

Almost nothing was left above ground of the old Randall Manor. In 1632 the historian John Weever wrote "scarce the ruins appear to direct one where the house stood".

The site where Randall Manor stood reverted to woodland and passed through various hands before the then Lord Darnley of Cobham Hall reacquired it in the 18th century.

For many years Randall Wood was used as a shooting wood, until the 21st century, when Kent County Council purchased it from (a later) Lord Darnley and added it to the adjoining Shorne Woods Country Park, which had been created from a former quarry a few years before.

Local people never entirely forgot the old Manor. In 1961, George Dockrell, a school teacher, organised a small archaeological excavation with his students



and found the site again. Excavations in 2006 to 2008, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and KCC and organised by the Community Archaeologist, Mrs Lyn Palmer, have been highly successful.



While KCC experts are directing the Randall manor dig, all the work is done by volunteers.

Some are experienced, but very many are entirely new to the subject. In particular, some hundreds of children from local schools have worked on the site and have gained an unforgettable experience of history.



## RANDALL MANOR

### The Old House in the Woods

On the hills above the rolling fields of Shorne, lies Randall Wood. The name is very old, probably Saxon. In those days, before the trees had grown up, it was called Rundale and it was a manor with its own fields and woods and its marshland down by the Thames.



*1091* 25 years after the Norman Conquest: Bishop Gundulph approved a gift to Rochester priory of the tithes (10% of income every year) of Rundale.

A hundred years passed. There was a family living in the nearby village of Cobham, who took their name from that place. Henry de Cobham ("Henry of Cobham") bought the manor of Cobham and also some land in Shorne.

*1208* Grant to Henry de Cobham of "the land of Hertland" in Shorne (probably what is now Randall Heath) by William de Quatermer the "King's knight".

(William de Quatermer had been given this land by King Henry II.)

Henry began buying land all over Kent, for his three sons, John, William and Reginald. He died about the year 1230.

**1230** Henry's son John de Cobham inherited "all the land and marsh which is called Rundale" in Shorne parish. This had probably been granted to Henry by the French Abbey of Fontevrault.

**1250s** John's younger son Henry de Cobham inherited the manor of Rundale and began to call himself "Henry de Cobham de Rundale". He built a capital messuage here (a substantial house, reconstruction below) and later inherited Allington Castle from the parents of his wife, Joan de Penchester.



**1316** Henry died about 1316. His effigy, wearing armour, lies on his tomb in Shorne church.

Henry's son Stephen de Cobham was made Lord Cobham in 1326. The Bishop of Rochester granted him a licence to hear mass in his private chapels at Allington and Rundale in 1329. A deed was dated at Rundale in 1330, so we know that he still spent some time here as well as at Allington. He died in 1332.

Stephen's son John was made a knight but not a Lord. In his time, the Plague, or

Black Death arrived in England.

**1349** The Black Death killed about 1/3 of the population of England.

Many manors and villages were wiped out by the Black Death, but we know that Rundale survived, because a deed was signed and dated here on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1362.

Thomas de Cobham was one of those who signed the deed. He was to be the last of the Cobham knights of Rundale. From this time the Rundale branch of the Cobham family now moved to Allington Castle (below). We know this because:



**1368** The will of Thomas Morice mentions that he was a tenant at Rundale.

**1405** The will of Reginald de Cobham, son of Sir Thomas, listed all his furniture at Allington, but nothing at Rundale.

Rundale manor had become just a source of income to its various owners. Sometimes, it was part of a "bundle" of several local manors which were sold or transferred at the same time.

**1424** Thomas de Cobham, the last of this branch of the Cobham family, died and the Moresby family owned Rundale Manor and Allington Castle for 3 generations.

**1492** The estate of the last of the Moresbys was sold off and Rundale and Allington were purchased by Sir Henry Wyatt.

**1540** His son, Sir Thomas Wyatt (the poet) sold Rundale to the Crown. Five years later, Henry VIII granted Rundale Manor to Thomas Brooke, Lord Cobham of Cobham Hall.

**1558** On the death of Thomas Brooke's son George, an inquiry mentions that there is still a house at Randall Manor (which is now spelled the modern way).

So the old manor house of Randall Manor managed to survive five different ownerships, but now its final demise was near. It had been built too well.

**1584** George's son William Brooke (below) started work on rebuilding Cobham Hall. Probably he took most of the Kentish ragstone from Randall Manor for this purpose.

