

## **Ightham Mote, Ivy Hatch, Sevenoaks, Kent, Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2019**

**Ightham Mote** (probably from Anglo-Saxon words 'eyot' and 'ham', being an 'island' and 'home' and Mote could refer to the moat: the architecture and decoration of the principal rooms show the development of the English country house over 700 years (although the property changed hands frequently during that time, it has always been a home). This is a house of great variety: from the medieval Great Hall and Crypt to the Victorian Billiard Room, each of its spaces is different.

**Tour of the House** started in the **Great Hall**, medieval and originally without a chimney; panelling added by Victorian architect Richard Norman Shaw; royal emblems in the main window, Tudor rose, portcullis of Margaret Beaufort, pomegranate emblem of Catherine of Aragon, and hunting Coat of Arms of Henry VIII, put there by Sir Richard Clement: Dame Dorothy Selby's 2 portraits, one as a young woman with an open ruff indicating she was unmarried, and the other as an old lady wearing black, with tulips on the table, a symbol of great wealth. There is a small internal window known as a Squint.

**The Crypt:** lies under the Old Chapel, and is properly an undercroft. It contains the ashes of the last private owner, Charles Henry Robinson who died in 1985. There are 'putlog' holes in the walls, which would have held the scaffolding poles as the Crypt was being built, and which were never filled in. **The Old Chapel** Squint allows owners of the house to see the altar from their private quarters in the Oriel Room. **The Boys' Rooms, Solar Bedroom and Bathroom:** renovated by owner Sir Thomas Colyer-Fergusson in the 1890s, and providing accommodation for his sons' and grandsons' rocking horse in the bathroom (to encourage a small son to take a bath...)

**The New Chapel**, probably created in 1638 by special licence, contains the Victoria Cross of Riversdale Colyer-Fergusson killed in Third Battle of Ypres in 1917.

**The Drawing Room:** the frieze around the room comes from a pattern book by the Flemish designer Vredeman de Vries as does the grand Jacobean fireplace incorporating the Saracen's Head emblem of the Selby family, probably installed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The hand-coloured Chinese wallpaper is mounted on panels for easy removal.

**Charles Henry Robinson's Dressing Room and Bedroom:** the Dressing Room paper used in the lampshades was supplied by the Robinson luxury paper-making family business in Portland, Maine. The gold-coloured carpet had been used in Westminster Abbey for the Queen's coronation in 1953. The Bedroom is decorated in the New England-style grey that C H Robinson liked.

**The Billiard Room:** created by Sir Thomas Colyer-Fergusson in the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century; the floor, panelling, and fireplaces were all made to his order.

**Tour of the Gardens:** Anthony guided us around the **South Lake** which is now part of a 15 year Conservation Plan; the lake has been dredged to keep it as a haven for wildlife, and overgrown shrubs and fallen trees have been removed. Particularly fine example of a London plane tree, some 250 years old, a hybrid of the Oriental plane (with 3-6 seed balls per stem) and the American sycamore (with 1 seed ball per stem). The land is to be restored to its original function of providing pasture for sheep and cattle, and there are fine, long-distance, views to the Weald.

**The Enclosed Garden:** the paved, walled garden with the fountain was formerly a herb garden, then a rose garden, and ultimately an American's idea of a typical English garden.

**The Formal Garden:** originally an Italianate garden, then a rose garden, and now a Victorian garden with carpet bedding.

**Patrick Higham, Visits Secretary**