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**Working Paper**

**A Review of the 'Secrets of the Norman Invasion'**

**submitted by Mr N. Austin to the Highways Agency**

**by Mark Gardiner BA PhD FSA MIFA**

**on behalf of the Highways Agency (South East region)**

**Project no. 1994/249**

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# **A Review of the 'Secrets of the Norman Invasion'**

**submitted by Mr N. Austin to the Highways Agency (South-Eastern region)**

**in connection with the A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Mr N. Austin of Crowhurst submitted to the Highways Agency a document entitled 'The Secret of the Norman Invasion' as evidence against the proposed line of the A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass. The present review is an examination of the evidence presented by Austin to determine whether the claimed sites should be taken into consideration for the bypass route.
- 1.2 The document submitted by Austin comprises four parts: a review and analysis of the documentary evidence and a study of the Bayeux Tapestry, a study of the Hastings area using maps, archaeological evidence from the Crowhurst area, and a discussion and conclusion
- 1.3 Austin argues in his paper that the proposed road passes close to the site of the Norman landing in 1066, which he identifies as near to Upper Wilting Farm, Hollington, Sussex. He claims that substantial material remains survive of the Norman boats and the forts erected by the Normans close to the landing place. Not all of the argument presented by Austin is relevant to the proposed route of the bypass. The present review concentrates on the claimed sites and their setting which may be affected by road construction.
- 1.4 The historical sources cited by Austin have been considered. For the purpose of this review, the aerial photographic evidence in his possession and elsewhere has been studied and the earthworks he claims to date from the Norman landing have been examined. The geophysical data supplied by Mr Austin have been printed out to reconsider his interpretation.
- 1.5 The results of Austin's report were discussed with the East Sussex county archaeologist (Dr Andrew Woodcock), with the tenants of Upper Wilting Farm (Mr and Mrs Blackford) and with Mr Austin himself. The views of David Smuthwaite of the National Army Museum, the advisor to English Heritage on historic battlefields, was also sought on the possibility that the Battle of Hastings might not have been fought on the traditional site. Mr Austin also provided copies of letters from the historian, Dr Marjorie Chibnell, a specialist on 11th- and 12th-century English history.
- 1.6 The numbers in brackets in the text below refer to the page numbers in Austin.

2. Summary of Austin's argument

- 2.1 Austin argues that the Norman fleet intended to sail to Pevensey on the Sussex coast and landed not there, but at Hastings. The place called 'Hastings' by the chroniclers is not the same as the town which currently bears the name, but may be identified with Bulverhythe which lies about 4km to the west, and with the area of Combe Haven behind it. In the 11th century Bulverhythe was an island at the head of a bay which occupied the area of the Combe Haven valley. The Normans sailed to the head of the valley and landed near to Wilting.
- 2.2 Austin locates the site of the landing at a site which he claims has been continuously occupied from the Bronze Age. Through resistivity survey he has identified an Iron Age hillfort. Close by is a Roman port with a fort and jetties for loading iron on to ships, which are recognised from cropmarks, from aerial photographs, and from earthworks. In the Saxon period there was a Saxon settlement along the shores of the Combe Haven valley which developed into the settlement of Bulverhythe by the mid-11th century.
- 2.3 By dowsing and subsequent archaeological excavation in area to the south of Monkham Wood near Wilting, Austin has located the site of many Norman boats, including the one used by William the Conqueror. An earth bank close to the site is said to have been constructed by the Normans to seal up their fleet.
- 2.4 After landing the Normans constructed two forts, a lower fort adjacent to Sandrock Field and an upper fort which lies adjacent to Upper Wilting Farm and in which was situated the chapel of St Mary in the Castle.
- 2.5 At a nearby, though undisclosed site, the burial place of the Saxon king Harold was located.
- 2.6 From a study, mainly of the Bayeux Tapestry, but also of other sources, he derives criteria against which the proposed site of the landing must be judged. He concludes that the place he has identified at Wilting fits these criteria.

3. The narrative histories of the Norman invasion

- 3.1 Austin uses five chronicles which may be briefly summarised. Although none of these may be considered wholly unreliable, the context for the production of each should be considered.

3.1.1 *William of Jumièges - Gesta Normannorum Ducum*

Jumièges's work was written in or shortly after 1070 and therefore provides a near contemporary account of the invasion of England by the Normans. The absence of circumstantial information suggests he did not have access to detailed evidence. The main edition is *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, ed. J. Manx (1914, Rouen), but the relevant passages have been conveniently reproduced in translation in *English Historical Documents* 2, 228-30.

3.1.2 *William of Poitiers - Gesta Willilmi Ducis Normannorum et Regis Anglorum*

Poitiers had served both as a soldier and a cleric before writing his *Gesta*. The work is written from a Norman point of view and is rhetorical in style. However, it was written about 1071 and therefore represents a contemporary account of the invasion and Battle of Hastings. Poitiers used many models for his composition. Virgil's *Aenid* was used as the model for the Norman sea-crossing, Sallust has used for the battle speeches, Cicero or Augustine were adopted for the moral or philosophical dissertations and reference was made to the *Satires* of Juvenal, the *Agricola* of Tacitus and the *Lives* of Suetonius.<sup>1</sup>

3.1.3 *The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio attributed to Guy of Amiens*

The attribution of the authorship of the *Carmen* is based upon a reference by Orderic Vitalis that Bishop Guy of Amiens wrote a poem about the Conquest. It is not agreed by all historians that the *Carmen* is that poem. R.H.C. Davis has argued the *Carmen* was not written in the 11th century by Guy, but that it is a 12th-century composition. He has disparagingly dismissed it as a source saying that, 'The *Carmen* is above all a literary piece written by a man who had no special information, who knew the names of very few of the individuals involved in his story, and of equally few places... It is hard to believe that anyone would ever have thought of this literary exercise as a serious historical narrative, if it had not been for the chance that made it the only surviving poem on the battle of Hastings'.

- 3.1.4 There is no unanimity among historians on the worth of the *Carmen*. Morton and Muntz who have edited the text consider it to be a reliable source and

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<sup>1</sup> R.H.C. Davis, 'The *Carmen* of Hastingae Proelio', *English Historical Review* 93 (1978), 260.

accept without question the identification of the author at Guy of Amiens.<sup>2</sup> Van Houts also accepts Guy as the author, but warns against its use as an historical text, 'Although it is an early text, it is not necessarily a reliable source. The poem is a literary work, not a literary curiosity... It was not written as a school product in a history lesson in the early twelfth century, but neither was it meant to be a textbook for twentieth historians'. She notes that Bishop Guy of Amiens wrote the *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio* in imitation of the epics of Virgil and Statius.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.1.5 *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*

The recently published scholarly edition and translation of the *Chronicle* provides a useful guide to this source.<sup>4</sup> Searle who has edited the edition concludes that the account of the Battle of Hastings can be traced to no one source, but virtually every incident is traceable to the works of Poitiers or Wace.<sup>5</sup>

### 3.1.6 *Master Wace - Roman de Rou*

Bennett has considered the use of the *Roman de Rou* as a source for the Norman Conquest and has given some warnings. He suggests that it may contain genuine oral traditions not found in other sources, but suggests that it reflects many of the political events and concerns of the mid-12th century when it was composed. He notes that Wace describes the Normans disembarking and constructing a wooden castle at Hastings from pieces ready-cut and transported in barrels. Bennett observes that this was not an 11th-century practice, but in 1170/1 two wooden castles were ferried across from England to Ireland. He concludes that, 'Vernacular poetry can provide a rich source for material on the history during which it was composed, rather than that which it purports to tell'.<sup>6</sup>

## 3.2 *Discussion of historical sources*

<sup>2</sup> C. Morton and H. Muntz, *The Carmen de Hastingae Proelio of Guy Bishop of Amiens* (1972). Oxford.

<sup>3</sup> E.M.C. Van Houts, 'Latin Poetry and the Anglo-Norman Court 1066-1135: The *Carmen de Hastingae Proelio*', *Journal of Medieval History* 15 (1989), 56.

<sup>4</sup> E. Searle, *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey* (1980). Oxford.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>6</sup> M. Bennett, 'Poetry as History? The 'Roman de Rou' of Wace as a Source for the Norman Conquest', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 5 (1982), 37-9.

The reports of the landing of the Normans need to be evaluated against the purposes for which they were written and the conventions of the period. It would be anachronistic to treat the Norman chronicles as if they were modern accounts of a contemporary event. They were generally written by clerics who had not been present, and represent a rendering of what within a few years would have become a traditional story of the invasion. We may identify three processes which may have affected the accuracy of the accounts

- 3.2.1 The use of classical models has been discussed by a number of historians. The reported speech is a common device of classical authors, although it is highly improbable that either they, or Norman historians, actually reproduce verbatim remarks. William of Poitiers makes an explicit connection between the invasion of England and the actions of Xerxes, Marius and Pompey. Many of the actions of the Normans may have been changed or slanted to make more explicit the classical parallels.
- 3.2.2 Secondly, the accounts were often written to flatter, or make a justify a point of view in a dispute, or as entertainment. As Van Houts has stated, they were not written for 20th-century historians. The accounts need to be used with great circumspection, and the use or absence of a particular word or phrase may not bear close interpretation.
- 3.2.3 Thirdly, histories are written according to the interpretation and prejudices of their periods. Absolute, objective history, that is history as an assemblage of incontestable facts, has not been considered achievable since the early 20th century.<sup>7</sup> In using earlier sources the historian needs to be aware of the perspective of the writer, and thus of the limitations of the source material.
- 3.3 The chief problem of Austin's interpretation is his failure to identify the limitations of his sources and his tendency to place excessive emphasis on events which cannot support his interpretation. Poitiers writes that William I went out to lead a patrol but,

Because of the roughness of the ground he had to return on foot'.

Austin (9) interprets this passage to argue that the ground was probably waterlogged. However, the context of the passage shows that the incident is reported to show that, unlike others, William exposed himself to danger by patrolling himself and in particular by dismounting. It is intended to demonstrate William's courage and strength. The passage cannot support the view that the ground was waterlogged.

#### **4. Pevensey as the Norman Landing Place**

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<sup>7</sup> This point is usefully discussed by E.H. Carr, *What is History* (1961), Chapter 1.

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- 4.1 An important element in Austin's argument is that Pevensey was not the landing place of the Norman boats. Instead, he argues that the Norman boats reached land further east at 'Hastings', not the present town of that name, but one a settlement he identifies at or near Bulverhythe which was formerly bore that name.
- 4.2 He argues against the Pevensey landing place on the following evidence:
  - 4.2.1 The text in Jumièges which describes the landing at Pevensey is unreliable.
  - 4.2.2 William of Poitiers repeated the error of the Pevensey landing place by copying Jumièges.
  - 4.2.3 The timing of the landing and the description of the topography given in the *Carmen* does not suit Pevensey.
  - 4.2.4 The *Chronicle of Battle Abbey* reports that William landed safely *near* Pevensey. It does not state that he landed *at* Pevensey. The possibility is left open that William may have landed near Hastings to which he went shortly after he had reached England.
  - 4.2.5 Master Wace records that the Norman fleet first sacked Pevensey and then moved to Hastings, but also says that they arrived near Hastings.
  - 4.2.6 The valuations of villis recorded in Domesday Book suggest significant decreases in the Battle area, but do not show marked declines in the vicinity of Pevensey. This suggests that the Norman did not lay waste to the area around Pevensey, though they did around Battle.
  - 4.2.6 The words *ad Pevenesae* on the Bayeux Tapestry refer not the actual landing place, but the original intended site of landfall.
  - 4.2.7 The Worcester or D-text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* records that William came from Normandy to Pevensey, but does not specifically mention that he landed there.
- 4.3 One of the strategic aims of medieval warfare was to seize control of the towns and of forts which effectively controlled the countryside. Pevensey and Hastings were the major ports on the east Sussex coast, and were probably the most important urban centres in the area in the mid-11th century. William's purpose in going first to Pevensey and subsequently to Hastings, according to the conventional view, was to take these towns. After the Battle of Hastings, William of Poitiers says, he marched to the towns of Romney and Dover. There is no particular problem in understanding the actions of William in landing in one place and then moving to another. It is very likely that the Normans would have consolidated their position in the period of over a week between the landing and the battle with Harold.



4.4 The argument that no landing took place at Pevensey requires a rather perverse view of the historical sources. The evidence of Jumièges and Poitiers is simply dismissed as incorrect, and the *Battle Chronicle* and the D-text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is interpreted in an illogical manner. The text of the Bayeux tapestry reads *Hic Willelm' dux in magno navigio mare transivit et venit ad Pevenesae* - 'Here Duke William crossed the sea in a great ship and came to Pevensey'. This does not support the view that Pevensey was the intended, but not the actual landing place.

4.5 Only Wace mentions a landing place near Hastings and in a subsequent, possibly contradictory passage, also reports that they sailed to Pevensey. There is some doubt about the reliability of the text of Wace which was written one hundred years after the event, but Austin decides to accept it as a reliable source.

## 5. The evidence of Domesday Book

5.1 The idea that the path of the Norman army may be traced in the valuations of Domesday Book, and particularly in the location of vills reported as wasted is of long-standing. Baring used the evidence in 1898, and the location of depreciated vills was mapped by Darby.<sup>8</sup> Domesday Book gives three valuations for estates, the value in 1066, 'later' - when the land was granted to its Norman lords, and in 1086.

5.2 Austin has compared the valuations in 1066 and 1086, and argued that Wilting lies at the epicentre of the wasted area. He has also argued that since there is little reduction in the value of manors in the Pevensey area, that town could not have been the landing site.

5.3 There are two problems about the interpretation which he offers. Firstly, in eastern Sussex the land recorded under the name of the estate rarely lay entirely in the immediate vicinity of the estate centre. For example, the land within 1½ miles of Battle Abbey, the lowy of Battle, included areas which had formerly belonged to the estates of Hooe, Bullington (Bexhill) and even Wilmington in the rape of Pevensey, all of which lay some distance away.<sup>9</sup> It is therefore not correct to assume that all the wasted land lay around the estate centre. Secondly, the data does not allow a regression of manorial values to be performed to identify an epicentre of waste. All that may be

<sup>8</sup> F.H. Baring, 'The Conqueror's footprints in Domesday', *English Historical Review* 13 (1898), 17-25; H.C. Darby, 'The South-Eastern Counties', in H.C. Darby and E.M.J. Campbell (eds), *The Domesday Geography of South-East England* (1962), 572, fig. 163. Cambridge.

<sup>9</sup> Domesday Book i, 17b.

safely concluded from Domesday Book is that the general area around Battle was wasted. More detailed conclusions are not possible.

- 5.4 Austin rightly draws attention to the absence of reduced values in the Pevensey area. This is an interesting observation, but does not necessarily show that the Normans did not land in that area (41): they may not have stayed there for a sufficient period to cause significant damage.

## 6. The Bayeux Tapestry

- 6.1 It is now widely agreed that the Bayeux Tapestry was made in England, possibly at Canterbury, for Odo, Bishop of Bayeux. The prominence given to Odo and his tenants allows this to be concluded with some certainty. Other aspects of the Tapestry are the subject of continued debate.
- 6.2 One of the more important contributions to scholarship on the subject has been a study by Brooks and Walker of the composition and artistic background of the Tapestry. They have argued that the designer of the Tapestry was provided with a narrative of the Conquest and provided the text for the embroidered inscriptions from which he produced his design. It seems likely that the narrative was written and not oral from the small but significant mistakes which have been introduced. In the scene in which William is shown attacking the Norman town of Dol, his enemy, Conan of Brittany is shown escaping by climbing down a rope. William of Poitiers provides a more detailed account which records that Conan was not within Dol at all. The inscription on the tapestry quite correctly records merely that 'they came to Dol and Conan fled', making no reference to the imagined escape from the town.<sup>10</sup>
- 6.3 It seems probable that the designer of the Bayeux Tapestry did not have detailed knowledge of medieval warfare. He depicts all soldiers, both Norman and English with trouser hauberks. These certainly were worn by the English, but they could not have been worn by the mounted Norman knights. The Tapestry does not show crossbows, although their use is implied by William of Poitiers and the *Carmen*. They were apparently not known to the designer. It is apparent that the designer did not have detailed personal knowledge of the events surrounding the Conquest.
- 6.4 There has been considerable debate about the accuracy of the depiction of architecture on the Tapestry. The surviving motte at Hastings Castle, for example, has been compared with the one shown on the Tapestry, and the castle of 'Belrem' has been compared with the surviving structure at Beaurain

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<sup>10</sup> N.P. Brooks and H.E. Walker, 'The Authority and Interpretation of the Bayeux Tapestry', *Anglo-Norman Studies* (1978), 1-34.

and with Romanesque architecture in general.<sup>11</sup> The arguments in favour of accurate representation on the Tapestry have shown that the designer had a reasonable understanding of contemporary building types and was able to depict the general character of a castle or church. They have not proved that the designer had detailed knowledge of the illustrated buildings.<sup>12</sup>

- 6.5 It is self-evident that the designer of the tapestry worked within the artistic conventions of his time. The absence of perspective and the often incorrect relative sizes of the items and individuals depicted are common to Romanesque art of this period.<sup>13</sup> Austin's comments on ship size and number of sailors which they accommodate do not appreciate the limitations of the artistic representation (49, 51-2).
- 6.6 Particular importance is given by Austin to the scene on the Tapestry showing the Normans dining in a circular table (56). He identifies this event with a meal on the day of the landing. He bases this on the consumption of fish by Bishop Odo. Fish would have been a typical repast for clerics on a Friday, the day of the landing (57). He argues that 'contrary to previous historical thinking the Bayeux Tapestry provides further unexpected and incontrovertible proof by virtue of the logistics of the day that Hastings was the landing site'.
- 6.7 The scene of the fish meal in the circular room has been convincingly shown by Brooks and Walker to have been based on conventional representations of the Last Supper. The table in the Tapestry is shown to be set with bread and fish as is normal in the Last Supper, and Odo adopts the position of Christ in blessing the food. The shape of the table follows that in Last Supper pictures, and can be closely paralleled in a north French gospel book of the second half of the 12th century.<sup>14</sup> The scene does not provide the 'incontrovertible proof' which Austin seeks for a Hastings landing site, but merely indicates the limitations of the Tapestry as a source for detailed interpretation.

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<sup>11</sup> C. Dawson, *History of Hastings Castle* 1 (1909), frontispiece; A.J. Taylor, 'Belrem', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 14 (1993), 1-24.

<sup>12</sup> That is the general conclusion of R. Allen Brown in 'The Architecture', in F.M. Stenton (ed.), *The Bayeux Tapestry: A Comprehensive Survey* (2nd edition, 1965), 76-87. A more recent edition of the Tapestry, D.M. Wilson, *The Bayeux Tapestry* (1985), adds little new to an understanding of the work.

<sup>13</sup> This is evident in, for example, the 'Raising of Lazarus' panel in Chichester Cathedral attributed to c. 1125-50.

<sup>14</sup> Brooks and Walker, 'The Authority and Interpretation of the Bayeux Tapestry', 15, citing Pierpoint Morgan Library MS. 44, f. 6v.

- 6.8 Largely from his study of the Tapestry Austin draws up a series of 40 criteria against which he measures his identified site of Upper Wilting (66-71, 156-9). His interpretation of the situation of the forts assumed that they are depicted with near photographic accuracy. He supposes that the camp was at the bottom of the hill and had agricultural strips behind it (70) and that the land was low down below three manor houses set in a row or upon a ridge (71). It has been argued that the designer of the Tapestry was working from a written narrative within the artistic conventions of the period, and did not have any first-hand knowledge of the places he was depicting, nor of the events. It is not possible to place the weight of interpretation given by Austin to the conventionalised scenes on the Tapestry.

## 7. The relationship of Bulverhythe and Hastings

- 7.1. Austin argues that before 1094 the castle and port of Hastings were situated at Bulverhythe which lies 5 km to the west. The site of Bulverhythe, he suggests, was formerly called Hastings. His interpretation is based on the following evidence:
- 7.1.1 There is no entry for Hastings in Domesday Book (79).
- 7.1.2 Domesday Book (1086) mentions a new borough in the entry for Guestling Hundred. This may have been the town of Hastings situated in the Bourne Valley, where the town of Hastings still stands. New Hastings is mentioned in the Pipe Roll of 1182 (80).
- 7.1.3 Historians have claimed the earlier town of Hastings stood in Priory Valley on the west side of the present castle, but no early buildings, with the exception of Hastings Priory are known there, and none are shown in Yeakell and Gardner's map of 1795 (81).
- 7.1.4 No Norman keep has been found at Hastings (82).
- 7.1.5 The description of the landing in the *Chronicle of Battle Abbey* does not suit the topography of Hastings (84).
- 7.1.6 The *Chronicle of Battle Abbey* indicates that the castle at Hastings stood on a site which had been lost to the sea. This description must refer to Bulverhythe where coastal erosion is known to have taken place (85).
- 7.2 The conventional view of the evidence is that the town of Hastings developed in the late Anglo-Saxon period in Priory Valley on the west side of the present Hastings Castle. The large number of churches which formerly stood in that area suggest that they formerly served an urban centre. Salzman has argued that the centre of Hastings moved in the late 12th century to 'New Hastings'

mentioned in the Pipe Rolls. He identifies the new site as the one in Bourne Valley, where the 'Old Town' now stands.<sup>15</sup>

- 7.3 Bulverhythe was a former medieval port and a limb (contributing member) of the Cinque Port town of Hastings. It was very probably an early settlement as five houses there were given by William, count of Eu to Lewes Priory in the 1090s.<sup>16</sup> There is no evidence that it was formerly called Hastings.
- 7.4 Hastings is mentioned in Domesday Book, though there is no entry specifically for it. It is mentioned, for example, under the entries in the Lincolnshire folios where the toll from ships from Hastings are recorded. It has been argued that the large space at the head of the Sussex folios in Domesday Book was intended for the entry for Hastings town which was not received in time to be written in. Hastings would have been recorded in a similar manner to Dover which heads the Domesday account of Kent.<sup>17</sup>
- 7.5 The new borough recorded in the vill of *Rameslie* in Guestling hundred is likely to have been at Rye. It cannot have been at Hastings or Bulverhythe which were probably in the Domesday hundred of Baldslow. The entry in Domesday Book reads in translation:

In this manor is a new borough and there are 64 burgesses paying £8 less 2 shillings. In Hastings 4 burgesses and 14 smallholders pay 63 shillings.<sup>18</sup>

The entry implies that the greatest number of burgesses were not in Hastings; only four burgesses were. The new borough, therefore, can hardly have been at Hastings.

- 7.6 Considerable erosion has taken place at Hastings, and may well have removed any site of any castle built near the shore. The extent of the erosion is apparent from the plan of the present castle which has no enclosing wall on the south side. The erosion to the sandstone cliff was already well advanced

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<sup>15</sup> L.F. Salzman, *Hastings* (1921), 6, 24; L.F. Salzman (ed.), *Victoria County History of Sussex* 9, 9.

<sup>16</sup> *Calendar of Documents Preserved in France, Illustrative of the History of Great Britain and Ireland*, 1, ed. J.H. Round (1899), no. 1391; *The Chartulary of the Priory of St. Pancras, Lewes, Part I*, ed. L.F. Salzman (Sussex Record Society 38 (1933)), 147.

<sup>17</sup> J.H. Round, *Feudal England: Historical Studies on the XIth and XIIth Centuries* (1895), 568; Domesday Book i, 375b.

<sup>18</sup> Domesday Book i, 17a.

by 1330 when a petition to the king noted that much of the castle had been destroyed by the sea.<sup>19</sup>

- 7.7 The evidence put forward by Austin does not indicate that the original town of Hastings lay at Bulverhythe or in the Combe Haven valley. He has suggested that the town of Hastings lay around the periphery of the valley (75, and information from Nick Austin) and adjacent to Bulverhythe. No historical or archaeological evidence has been found to support this contention.

## 8. Place-names

- 8.1 Austin agrees that his place-name interpretation is speculative, but considers that it is impossible for an event so momentous as the Norman invasion to have passed without some record of the events appearing among the place names (150). Place-names, however, are rarely a record of events of national importance, except when folk memory has applied the name retrospectively, and often to an incorrect locality. The town of Battle is an apparent exception to this general principle. It acquired its name not directly, but from the abbey which was founded on the site. Only in such unusual situations might a place-name reflect a major event.

### 8.2 *Monkham Wood*

This place-name is not treated by the *Place-Names of Sussex*, and there is no information on its antiquity. There is no reason to think that Austin's interpretation is correct, and it is unlikely to be *a priori* according to the principle enunciated above (paragraph 8.1).

### 8.3 *Sandroek Field*

The origin of the field name offered by Austin, from a sandstone outcrop, is no doubt correct. The suggested corruption into Senlac is etymologically implausible. The earliest recorded forms of Senlac are *Santlache* and *Senlac* in the 12th century.<sup>20</sup>

### 8.4 *Bulverhythe*

Interpretation of Bulverhythe as 'the landing place of the people' is not strictly accurate. The place-name means 'the landing place or hythe of the

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<sup>19</sup> F.H. Baring, 'Hastings Castle, 1050-1100, and the Chapel of St. Mary', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 57 (1915), 129.

<sup>20</sup> A. Mawer and F.M. Stenton, *The Place-Names of Sussex* 2 (English Place-Name Society 7 (1930)), 499. Cambridge.

burgesses', presumably referring to the people of Hastings. Austin's interpretation is not sustainable (151).<sup>21</sup>

## 8.5 *Redgeland*

8.5.1 It seems unnecessary to create a highly doubtful derivation of the place-name Redgeland, when a more obvious and satisfactory one will suffice. Hedgeland appears as *Hecilande* in the Battle Abbey Chronicle in a passage dating to the early 12th century. The spelling shows clearly its origin from the Old English *hecg*. Hedgeland was mentioned in the 1433 survey of the Abbey estate and survived in usage as a place-name until at least the 18th century.<sup>22</sup> It was applied to a tenement at Telham. Redgeland, by contrast, is not recorded at a particularly early date (*pace* Austin 151), and includes the Old English element *hrycg*. The earliest recorded form is *Ruggelond*.<sup>23</sup> In spite of the similarity of modern spellings, it is very improbable that the two names would have become confused.

8.5.2 Austin also argues that the monks of Battle Abbey falsely applied the name Hedgeland to another site, the place bearing the name at Telham. He argues that they needed to do this because the Battle of Hastings was not fought close to the site of the Abbey, but elsewhere. This Abbey was supposed to have been founded on the site of the battle, which he suggests it was not (18-22). This argument makes a string of assumptions which are quite unnecessary if the conventional site of the battlefield is accepted.

## 9. Summary of the Historical Evidence

9.1 Each element of the historic evidence may now be considered, and the case for the identification of the Norman landing place reassessed. In general it is useful to apply the principles of Occam's Razor - entities should not be multiplied needlessly - to those instances where the evidence is poor. Put simply Occam's Razor says that an interpretation which makes fewer assumptions is to be preferred to one which makes more.

9.2 The context of the historical sources has been examined. It has been argued that they cannot sustain the interpretation placed upon them by Austin. They do not provide sufficient information to locate precisely the landing place of the Norman fleet and the early forts, but there does not seem to be sufficient

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 535.

<sup>22</sup> *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, 51, n. 3; East Sussex Record Office BAT 39, f. 30 which is a copy of Public Record Office E315/56; East Sussex Record Office BAT 4421.

<sup>23</sup> Mawer and Stenton, *Place-Names of Sussex*, 504.

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evidence for overturning the accepted view that the fleet landed in the vicinity of Pevensey and that the forts were built near to the still surviving castle at Hastings.

- 9.3 Domesday Book does not support the interpretation applied to it by Austin. Apart from noting the area of waste around Battle itself, Domesday Book does not assist any further in identifying the camp of the Normans.
- 9.4 The Bayeux Tapestry has been treated by Austin as if it was a photographic record of the events of the invasion. This usage of the Tapestry is tendentious and it takes an anachronistic view of the representation of landscape.
- 9.5 The interpretation of Bulverhythe and Hastings cannot be sustained by the evidence.
- 9.6 The place-names do not support the interpretation placed upon them by Austin.
- 9.7 It may be said that in conclusion that the historical evidence does not allow a certain identification of the Norman landing place or of the other events described before the Battle of Hastings. The identification of Upper Wilting Farm as the landing site of the Norman fleet and the Norman forts is made largely contrary to the principle of Occam's Razor and cannot therefore be sustained.
- 10. **Introduction to the archaeological evidence from the Crowhurst area**
  - 10.1 The archaeological evidence used by Austin is as follows:
    - 10.1.1 The preliminary archaeological survey undertaken by the Oxford Archaeological Unit for the Environmental Statement for the Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass, which identified areas of archaeological potential (90-1).
    - 10.1.2 A resistivity survey undertaken by Mr Austin in field 5143 (92).
    - 10.1.3 Earthworks which are interpreted as jetties for loading ore on to ships (93).
    - 10.1.4 Supposed Roman roads from the jetties to Beauport Park and Crowhurst Park (94-5)
    - 10.1.5 Cropmarks in Sandrock Field (99)
    - 10.1.6 Dowsing in the area of the Roman fort and lower Norman camp.
  - 10.2 The archaeological evidence presented by Austin was evaluated by reprocessing the data from the resistivity survey, visiting Upper Wilting Farm



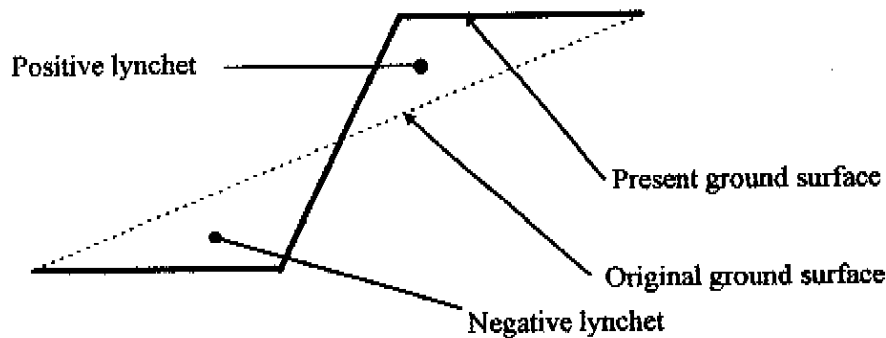
and re-examining the claimed archaeological sites and by studying aerial photographs of the area.

## 11. Resistivity Survey

- 11.1 A resistivity survey was undertaken by Austin and others between August 1993 and summer 1994. The total area surveyed measured 560m by 320m and covered the complete lower Norman fort area.
- 11.2 Resistivity survey measures the variation in electrical resistance of the soil. Higher resistance may be produced by masonry structures, areas with a greater number of stones or compacted soils. A metalled road would appear as an area of high resistance. Lower resistance may occur over ditches which have a looser fill than the surrounding material and contain a greater proportion of water to soil. Small features such as post-holes or even graves are rarely detected by resistivity survey.
- 11.3 The data from the resistivity survey was provided by Austin and processed using Geoplot ver. 2.01. Print-outs were made using the same parameters used by Austin in his report. The results may be compared with the interpretations shown in the report. Lighter areas indicate lower resistance; darker areas higher resistance.
- 11.4 The first plot (fig 1) can be compared with the interpretation given on page 129 of the report. The line marking the 'front edge of the fort' can be recognised as a band of slightly higher readings, although the line of the Roman track is not readily identifiable. There is no evidence of an area of lower resistance parallel to the 'front edge of the fort', which would mark an accompanying ditch.
- 11.5 The data is enhanced on the subsequent plots (130) and these show features interpreted by Austin as a keep and ditches. All these features are identifiable as areas of higher resistance, although ditches should appear as low resistance (fig. 2). A U-shape area of masonry is identified as a keep, although it has only three sides.
- 11.6 It is clear that the resistivity survey has identified some features, but their interpretation is difficult to ascertain. It is not correct to state that the 'resistivity survey confirms ditches and buildings common to occupation by man in an area that has previously been devoid of any reported activity since the Domesday Book was written' (134). This field has very probably been used for agriculture and appears to have been quarried (see paragraph 12.6 below). Although the interpretation of these features is not certain, the resistivity survey does not confirm that features suggested by Austin and cannot support the interpretation place upon it.

**12. Earthworks at Upper Wilting Farm**

- 12.1 Upper Wilting Farm was visited on 11th April 1995 and the earthworks were examined in the presence of Mrs Blackford. Most fields had been ploughed, but had not been harrowed, and were well weathered. The opportunity was taken to examine the surface of the fields to determine whether artefacts were present. Particular attention was paid to the land within and to the south of the lower Norman fort, although most of the site of the fort remains under grass.
- 12.2 Upper Wilting Farm lies at the head of a small plateau at the top of a hill. The best land on the farm surrounds the farm, and include Chapel Field which lies to the north and west of the farm buildings. Chapel Field is presently under pasture and is reported to have been last ploughed during the Second World War. The field has low ridge-and-furrow earthworks which are more evident at the west end below a lynchet which runs across the present field. Ridge and furrow is also very noticeable in the field to the south-west of Chapel Wood. Other earthworks were also noted in that field, including a low bank. The ditches of the ridge and furrow are only 2 to 3m apart. Medieval ridge and furrow has a wider spacing. It is probable that the ridges were produced by hops which the farmer reported used to be planted around the farm. Hops were grown on the better soils in the Weald and in the mid-20th century were typically planted in rows 6ft 6in. (2m) apart.
- 12.3.1 There are within Chapel Field one prominent and one lesser lynchet which correspond to the south-west and north-west sides of the upper Norman fort identified by Austin (148). Examination on the ground confirms the evidence of the aerial photographs. The bank has neither an internal bank nor an external ditch. The earthworks may be confidently identified as a lynchet produced by agricultural activity.
- 12.3.2 Lynchets form naturally during the process of cultivation. Ploughing breaks up the soil and allows colluviation, the movement of soil downhill. The soil travels downhill until it reaches a barrier such as a hedge-line or the lower limit of plough. It accumulates at the barrier forming a positive lynchet. On the lower side of the barrier, the soil which has not away further downhill forms a negative lynchet. The result is to produce a break in a formerly continuous slope.



- 12.4 The earthworks identified by Austin jetties at the south-east corner of Monkham Wood and to the south of Redgeland Wood were examined (93, 102, 136-8). These are parallel, but discontinuous terraces lying at right-angles to the slope. It is most likely that these earthworks have formed naturally through the rotational slip of the steep land immediately above the marsh. The toe of the slip can slide into the soft ground of the marsh as Hutchinson has demonstrated at Lympne.<sup>24</sup> Rotational slipping is a common feature in the saturated soils of the Weald, and indeed Mr Blackford reported that some slipping had taken place in the last decade in Chapel Wood.
- 12.5 No evidence was found for earthworks in Sandrock Field, the site of the putative Roman fort (99), and an examination of the surface of the field failed to recover any artefacts earlier than the 19th century. The primary evidence for the Roman fort in this location is from dowsing.
- 12.6.1 The earthworks and soil marks recorded on aerial photographs (paragraphs 13.5.4, 13.5.5 below) were examined on the ground. The field has a large number of shallow depression which were visible in aerial photographs. Although they had been partially removed by ploughing, they were identifiable as slight depressions often containing surface water. Some of the pits have not been ploughed as the ground is too uneven. Adjacent to the pits are low mounds formed by dumped material.
- 12.6.2 The upper part of the field lies on Weald Clay. The Clay commonly contains iron ore which was mined for iron working. The small pits found at Upper Wilting Farm are more characteristic of medieval and post-medieval ore

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<sup>24</sup> J.N. Hutchinson, C. Poole, N. Lambert and E.N. Bromhead, 'Combined archaeological and geotechnical investigations of the Roman fort at Lympne, Kent, *Britannia* (1985), 209-36; J.N. Hutchinson, 'Recent Geotechnical, Geomorphological and Archaeological Investigations of the Abandoned Cliff backing Romney Marsh at Lympne, Kent', in J. Eddison and C. Green (eds), *Romney Marsh: Evolution, Occupation, Reclamation* (1988), 88-9.

extraction, than earlier working. It seems probable that these pits were produced by ore extraction.

- 12.7 The soil marks recorded on the aerial photographs within the same field can be identified on the ground as patches of darker soil containing a high proportion of fragmented charcoal. These areas may have been produced either by ore-roasting or charcoal-making. The first stage after extracting ore was to roast it in a fire to drive off some of the impurities. It does not seem that this is a likely interpretation of the feature in this case, as the soil did not contain iron ore flecks which are a typical product of the process. It is more likely that the darker areas mark the site of charcoal burning. Charcoal is produced by burning wood with limited access to air. The wood was heaped into a pile, covered with turves, then lit and allowed to burn under controlled conditions. The same site was often re-used for charcoal clamps leaving areas of ground with numerous fine fragments of charcoal.
- 12.8 The area of the circular soil marks identified by Austin as possible building sites (117) were examined (paragraph 13.5.6). No artefacts were recovered from the surface of the of the field
- 12.9 The bank identified by Austin as a constructed by William to 'earth up his boats' (141-4) was examined. It has not been possible to follow Austin's argument against the association of the bank with the moden drainage ditches. It seems likely the bank was either formed by scoured the adjacent ditch, or was intended to prevent flood water in Combe Haven entering the meadowland to the north.

### 13. Aerial Photographic Evidence

- 13.1 Aerial photographs held by East Sussex County Council and by Mr Austin were examined to consider the evidence for the Roman roads in the area of Upper Wilting Farm and to the north, the supposed Roman fort in Sandrock Field, the lower Norman fort and the upper Norman fort.
- 13.2 Archaeological features are manifest on aerial photographs in three ways. Cropmarks produced by the differential growth of crops are rarely seen on Wealden soils. Soil marks created by digging into the subsoil, or by burning the soil are occasional visible on aerial photographs. Upstanding earthworks, where present, are generally clearly visible under suitable conditions. The Weald has not been extensively flown and photographed specifically for archaeological purposes, because of the low visibility of remains in the area. Most of the aerial photographic coverage is overlapping verticals taken for planning purposes, and may not have been ideal for archaeological purposes.
- 13.3 The following photographs held by East Sussex County Council were examined:

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1987 CGA Survey for East Sussex County Council, taken 8th May 1987, scale 1:10 000, nos. 10 87 042, 066-7, 175-6.

1991 Geonex UK Ltd for East Sussex County Council, taken 10th September 1991, scale 1:25 000, nos. 42 91 134-5.

With the exception of the lynchet to the west of Upper Wilting Farm, which appeared as a clear earthwork, no other features were noted.

- 13.4 Mr Austin holds laser copies of photographs held by the National Air Photographic Library, Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) at Swindon. He has also obtained enlargements of air photographs apparently taken by Geonex in 1991 for East Sussex County Council. He took some colour aerial photographs of the area of the 'lower Norman fort' during a brief ride in a private helicopter.

The following copies of photographs held by the RCHME were examined:

3G/TUD/UK/149, frame 5356, 16th April 1946

541/532, frame 3059, 23rd May 1950

58/RAF/3915, frame 0178 F22, 5th November 1960

MAL/75025, frame 070, 30th April 1975

MAL/80006, frame 196, 4th April 1990

- 13.5 The following features were identified on the aerial photographs:

- a) the lynchet to the west of Upper Wilting Farm
- b) ridge and furrow earthworks situated at approximately TQ769109 to the south of Chapel Wood
- c) the line of the coach road an 18th-century coach road
- d) earthworks, probably representing pits centred on TQ775103
- e) soil marks centred on TQ775103
- f) circular soil marks centred on TQ772103

Evidence of Roman roads, for the lower Norman fort and for the Roman fort in Sandrock field was not seen on the aerial photographs.

- 13.6.1 The lynchet to the west of Upper Wilting Farm is identified by Austin (148) as the north-west boundary of the upper Norman fort. Aerial photographs show a sharp change in slope, but do not reveal an internal bank and external ditch.

- 13.6.2 The ridge and furrow recorded on the aerial photographs is clearly on the ground to the south of Chapel Wood. Its interpretation is discussed in paragraph 12.2 above.
- 13.6.3 The 18th-century coach road is shown on photographs reproduced by Austin (114) and has been sectioned by the Hastings Area Archaeological Research Group.<sup>25</sup>
- 13.6.4 Earthworks to the north-west of Sandrock Field were identified as pits on aerial photographs and this was confirmed in an examination of the field (paragraphs 12.6.1-2).
- 13.6.5 Aerial photographs taken by Austin (119, 120) show clear dark circular patches within a ploughed field. These are discussed further below (paragraph 12.7).
- 13.6.6 Soil marks to the west of the Monkham inlet are reproduced by Austin (117). Their nature has not been determined. They might result from the compaction of the soil by cattle congregating around feeding troughs.
- 13.7 The aerial photographs revealed no other items of archaeological significance.

#### 14. Conclusions

- 14.1 This working paper has been critical of the evidence presented by Austin in favour of the archaeological and historical significance of Upper Wilting Farm. Wherever specific points of his argument may be checked in detail, they have found to be based on either an inadequate understanding of the evidence or a partial view of the material or a tendentious interpretation. Occam's Razor may be applied to many of the arguments presented in Austin's text. When his interpretation is set against the conventional understanding of the events of the Conquest, the latter is generally to be preferred because it requires fewer assumptions. A better interpretation of the evidence is likely to comprehend a greater range of the evidence than a poorer one. Austin's interpretations rarely do so.
- 14.2 To illustrate this point, we may apply these principles to the identification of 'Hastings Castle' with earthworks at Upper Wilting Farm and the proposal that the identification of a mark on aerial photographs is the site of the chapel of St Mary in the Castle. A site for Hastings Castle is known within the present town of Hastings and it contains the ruins of St Mary in the Castle. A confirmation of the endowment of St Mary in the Castle, also known as Hastings College, survives in a 12th-century *inspeximus* (charter of

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<sup>25</sup> P. Haines, *The HAARG Domesday Project: Upper Wilting Farm* (1987). Hastings.

certification). It has been argued that the original confirmation of endowment must be nearly contemporary with Domesday Book (1086). However, among those endowments of St Mary was the chapel of Wilting.<sup>26</sup> Therefore St Mary in the Castle could not have been the same as Wilting chapel. To sustain Austin's argument it is necessary to hypothesise two Hastings Castles, one at Upper Wilting Farm and one in the place which presently bears the name, and two religious sites at Wilting, St Mary in the Castle and a separate chapel of Wilting. Hypothetical entities have been multiplied contrary to the principle of Occam's Razor, and the interpretation must be rejected in favour of the accepted identification of these sites.

- 14.3 It has not been possible to check all of the details presented by Austin. The archaeological remains which he uncovered are no longer open to view and cannot be re-examined. Nevertheless, the descriptions and photographs of the discoveries do not encourage the view that the remains were of Norman artefacts and Norman ships. Equally, it has not been possible to undertake the fieldwork necessary to locate the town of 'Hastings' which he postulates is situated around Combe Haven. The evidence in favour of such a site is extremely tenuous and is not sufficient to justify further fieldwork.
- 14.4 No argument is stronger than its individual elements. The length of Austin's submission to the Highways Agency and the range of material which he has used to argue his case do not of themselves give his interpretation credibility. His interpretation must stand or fall upon the force of the arguments presented. On these grounds it must be concluded that he has failed to establish a probability, or even a reasonable possibility, that the Norman landing took place at Upper Wilting and that significant remains still survive there of the forts which they constructed at Hastings.

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<sup>26</sup> The *inspeximus* is conveniently published in *The Chartulary of the High Church of Chichester*, ed. W.D. Peckham (Sussex Record Society 46 (1946)), 299-302. The foundation of Hastings College has been discussed by M.F. Gardiner, 'Some Lost Anglo-Saxon Charters and the Endowment of Hastings College', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 127 (1989), 39-48.

Site : wilting		Resist. Survey		Scale	1:443
Mesh : 1					
Shade Plot (Clip)		Size x 1		Block	Off
Minimum	-1	Grey Levels	17	Black White	
Maximum	1	Palette	Positive		
Contrast	1				
Units	Std.Dev.				

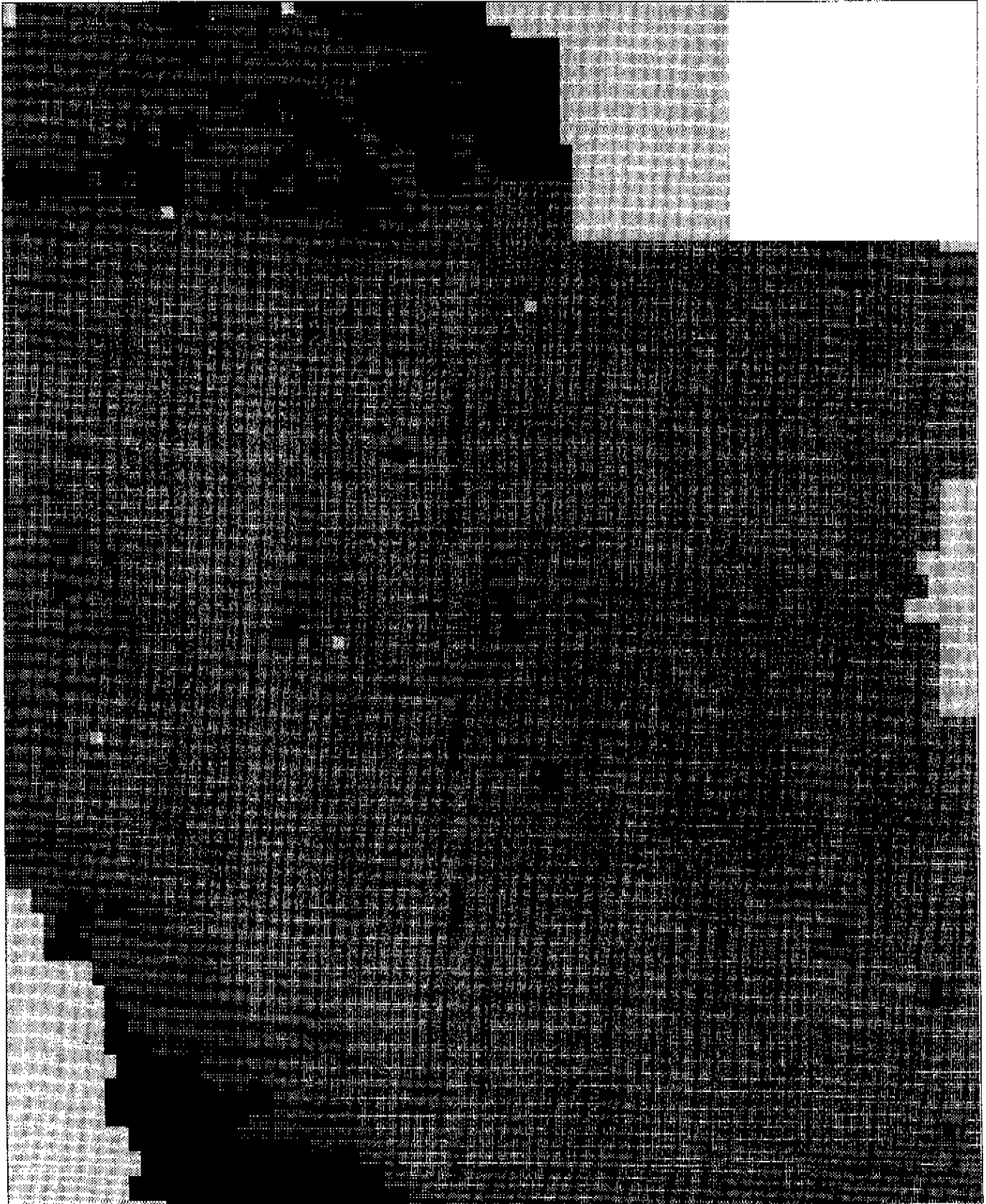


Fig.1



Site : wilting Mesh : 1		Resist. Survey	Scale	1:886
Shade Plot (Relief)		Size x 0.5	Block	Off
Scaling Factor 1 Sun Dir. (°) 225 Sun Elev. (°) 25		Grey Levels 17 Palette Positive		

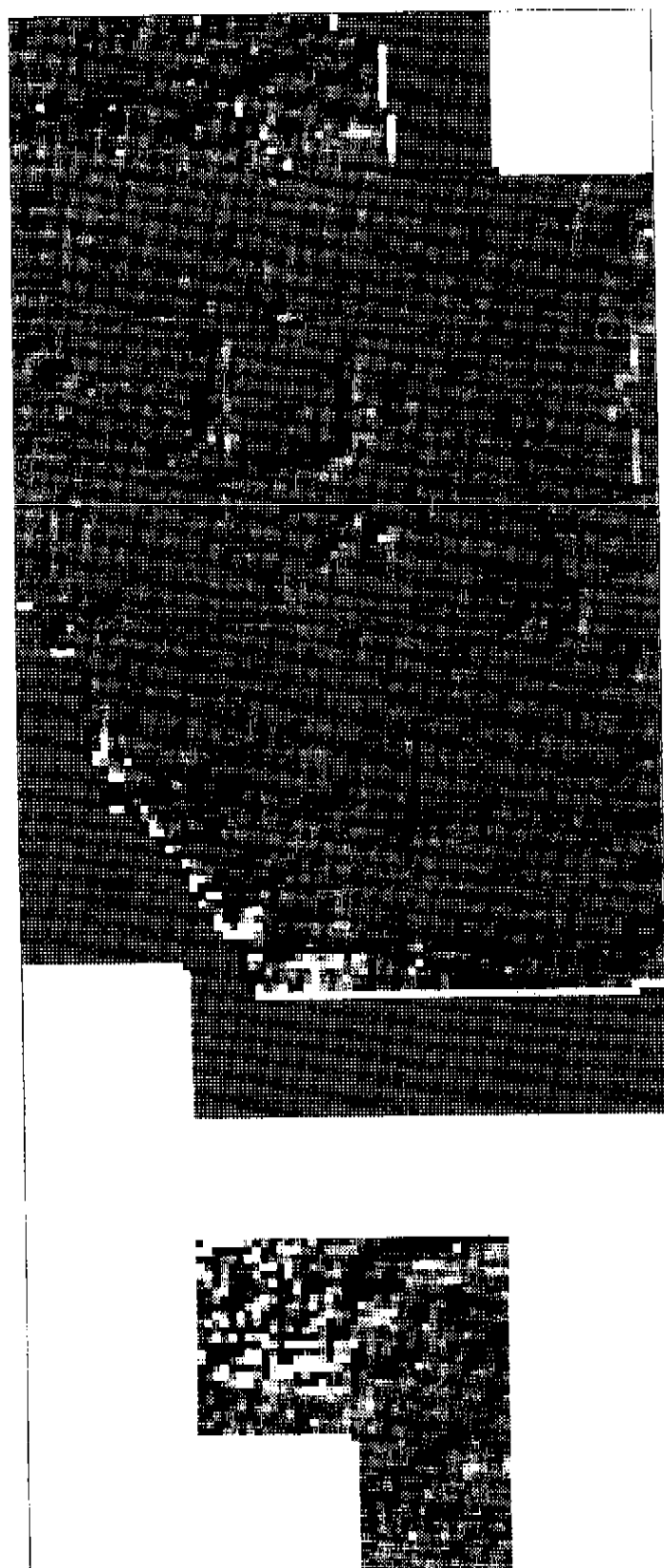


Fig. 2