in the 1470s was not simply a major addition to the house, but marked a transformation in the surrounding landscape as well; it is probable that the line of the road was diverted at this juncture, and it may be that the series of northern ponds were added or formalised at this quite late stage.

It is easier to say what Ightham Mote was not. The popular image of the house is one of a modest retreat, never built or rebuilt in the grand manner, and tucked away in a forgotten, isolated valley. The post-medieval history and current appearance of Ightham lends additional force to this perception, and it is a vision which animates much of the popular presentation and understanding of the site. However, to a late medieval visitor, particularly after the construction of the outer court, Ightham may well have appeared as quite a grand place. The view down into the valley, coming after an extended journey to an isolated location, would have revealed an extensive suite of buildings, arranged around two major courtyards and with a gatehouse tower at its centre, its walls and gate tower reflected in the waters of the moat and probably framed on either side by outer gardens and extensive water features.

If the landscape was designed, what was it designed to do? One could argue that the landscape at Ightham Mote was designed to be viewed and enjoyed, and to provide a 'theatrical route of approach' (Creighton 2009: 86) which controlled movement and revealed the house and its surroundings in stages. The hypothesised routes of approach certainly do this, though they achieve this effect through the use of the pre-existing lie of the land. The stage-by-stage revealing of different elements of the landscape is a result of the landscape's natural topography.

The landscape at Ightham is a perfect illustration of the use of the natural topography of the landscape to create a setting for a house. Rather than the *landscape* being designed, the *house* was designed – or rather, carefully placed and oriented – to enhance and make use of the landscape's natural features. The house's main gate and outer court are oriented away from the approach from the east, towards the north-south route to the west. This directs visitors or inhabitants using the eastern approach to come around the house in a sharp turn in order to enter, prolonging the amount of time viewing the house, and exposing different sides of the house and aspects of the landscape to the viewer. The north-south decline in elevation and natural spring allow for a cascading effect of water features throughout the landscape. The placement of a pond at either extreme of the landscape with the house between ensures that the house is seen across a lake from either a northerly or southerly approach, while the cascading effect of the water also ensures that waste deposited into the moat is flushed out and deposited in the south pond.

The existence of two approaches, one for general traffic and one for accessing Ightham Mote directly, has implications for different power dynamics within the landscape. Ightham Mote is isolated, at the southern end of the parish of Ightham and the border with the parish of Shipbourne. Furthermore, it has its own chapel, which means that those who lived at Ightham Mote may not have needed to regularly leave the property to attend the church at the far north of the parish of Ightham. Those who worked in the house and in its immediate landscape would have lived in the house as servants and domestic workers, while those who worked in the more distant outfields and demesne lands would likely have only approached as far as the fields. Thus, the only individuals who would regularly travel to and from Ightham Mote would be the owners on occasional travel, those invited directly, and those who walked or rode past the property on their way down the main road.

It is not known whether the eastern route was created especially for the house, whether it already existed in the landscape, or indeed if it was a post-medieval addition. In the first two cases, it is very possible that by the later Middle Ages, the minor road was used more or less exclusively to access Ightham Mote. The gentle slope of the eastern ridge, procession between the south pond and house, and termination between the inner and outer court, as opposed to meeting the major road, seem to support this interpretation. If it is the case that the eastern approach was used as a more social, restricted access to Ightham Mote, then it holds that use of the road would be limited to the household, its guests, and household staff.

The presence of a separate route of approach of some length, over 1000 m from the northern fork to the house – either formally or through frequent use – intended primarily for members of the household of Ightham Mote, reflects a social segregation in the landscape. This ideological and social separation is expressed through the use of physical separation. However, as Adam T Smith explains in *The Political Landscape*, 'space not only expresses but also argues' (Smith 2003: 61). Smith claims that when practices are limited to certain spaces – for example, limiting the driving of automobiles to the road – these practices legitimise the spaces, give them power to limit behaviours and practices. However, the limitation of practices to particular spaces also reinforces the social and political institutions that the creation of these spaces directly benefit. The designation of a road for 'procession' or 'approach' and a road for simply 'passing by' designates the landscape as set apart, not an element of the daily back and forth through the landscape, of people of a variety of social classes and identities, but rather for a privileged class. Those lower-class individuals accessing the landscape by either approach, whether invited or not, would have been aware of this distinction as they entered the property. This creates a very tangible social space around the immediate landscape of Ightham Mote.

If the experience of space is the framework of human knowledge of the world (Hillier & Hanson 1989), then the existence of two roads which spatially and socially segregate two separate groups shapes our understanding of the social relationships between those who use the main road and those who use the private drive. This distinction reinforces the ideology of social differentiation by distributing it across the landscape. Spatially constrained activities – processing on the minor road, versus passing by on the major road – are assigned to particular social identities: those with

a certain level of material wealth and those without it, respectively. Through the repeated daily practice of taking the public highway, with the understanding that a more exclusive or processional approach exists, individuals with less access to material wealth are made aware of their exclusion from this social space. While passersby may not have felt subjugated or excluded by the fact that they were taking the public road, or even been aware of it, their taking it would have contributed to a system in which different social positions enjoyed different levels of power. This embodied experience, understanding of social position, and understanding of the world, contribute to the maintenance of the existing relational, hierarchical social structure which defines social classes in the first place.

This is not to say that individuals are enslaved by their spatial constraints; deer parks, considered almost universally to be 'elite' spaces (Cantor 1982; Johnson 2002; Creighton 2009; Creighton & Barry 2012), were commonly broken into by individuals of lower social status, particularly when food was scarce and deer within the lord or earl's private deer park were plenty (see also Chapter Seven). Likewise, non-elite individuals likely would have taken the minor road to come to Ightham Mote for temporary work, by invitation, or potentially to steal food or simply to trespass. However, by entering into what is understood as private space, delineated by the major and minor roads or the simultaneously physical and social boundaries of the park pale, trespassers are aware that their behaviour challenges the power of the landowner. They are not acting outside of the relational social hierarchy in place, but simply challenging it. The spatial segregation of social identities, as illustrated at Ightham Mote, contributes to a hierarchical structure of social relations. This hierarchy, reflected in physical space, reinforces the knowledge that those with less material wealth are socially distinct from and excluded by those with more material wealth.

Conclusion

Our survey and analysis of the Ightham landscape has led to several general conclusions about its form, and whether it can be considered a formal or designed landscape.

First, the present appearance of the landscape at Ightham Mote is probably misleading. The landscape was not designed in that it was tailor made for the house; rather, the house was positioned to fit the lie of the land as it existed and the landscape was modified rather than created.

Second, the 'expression of social status' at Ightham Mote is anything but intangible. The reinforcement of social status is an undoubtedly physical phenomenon in the landscape. Modifications to the landscape reflected and prompted embodied patterns of movement. In this way, the landscape acted upon the bodies of those who moved through it, reinforcing existing social hierarchies and power structures that defined social life in the medieval world.

Finally, the concept of designed landscapes is simultaneously redundant and paradoxical: redundant in that all landscapes that have been modified by human activity, intentional or not, are in some capacity designed and paradoxical in that no landscape can be completely designed in its entirety. Rather than focusing our efforts on identifying *designed* landscapes in the archaeological record, we should search for *modified* landscapes.

Our goal should not be to find out 'for what purpose was this landscape designed', but rather 'how do modifications in the landscape constrain and facilitate human work, movement, and other practices?' Topographical analysis of movement through the landscape, as evidenced at Ightham Mote, has the ability to address more complex questions about the way landscape reflects, reinforces, challenges, and embodies differential power dynamics through experience of the landscape and daily practices inside, around, and within it.