

4.0 Statement of Significance

[Draft material provided by Janet Clayton, ODAS, 6 October 2016]

The site of Scadbury Moated Manor in its entirety is a highly significant asset. It has a well documented social history and the surviving remains cover a variety of building phases. A programme of archaeological excavation has been carried out, supporting a fuller understanding of its development.

A range of factors make the site of particular interest. It is a good example of a medieval moated site with associated fish-ponds. The moat still holds water, providing a beautiful setting with native wildlife. Only three main groups of families have been associated with the manor until its purchase by LB Bromley in 1983. This makes it possible to link a wide range of detailed archaeological and historical information covering over 800 years. An extensive archive of documents connected with the final group of families (Bettenson/Selwyn/Townshend/Marsham-Townshend) is held locally by LB Bromley Archives.

All the families associated with Scadbury were major local landowners, and their actions affected the lives of local families. Two of these families – the Walsinghams and the Townshends – were also significant players on the national stage. They moved in the circles of the royal court and were directly involved in national politics, giving their involvement with the site a wider dimension. Thomas Walsingham, who purchased Scadbury in 1424, was one of the wealthiest London merchants of his day, supplying wine (and financial support) to the King. His descendant Sir Edmund Walsingham was Lieutenant of the Tower of London at the time of the imprisonment of Queen Anne Boleyn and Sir Thomas More. Edmund's nephew Sir Francis Walsingham was Secretary of State to Elizabeth I, and his grandson Thomas, knighted by Queen Elizabeth at Scadbury in 1597, was an associate of the Elizabethan playwright Christopher Marlowe. 'Tommy' Townshend, 1st Viscount Sydney, served in Pitt's government and in 1788 despatched the first group of convicts to newly-discovered Australia; the settlement they established there – now the city of Sydney – was named after him.

A context for the scheduled manor site is provided by a number of unscheduled features, including a walled garden (the surviving stretches of wall date to the 16th century and stand to head height), the foundations of a medieval barn and Tudor gatehouse, and a small group of standing farm buildings, mainly 19th century and still in use, which incorporate earlier brickwork. There is also a large bunker used in WWII as the Home Guard HQ for SE London.

In the early 20th century the moat and brick foundations on the island were repaired by the estate's owner, Hugh Marsham - Townsends. The buildings had been pulled down in 1738. He used the setting to construct a medieval hall on the foundations of the Walsingham hall incorporating the medieval timbers rescued from a dismantled manor house in St Mary Cray (these were later removed from the Scadbury site following vandalism). He added a fireplace and chimney stack and a minstrels' gallery accessed by an early example of poured concrete stairs. The surrounding grounds and foundations were restored as garden features. These 1930s elements are now an important part of the site's history.

The site today is in public ownership and is widely known as Scadbury Park. The park, much of which is wooded, is a local public nature reserve and defined as 'Green Belt' and a site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. This valuable green area preserves the core of the original Scadbury estate. Scadbury Park is regularly used by local residents but is also accessible to the wider population of South East London and Greater London. The wider park itself incorporates historic features, including traces of a Tudor deer park and a series of World War II defences positioned along a ridge, guarding the Outer London Stop Line in the Cray Valley below. The manor site itself can be seen from the public footpath which runs alongside the moat. The annual open weekend (two afternoons in September) attracted almost 460 visitors in 2016. Visitors have to make the journey on foot, as there is restricted parking at the site. Since the first open weekend was held in 1987 over 12,000 people have visited.

The site is capable of supporting a range of stories about its development which can be made relevant to varied groups of visitors including schools, colleges and academic institutions. There is scope to improve the

presentation of the site, to increase an educational offer, and to increase access, but there is currently little infrastructure available to support wider public access or ongoing involvement. At present public outreach is largely managed by volunteers from the Orpington and District Archaeological Society and is limited by issues such as site safety, lack of appropriate infrastructure and volunteer availability/capability.