

West Dean History Trail

HISTORIC SITES where nothing remains above ground

ROMAN VILLA

In the fields marked on the map were several buildings. One of them also extended where the railway line and The Maltings now are. Excavations on different parts of the site were carried out in 1741, 1846 and 1871-3. The first excavation, in the area now covered by the railway line, revealed a tessellated paved floor, 66 feet by 18 feet, of which a four-foot square was taken to London for examination by the Society of Antiquaries and exhibited to the public at Charing Cross.



TESSELLATED PAVING 1876

The second excavation, triggered by the railway construction destroying the site of the first one, related to adjoining areas of the same building where further tessellated paving was found. Those carried out by the Rev G S Master in 1871-3 revealed two more extensive buildings which he named Villa Urbana and Villa Rustica and where, in addition to the layout and construction, he discovered many objects. In 2014 a geophysical survey by English Heritage corresponded well with the map prepared by the Rev Master.



WATER BEAKER, NEW FOREST WARE, SIMILAR TO THOSE FOUND AT WEST DEAN

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CHURCH OF ALL SAINTS

The Church of All Saints stood on Moody's Hill and was the church of the Hampshire ecclesiastical parish of West Dean. The date of its foundation is not known but mention can be found as early as 1200, it was listed in the churches of the Winchester Diocese in 1284 and its patrons and rectors are recorded from 1321 to 1467. Due to the parish having become insufficient to support a rector of its own it was united in 1473 with the Church of St Mary in the



THE STONE COFFIN IN THE CHANTRY

Wiltshire ecclesiastical parish of West Dean under the Salisbury Diocese. The agreement between the two dioceses provided that tithes from the Hampshire parish were to go to the rector of St Mary's who in return was to conduct mass in All Saints every week and to be responsible for the repair and even the rebuilding of its chancel. At what point All Saints was demolished is not known but even its site was forgotten until March 1870 when the accidental discovery of a stone coffin (now in the Borbach Chantry) led to excavations which revealed the existence of numerous burials and the foundations of the eastern end of the chancel.

WEST DEAN HOUSE

George Evelyn had established the family fortunes in the 16th century by obtaining the royal monopoly on the manufacture of gunpowder. In 1618 one of his descendants, John Evelyn, bought the manor and estate of West Dean.

Although the precise date of West Dean House, originally called Deane House, is not known, it is thought likely that because the design incorporated old-fashioned Jacobean and more modern Renaissance style details, it was built by John Evelyn between 1618 and his death in 1627. The house was of brick with stone dressings. To either side of the house were extensive orangeries, each with four large windows and five pillars.

On the western side was a magnificent terrace with a central staircase. Below this was a grove of elm trees at the top of a succession of terraces and formal gardens leading to a park which had Dutch style canals fed by a large fish pond.

In 1692 following the death of her mother, Mary Pierrepont aged three, later to become the well-known writer Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, came to live in West Dean House with her grandmother Elizabeth Pierrepont, herself the great grand-daughter of John Evelyn. Mary remained there until Elizabeth Pierrepont died in 1699. Lady Mary was less than impressed with West Dean when she returned to it in 1710 and it is believed it was from West Dean that she eloped with Edward Wortley Montagu in 1712, the carriage for her escape being secreted by the mound of the Norman motte. The last people to live in West Dean House were a group of nuns in the 18th century. After they left in 1799 the house stood empty until 1823 when it was demolished.



EAST FRONT, WATERCOLOUR BY THOMAS SANDBY 1790