

EXTRACT FROM ENGLISH HERITAGE'S RECORD OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS

MONUMENT: Shurland House: early 16th century Great House and associated remains

PARISH: EASTCHURCH

DISTRICT: SWALE

COUNTY: KENT

NATIONAL MONUMENT NO: 29601

NATIONAL GRID REFERENCE(S): TQ99397153

DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

The monument includes a Great House of late medieval date situated 450m north east of the village of Eastchurch on the Isle of Sheppey. It survives as standing and buried remains, the standing remains being the gatehouse range Listed Grade II* and courtyard behind, and the outer garden walls which are Listed Grade II. The monument also includes an area of enclosed gardens and an unenclosed pond which lies about 40m south west of the gatehouse. The complex stands close to the crest of a ridge which runs roughly north to south and which provides commanding views eastward to the sea and across to the mainland. It is primarily a magnate's house of the late medieval period very probably built on the site of an earlier medieval manor.

The house is approached through a front court to the west gatehouse range, behind which north and south ranges form a courtyard with the main house as its east side. Service courts stand east and north of the main house together with ancillary buildings, one of which appears to have been a chapel. To the south is a large walled former garden. A Public Record Office (PRO) drawing of Shurland made in the time of Elizabeth I shows the house probably at its largest extent.

The most substantial surviving remains at Shurland are those of the gatehouse range which is complete to parapet level. The gatehouse is of two storeys with three storey octagonal corner towers. It stands on a stone plinth but is otherwise of red brick with stone dressings. The towers are looped but chiefly for ornament. The gatehouse range and towers had stone castellation but this has largely been lost with the exception of the east wall facing into the courtyard. Original fenestration also remains on the east elevation of the gatehouse consisting of two light windows under a square head in stone. The gatehouse was originally free standing; the blocks to its north and south are infill. The entrance is a four centred arch dressed in stone which aligns with the entrance of the main house. The timber doors studded in iron survive for both gates. In the west wall the window by the gate is formed by the partial blocking in stone of a former pedestrian door. When first completed the infill blocks would have had stone dressed windows similar to those on the east elevation. The west elevation of the entire gatehouse range has been refenestrated. The window openings have been enlarged and in c.1700 sash windows were provided. There are two such windows to each bay of the first floor and single sash windows at ground floor level either side of the

gatehouse. Internally the gatehouse range has been reduced to a shell. However, sufficient evidence remains to reconstruct the basic structure of floors, internal walls, and staircases in the turrets. Deep depressions in the collapsed material on the floors of the building hint at the presence of a number of cellars.

To the north of the gatehouse, the south wall of the north range stands largely to the height of the ground floor windows and the central door is now blocked. There is a substantial change in the ground level behind the north range and only a fraction of its north wall still stands. Similarly, the gable end, where it joins the gatehouse range, has been reduced to one corner with its stone quoins. The south range has been reduced to ground level but is traceable by its stone plinth which now carries the broken iron pipes of a heating system to a converted part of the remains of the main house. The heating system, and traces of concrete floors covered in late 19th century mosaic tiles, belong to a greenhouse built during the late occupation of Shurland. Where the south range joins the gatehouse range there is a substantial basement built of stone under what would have been the gable end of the south range. The east side of the courtyard was formed by the main house. This is built of stone and the principal remains are the west wall with its buttresses. The PRO drawing implies a fully stone building with fenestration and decorative battlements of the type seen on the east elevation of the gatehouse range. The main house can be seen in the drawing to be sandwiched between the north and south ranges both of which continue to its rear. The main house would appear to have been built first and is possibly on the location of the former medieval manor building.

An enclosure surrounding the house is provided by a stone built outer courtyard wall which survives to its full height on the east. None of the buildings in this area shown on the drawing still stand but the outline of some of them is occasionally traceable on the ground as parch marks. A well occupies a position close to the outer wall similar to that shown on the drawing. The stone blocks of the wellhead have been reused as steps against the rear wall. The drawing shows ranges of service buildings on the north east side, perhaps associated with the period of Crown occupation after 1570, but no trace of them is visible on the ground. South of the main house the walled area has been extended to produce a large flat area about 70sq m, partly terraced into the ridge, which represents a garden added to the house after the main period of Tudor construction. In the south west corner is a blocked round headed door which possibly provided an independent means of access to the garden.

Situated outside the enclosed complex on its south western side is a spring fed pond, approximately 60m by 40m across. Along one side of it is an unmade access road which leads from the village to the farm buildings within Shurland.

The history of Shurland House is reasonably well known. The house was built by Sir Thomas Cheyney, a Knight of the Garter and Treasurer of the Royal Household under Henry VIII. Cheyney was also appointed Governor of Rochester and Warden of the Cinque Ports. The house must have been substantially complete by the time of Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII's visit on the 7th October 1532. Sir Thomas remained at court under Elizabeth I and died in 1559. His son, Henry Cheyney, moved his household to Bedfordshire and Shurland was neglected to the extent that the Crown sequestered the property in 1570. The PRO drawing of 1572 would appear to be part of the Crown survey of the site at that time. In 1593 a lease was granted to Sir Edward Hobey, of Queenborough Castle, his wife Margaret, and to Thomas Posthumus for their three lives. In 1605 James I granted Shurland to Philip Herbert, the younger brother of the Earl of Pembroke and the Shurland estate remained in the Herbert family being

reduced to the status of little more than a farmhouse. The house receives a mention in Hasted's history of Kent of the late 1780s.

A number of features within the area are excluded from the scheduling; all farm buildings and modern outbuildings within the walled Shurland complex, the silos and their concrete bases, all modern agricultural pens and features, modern gates, fencing, fence posts, telegraph poles and iron pipe-works, the water tank built into the eastern outer courtyard wall (although the piers incorporated into the fabric of the earlier wall are included), the extraction outlet sited on the edge of the pond and the loose gravel surface of the unmade track to the north of the pond; however the ground beneath all these features is included.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE

Country houses of the late Tudor and early Jacobean period comprise a distinctive group of buildings which differ in form, function, design and architectural style from country houses of both earlier and later date. Built after the dissolution of the monasteries they are the product of a particular historical period in which a newly-emerged Protestant elite of lawyers, courtiers, diplomats and other officials, mostly with close contacts at court, competed with each other to demonstrate wealth, taste and loyalty to the sovereign, often overstretching themselves financially. Their houses are a development of the medieval hall with flanking wings and a gatehouse, often looking inwards onto a courtyard; later examples tend to be built outwards, typically on a U- or H-plan. The hall was transformed from a reception area to an entrance vestibule and the long gallery and loggia were introduced. Many houses were provided with state apartments and extensive lodgings for the accommodation of royal visitors and their retinues.

Country houses of this period were normally constructed under the supervision of one master-mason or a succession of masons, often combining a number of designs drawn up by the master-mason, surveyor or by the employer himself. Many designs and stylistic details were copied from Continental pattern-books, particularly those published in the 1560s on French, Italian and Flemish models; further architectural ideas were later spread by the use of foreign craftsmen. Symmetry in both plan and elevation was an overriding principle, often carried to extremes in the Elizabethan architectural 'devices' in which geometric forms were employed to express religious and philosophical ideas. Elements of Classical architecture were drawn on individually rather than applied strictly in unified orders. This complex network of influences resulted in liberal and idiosyncratic combinations of architectural styles which contrasted with the adoption of the architecture of the Italian Renaissance, and with it the role of the architect, later in the 17th century. About 5000 country houses are known to have been standing in 1675; of these about 1000 are thought to survive, although most have been extensively altered or rebuilt in subsequent centuries to meet new demands and tastes. Houses which are uninhabited, and have thus been altered to a lesser degree, are much rarer. Surviving country houses of the late Tudor and early Jacobean period stand as an irreplaceable record of an architectural development which was unique both to England and to a particular period in English history characterised by a flourishing of artistic invention; they provide an insight into politics, patronage and economics in the early post-medieval period. All examples with significant surviving archaeological remains are considered to be of national importance.

Shurland House is an outstanding example of its class, probably built on the site of the earlier 13th century manor of Sir Robert de Shurland. The site's standing and buried remains survive well and can be interpreted through a detailed drawing of the site, made in the time of Elizabeth I, and held at the Public Records Office. This shows what is thought to have been the full layout

of buildings and gardens, demonstrating that the monument today conforms largely to its full original extent. Much can be read into the architectural detail at Shurland. Houses built towards the end of the medieval period begin to exhibit the influence of the Italian Renaissance. They hark back to native Gothic traditions in a deliberate attempt by the nobility to link themselves to the age of chivalry. Symmetrical elevations and buildings arranged around multiple courtyards, such as at Shurland, are key features. Shurland has major upstanding remains, good documentation material, including the PRO drawing, and extensive buried remains. It is a rare survival of a period when architecture was changing rapidly and moving away from the medieval tradition, and when the reintroduction of brick was changing methods of construction. By its completeness it provides the opportunity to study the development of a medieval manor into a Tudor courtier or magnate's house.

SCHEDULING HISTORY

Monument included in the Schedule on 23rd June 1975 as:

COUNTY/NUMBER: Kent 293

NAME: "Shurland House", Sheppey

The reference of this monument is now:

NATIONAL MONUMENT NUMBER: 29601

NAME: Shurland House: early 16th century Great House and associated remains

SCHEDULING REVISED ON 03rd September 2002