

The development of ightham mote

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Ightham Mote is a medieval moated manor house located 6 miles east of Sevenoaks in Kent. It is the result of over five centuries of building and rebuilding. The development of Ightham Mote appears to have especially been affected by the Tudor society as this was the period when wealth prevailed in England due to Reformation (the uncertainty of religious doctrine meant that money was not paid to the churches) and revival of Trade (increased wealth as a result of peace which enabled trading overseas). This meant that this mounting money could be spent on houses.

Also the restoration of peace (no more wars) and the introduction of humanism (increased interest in new styles of architecture) led to surplus money being put forward to modify the architecture of houses to reflect wealth and the attitudes of Tudors towards wanting to better themselves. Through the two centuries of the Tudor Period, various owners of Ightham Mote made extensive alterations to the building; to both interior and exterior; as they responded to changing tastes and the demand for increased comfort and privacy. The Great Hall of Ightham Mote is a room that clearly reflects the Tudor society at the time.

Unlike the medieval period, the changes in the Tudors were made to maintain the fashion of the time. This is reflected by Richard Haut (who owned the house in 1485) replacing simpler small windows of the Great Hall with bigger windows, purely based on the fact that the society had "passion for brightness." This was a typical feature of the time, since it is also mentioned in Girouard. The fact that bigger windows were built meant more money was spent: glass was expensive. This money was not only due to the

revival of trade but most of it was as a result from reformation, since no money was needed to be paid for the church.

This directly links to the king who brought in the reformation act and was now the head of the church and owner of all lands; which resulted in people implementing royal emblems on these windows in hope for the king to favour them and perhaps present them with some land/gift. Sir Richard Clement being a courtier to Henry VIII was no different; he too inserted 5 royal emblems and carved the pomegranate with Tudor roses and fleurs-de-lis, emblems associated with Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon.

This had been put there to show his loyalty and dependence on the Crown. These royal emblems are a typical feature as they are found in Haddon Hall (BBC video), Baddesley Clinton (brochure) and Girouard. However, it is also atypical because Clement should have removed the emblem of Catherine of Aragon, since it was confirmed by the king that he didn't want the presence of any possessions associated with his ex-wife. This therefore suggests that Clement was not as wealthy and important enough to expect visits from the king, which is why he did not make these changes.

In the Tudor times, changes were brought mainly for comfort; for this reason, Sir Clement replaced the open hearth with a fireplace and situated it to the side of the Great Hall. Its fireback, dated 1583, protected the chimney back and threw out more heat which meant more warmth: comfort. These alterations demonstrate the extent to which Clement refashioned the old medieval building to create a house that was more comfortable and

fashionable. The oriel windows in the solar rooms may have been second hand. They were made larger by Clement.

This was done to bring light and comfort as well as to show wealth because glass was very expensive. This was a typical feature as Girouard states: " they (Tudors) had passion for brightness" and the BBC video states had " Hardwick Hall had more glass than wall. " The oriel windows, mainly in the courtyard, appeared to have bargeboards. These bargeboards were highly decorated - carved with (royal emblems) pomegranate, Tudor roses and fleurs-de-lis. These were not only there to prevent rain from blowing under the eaves, but to show loyalty and gratitude to the Tudor monarchies.

It is a typical feature, also found in Baddesley Clinton. As well as the emblems; Clement added a curved, wooden painted ceiling in the Tudor livery colours (green, white and silver) again to show relationship between the superior and his dependent. It also portrayed wealth: as coloured paint was very expensive, which added brilliance to the new Chapel. It is an atypical feature since curved ceilings was not common; however the use of the livery colours is typical as the Tudors were keen on the thought of impressing the king.

These changes reflect how important it was of the society to be able to " impress" which is explained by Girouard in his source: they " above all wanted to impress". Clement added battlements to the gate house between 1521-9 which complemented the west tower with a small drawbridge. He also added red brick crenellations in the 16th century. These were not built

for defence measures but as status symbols because it was very fashionable at the time to have these features.

The red brick reflects wealth as it was fairly expensive, since it was bought from France. This also shows increased wealth as a result of peace, enabling trade to take place. They were very typical features as they are found in Penshurst Place, Haddon Hall, Baddesley Clinton and Hampton Court. These features again reinforce the idea of the Tudors wanting to "impress". One of the crucial adjustments made between the Medieval and the Tudor times was the change of the "Old Chapel" into 2 divided rooms by the insertion of a floor.

This was done in the 16th century by Clement or the Allens, which reinforces the idea of increasing luxury. Addition of more rooms was typical as they signalled a social change in the household and in society. The two rooms are said to have had two fireplaces for comfort and warmth; and it had a harp lute, reminding us that the Tudor occupants of the house had to make their own entertainment; this was typical since people in the Tudor period liked entertainment. It reflects the Renaissance which deemed music and literature to be important.

The Renaissance also brought the idea of the significance of "balance" which influenced the Tudors to redesign their house to make them symmetrical. The West front of Ightham Mote is likely to have been symmetrical in the Tudor period, which I have observed from my visit to Ightham Mote, because the bottom half of the building has 3 sets of windows

on both sides (symmetrical) so the top half is likely to have been modified over the years to have been what it is today.

Moreover, Clement put a brand new entrance which passed through the stable block and the outer courtyard to reflect this idea of symmetry.

Symmetry was very typical: "greatly admired by Tudors" as the BBC video states - also found in Hardwick Hall. Overall, the development of Ightham Mote was greatly affected by the changes in the Tudor times; especially due to the taste in fashion as the people of the time felt the need to have fashionable houses to better themselves over others. Several alterations were also made to impress the monarch in the hope to serve one's ends through royal connections.