Abstract. This chapter focuses on the landscape of Scotney. Scotney is a late medieval castle close to Bodiam and built in the later 14th century. It also has a complex landscape, with water features, much of which survives within a 19th-century picturesque landscape park. The area of parkland south and west of the castle was surveyed by the Southampton/Northwestern team. This chapter reports on this work, and places the survey results in the context of wider evidence for the Scotney landscape in the later medieval period.

Introduction

Scotney Castle is situated in the middle of the Weald, on the border between Kent and Sussex in southeast England (Fig. 6.1). It is about 18 km north-west of Bodiam. Though not as well known as Bodiam, Scotney shares close parallels, both in terms of the building and the surrounding landscape, and is also owned and managed by the National Trust. It is a late medieval castle, surrounded by a landscape with complex water features, including a moat in the form of a small artificial lake. Its builders and owners were the Ashburnhams, a gentry family closely associated with Dallingridge (Saul 1986).

The modern visitor to Scotney approaches the site from the south-west, along a curving private road about 1 km from the public highway. The road runs on higher ground through wooded areas before affording views down to a valley to its right. The valley is now parkland, with wide grassy slopes and occasional trees, surrounded by wooded areas on the higher ground. The ruins of Scotney Castle are hardly visible behind dense tree growth at the bottom of this valley. The modern car park is next to the, much later, 19th-century Scotney New Castle, which stands on higher ground looking down on the older castle. The overall first impression for the visitor is thus of a 19th-century ‘picturesque’ landscape, laid out with parkland and carriage drives (Fig. 6.2). The modern approach to the site, and the features of the later picturesque landscape as a whole, have to be ‘thought away’ by the modern visitor before an understanding of the medieval site and landscape can begin.

The standing fabric of Scotney Castle has been the subject of a thorough analysis and interpretation, published in Archaeologia Cantiana (Martin et al. 2008; 2011; 2012). The castle is moated, and the inner court rises directly from the water, without a berm, as at Bodiam (Fig. 6.3). The water surrounding the castle is fed by streams from the south and south-west, and held back by an artificial dam to the west. This body of water has three islands within it, two of which have definite structural evidence from the Middle Ages. The middle island appears to have functioned as an outer court, with stables and other buildings. It was approached via a bridge from the north-west, as it is
today. The inner court, on the island to the north-east, was approached via the outer court; it was rhomboidal in form, with a circular tower at each of the four main corners. The present structure is much more ruinous than Bodiam, with only one machicolated tower surviving to battlement level and the others largely destroyed; internally, the associated domestic buildings were much rebuilt in the post-medieval period. The medieval domestic arrangements, rather than being laid out around the sides of the courtyard as at Bodiam, instead formed a central block running from one side of the rhomboid to the other, with the hall in the centre and services to the south-east. This block was partially demolished in a wholesale rebuilding of the hall block dating to the 1630s, a rebuilding that was apparently never finished.

In the spring of 2011 and the summer of 2012, teams from the University of Southampton and Northwestern University carried out an archaeological survey of the landscape surrounding Scotney Castle, with Timothy Sly of Southampton as the primary director and supervisor of the work. The total area surveyed in 2011 and 2012 comprised the fields directly south-west of the castle, stretching to the boundary with the A21 bypass and up the slopes of the valley to the north-west and east (Fig. 6.1). The fieldwork at Scotney had three main goals. First, we wanted to gather data for the analysis of the wider medieval landscape surrounding Scotney Castle. Second, we wanted to provide data for the purposes of conservation management at the site and enhancement of the visitor experience, and third, it enabled us to train students in topographical and geophysical survey methods.

This chapter synthesises the data from the 2011 and 2012 surveys, historical documents and maps, and past literature (mostly unpublished) on the medieval landscape of Scotney Castle. The results of the survey contribute to a more detailed understanding of Scotney Castle and its landscape in the medieval period.

Fig. 6.1: 2011-2012 Northwestern and Southampton Scotney Castle Landscape Survey extent.

Fig. 6.2: General appearance of Scotney Park today, looking north from the valley bottom. Photo by Matthew Johnson.
Much of the medieval landscape at Scotney remains conjectural, and there are many possible avenues for future research. However, we were able to establish that the Scotney landscape was every bit as complex as that at Bodiam in the later Middle Ages.

The Scotney estate is currently owned and maintained by the National Trust. The medieval moated site, often referred to as ‘The Old Castle’, lies along the confluence of the Sweetbourne and the River Bewl, in a valley south of the River Teise, about 1.5 km south-east of Lamberhurst. As noted above, much of the surrounding landscape was converted to a picturesque park in the 19th century by Edward Hussey III. As a result, most of the current vistas and pathways through the park have been arranged according to 19th-century aesthetic choices. The extensive 19th-century landscape alterations at Scotney present challenges in understanding and interpreting its medieval landscape. Confusingly, the designation ‘Scotney Castle’ sometimes refers to the neo-Tudor country house, also known as the ‘New House’, built by Edward Hussey from 1837-1844, located up the valley slope, north-west of the medieval site.

The data from the topographic survey provided evidence for medieval ponds and a possible mill site along the Sweetbourne, a sunken approach running parallel with the Sweetbourne down the hill to the castle, and a meadow which may have been flooded at various points in the past, just south-west of the moated site (Figs 6.4-6.6). One 60 x 60 m resistivity survey, targeted at earthworks south-west of the castle, confirmed the continuation of the sunken pathway from the south-west towards the castle (Fig. 6.4). A second 60 x 60 m resistivity survey was targeted over a number of large, possibly worked, stones within a copse along the southern slope of the valley, largely for the purposes of archaeological instruction in geophysics. The results of this survey were, unfortunately, inconclusive (Figs 6.6 & 6.7).

Scholars have recently described the ‘designed’ qualities of 14th-century elite landscapes as ‘vehicles for contemporary elites to showcase their wealth and sophistication’ (Creighton 2009: 1) or as active and complex stage settings for social action (Johnson 2002). As discussed in Chapters One and Two, surveys of other sites in the region, such as Bodiam Castle, have suggested that later 14th-century landscapes were organised around specific paths of movement and views of the castle along the approach (Taylor et al. 1990; Everson 1996). This may have been the case at Scotney Castle as well, considering the owners of Scotney and Bodiam, Roger Ashburnham and Edward Dallingridge, were contemporaries and associates. However, in order to understand the medieval landscape at Scotney, the highly ornamental 19th-century picturesque landscape must first be carefully unraveled from the medieval — both in the field and in the conceptual interpretation of the data.

Evidence for Medieval Landscape Features at Scotney Castle

Past surveys of Scotney Castle and the surrounding landscape have been carried out primarily for the purposes of conservation management (Bannister 2001; ACTA 2007; Hancock 2008; Martin et al. 2008; 2011; 2012; National Trust 2009). These ‘grey
literature’ reports are unpublished, but they provide a wealth of information on the archaeological and historical context of Scotney Castle and its surrounding environment. There is evidence of a complex medieval landscape at Scotney, which may have included a mill and associated ponds, a park, a moat with three islands, three possible approaches to the castle, and a possible floodplain south-west of the moat. The evidence for each of these features and the 2011-2012 survey’s contribution to the evidence is summarised below.

Scotney stands in a boundary location. The current extent of the Scotney estate, now owned and managed by the National Trust, actually comprised three separate manorial holdings from the medieval period and into the 18th century: Scotney (alias Curtehope, Courthope), Chingley, and Marden. The manor of Scotney consisted of the land west of the River Bewl to Lamberhurst, while Chingley and Marden lay to the east of the Bewl, with the manorial boundary between the two running south-east through Kilndown Common (Fig. 6.8; Bannister 2001: 17). The River Bewl has been an important political boundary, dating from 1077 to the present. Described in a land charter of AD 1077, it was the early medieval boundary between the dioceses of Rochester and Chichester, the former boundary between Kent and Sussex (1077-1894), and the parish boundary of Lamberhurst and Goudhurst (1077-present) (Sawyer 1968: 1564).

Scoteni phase (13th century): Mill and ponds

The historical record suggests three possible phases of medieval landscape alteration at Scotney Castle. The first phase is associated with the Scoteni family in the late 13th century. Sir Peter de Scotney inherited and occupied the manor of Curtehope in 1285, and in 1295 he held half a knight’s fee as lord of Curtehope (Redwood & Wilson 1958: 117; Witney 1976). This knight’s fee is later described as comprising 80 acres of land and a mill (Du Boulay 1966: 372).

There is no definitive archaeological evidence for occupation at the current location of the moated site before the mid-14th century, but it is possible that the system of embankments and earthworks running along the Sweetbourne may be associated with the 13th-century mill (Bannister 2001: 37). William Clout’s set of maps depicting the Scotney estate in 1757, copies of which are held at the National Trust archives at Scotney, identifies three fields along the Sweetbourne as ‘Upper Pond’, ‘Lower Pond’, and ‘Mill Garden’. The course of the Sweetbourne also appears to have been artificially straightened, indicating possible human intervention and water management at the site. If the earthworks were in fact associated with ponds, the areas named Upper and Lower Ponds do not appear as water features on any historical maps, suggesting they were out of use by the 17th century (Bannister 2001: 38). While the River Bewl could also be a candidate for the location of the mill, it forms a boundary between three medieval manors, two counties and two parishes. Consequently, it may have been more difficult to negotiate the rights to use the Bewl to power a mill, instead of the Sweetbourne (Bannister 2001: 37). There are other known mills along the River Teise in Lamberhurst which de Scoteni could have owned, and to which the document is referring, but it seems
Fig. 6.5: Summary of the 2011-2012 Northwestern and Southampton Scotney Castle Landscape Survey results.

Fig. 6.6: Linear features identified in topographic survey and resistivity surveys; M1-M3 are modern pathways constructed in the 18th and 19th century.
as if a miller, called Helyas, controlled the mills in Lamberhurst at the time, as he granted 20s from mills in Lamberhurst to Leeds Priory in 1285 (CKS U47/32 Q1; Bannister 2001: 37).

The 2012 topographic survey confirmed the presence of possible pond bays, generally aligning with the location and shape of the Upper Pond and Lower Pond fields denoted on the 1757 map (Figs 6.9 & 6.10). Just south of where the Sweetbourne enters the estate the sharp base of the hill forms a linear topographic feature (F5), which aligns with the boundary in the 1757 map surrounding Upper Pond field (Fig. 6.9). The linear sunken feature running north-west (F2), perpendicular to the Sweetbourne and just south of the modern trackway, probably represents the field boundary identified in the 1757 map between Lower Pond and Mill Garden fields. At the point where the Sweetbourne enters the Scotney estate, just outside of the 2012 survey extent, there are significant earthworks, which may represent the artificial pond-bay boundary of the Upper Pond. There is no evidence for the dating of the ponds, and so they may have been constructed or modified any period before the 17th century. However, if the mill mentioned in the historical documents existed at this location in the late 13th century, then it would follow that there was least one pond associated with it.

**Grovehurst phase (1300-1358): Park**

The second phase of medieval landscape alteration at Scotney can be attributed to the Grovehurst family in the early 14th century. According to Nicola Bannister’s research, derived from charters in Lambeth Palace Library (2001), in 1310 John de Grovehurst was granted the right of free warren in Scotney (Charter Rolls) and in 1312 he was granted permission to build a private chapel at his manor at Scotney. John de Grovehurst probably resided at a manor house on the Scotney estate by this time. Therefore, it is possible that an early phase of the current moated complex and medieval house dates to the early 14th century. However, there is no surviving fabric from such an early phase (Martin et al. 2008: 10). Besides the mention of Grovehurst’s right of free warren in 1310, Henry Allen’s 1619 map depicts ‘Scotney Parke’ and the fields bounded by the road through Lamberhurst and the River Teise (CKS U1776 P1). When oriented correctly, the outer boundary of the park depicted in the 1619 map broadly corresponds to parts of the current boundary of the National Trust estate today, north-west of the castle, along Collier’s Wood and north-west to Claypits Wood. The ‘interior’ of the park is depicted as north-west of this boundary, outside of the current estate, towards Lamberhurst (Fig. 6.8). There are earthwork features on the ground, roughly tracing the park boundary depicted in the 1619 map, and Nicola Bannister has described these earthworks as the medieval park pale implied by John de Grovehurst’s right of free warren in 1310 (Bannister 2001: 29).

Although this area was outside the scope of the 2011-2012 topographic survey, a preliminary walking survey was carried out to investigate the area. Without a more comprehensive topographical survey, there is currently not enough evidence to determine whether the system of banks and ditches is definitively a medieval park pale, or simply a substantial field boundary of any date.

**Ashburnham phase (1358-1418)**

Scotney passed to the Ashburnham family after Isabel, the widow of John de Grovehurst, married John de Ashburnham. John’s son, Roger, Conservator of the Peace in Kent and Sussex, together with John Etchingham and Edward Dallingridge, from 1376-1380, inherited Scotney in 1358 (Martin et al. 2008). Roger Ashburnham can be associated with a third postulated phase of medieval landscape alteration. Although there is no licence to crenellate for Scotney, it is assumed Roger de Ashburnham constructed curtain walls, a tower, and a gatehouse at the site. The date of this construction has been given as c. 1378 (Bannister 2001: 20; ACTA 2007: 27; Martin et al. 2008: 10; National Trust 2009: 22), giving the site at least the appearance of a castle or fortified manor house.

The rationale given by scholars for such a specific date of construction is based entirely on comparative stylistic, architectural evidence and because of the French attacks on Winchelsea, Rye and Hastings in 1377. It has been suggested that the fear of a French
invasion would have provided the necessary motivation for building a castle without a licence (National Trust 2009: 22). However, the location of Scotney is much further inland than Bodiam, and is much further away from navigable water routes; it is therefore possible to be skeptical of a primarily defensive intent. However, the stylistic and other features of the castle make a date in the 1370s a reasonable assumption.

As David Martin and colleagues carefully point out, in an archaeological interpretive survey of Scotney Castle, ‘it is not known whether the fortifications were placed around an existing house or whether a new site was chosen for the moated house’ (Martin et al. 2008: 10). Given that there is no berm at Scotney, and the water of the moat abuts the Ashburnham Tower on the inner island, it is likely that the moat was at least modified or drained, if not constructed, at some point during Roger de Ashburnham’s occupation of the site (1358-1392).

Features of unknown date: medieval approaches, moat, and meadow

The Clout map of 1757 shows three approaches to Scotney Castle, likely used by the Darell family during the post-medieval period, but possibly earlier — one from Kilndown, one from Lamberhurst, and one from Bewl Bridge Farm (Bannister 2001: 34). The earthworks running down the hill from the south-west and parallel to the Sweetbourne have been interpreted as a possible principal approach to the medieval castle (National Trust 2009: 24; Goulding and Clubb 2010: 6-7), although there is little concrete evidence for this claim. These approaches were altered or went into disuse in the mid-19th century, when Edward Hussey III transformed the landscape into a picturesque park and gardens (Bannister 2001: 30) (CKSU1776 F1/4-6). For instance, the 1870 Ordnance Survey Map, in contrast to the 1757 Clout map, depicts no pathway running north-east through the fields between the Sweetbourne and Bewl, south-west of the castle. Instead, the south-western half of the pathway is depicted as a simple field boundary, which was identified in the topographical survey (Fig. 6.6, F4).

The 2011-2012 topographic survey confirmed the presence of a slightly sunken linear earthwork feature running roughly parallel with the Sweetbourne and continuing towards the castle (Figs 6.4 & 6.5, F1). When georeferenced with the 1757 Clout map, this topographic feature conforms to the area marked ‘Lane’ on the map and the field boundary in the 1870 Ordnance Survey Map. The resistivity survey...
straddling this earthwork feature, just north-east of the modern trackway, revealed a linear patch of high resistance, which may indicate compacted soil associated with the Lane depicted in the 1757 map (Fig. 6.6). The 2011-2012 survey also identified earthworks just east of the Bewl and south of the castle (Fig. 6.6, F3). These earthworks align with the Lane depicted in another 1757 Clout map of the area, east of the Bewl, running down the valley slope through Kilndown wood (Fig. 6.9).

Unfortunately, the date of construction for the moat remains unconfirmed. Considering that the general moat-building chronology in England is 1200-1325 (Aberg 1978), it is possible a moat existed at the site during the Scoteni or Grovehurst phases of occupation, although the Grovehurst phase seems the more likely of the two. John de Grovehurst was granted right of free warren in 1310 and granted permission to build a chapel in 1312, two features often associated with elite moated sites in the area. For example, the nearby moated site known as The Mote, near Iden, with a licence to crenellate in 1318, and a permission to build a chapel in 1320, was presumably constructed within the same decade as Grovehurst’s initial occupation of Scotney (Gardiner & Whittick 2011).

It is also possible, however, that the moat was constructed during the Ashburnham phase of construction. Nearby Bodiam Castle has a licence to crenellate dating to 1385, and assuming the moat was dug around the same time as the castle was constructed, this is within a decade of the presumed Ashburnham phase of construction. It is also possible that the moat had multiple phases of construction, perhaps starting with a single island and then other islands were added over time with different owners, although there is no concrete evidence for this claim. As is usual with topographical surveys, the 2011-2012 survey of Scotney produced no direct evidence for the date of construction, or alteration, of the moat.

An unpublished report on the Scotney estate suggests the large flat area just south of the gardens, at the confluence of the moat and the River Bewl, may have been seasonally flooded as another piece of a ‘designed landscape’, but the report gives no evidence for this claim (ACTA 2007: 28). The 2011-2012 survey confirmed the general topography of this meadow and, indeed, the flat area stretching south of the moat and straddling the River Bewl appears to be a floodplain (Fig. 6.6). It is possible that before the Bewl reservoir dam was constructed in 1975 the whole area surrounding the River Bewl was either seasonally, or permanently, flooded at various points in the past.
A Designed Landscape?

Based on the available evidence, Scotney Castle as it appeared in the later Middle Ages probably had a much more elaborate watery medieval landscape than is apparent today. If the mill, mill ponds, park, moat, and possible floodplain were all in existence, along with the south-west approach, during the Ashburnham phase of construction, this would be compelling evidence for the landscape being experienced as an impressively 'designed', elite medieval site — much like its neighbour Bodiam Castle (Taylor et al. 1990; Everson 1996). In accordance with emergent perspectives on medieval castles and their 'designed landscapes' in the past decade (Johnson 2002; Creighton 2009), this possible landscape affords specific vistas of the castle and surrounding moat, while travelling on a route surrounded on either side by mill ponds and a flooded meadow. The visitor would then pass by the mill and turn at a 90 degree angle to enter the central moat island, probably the outer court (Martin et al. 2008: 11), and then turn again to enter the inner court under the gatehouse.

However, the argument for a complex designed landscape, which was intended to impress, requires, in part, that this set of water features be visible from the principal approach to Scotney. It is clear from Edward Hasted’s experience of the site in the late 18th century that visibility of the castle was not a priority, at least for the Darells, the post-medieval owners of the estate:

*About half a mile below Bewle bridge near the east bank of the stream, is the mansion of Scotney, situated in a deep vale, and so surrounded with woods, as to give it a most gloomy and recluse appearance.*

(Hasted 1798: 297)

The views provided by the current picturesque landscape are tightly controlled and radically different than they would have been before the late 18th and 19th century. While much of the surrounding woodland would probably have been managed and coppiced, especially on the slopes of the valley (Bannister 2001: 24), it is still unknown whether the fields south-west of the estate were covered in woodland, or not, during the medieval period. The 1757 map names the fields on either side of the south-western approach as ‘Quarry Field’, ‘Stream Field’ and ‘Hop Garden’, suggesting that these areas were not heavily wooded, at least in the post-medieval period. More archaeological investigation is required to reconstruct the density of woodland in the medieval period along this approach.
**Bodiam, Scotney and Etchingham**

Scotney has parallels with Bodiam, in terms of its social context, its architecture, and its landscape. These parallels are quite striking, though they are not as straightforward as they appear at first sight, and they need to be set out with care.

Scotney’s builder, Roger Ashburnham, was closely associated with Sir Edward Dallingridge. Dallingridge, Ashburnham, and Sir William de Etchingham were three local gentry named together as Conservators of the Peace in Kent and Sussex between 1376 and 1380. Sir William de Etchingham, whose family was at least as important as the Ashburnhams and had indeed been the most important family within the Rape of Hastings, had houses at the settlement at Etchingham (about 9 km west of Bodiam and 14 km south of Scotney, from which he took his name and where he also rebuilt the church) and at Udimore. Both houses have been completely destroyed, though some earthworks survive east of the church at Etchingham, and documentary information indicates this was a place of some status and importance, with a long history stretching back to before the 13th century (Vivian 1953). Ashburnham, however, was not a knight; he also did not obtain a licence to crenellate for Scotney. It is tempting to link these two observations: if Charles Coulson and others are right in seeing licences to crenellate in largely honorific terms (Coulson 1993; Davis 2007), then Ashburnham’s apparent lack of concern for a title may be linked to his apparent lack of concern about a licence.

Etchingham, Scotney and Bodiam are all moated sites. They are also larger examples of the class of moated sites that is so frequently found in the Weald, and will be discussed further in Chapter Ten. Etchingham sits in a flat and level location, while Scotney and Bodiam sit in a dip in the landscape, with higher ground on at least two sides. This location has, in all cases, been utilised to construct and maintain water features. Both Bodiam and Scotney sit close to the boundary between the counties of Kent and Sussex. Bodiam is in the middle of its manor, whereas the Scotney site sits on the margins of several different manorial estates.

Scotney shares design parallels with Bodiam. The ‘footprint’ of Scotney’s inner court and that of Bodiam are roughly similar in size. Scotney is surrounded by a moat and other complex water features; it has four circular towers linked by curtain walls. It has been suggested that Henry Yevele had a hand in both designs, though the evidence is stylistic and based on inference (Harvey 1954). However, it also has important differences. The towers are much more squat than at Bodiam. The surviving Ashburnham Tower has machicolations; what those machicolations supported is unclear: a full-height parapet and crenellations or smaller battlements. Scotney is approached via an outer court. Its domestic buildings are not in line around four ranges, but are arranged across the centre of the site. The surrounding curtain wall is much thinner and also much lower than at Bodiam. Though building accounts do not survive for either site, Bodiam clearly represents a much larger input of labour and resources. Etchingham was a somewhat larger and more important place than Scotney, and as is common in the later Middle Ages, had a substantial church associated with it. Taken as a whole, a comparison of Etchingham, Bodiam and Scotney adds support to Coulson’s assertion that the complex landscape and architecture of Bodiam is an example of a common phenomenon in the later Middle Ages, rather than an unusual or exceptional piece of architecture (Coulson 1992: 75, 89).

**Conclusion**

The 2011-2012 archaeological survey of Scotney Castle has provided evidence for medieval ponds, a possible mill, a south-west approach to the castle, and a possible floodplain south-west of the moat. If these features were all in use at the time of the Ashburnham phase of construction, the landscape at Scotney Castle can be seen as a close parallel to that of nearby Bodiam Castle. This is a feasible claim, considering their owners were contemporaries, both being appointed as Conservators of the Peace in Kent and Sussex, along with William de Etchingham, from 1376-1380. Indeed, while Ashburnham may have been responsible for the fortification of the manor house, it is problematic to attribute the elite landscape at Scotney to Ashburnham alone; the historical record suggests that, like Bodiam, Scotney accumulated a palimpsest of landscape features over time, with various owners contributing to what we can identify today. Regardless of the ‘designed’ characteristics of the Scotney landscape, this survey has also contributed to our understanding of how an elite manorial residence used the surrounding environment to organise and manage the flow of water, materials, and people in and out of the estate.

More evidence is required to flesh out our understanding of the Scotney landscape. First, the topographical survey could be expanded to cover the entire area surrounding the castle. Beyond this area, the field boundaries associated with a possible park pale need further attention. This should be done in conjunction with LiDAR data, and a detailed examination of the
1619 map by Henry Allen (CKS U1776 P1) and a walking survey of the fields north-west of the Scotney estate, following the boundary of the supposed park. Second, the geophysical survey could be expanded in two locations. The current 60 x 60 m resistivity area, close to the Sweetbourne, should be extended north-east to determine if the sunken trackway continues to the edge of the modern garden boundary. A geophysical survey could also be carried out on the north side of the Sweetbourne, along the boundary of the field denoted ‘Mill Garden’ on the 1757 Clout map, in order to locate the foundations of the mill referred to in the 1295 document (Fig. 6.9). Finally, further environmental archaeological methods may be able to reconstruct parts of the medieval landscape at Scotney. Systematic coring of the pond areas and floodplain north and south of the hollow way could confirm possible periods in which these areas were covered with water. Extensive pollen sampling may be able to reconstruct past density of woodland, relative to the present day.