



Bodiam Castle and its Manor before National Trust ownership

Bodiam is a small East Sussex village in a large parish on the border of Kent, with a name possibly meaning *homestead or enclosure of a man called Boda*.¹ In Domesday it is called Bodeham, and there are subsequent variations such as Bodiham, Bodingham and Bodgiham.² One of the authors elderly aunts was born and lived in neighbouring Northiam and always called it 'Bodjum'.

The area now owned by the National Trust extends to 28 hectares (68 acres) north and south of the River Rother at Bodiam. It is an area that has been inhabited by humans from at least the Bronze Age and was in particular an area of much activity in Roman times.

It is much visited because of its remarkable, and rather fairy tale like, castle that stands just north of the river Rother and the Kent and East Sussex Railway station. The castle has been owned by the National Trust since 1925 but it has not been lived in since the English Civil War when it was deliberately put into a state of ruin by the victorious Parliamentarians.



from Wikipedia

Nevertheless, the history of the castle is well-documented, not least by its last private owner^{3, 4}, to whom we may well owe its continued existence. This was the first and only Marquess Curzon of Kedleston (1859-1925). George Nathaniel Curzon was one of the best-known politicians of the quarter-century before his death.

Born into a wealthy noble family, after Eton he went to Balliol College, Oxford. There his self-assurance bordering on arrogance was clear to all. A ditty about him appeared while he was there:

My name is George Nathaniel Curzon,
I am a most superior person.
My cheek is pink, my hair is sleek,
I dine at Blenheim once a week

In 1885 he was elected as an MP and seems to have spent much of his time travelling in Asia, including areas that had recently become part of the Russian empire. He clearly held reactionary views, being strongly opposed to Irish home rule and to women's parliamentary suffrage, although abstained in the House of Lord's vote on female suffrage in 1918, which example was followed by others, allowing the bill to pass. He took junior government offices in 1891-92 and 1895-98 and was then appointed Viceroy of India (1899-1905). While there



he was instrumental in restoring the Taj Mahal at Agra and on his return bought and restored Tattershall Castle in Lincolnshire. In 1916 he was appointed to the Cabinet as part of the coalition government, and was Foreign Secretary from 1919 to 1924. He gave his name to the Curzon Line, the proposed eastern border of the newly-recreated state of Poland, which was in essence to come into effect rather later, in 1945.

Before 1916 the then owner, George Cubitt, had not wished to sell Bodiam Castle, which despite his early efforts had returned to a poor condition again. But he died, and his heir sold it to Curzon in 1917. Curzon's investigations and restoration is the basis of much of which can be seen today. He appointed William Weir (1865-1950) as architect whom he had previously appointed at Tattershall, and serious work began shortly after the end of the Great War in 1919. It meant clearing the ivy that was threatening the fabric, cleaning the moat, establishing a level interior floor and repairing stonework. He also had a small museum built there and a cottage for a caretaker. Curzon died suddenly in 1925, by which time he had made a will bequeathing both Bodiam and Tattershall to the National Trust.

Curzon was the last of a long line of previous owners of the manor of Bodiam, which can be traced back to before 1066. He unexpectedly died on 20 March 1925 soon after a severe bladder haemorrhage and operation, at the age of sixty-six⁵, before he could finish all the work he intended for Bodiam, but left behind a monograph describing his investigations and conclusions. He saw the final typescript of the book, but unfortunately not the final proofs before publication. There is a foreword by Sir Harold Nicolson (1886-1968), husband of Vita Sackville-West and co-restorer of Sissinghurst.

In 1066 Bodiam was part of the township of Ewhurst, within the Hundred of Staple, itself within the Rape of Hastings, the easternmost Rape of Sussex. Before the Conquest the area belonged directly to King Edward the Confessor. An English thane called Ælfhere held it and its six hides (about 720 acres) from the king.⁶ Three other parcels of land near Alfriston were also held by a man of the same name, but it may not have been the same person.⁷ Otherwise we know nothing of Ælfhere or his forbears.

The next time we hear of Bodiam is in an early charter to Battle Abbey, in which Osbern (of Bodiam), transfers the lands of Beche within the new banlieu of Battle Abbey to the abbey. We can assume that this 'gift' near its foundation was the result of William I's unilateral creation of the abbey's banlieu. It was a 'gift' that could not be withheld by Osbern FitzHugh, son of Hugh d'Eu.

Osbern will have been granted the above land plus a hide and three virgates (210 acres) of Bodiam before the 'gift' and so displaced Ælfhere as described in Domesday. He would have been granted both the Battle and the Bodiam lands in Ewhurst by the new Lord of the Rape of Hastings, Robert d'Eu, who had himself been granted the Rape by William I on or before May 1070.⁸ Osbern also held other lands within the Rape including at Bexhill⁹ and some forest outliers. He also later part gave/part sold 30 acres of meadow land at Bodiam to Battle Abbey in 1109 and his widow Emma gave the Abbey yet more land after his death.

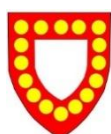
The land holdings are described in Domesday of 1086. As well as the land of Osbern, men called Roger and Ralph who now held another hide of Bodiam between them may have been Osbern's brothers. The balance of the Ewhurst lands remained with Robert d'Eu, in lordship.



Hugh d'Eu was Robert d'Eu's brother. Robert and Hugh's father was William, Count of Eu, their mother Lesseline of Harcourt. So Osbern's uncle was Lord of the Rape and one of Osbern FitzHugh's great grandmothers was Gunnora of Creppon, also a great-grandmother of William I. A FitzHugh has also been recorded in four versions of the Companion Rolls of the Conqueror¹⁰ so it was also possible, but not proven, that Osbern FitzHugh was with William's army at the Battle of Hastings in Robert d'Eu's retinue.

Osbern was later referred to as Osbern de Bodiam, and the de Bodiam family remained land holders at Bodiam for some generations. His wife was called Emma, but we have no record of her family name.

There are inconsistencies between various secondary and web genealogical sources for the de Bodiams. Those descendants that can be found include:



Roger de Bodiam – mentioned in 1154, 1166 and 1176. By this time he held four knights fees or 2560 acres.¹¹ This must have included adjacent parishes and lands as far away as Battle and Beckley.



William de Bodiam – mentioned 'in the time of Richard I' (1189-99) and in 1207-8.¹² He went on crusade and had a blazon Gules, an inescutcheon Argent and an orle of bezants Or¹ (above left). This differs from the Bodiham blazon given in the VCH Sussex (left). His wife was Margaret; again we do not know her family name.

Henry de Bodiham m. Margaret (Calet?) Mentioned in 1199 and 1212

William de Bodiam – mentioned in 1215 as a soldier in Poitou, which suggests that he had succeeded by 1210. VCH¹³ suggests a further William de Bodiham at this point, who is mentioned in 1261.

Margaret de Bodiam (b bef 1309, d aft 1361). She had no brothers and inherited the de Bodiam estates. Margaret de Bodiam then married Richard de Wardedieu, after 1325, possibly around 1331.

The Wardedieu family trace back to Northamptonshire.¹⁴ A William Warde-Deu dealt with some lands at Hannington, Northants in 1227, and an Ingram Wardedieu inherited land there from his brother Richard in 1241 and in turn it passed to his son William, then his son Henry in 1260 (who was underage). This Henry de Wardedieu may be first noted in Bodiam, in about 1278, but still holding the Hannington lands. It may be this Henry that a few years before, in about 1275, gave lands at Bodiam to Robertsbridge Abbey 'for the soul of his brother William', and in 1296 we find a Henry Wardedeu paying ten shillings in the Lay Subsidy Roll of Sussex, a substantial amount at the time.

It is unknown how he came to hold property at Bodiam, but one theory is that he may have been involved in military matters in Brittany and had subsequent to this been granted land in Staple hundred by John of Dreux, who had become Lord of the Rape of Hastings and Earl of Richmond, 1268-1305 (and from 1286 Duke of Brittany). He had been granted the Rape by Henry III. These were perhaps the lands of the township that had remained in lordship since the time of Robert d'Eu.

¹ The bezant was the currency of the Crusaders. In heraldry it is shown as a small circle 'Or' or yellow.



Whatever happened, clearly Henry de Wardedieu held some land in Bodiam and the available published genealogies are sometimes confused between this family and the de Bodiam family at this point. This is possibly because there are mentions of Henry de Bodiam, but actually refer to Henry 'of Bodiam' Wardedieu. On his death his lands passed to William de Wardedieu in 1316. William then died in 1329 and it passed to his brother Nicholas, but he in turn, possibly on becoming a monk at Battle Abbey (but still noted as Magro² Nicho Waredeu in the Lay Subsidy Rolls of 1327 and 1332), or possibly on his death, passed the land to his younger brother Richard. This Richard 'of Bodiam' Wardieu married the heiress Margaret de Bodiam. This consolidated the holdings, uniting the families and thus removing our confusions.

So from that point the de Wardedieu family were the lords of Bodiam: John de Wardedieu mentioned in 1330-31 (died before 1377), married Elizabeth de Nevill, widow of John Hakeluyt, Lord Allerton (Allerton is not far from Hannington, which remained in the de Wardedieu's hands). Elizabeth was the daughter of Theobald de Nevill, Forester of Rutland. Elizabeth de Wardedieu (b 1347), was mentioned as heiress in 1383 (no sons again). This Elizabeth de Wardedieu then married Sir Edward Dalyngrugge, the builder of Bodiam Castle.

The father of Edward Dallingriggee/Dalyngrigge/ Dalyngruge (1346-1393) (and many other variants) was Roger Dalyngridge (b c1311, d 1380). His mother was Alice Radygden (d bef 1362). Many sources suggest that John and Joan de la Lynde were Edward's parents, but they were his grandparents.¹⁵ A statement that Edward's mother was still alive in 1401 is also incorrect: the survivor was Roger's second wife, also called Alice! The Dalyngrigge family can be traced back only three generations, to Dalling Ridge, near East Grinstead, although before that probably from Hampshire. His great-grandfather was a John Dalyngrigge (c1280-c1324) and his grandfather was also called John (b. before 1300-1335). His grandfather had married Joan de la Lynde who as a daughter but a co-heir brought some lands into the family. The de la Lynde family can be traced back via marriages to the de Nevill family and Geoffrey de Neville (died after 1164).^{16 17}

The Radygden family is also interesting. It can be traced back to Richard de Retendon, who is mentioned in 1246-7. Concerning Edward Dalyngrugge's father in law John Radygden some information can be summarised:¹⁸

In 1316 Alice's father John Radygden (c1274-1350) served as commissioner of array, with a remit to gather inhabitants and ready them for military service. He was then selected as Knight of the Shire for the county in 1319 and sat in various parliaments until 1329. In 1325 he was part of the enterprise which provided 20 men-at-arms from Surrey and Sussex to serve in Gascony and was instructed to organise the lighting of signal beacons and deployment of watchmen. The following year he selected 140 armed Sussex footmen and 400 archers for battle in France. He was still active in county affairs aged seventy. With the troops he mustered for battle gathering under his coat of arms, there was likely to have been a well-developed association of the de Radynden insignia and the county where he was so influential.

There is also an earlier proposition by Ellis¹⁹, which is elaborated on below:

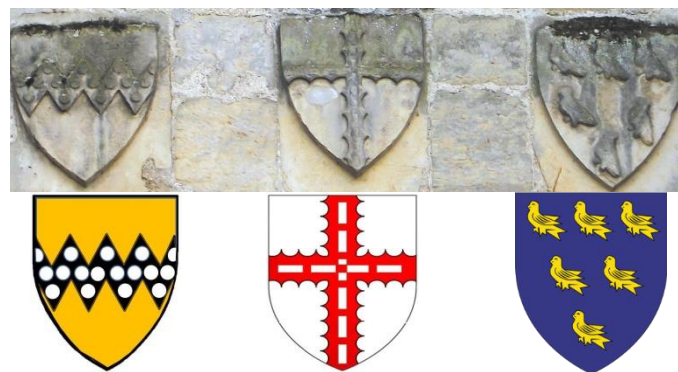
It may be that a seal of the Knight of the Shire was affixed to some document relating to county affairs, and that the use continued.

² An abbreviation for magister, or **master** applied to Catholic priests or teachers.



John Radygen (son of Walter de Radygen and Agath Mucegros) and his wife Joan's daughter Alice Radygen and her husband Roger Dalyngrigge inherited the manors of Sheffield (in mid-Sussex) and four other manors in Sussex upon John's death in 1350. Radyngden is now in the area of Preston Park, Brighton. The blazon of Radyngden is likely to be the progenitor of the coat of arms of Sussex, with its martlets.

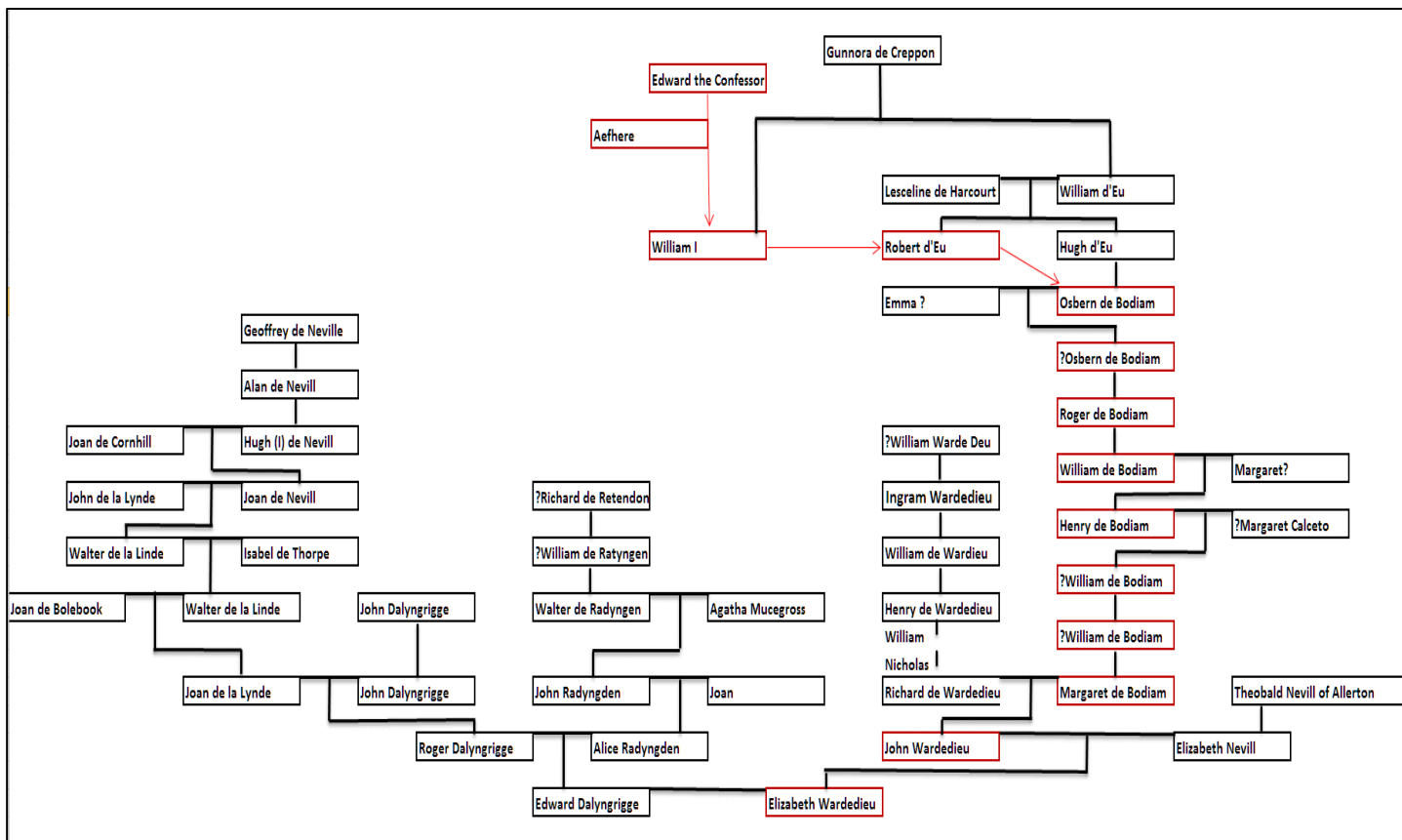
Over the north gateway of Bodiam Castle can be seen a group of blazons (*photograph below*). That to the left as viewed is of Wardedieu, central is that of Dalyngrigge and to the right is that of Radyngen. These are acknowledgements of the roots of Dalyngrigge's fortune acquired by marriages by himself and his own and his wife's forebears. These are shown together with their probable heraldic colourings below. Depending on the source of information, the blazons of Wardedieu and Dalyngrigge may both or either have had a ground of Argent (white) or Or (yellow). It is also possible that an earlier version of the Radyngen blazon bore ten martlets – with an extra top row of four – and may have had a 'Sable' or black, rather than the better known 'Azure' or blue ground. If so it was later simplified to six martlets by the time Bodiam Castle was built.



L to R: Blazons of Wardedieu, Dalyngrigge and Radyngen



A further blazon can also be seen on the south gatehouse for some reason displayed rotated left. It lies between two blank shields (which may have once been painted). This is of Robert Knolles or Knollys. This will have been an acknowledgement to Edward Dalyngrigge's patron with whom by association he made another fortune at the expense of the French during the 100 years' war.^{20 21} Knollys first involvement was in Brittany during the Breton War of Succession, during which he was knighted. Money was made from looting towns and cities of valuables and taking hostages for ransom, as well as taking ransoms for not looting cities such as Auxerre. He went on to raise an army in 1370 which rampaged across northern France, but he was formally disgraced in 1372. Dalyngrigge had joined one of his mercenary 'dogs of war' so called 'Free Companies'²² pillaging France, continuing to pillage cruelly even between more regular hostilities that observed at least some of the mediaeval rules of war.



The castle itself dates from sometime after 1385, when Edward Dalyngrigge obtained a royal licence to build a crenelated manor house, ostensibly to provide some protection from French raids of the area. However, it was more likely to have been a 'status' project for Edward's aggrandisement²³. It has been suggested that the renowned medieval master mason Henry Yevele²⁴ advised on the architecture of some parts of the castle, but that local masons did the actual work. Documentary evidence indicates that Dalyngrigge may rarely have been in residence at the castle, Elizabeth governing in his stead. After all she had inherited the manor!

Translation copied from SAC Vol.
XIII (1861)²⁵



It is interesting that in nearby Iden, the other side of the Rother but nearer Rye that in 1318, nearly 70 years before this Sir Edmund de Passeley received a licence to crenellate his dwelling place of La Mote (VCH Vol. 9). Near Moat Farm, Iden, are the few remains of a fortified manor house enclosed by a large homestead moat. It is as impressive as Bodiam in terms of its archaeological footprint, with some indications that this site was particularly grand, with at least some of the buildings of stone which supporting this suggestion. This defended the lower Rother and northern approaches to Rye. Two or three hundred similar sites are dotted around Kent, East and West Sussex, and Surrey²⁶. The backgrounds of and motivation to build such moated structures are examined in detail by Johnson²⁷



*From the top:
blazons of
Lewknor,
Levet,
Tufton and
Powell*

This was again one of those many times when a French invasion was feared, and Richard II needed Sussex people on whom he could rely. Dalyngrigge had served in the Hundred Years War against the French²⁸, and was presumably regarded as a good man to hold off the enemy if and when this was needed.

From Edward Dalyngrigge it passed to his son John and then by a cousin and marriage to the Lewknor family in 1588 when ownership through purchase began. During their time there was a brief interval when the manor was seized by the Crown: the owner had been an opponent of Richard III. But Richard soon met his end and the castle was restored to the Lewknors, the rest of the estate following by 1542. Sir John Lewknor, son of the man dispossessed by Richard III, died in 1543, and there followed a period in which, in the absence of sons, four daughters held a joint interest.

One of their descendants and the son of a man called Thomas Levett to whom another descendant had sold his interest, in 1623 sold their joint interests on to Sir Nicholas Tufton, shortly to be created Earl of Thanet. It is unclear what state the castle was in during the imminent civil war, but it was still a potential strongpoint for the royalist Tufton (now the second earl) and was surrendered, probably without a siege. Tufton was heavily fined and the interior of the castle destroyed. From then on it is certain that it was not to be a residence.

In March 1645 Tufton sold his interest to Nathaniel Powell of Ewhurst, whose son, also Nathaniel, had no children when he died in 1703. The estate then passed to his brother Barnham, whose son Christopher at least initially was co-owner with his mother Elizabeth; he too was to die without issue in 1728, but by then he had sold it to Sir Thomas Webster of Battle Abbey, who was busy building a large estate for himself and his family.

The Websters owned the Bodiam estate for just over a century, passing through the hands of a further four baronets. It was the fifth baronet, Sir Godfrey, who first contemplated selling it in 1815. Curzon comments in his book:

'it is manifest indeed that throughout the 18th century there can have been no pretence of respect for the remains, either inside or outside, and that the Webster owners cared nothing for the ruin.

It was eventually put on the open market in 1828, together with other Webster properties:



IMPORTANT INVESTMENTS IN SUSSEX.

The ancient Freehold Castle of Bodiam, with the Manor and Its Royalties and Privileges, and Acres of rich Marsh and Meadow Land, near the Town of Battle; also the Living of Hooe, near Hastings, extending over 9,500 Acres. The Royal Oak public-house. The Manor or reputed Manor of Barnhorne, near to Hastings, with Manor house, and near 800 Acres of excellent Land, and two Farms of 100 Acres of Land, called Brambles and Kitchenhams. MR. GEORGE ROBINS has the honour to announce that he is directed by Nobleman to SELL BY AUCTION. at the Auction Mart, London, on Thursday, the 28th of August, at Twelve o'clock, In Lots, Very Valuable Freehold Estates, comprehending the ANCIENT CASTLE OF BODIAM, Exhibiting one of THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SPECIMENS of the MASONRY of FEUDAL TIMES, Together with the Moat surrounding the same—the little MOAT and the DRAWBRIDGE, Containing an Area of Four and Acres: also The MANOR of BODIAM, with RIGHTS, ROYALTIES, and PRIVILEGES, And Domain of 25 Acres, surrounding the Castle; Also The PERPETUAL ADVOWSON, RIGHT of PRESENTATION, & PATRONAGE of the VICARAGE of HOOE, Containing 9,500 ACRES OF LAND, Situate in the vicinity of Hastings, Bexhill, and Battle. The Incumbent is 74 years of age. ALSO, THE MANOR OF BARNHORNE, Near to Hastings, with Manor, Farm House, and suitable Buildings, and 300 Acres of very excellent Land, in ring fence, in the occupation of Mr. Christmas; also, TWO SEVERAL FARMS, Or Tracts of Land, called Brambles and Kitchenhams, containing 100 Acres of Land, situate at Hooe and Bexhill, and in the occupation of Mr. Blackmail. A more detailed advertisement will shortly appear, and particulars then had at the principal Inns at Eastbourne, Hastings, Battle, Lewes, and Brighton i and Messrs. Capron, Rowley and Weld, Savile-place; the Auction Mart; and at Mr. George Rooins's, Offices, London.²⁹

A later advertisement³⁰ included a detailed description of the castle alone, which suggests that the other properties were sold but that the castle remained on offer. It was bought by John Fuller of Brightling, reputedly to protect it from demolition by another owner. One of the features at Brightling built by Fuller is a tower, and it has been noted that Bodiam Castle can be seen from the top of this tower just under 11km (6¾ miles*³) away.³¹ That the castle was in a bad state is obvious from the drawing below, the date of which is unknown. If it is after the restoration in the 1860s it shows the still remaining, and dangerous, ivy. Fuller, of course, had little time to do much with the castle, for he died six years later, without children. Holland³² considers that from work records and accounts that Fuller did much more to the Bodiam landscape than has been previously thought. She quotes,

‘It is evident that Fuller was making significant changes to the landscape, carrying out work such as digging ditches, coping stone, levelling, working on the banks of the moat, making restorations to the castle itself and laying down paths across the site.’

His cousin Augustus Elliot Fuller, a local MP, succeeded to his estates and appears to have done little more to the castle. Newspaper reports suggest that frequent visits to it were permitted by parties of tourists and societies and an ‘annual gypsy party’.³³ His son, Owen John Augustus Fuller-Meyrick, sold it to George Cubitt in 1862, whose father had already bought the advowson of the parish of Bodiam in 1849.

Cubitt (1828-1916) was a young man then and a rich one; his father was Thomas Cubitt the famous builder and developer. George became a Conservative MP and in 1892 the first Lord Ashcombe. The mid-nineteenth century was a great time for romantic medievalism. Cubitt did much to save the castle. A contemporary reported³⁴ that the front towers were

³ As measured on Google Earth.



crumbling, unsafe and dangerous to those entering the castle. They and other parts were filled with cement and concrete; stones were found in the moat, presumably from the dismantling by the Parliamentarians over two hundred years before, and brought back for re-use. There were repairs to most parts of the castle, in an attempt to reproduce its original appearance.

So, it was not until George Cubitt took over the castle in 1864 that any significant restoration work began on the internal and external ruins. Having initially done well, he did no more, and among other things ivy grew again over the walls, threatening their stability. It was Cubitt who declined to sell the castle to Curzon, and his son who did so in 1917. It was a combination of Cubitt's early work and Curzon's (whose work often overshadowed his predecessor) which led to the building appearing as it does today. As noted above Curzon died suddenly in 1925, and Bodiam passed to the National Trust.

George Kiloh and Keith Foord
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Sources: As endnotes.

Also see:

Robertson, H: *Stemmata Robertson and Durdin* (1893-5)

Anon: *Gleanings respecting Battel and its Abbey* (1841)

Johnson, M: *Lived Experience in the Later Middle Ages: Studies of Bodiam and Other Elite Landscapes in South-Eastern England* (2017)

The blazons illustrated above are based on the descriptions in VCH Sussex Vol. 9, Burke's General Armory of 1884 and further research.

Excellent biographies of Edward and John Dallingridge authored by L S Woodger can be seen on the History of Parliament website. Both were MPs for Sussex a number of times.

<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1386-1421/member/dallingridge-sir-edward-1346-1393>

<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1386-1421/member/dallingridge-sir-john-1408>



From M A Lower: Bodiam and its lords, 1871. Artist unknown.



Endnotes

- ¹ Mills, AD: *Dictionary of English place-names* (1998)
- ² Mawer, A and Stenton, FM: *The Place Names of Sussex Part II* (1930)
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- ⁴ Lower, MA: *Bodiam and its lords* (1871)
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- ⁷ <http://pase.ac.uk>
- ⁸ Foord, K: *Conquest to Dissolution 1066-1538* (2019) and also see *The Rapes of Sussex, Hundreds of Hastings Rape and the people of the Rape of Hastings to 1538 at*
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- ⁹ E Searle: *Lordship and community*, 1974
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(<https://battlehistorysociety.com/Documents/R10.pdf> and
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- ¹² Luppertz, A: <http://knightlyfamilies.com/intro2.htm>
- ¹³ Salzman, LF (ed.): *VCH Sussex Vol. 9* (1937) p262
- ¹⁴ <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/northants/vol4/pp172-174#anchorn12>
- ¹⁵ *Calendar of Inquisitions Post-Mortem*, xiv, 70; C139/111/52
- ¹⁶ <http://www.thepeerage.com/p76.htm#i752>
- ¹⁷ <http://www.thepeerage.com/p10776.htm#i107757>
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- ¹⁹ Ellis, WS: 'Arms of the County of Sussex'. *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, Vol. 37 (1890) pp177-183
- ²⁰ Bostock, T: *Dogs of War: Sir Hugh Calveley and Sir Robert Knolles* (2017)
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- ²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_company
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- ²⁴ Harvey, J: *English Medieval Architects: A biographical dictionary down to 1550* (1954)
- ²⁵ Blaauw, WH: Royal Licences to fortify towns and houses in Sussex. *Sussex Archaeological Collections Vol.13* (1861)
- ²⁶ <https://sites.northwestern.edu/medieval-buildings/other-moated-sites/>
- ²⁷ Johnson, EJ: op cit
- ²⁸ Lower, MA. op cit.
- ²⁹ *Sussex Advertiser*, 4 August 1828
- ³⁰ *Sussex Advertiser*, 1 September 1828
- ³¹ Holland, B: *How extensive was John 'Mad Jack' Fuller's landscaping at Bodiam Castle? How does this landscaping relate to his Brightling estate and the socio-political context in which it lies?* Dissertation in Archaeology; School of Humanities, University of Southampton, 2011
- ³² Holland, B: op cit
- ³³ *Sussex Advertiser*, various dates in the 1830s and 1840s
- ³⁴ Lower, MA: op cit.

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**Metadata: Bodiam,Castle,Curzon,Cubitt,Osbern,Ewhurst,Crenelation,
Dalynggrigge,Wardedieu,Webster,Fuller,Restoration**