

Sand: A Tudor Tale

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Sand is an elegant stone Tudor house located approximately a mile northeast of Sidbury set in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It has early twentieth-century additions and both the main house and adjacent Sand Lodge, a thatched Hall House, are Grade II* listed. The estate is situated on the south facing side of the Roncombe Valley, with the stream of the same name running through the bottom, joining the River Sid just north of Sidbury. Pevsner describes the house as being constructed from 'random rubble' with a gabled two-storey porch and roof-line 'enlivened by small blind coped gables with flat tops and little finials'.¹ Although extensive renovations were completed in 1906 a great deal of the Elizabethan house still remains with a ground-floor hall to the left of the main entrance featuring two large six-light mullion windows. The main façade of the building faces southwest, with the southeast terraced gardens running down towards the river below. Much of the current garden was laid out around 1911, with further alterations in 1970, and it now includes a kitchen garden, mixed borders and woodland walks.

The house has belonged to the Huyshe family since 1560, with Stella and Stephen Huyshe-Shires the current joint custodians. In the mid thirteenth century the medieval tenants, William de Sande and his son Deodatus, bought the site from the Dean and Chapter of Exeter. In 1408 a 'small stone house' is recorded as being sold to Roger Tremayle, who is believed to have built the second dwelling on the estate. In 1500 his grandson Thomas is thought to have created an L-shaped building, with Great Hall, entrance and kitchen, by adding on to the older house. It remained in the family for three more generations and, after a brief period in the ownership of William Arundel, was sold to Henry Huyshe in 1560/61. Six years later both properties were inherited by his two sons and in 1584 were sold to their father's first cousin, James Huyshe, a prosperous London Grocer.

The Huyshe family Coat of Arms had been in use before 1350 reflecting their considerable status even by medieval times. James Huyshe was the third son of John Huyshe of Doniford and, like many Devon men of the sixteenth century, was educated in London at the Inns of Court, later entering the Livery of Grocers in May 1567.² He married only twice, but astonishingly had twenty nine children, with his eldest surviving son, Rowland (1560–1632), inheriting Sand on his father's death in 1590. Sand had been bequeathed to Rowland following his marriage to Anne Wentworth the previous year, a union that was to bring important family connections. It is believed that Anne was descended from Edward I, and records confirm her mother to be the daughter of Sir Edward Capel.³ John Capel (1560–1630), the grandson of Thomas Manners, the 1st Earl of Rutland, was Anne's first cousin and was known to be a good friend of Rowland Huyshe.

It is interesting to question why James Huyshe would wish to buy an estate in Sidbury when he lived in Cheapside, near Grocers' Hall. No doubt local family connections were influential but, by the middle of the sixteenth century, Devon was also one of the most important counties in England due to its overseas trade and strategic position. It was not, however, at the mercy of just one or two wealthy families and this gave opportunity for a more diverse range of minor gentry to purchase land.

James Huyshe may have started the renovations at Sand, but it was the newly-weds who saw the project through to fruition. It is thought that by raising the main roof of the house they were able to add a ceiling to the Great Hall and put chambers above, all in keeping with the great rebuilding frenzy of the late Elizabethan period. They added a wing to either side of the old 'L' shaped dwelling and a two-storeyed stone porch to the front entrance, suitably complemented by a Renaissance-style classical arch. The result of their modernisation project was a fashionable, roughly symmetrical Tudor house that looked outwards towards the surrounding countryside. The plaque on the end of the adjacent hall house is dated 1600 and bears the initials RAH. It may mark the end of the refurbishment phase but equally could commemorate the turning of the century. Almost inevitably



*Front aspect of Sand
Author's photograph 2012*

there is no known plan of the garden that was created during the following years. From 1730 to 1906 the estate was rented out as a farm and it is known records were moved to the family home at Clyst Hydon Manor. A detailed survey plan, dated 1832, is still in existence and shows a courtyard of buildings, various barns, a kitchen garden and piggery. The 1840 tithe map confirms the layout with the corresponding Tithe Apportionments indicating land use as arable with orchards.

Importantly, two features from the beginning of the seventeenth-century still exist in the garden and provide a degree of intrigue for historians. At the front of the house a section of the Elizabethan wall still remains with a decorative canopied stone archway halfway along its length. Classical in appearance, it leads through to the garden and



*Capel archway leading down to the garden and formal garden.
Author's photograph 2012*



*Line drawing of the Capel Coat of Arms 1897
Hamilton-Rogers, Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological
Society 1897, p. 32*

paved terrace beyond. A weathered sculpting on top of the arch shows a shield with the Capel Coat of Arms and bears the inscription 'Hortus Johannis Capell 1610', supporting the claim that it was Capel not Huyshe who created the garden at Sand. A line drawing of the ornamentation, completed in 1897 for the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society, shows the shield in considerably more detail than can still be seen, recording elaborate scrolls surrounding an accurately depicted Capel Coat of Arms. The reason why Huyshe allowed his friend such recognition is unknown, with a document from 1607 held at the Devon Heritage Centre (DHC) only serving to further confuse the position. The indenture makes provision for Anne should her husband predecease her by leasing the estate to 'John Capell of Ubley, Somerset' for a period of ninety-nine years, at a yearly cost of just five shillings.⁴ However the lease and its associated benefits could be cancelled by Anne, should she choose, merely by providing her cousin with a pair of gloves worth six pence or, alternatively, six pence in money. Presumably other documents, now missing, would have provided explanation for this unusual position.

The second feature can be found within the garden itself. To the south of the Capel arch a wide terrace overlooks the garden and, on the right, a most unusual building. This small stone thatched structure has been referred to using a variety of terms: gazebo, summerhouse, pleasance, music and banqueting house. Over the years it has been recorded by various artists, maps, and nineteenth-century photographers and is currently used as a ticket office on the days Sand is open to the public. Positioned beyond the front wall it is unlikely to have been a gate lodge and, considering its ornamentation, a personal use is far more likely. Perhaps there was an identical building at the opposite end of the terrace. It would have added symmetry, so characteristic of Tudor garden design, but a wooden Edwardian summerhouse stands in the likely position making it impossible to look for any remains. The lower section of the building is integrated into what may be an older wall from the same period.

The roof was replaced in 1970 and, although the original construction cannot be confirmed, a series of photographs taken in 1875 show straw roofing present. If originally thatched it would have been in keeping with the adjacent Hall House, in contrast to Lower Sand where slate was probably used since at least 1594. Constructed from similar stone to the other buildings on the estate, the most striking feature is the integration of Tuscan pillars into its main façade. The plain, unfluted columns have a simple structure and are a variant of the more ornamental Roman Doric order. They support the elliptical arch that spans the main entrance, making it likely they were part of the original construction. The Tuscan order was commonly associated with more rural styles of design and serves to compliment the thatched roof, although a slightly uneasy combination of styles does seem evident.

Experimenting with design was a significant part of sixteenth-century English architecture. The use of classical elements in Tudor buildings reflected intellectual delight in the curious and were used to create originality, surprise and meaning. It was important to have knowledge but also to demonstrate one's wit and inventiveness. The word 'device' was used by Elizabethans to describe any ingenious shape or

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*Northeast aspect of the garden building at Sand, showing the Tuscan columns, heraldic and macaronic inscriptions.
Author's photograph 2012*

concept and was often skilfully emphasised by iconographical detail in their buildings and gardens. It is usefully summarised by Girouard as 'the urge to express everything in terms of something else'.⁵ Sand has a splendid example of this Tudor fascination with hidden meaning which can be found on the wall above the building's entrance. A rectangular stone tablet bears the macaronic inscription:



*Garden building showing the back doorway that leads out to the area beyond the forecourt wall 1875.
Private collection held by the family*

This unusual combination of Greek and Latin has been translated as 'The fountain of true fragrance is to be in fellowship with God'.⁶ A paradigm of Tudor piety, the concepts of before and afterlife have been carefully combined in one allegorical phrase. Religious views dominated their life and the wealth of initials, dates, mottoes and engravings found scattered over buildings and gardens are linked to an obsession with devotion and desire for immortality.

The family Coat of Arms is positioned above the inscription plaque, and shows the heraldic shield of Huyshe impaling Wentworth. Is this perhaps the reason for the building's construction: a celebration of the couple's marriage in the eyes of their true God? There are no dates on the inscription nor on the second Huyshe coat of arms that can be found on the back gable, but their presence must substantiate at least some involvement by Rowland with the garden that was created in 1610. Once inside the building, windows provide views over the garden to the southeast and distant landscape to the southwest allowing enjoyment of the surrounding fields, woods and valley beyond. One window extends down to the floor but the later infill under the main entrance now leads to a degree of gloominess even in mid-summer. A second wooden door leads out to the main driveway beyond the forecourt wall and then back up to the lane.

It is interesting to contemplate how such a fascinating building may have been used considering its short distance from the house and position in the garden. The lack of fireplace would have made it chilly in winter, but otherwise a convenient place to serve such 'banqueting stuffe' as Sir Hugh Platt describes.⁷ This after dinner course of various sweetmeats, jellies and suckets was often the most expensive part of the meal and to serve it in a Banqueting House, away from the noise of the main house, became a public display of personal wealth and exclusivity.

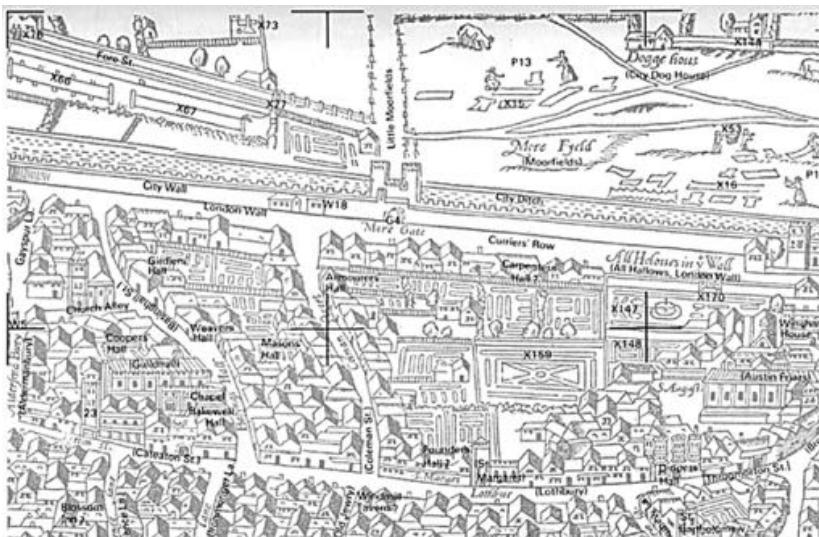
The stone alcove inside, said to have been recycled by Huyshe from the old medieval house, may also give a hint to the building's original function. Was it perhaps used as a place for personal prayer and contemplation? Although at this time Sand had its own chapel next to the main house, the Oratory would have been used by workers from the estate, making it a far more crowded place in which to



Stone Alcove in the garden building. Author's photograph 2012

worship. During the sixteenth century it became the norm to read silently to oneself instead of out loud, encouraging reading as the private reception of the ideas of one individual to another.⁸ This growing concern with the individual was catalysed by the emergence of Humanism in Renaissance Italy, a belief that saw man as perfectible, having a value in himself rather than simply in his relation to God and the community. In particular, members of the Protestant faith became concerned with personal salvation and the importance of the private experience of God, requiring space for the obligatory reading, individual prayer and philosophical thought. Huyshe supported Charles I but it is not known if he was Protestant, only that his father's will demanded such should the family wish to inherit his wealth.

Sidbury Church has a similar, but larger, structure in its external South wall referred to by some historians as a table niche that was used as an altar for the outside celebration of Mass. However a distinguished Antiquarian visiting in the 1880s recorded a now illegible inscription on its walls, 'JS 1617', in his opinion confirming, not the presence of a table niche, but the tomb of John Stone. Stone, as his name suggests, was a stonemason, who worked on the church's



Section from the 'Agas' map showing the areas of Cheapside and Lothbury in the 1550s. Drapers' Hall and Grocers' Hall are located at X159.

restoration and whose death is commemorated inside on the south Chancel wall.⁹ Stone was a common name at the time but it is possible that John was related to Nicholas Stone, born in Woodbury in 1586 and the renowned Master Mason to James I. Records claim that Nicholas' father lived in Sidbury at the beginning of the seventeenth-century and that prior to his marriage to Maria de Keyser, Nicholas' bans were listed at Sidbury church, therefore creating an important association with the village.¹⁰ Could it be plausible that as a young man he was involved with the work at Sand? The Capel connection would certainly have encouraged such an alliance.

With the absence of documentation it is only possible to speculate how the garden appeared in 1610, but it is possible to contemplate what may have influenced Capel when he came to create the design. The date on the Capel arch places the garden in the early years of the reign of James I, but its design would most likely have been Elizabethan in character. Jacobean gardens evolved slowly, influenced by the Mannerist designs of Salomon de Caus and classicism of Inigo Jones, but bearing in mind his notable family connections, Capel must have been aware of the new French and Italian influences that were entering the country. The family owned a property, Capel Court, in the mercantile heart of Cheapside so it is likely he was familiar with the impressive gardens of the London Livery Companies that were located in the area. His family had current as well as earlier connections with the Drapers, whose garden was extensively redeveloped following purchase of the late Sir Thomas Cromwell's estate from Henry VIII in 1543. William Capel, a Draper, was founder of the family's great wealth, an eminent Tudor figure and Lord Mayor of the city in 1503 and 1509.

Detailed records of the Drapers' garden can be found in the Warden's accounts and give suggestion to the plants and garden that Capel may have seen. They record the purchase of thyme, red lilies, campion, columbine, roses and lavender, and the considerable sums paid to gardeners for 'takyng paynes in the gardeyn' when knot gardens were created.¹¹ Two bowling alleys were added confirming use as a social as well as productive space and, by 1570, more fruit trees had been purchased along with a maze and fountain. Local residents

were often welcome as long as they respected the amenities and refrained from laying out their washing over the shrubs to dry. Drapers' Hall was very close to Grocers' Hall, both shown clearly on the 'Agas' map thought to have been engraved in the 1550s. Could it be this is where Huyshe and Capel first met? The Grocers extensive garden was already well established when they acquired the property in Old Jewry in 1427. It was refurbished in 1598, concurrent with the restorations at Sand, with privet hedges replacing old railings and winter lanterns ordered to light the new bowling alley. They bought dung, gravel and soap ashes; bricklayers were employed to create borders and labourers to dig and plant herbs, shrubs, bay trees and box hedging. Knot gardens must have been created as the accounts record their removal in 1664 when they were replaced by grass as a cheaper alternative. The records declare 'the knottes

in the garden are of little use or ornament, but continued charge, neither box nor flowers thriving therein, and that grass plots now most used would be most pleasant and less chargeable in keeping'.¹²

Capel had connections with many other great Tudor gardens worthy of being considered as influential designs. The first is Hadham Hall in Hertfordshire which became Capel's family home shortly after his mother's death in 1572. He would have been twelve at the time of the move and must have witnessed the renovations carried out by his father. No garden plans remain but it is known that Queen Elizabeth visited in 1578 so a garden must surely have been created to complement his father's extensive Renaissance style mansion. Only a short distance from Hadham was the famous garden at Theobalds created for William Cecil between 1575 and 1585. With its grand parterre, maze and Renaissance style water jokes it has been described as 'the greatest Tudor garden in Hertfordshire'.¹³ Haddon Hall in Derbyshire must have come to Capel's attention when it passed to the Manners family through the marriage of his uncle in 1572. It has remained in the family ever since and, although renovated by the 9th Duke of Rutland in the early twentieth century, still retains the extensive terraces and features built between 1580 and 1600.¹⁴ The house has appeared in many film productions such as *Jane Eyre* and *The Other Boleyn Girl* and was recently popularised by the BBC programme *The Tudor Feast*. Its transformation from medieval hall to Elizabethan country house is thought to be linked to a Robert Smythson plan, with terracing and steps giving unity of design between the house and garden.¹⁵ No planting records from the period have survived but it is likely the lower terrace served as a privy garden with knot gardens to be viewed from inside the now famous Long Gallery. An original sundial, dated 1591, still remains, along with balustrading and steps that lead up to the original bowling green and stand, possibly for spectators; all thought commensurate with the garden's Tudor design.¹⁶

The garden at Haddon must surely provide suggestion to what may have been created at Sand. Both were pleasure gardens, used for entertainment, created on steep slopes with views to enjoy. Knots would have formed part of a formal design, part of a privy garden viewed from principal chambers, that, at Sand, lay on the southeast side of the house. Grass or coloured stones may have been used instead



The Upper Garden at Haddon Hall, showing the Long Gallery, terraces, steps, and balustrade built between 1580 and 1600. The original bowling green was at the top of the steps. Photograph courtesy of Nicky Crewe, Haddon Hall

of flowers, a custom commonly used to reduce maintenance costs. By 1610 there would have been plenty of literature to aid construction; although the elaborate designs of the fashionable *parterres de broderie* may have seemed less suitable to Sand's rural setting. Such designs had been described and illustrated in *La Maison Rustique* (1586) along with the practicalities of construction using lines and pegs.¹⁷ Translated by Richard Surflot in 1606 under the title of *The Countrie Farme* it provided inspiration to many gardeners of the seventeenth-century. Although a bowling green, fountain and sundial would doubtless have been included, this remains as conjecture until such times that firm evidence comes to light.

Sand is open to the public, offering guided house tours and the opportunity to visit its surrounding garden. The house has its own intriguing tales of association such as the badge of Catherine of Aragon in the hall window linked to a possible visit in 1501. Because the estate was used as a farm for almost two hundred years it was spared continual refurbishment by subsequent owners. As a consequence many original elements remain, making Sand, both house and garden, an important feature in the history of East Devon.

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