

The Ice-House Hunt

Man has stored ice since earliest times in structures ranging in size from simple pits to elaborate and technically sophisticated ice-houses for commercial or domestic use. The Ice-House Hunt, based in Bedfordshire, is undertaking a countrywide survey and has approached the County Planning Officer for the whereabouts of Kent ice-houses. From old Ordnance Survey maps, an article in Vol. 80 of 'Archaeologia Cantiana' and a chapter in Robert Goodsall's book, 'A Kentish Patchwork' (1966), it is estimated that at least 30 ice-houses once existed in Kent.

If you know of any such structures, whether standing or destroyed, we would be interested to hear of them, with as much detail as possible, e.g. exact location, description and date of building, ground plan dimensions, construction, surrounding soil types, possible source and use of ice, one or two sketches. Any information gathered will be forwarded on to The Ice-House Hunt.



ENCOMBE ICE WELL

SPRING 1967



Encombe Ice Wall Spring '87

28th May, 1968.

Dear Colonel Drake-Brockman,

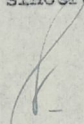
As promised I now enclose sketch plan of the Ice Well at Encombe and its surroundings, with three photostat copies, four copies of an enlarged version of the photograph I showed you, and four copies of some notes I have drawn up on my research to date on the well itself, which notes may be of some use to you.

I feel that the Encombe well ought to be preserved as

1. It may be the only one in this part of Kent.
2. It would appear from Goodsall to be of a rather ^{ADRE} type and the only one he knows which it can be proved actually was an Ice House.

If you wish further copies or if there is anything else I can do please let me know. I am very keen to see this well preserved.

Yours sincerely,



Your Ref. CL/PA/300

13th June, 1968.

Dear Sir,

Sandgate - Ice Well at Encombe

Further to my letter of 23rd May, 1968, I enclose two copies of a photograph taken at the site of the ice-well, without, as I explained in my letter, having previously removed the debris from the well as I had not approached the owner of the land. I also enclose two photostat copies of a sketch plan of the ice-well and its surroundings, and two copies of some notes on the research carried out by Mr. A.H.T. Todd who lives near to the site.

This ice-well would appear to be of a rather rare type, according to Robert Goodsall in A Kentish Patchwork in which he describes an apparently similar one at Chislehurst as something of an enigma.

It is highly probable that this ice-well is the only one in this part of Kent, and we recommend that it be excavated and preserved, and listed by the Ministry.

Yours faithfully,

R.F.H. Drake-Brockman

Hon. Secretary

J.C. Scragg Esq.,
Town Clerk,
Civic Centre,
Castle Hill Ave.,
Folkestone.



Chief Executive
of the County Council
W. U. Jackson

County Planning Officer: W. H. DEAKIN

Mrs. M.L. Lachlan,
Hon. Secretary,
The Sandgate Society,
Albion Cottage,
SANDGATE,
Kent CT20 3AL

Tel: Maidstone (0622) 671411

Extension: 3115

Ask for: Mr. Turner

Our ref: S5

Your ref:

Date: 26th March, 1981

Dear Madam,

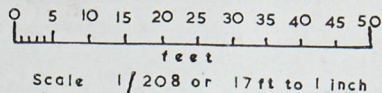
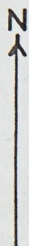
The Ice-House Hunt

Thank you for your letter of 23rd March, 1981 enclosing copies of notes by A.H.T. Todd on the Ice-House at Encombe, Sandgate. I was not aware of the existence of any ice-houses in Sandgate and would certainly be pleased to have details of the one at Chichester House if you have time to investigate that one too. Any information will be forwarded in due course to the national organiser of The Ice-House Hunt in Bedfordshire.

Regarding the possibility of a preservation order on the Encombe Ice-House I would suggest that either Mr. Todd or yourself contact Mr. Brian Dobbie at the Shepway District Council Planning Department, Oxenden Road, Shorncliffe. He is the architect responsible for listed buildings and conservation in your area and would be able to advise you on the matter. The telephone number is Folkestone 57388, extension 308.

Yours faithfully,

for County Planning Officer



ENCOMBE
CARRIAGE DRIVE

Garden Building
now demolished
or buried

WATER GARDEN. (Valley)
Portion D to E now buried by tipping level with a
eastwards from Encombe Carriage Way, to line ABC.

ICE
HOUSE
OR
WELL

Trees
(Subject of Pres. Order)

footpath

Summer
House

Robingale.

The Cottage.

The Bungalow

Old Private Right of Way to Milnerforce Road

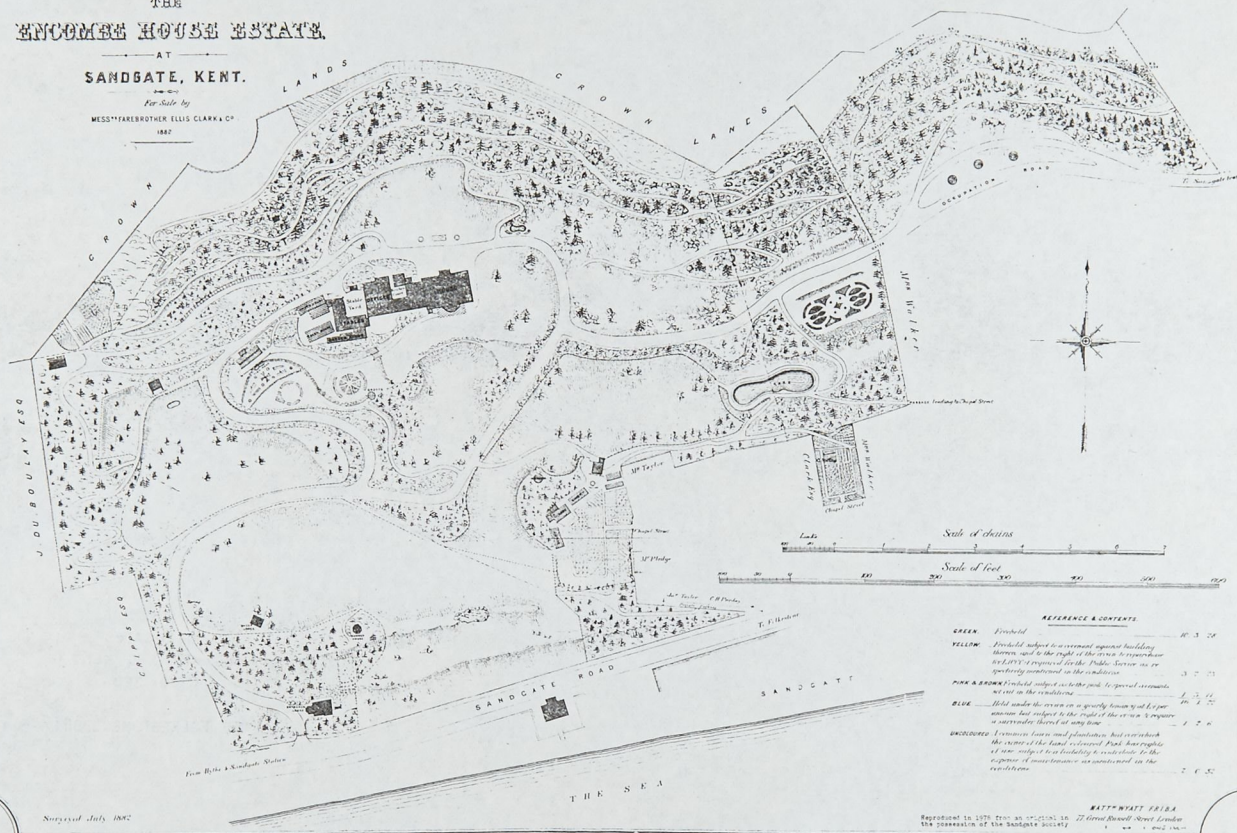
ENCOMBE, SANDGATE.

Portion of Estate including Ice Well enlarged from
Ordnance Survey Sheet TR 2035 SW dated 1957,
1/1250, with additional Information. Grid Reference
of Ice Well:- TR 2001 3516. 22 MAY 1968

11, ENCOMBE

—•— AT —•—
SANDGATE, KENT.

For Sale by
MESSRS FAREBROTHER ELLIS CLARK & CO
1882



Surveyed July 1883

Reproduced in 1978 from an original in the possession of the Sandgate Society

O/S 1872 1/2500

N
↑

Main Grd.

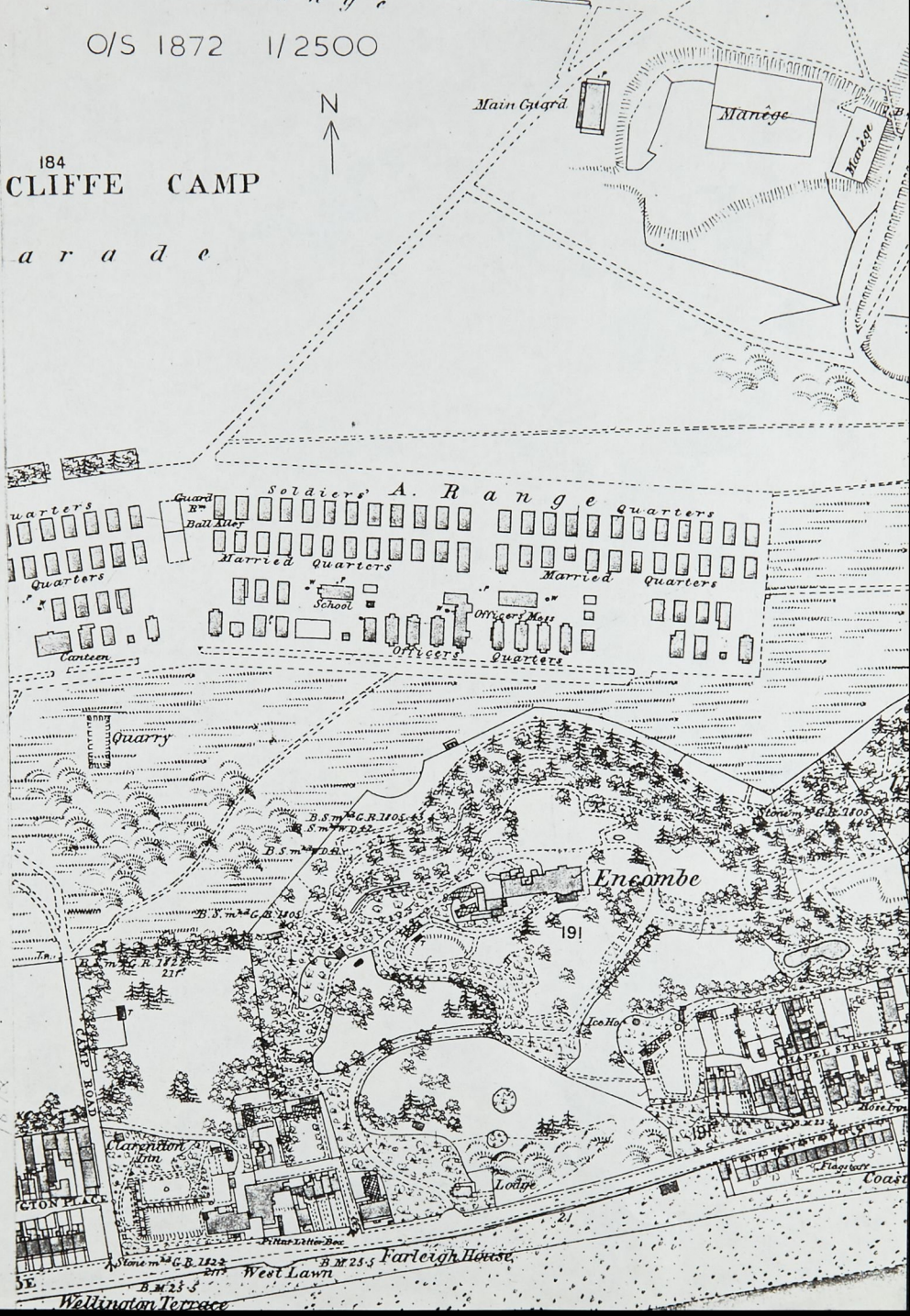
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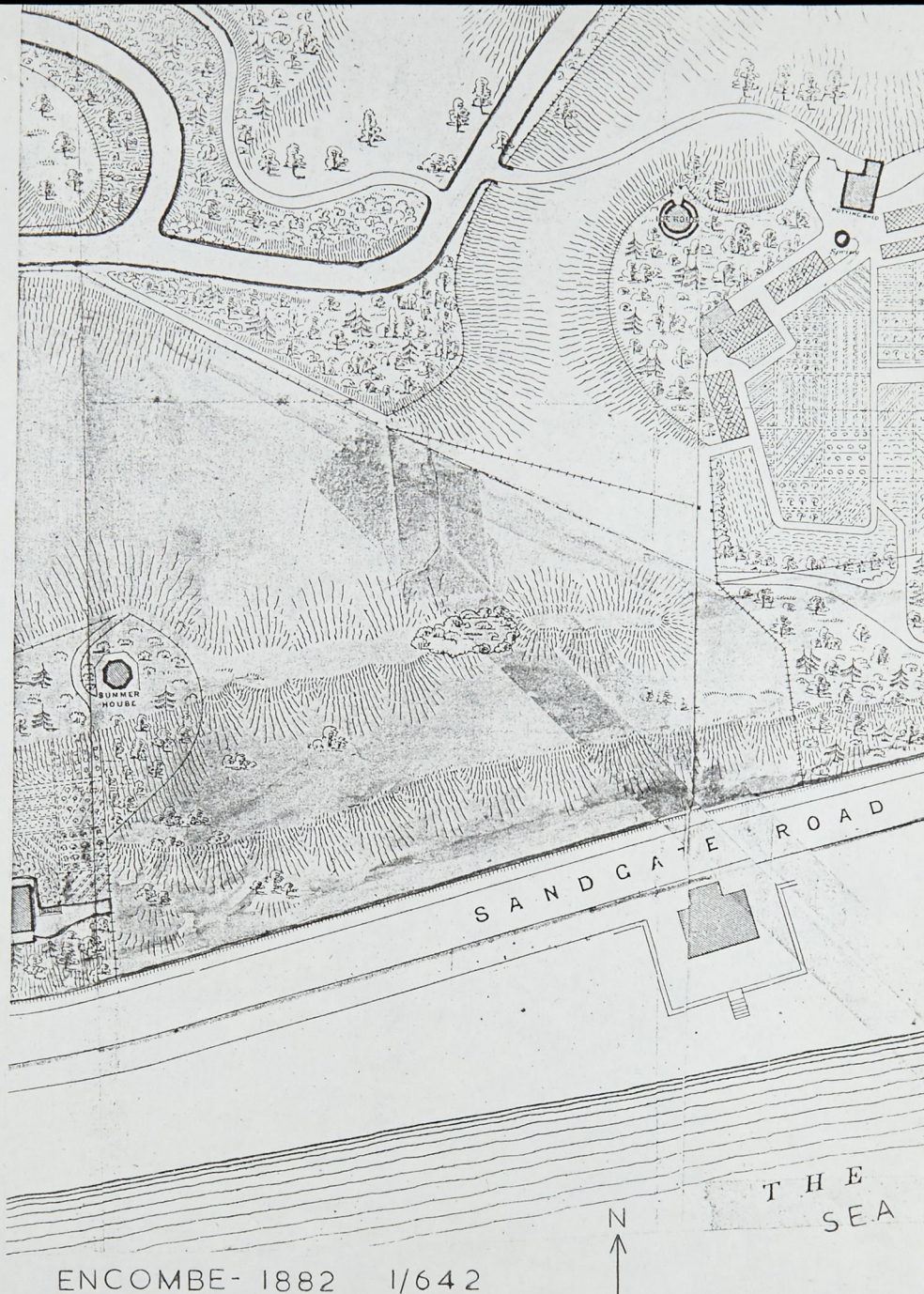
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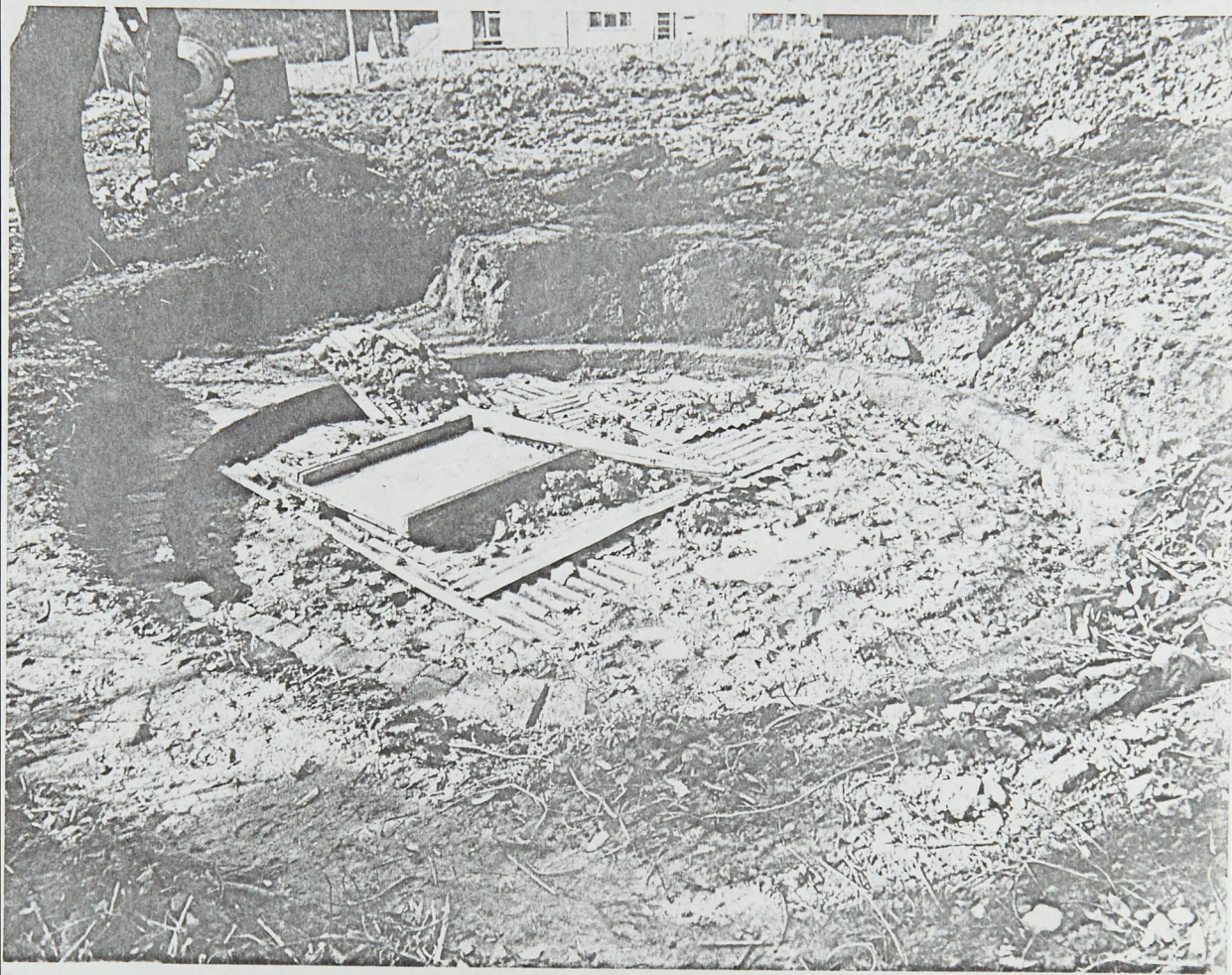
CLIFFE CAMP

a r a d e





ENCOMBE- 1882 1/642



ICE WELL OR ICE HOUSE AT
ENCOMBE, SANDGATE, FOLKESTONE.

Grid Reference TR 2001 3516.

NOTE by A.H.T.Todd.

In "A Kentish Patchwork", Constable, 1966, Chapter 15, page 111 R.H.Goodsall says of the Ice House in the grounds of Old Crown Cottage, Chislehurst that it is something of an enigma, that it stood on high ground, (as did the ice house at Encombe before the water garden was filled in ~~recently~~), had a circular opening, similar to a well and the opening was covered by a shed, once thatched. Later he refers to the Old Crown Cottage example as "the ice house (if such it was)..." From this it is clear that he is in doubt as to whether this actually was an ice house as its type was unusual. Here lies the significance of the Encombe Ice House. It would appear to fit exactly the description of the Old Crown Cottage well AND it is fully documented that it was an ice house. (See Ordnance S'vey map of 1872 which shows it as ~~MISSING~~ "Ice Ho" and the Offer for Sale of 1883¹⁸⁸² of Encombe by Farebrother, Ellis, Clark & Co. the plan they give showing it as "Ice House" and their particulars mentioning "a capital Ice House"). The Ice House at Encombe appears on the later Ordnance Survey maps of 1897, 1907, 1933 & 1938 as a circle and on that of 1957 as a six-sided figure. All these maps and the 1883 Offer For Sale are reproduced in my note "Encombe, 1821-1924" now in Folkestone Library. No view of anything like Goodsall's "shed" appears in the collection of Porter water colour sketches, also reproduced in my Note, *dated 1868*.

The shaft is built of bricks and is about 12ft in diameter. It tapers inwards towards the bottom. The bricks are laid circumferentially except for the top course, which is laid radially. Of this top course one section of about 15 bricks, or about 1/6th of the whole, is missing. Otherwise the shaft appears to be in a good state of repair and remarkably complete. The existence of this differently laid top course at what is about the old ground level before tipping was carried out made it appear likely that it was of the Old Crown Cottage type and that the door would have been on ground level into the shed. But to check that it was not entered by tunnel through the hillside I dug down some four feet * inside the brickwork of the north face. No trace of a door was found. At four feet, tipped clay ceased and I came to rich grass cuttings compost. This tied up with the statement of George Punnet (gardener at Encombe for 40 years) who said it had been used latterly as a compost pit. He also said he believed the ice for the well was obtained not from the nearby lake but from ships bringing it from Scandinavia. One does not get much ice forming at Encombe. It is possible that when the shed fell into decay the well may have been filled in to make it safe, in which case it is possible the shed's remains were thrown down first and might be found on excavation and used to provide clues on the details of the shed's construction and shape.

OUTSIDE OF THE

All round the rim of the well slightly below the level of the top course of bricks I found a layer of a black substance which contained jagged lumps of grey-black rock and shingle. I have found some of the old paths of Encombe to be surfaced with what appears to be ash. I did not find any doorstep outside the rim nor did I find any post holes or stumps.

My excavation revealed the remains of one of Mrs. Philipson's iron gates, identified by the portions of ironwork grape vine still attached to it. The gate was bent double-Punnet had told me the gates to the Water Garden had been bull-dozed. I salvaged as much of the vine as I could find. The remaining framework of the gate is still there and may be seen protruding from the ground on lifting the galvanised iron sheeting I have placed over it.

I did not feel able to continue the excavation as the well was not on my property and without getting permission the spoil could not be tipped nearby. There was also the question of the pit being a danger to children.

* The 1885 Offer for Sale clearly shows the door opened to the north, as indeed Goodsall leads us to expect.

A. H. T. TODD.

BOY HILL.

11. ENCOMBE.

SANDGATE.

FOLKESTONE, KENT

CT20 3DE

TEL FOLKESTONE 38881

KENT COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

General Secretary:
J. L. H. DAVIS, C.B.E., D.S.O.

COMMITTEE FOR THE PRESERVATION OF RURAL KENT

PRESERVATION OF ANCIENT BUILDINGS COMMITTEE in conjunction with KENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Chairman :
C. R. Councier, F.S.A.

Hon. Secretary :
Lt.-Col. R. F. H. Drake-Brockman

1, HOLMESDALE TERRACE,
FOLKESTONE. Phone 52333

6th September, 1968.

Dear Mr. Todd,

Sandgate - Ice Well at Encombe

Thank you for your letter of 31st August.

Folkestone B.C. forwarded a copy of the photograph, sketch plan and notes which you gave me, and which I sent them on 13th June, to the Ministry of Housing & Local Government, with our recommendation that the Ice Well be excavated, preserved and listed by the Ministry.

On 7th August they informed me that neither that Ministry nor the Ministry of Public Building & Works wished to list the Ice Well or to provide for its preservation, and they returned to me the photograph etc.

I then wrote to Folkestone B.C. and asked them the direct question - Are we to understand that your Council does not now propose to take any action to acquire the land, clean out and restore the Ice Well, and make the site attractive, as recommended in our letter of 16th March? To this the Town Clerk replied on 15th August that he would place the matter on the agenda of the next meeting of the Town Planning Committee.

I hope the Sandgate Society, to whom I am sending a copy of this letter, will consider the possibility, as you suggest, of getting something done about laying out the path, including the Ice Well in the scheme, as someone or other may one day get the Ice Well cleaned out and restored, if it is not too late.

Yours sincerely,

A.H.T. Todd Esq.,
Steamer Cottage,
5 Encombe,
Sandgate,
Folkestone.

R. Holmesdale

10th September, 1968

H.B. Chaplin.

Mrs. E.B. Greenwell

D.G. Vorley,
1, Castle Road,
Sandgate.

Dear Col. Drake-Brockman,

Ice well at Encombe.

Thank you for keeping the Society in the picture regarding the Ice well at Encombe. Mr. Todd has also kept us pretty well informed of all developments.

I have recently written to the Town Clerk about Mr. Todd's suggestion for the provision of a footpath through Encombe from Wilberforce Road asking what had been decided. (The suggestion, voted a good one, originally came before the Highways Committee early this year and the Borough Engineer was instructed to look into it and report back)

At the same time, I deplored the fact that the Ice well was not going to be officially preserved and expressed the hope that if the footpath idea materialised, the Ice well would benefit from its position right by the side of the proposed line of the path.

The matter will be pursued further when we know what decision has been reached by the Council regarding the footpath.

Yours sincerely

Lt.-Col. R.F.H. Drake-Brockman.

D.G. Vorley

Cpy to Mr Todd.

Immediate problems identified.

Knotweed - This is an immediate risk to public and private property and should be addressed.

Fly tipping - There is an increasing risk of hazards and irreparable damage to trees as well as environmental health problems associated with fly tipped waste.

Bonfires - Simply, these put the woodland at risk, particularly if occurring in the drier months.

Overhanging/growing trees - These are causing a nuisance in some areas and require immediate action.

Tree/Woodland Health - Treecraft were commissioned in 2016 to undertake a survey and give advice, they advised thinning/removing a number of self seeded and unhealthy trees to protect those established trees of good quality.



Opportunities.

1 Widen & improve the existing path.

2 Provide a setting for the old well and give visual amenity and bench area to path.

3 Provide a new path from new flats to the car park?

4 & give access to the woods overlooking the stream?

5 Rebuild a water garden.

5 A building in the woodland, reflecting that characterful buildings including glass houses existed once on the land.