

COBHAM HALL
Kent

The North Pleasure Grounds

Paul Pattison, Louise Barker
and Moraig Brown



ENGLISH HERITAGE

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SURVEY REPORT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION SERIES

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THE NORTH PLEASURE GROUNDS

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'Whether we consider its extent, its magnificence, or its comfort, there are few places which can view with Cobham in Kent, the seat of the Earl of Darnley'

(Repton 1816, 10)



James Wyatt's Pump House, built 1789-90 on the edge of Brewers Ponds in the North Pleasure Grounds of Cobham Hall (Paul Pattison)



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English Heritage survey plan of the North Pleasure Grounds, 1:500 scale



1. INTRODUCTION

In February and March 2004, staff from the Archaeological Investigation Section (Cambridge Office) of English Heritage (EH) carried out survey and analysis of earthworks in the North Pleasure Grounds at Cobham Hall (Kent). The investigation, which forms part of a multi-disciplinary study of the former Cobham Park and adjoining lands, was requested by the Cobham Ashenbank Management Scheme (CAMS). The results will contribute to the detailed design of a landscape restoration project, which is being funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and English Heritage.

Cobham Hall is a Grade I Listed Building, while Cobham Park is on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens at Grade II*.

Cobham Hall and Park are situated on the north-eastern fringe of the North Downs, on locally high ground 80-130m (260-426ft) above OD, some 5km south-east of Gravesend and 6km west of Rochester. The northern boundary of the CAMS area is formed by the CTRL and the A2 (Fig 1). From the higher parts of the area, where not obscured by tree cover, there are extensive panoramic views. The underlying geology is of Upper Chalk (Upper Cretaceous) overlain on the higher ground by more recent deposits of Thanet sands (Palaeocene), Clay-with-flints and Head (Pleistocene).

Early in 2002, an archaeological desk-based assessment and RCHME Level 2 survey of the CAMS area were undertaken by the Birmingham University Field Archaeological Unit (BUFAU) (Barratt *et al* 2002a). This includes a gazetteer of archaeological and historic features, plus recommendations for further work on several key areas within the scheme. One of these areas encompasses the former gardens and pleasure grounds around Cobham Hall, of which two parts - Lady Darnley's Garden and the South Pleasure Grounds - have already been studied (Barker and Pattison 2003). A third part, the North Pleasure Grounds, are the sole subject of this report (Fig 2).

The current work was undertaken to a brief drawn up and agreed jointly by EH and CAMS. It comprises, essentially, a survey, analysis and interpretation at RCHME Level 3 of all earthworks and other surface features of archaeological significance within the North Pleasure Grounds. Two Grade II Listed Buildings, the Pump House and Repton's Seat, are located within the study area but were not examined in detail. The field survey is



complemented by study of several excellent historic maps of Cobham Park; it has also drawn heavily on Roger Bowdler's fine historical account of the development of the gardens as a whole (Bowdler 2002).

Following completion of the fieldwork, this report has been written up by Paul Pattison with drawings by Moraig Brown, as a private commission.

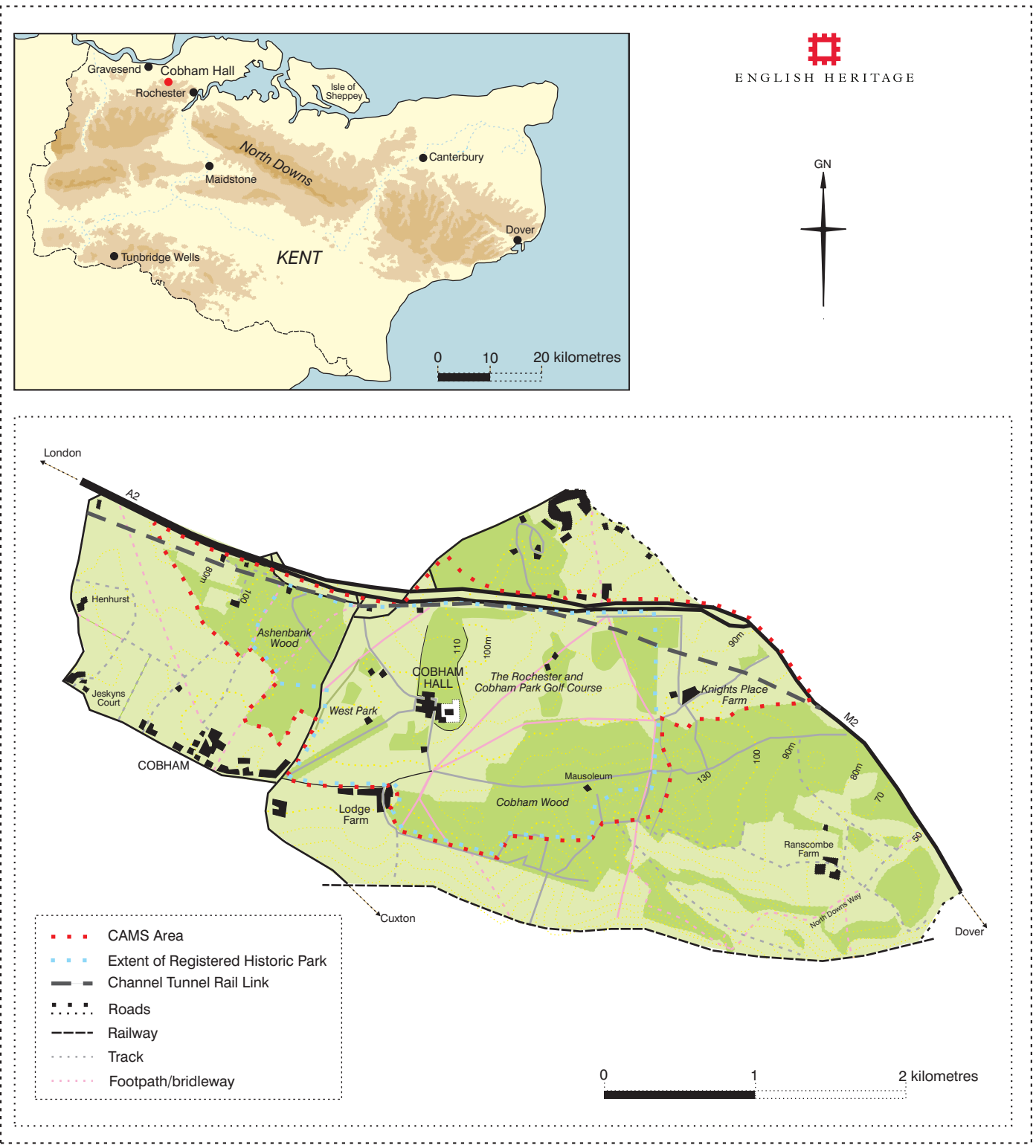


Figure 1
 Location maps showing Cobham Hall and Park

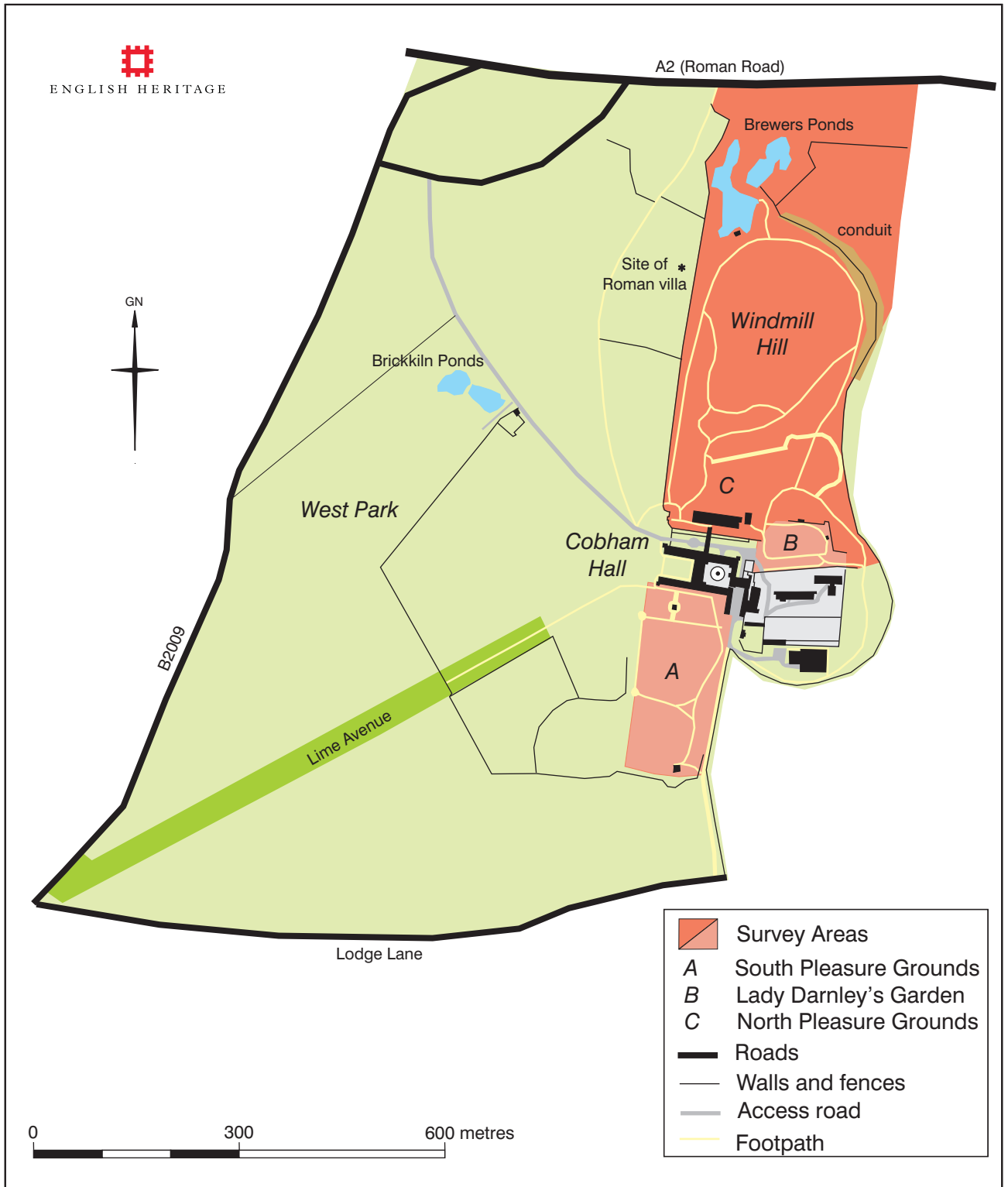


Figure 2
Cobham Hall, gardens and West Park, showing areas surveyed by English Heritage up to March 2004



2. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

This section combines the evidence from historic maps and documents with the evidence of landscape archaeology. Where relevant, some material is repeated, in a simplified form, from the earlier and similar report on Lady Darnley's Garden and the South Pleasure Grounds (Barker and Pattison, 2003). Words and letters that appear **in bold** are shown on the figure indicated at the beginning of that particular section. Other figure references of relevance appear in the body of the text. The survey drawings comprise reductions of the archive survey plans, on which all structures and earthworks are in grey, with colour overlaid to illustrate features which survive, are buried, or do not survive from a particular period in time; this information is derived mainly from historic maps and other sources, while some of it is interpretation.

2.1 THE PREHISTORIC AND ROMANO-BRITISH PERIODS

The major road connecting the channel ports and London, known as Watling Street and now the busy A2, passes along the northern edge of the present CAMS area. The CTRL runs alongside the A2 on the Cobham Park side. The road for long acted as an attraction for settlement and other activity, something of which was revealed during excavations in 1959-60 within Cobham Park, when part of a Romano-British villa or small settlement was found (Scheduled Ancient Monument 159). Early in 2002, several slight linear earthworks in the western part of Cobham Park were interpreted as being the remains of a group of fields, possibly associated with the villa and formerly extending over a larger area of the later Park (Barratt *et al* 2002b, 4). In a recent assessment of aerial photographs it was observed that earthworks south-east of the Hall form a series of parallel linear banks associated with a D-shaped enclosure. It was suggested that these banks functioned as part of a Romano-British stock management economy, the enclosure forming a compound and the banks representing a field and drove-way system (Barratt *et al* 2002b, section 3). However, although there is undoubtedly a relict field system that pre-dates the historic Park, its context needs further study not least because material stretching back to the mid/late Bronze Age came to light during excavations for the golf course extension, south-west of the Hall, in 1998 (Kent SMR TQ 66 NE 68).

2.1.1 Archaeological evidence (Fig 3)

The Romano-British villa stood just outside the western edge of the North Pleasure Grounds. In several places on the northern slope of Windmill Hill, inside the survey area, Romano-British pottery and building tiles were noted in areas of ground disturbance caused by fallen trees and by burrowing animals. This introduces the possibility that the

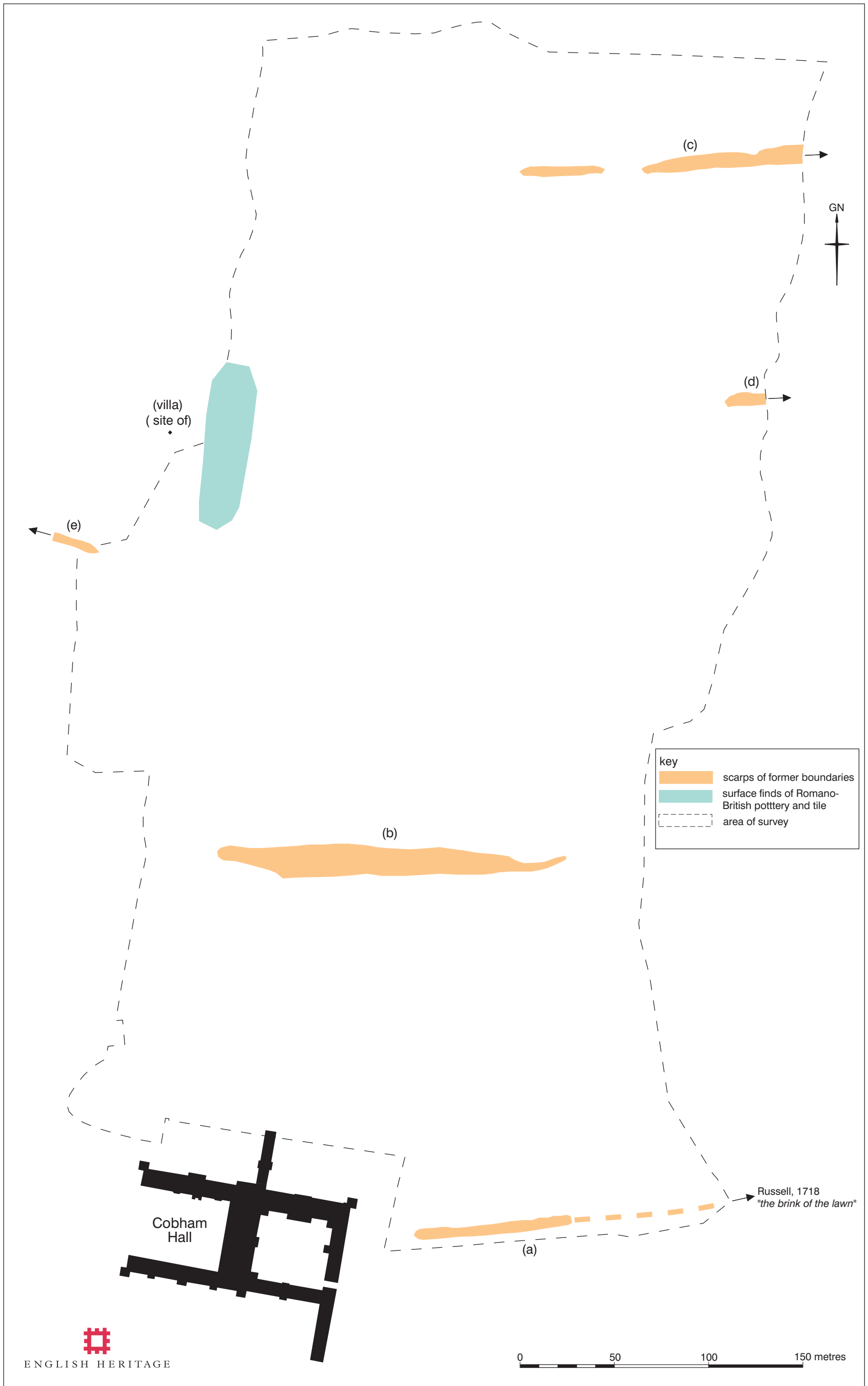


Figure 3 The North Pleasure Grounds: survey plan showing surviving and lost features which pre-date the gardens at Cobham



settlement was more extensive and that further buildings might be expected inside the North Pleasure Grounds.

Successive phases of landscaping that resulted from the frequent redevelopment of the post-medieval gardens will have removed or concealed some of the physical evidence for human activity that pre-dated the establishment of Cobham Hall and Park. However, there are a few features in the North Pleasure Grounds that hint at an earlier agricultural landscape, in the form of redundant field boundaries that may have been part of the extensive field system referred to above.

Lady Darnley's Garden has a scarp (**a**) along its southern edge, some 1.6m high, which was re-shaped several times during the development of the garden and which had a dramatic influence on its layout. It is on a very different axis to that of the Hall and its gardens, indicating that it is probably an earlier feature adapted for ornamental use. On Russell's map of 1718 it is shown to extend north-eastwards through the Park as a boundary defining the '*brink of the lawn*' (RMLSC: U565/P3). Several scarps in the North Pleasure Grounds have very similar alignments, a fact which lends support to their being boundaries or divisions within a co-axial system of fields. The first of these might be (**b**) a massive scarp up to 5m high that forms the northern edge of the North Lawn, slicing across the southern fringe of Windmill Hill. Although the scarp may partly result from terracing for the North Lawn and the removal in the mid-18th century of a brick boundary wall of the 16th/17th century garden (see below), it is tempting to see its alignment as the product of earlier agricultural activity. The second scarp (**c**) runs along a contour on the moderate slope north of the North Pleasure Grounds: it has the characteristics of a lynchet produced by arable farming and clearly has been truncated by the development of Brewers Ponds. It also seems to have a platform cut into it, probably during the 18th century for a building associated with the dog kennels (see below). Just to the south, on the same alignment, a broad and denuded bank (**d**) just enters the current area of survey and extends for several hundred metres across the adjacent golf course. It is clearly truncated by the earthworks associated with the Conduit Pipe, which are 17th-century or earlier. A fifth boundary (**e**) was partially surveyed to the west of Windmill Hill, close to the underground reservoir. This one links to the system recorded by BUFAU (2002a and b).



2.2 THE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY TUDOR PERIODS (to c1550)

2.2.1 Historical outline

The Manor of Cobham was granted to William de Cobham around 1208 and after 1410 descended through marriage to the Brooke family. A manor house may have stood south of the parish church in Cobham village, some 1.7km (1 mile) west-south-west of Cobham Hall. Wherever the Cobham manor house stood, during the 14th and 15th centuries it was a secondary house, the principal family seat lying at Cooling Castle on the Thames estuary. A description of the manor of Cobham in 1300 depicts a mixed agricultural estate which included 360 acres of mostly inferior land (due to the poor quality soils), 10 acres of salt meadow, 32 acres of wood and 2 windmills. Wheat and barley were the main revenue crops of the estate, together with sheep (mainly for wool) kept on the coarse marshland grazing. Household accounts show that the majority of livestock were kept for local use and consumption on the manor (Laurie 1984, 57).

It is uncertain when the present Cobham Hall and its deer park were first established but the family were granted free warren on their estate by Edward III in the 1340s. The original deer park was probably the area labelled *The Ould Parke* on Norton's map of 1641 (Fig 4). The first mention of Cobham Hall in documentary sources dates to 1512 (Bowdler 2001, 15.1). By 1545 the Hall had developed into a house grand enough to receive Henry VIII's brother-in-law, the Duke of Suffolk. Such a house would have enjoyed elaborate formal gardens.

2.2.2 Archaeological evidence

There are no surface features of demonstrably medieval or early Tudor date within the current survey area. However, before emparkment the land would have been agricultural and it is possible that part of the field system mentioned in 1.1.2 above was utilised, or indeed had its origins, in the medieval period. A more thorough survey and analysis of that system might yield more informative results.

It is possible - and likely - that remains of the Tudor garden layouts survive as archaeological features under the North Lawn.

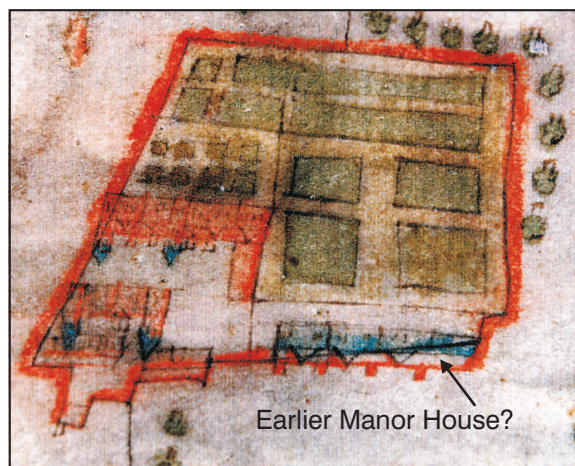


2.3 THE ELIZABETHAN AND STUART PERIODS, c 1558-1660

2.3.1 Historical outline

A major change in the status of Cobham occurred during the reign of Elizabeth I. The Brooke family aligned firmly with the Protestant cause and the 10th Lord Cobham, William Brooke, gained an influential position at Court, highlighted by the Queen's visit to Cobham in 1559 during her progress through Kent. Cobham became the principal home of the Brookes, with the Hall and Park transformed into a seat of the highest status.

Figure 4
A detail from Norton's 1641 map, showing the Hall at bottom left. The formal gardens on the north and east originated in the 16th century (text has been added by the authors) (Rochester upon Medway Local Studies Centre: U565/R1)



It has been suggested that, on the available evidence, Cobham Hall as begun in the 1550s may have faced east, with a hall range on the west, a residential range on the north and an east entrance range possibly left incomplete. It appears to have been an inward-looking courtyard house, of which no trace of a south range remains (Newman & Tatton-Brown 1991, 1). The earliest reference to the formal

gardens dates to 1577, when they were ranked alongside those at Theobalds, Hampton Court and Nonsuch and were praised as one of the great spectacles of the age:

'A rare garden.....in which no varietie of strange flowers and trees do want, which praise and price maie obtaine from the furthest part of Europe or from strange Countries, wholly it is not inferior to the garden of Semiramis'

(William Harrison's Description of England, appended to Holinshed, 1586)

During the 1580s, Cobham Hall was extended, probably by the addition of even grander buildings around a second court to the west. The principal orientation was now to the west (Newman and Tatton Brown 1991, 1). These alterations were complimented by formal gardens, the outlines of which are probably those shown in Thomas Norton's survey of 1641 as very large walled areas to the north and east of the Hall (Fig 4). A large part of these gardens lay on what is now the North Lawn. This arrangement of a west-facing house with gardens on the north and east might be regarded as somewhat



curious. It might indicate that the the larger eastern part of the walled garden, as shown in 1641, originated prior to the alterations of the 1580s. If so, its remains would be a rare survival of early Renaissance gardens in England. Moreover, the larger eastern part of the garden depicted in 1641 is aligned on what has been taken to be a detached service range at the south-eastern corner of the walled area. This large gabled range looks much more than a service range and might be part of a pre-1550s Brooke manor house.

Although we know little of the 16th-century gardens, the 11th Lord Cobham, Henry Brooke, was noted as an assiduous plant collector and propagator of exotic new species, possibly influenced by his close friend and ally William Cecil, Lord Burghley, who may have had a direct hand in the layouts. We know, for instance, that in 1597 the gardener brought rare plant bulbs to Cobham, including yellow and white irises and white, scarlet and orange tulips (Laurie 1984, 61, citing the Cecil Papers at Hatfield House, 45/182). It has been suggested that various fruits - apples, cherries, pears, quinces and walnuts, shown on a family portrait of 1567 - were all cultivated at Cobham (McKeen 1986, 163). There was also a highly regarded vineyard, singled out in Barnaby Googe's preface to the translation of Heresbach, dated 1577 (Thacker 1985, 71).

In 1603, Henry Brooke was found guilty of treason and the estate was forfeited to the Crown. Nevertheless, the Hall retained its high status, receiving James I in 1622 and Charles I and his wife, Queen Henrietta Maria, in 1625. New works were commenced under the 4th Duke of Richmond in 1633 and he spent large sums of money on enlarging the estate throughout the 1630s, though there is no detail concerning the gardens. However, Norton's map of 1641 reveals a walled formal garden of generous proportions, comprising a series of square and rectangular compartments arranged in a geometric fashion which typified the later Renaissance gardens in England (Fig 4).

2.3.2 Archaeological evidence (Fig 5)

The North Lawn now occupies the site of the greater part of the former area of walled gardens known from Norton's 1641 survey. Part of this wall forms the present eastern side of Lady Darney's Garden (Barker and Pattison 2003, 25-7). North and north-west of it, the former garden area is represented by earthworks defining a large polygon of broadly rectangular plan. The northern edge is marked by a massive terrace scarp (a) created in part by cutting back into the hillside, and possibly in part by the removal of the walls in the mid-18th century. The present form of the scarp is also partly the product of later landscaping, as the original wall was probably a revetment which has been totally robbed out. The western edge of the former garden is also formed by a substantial scarp

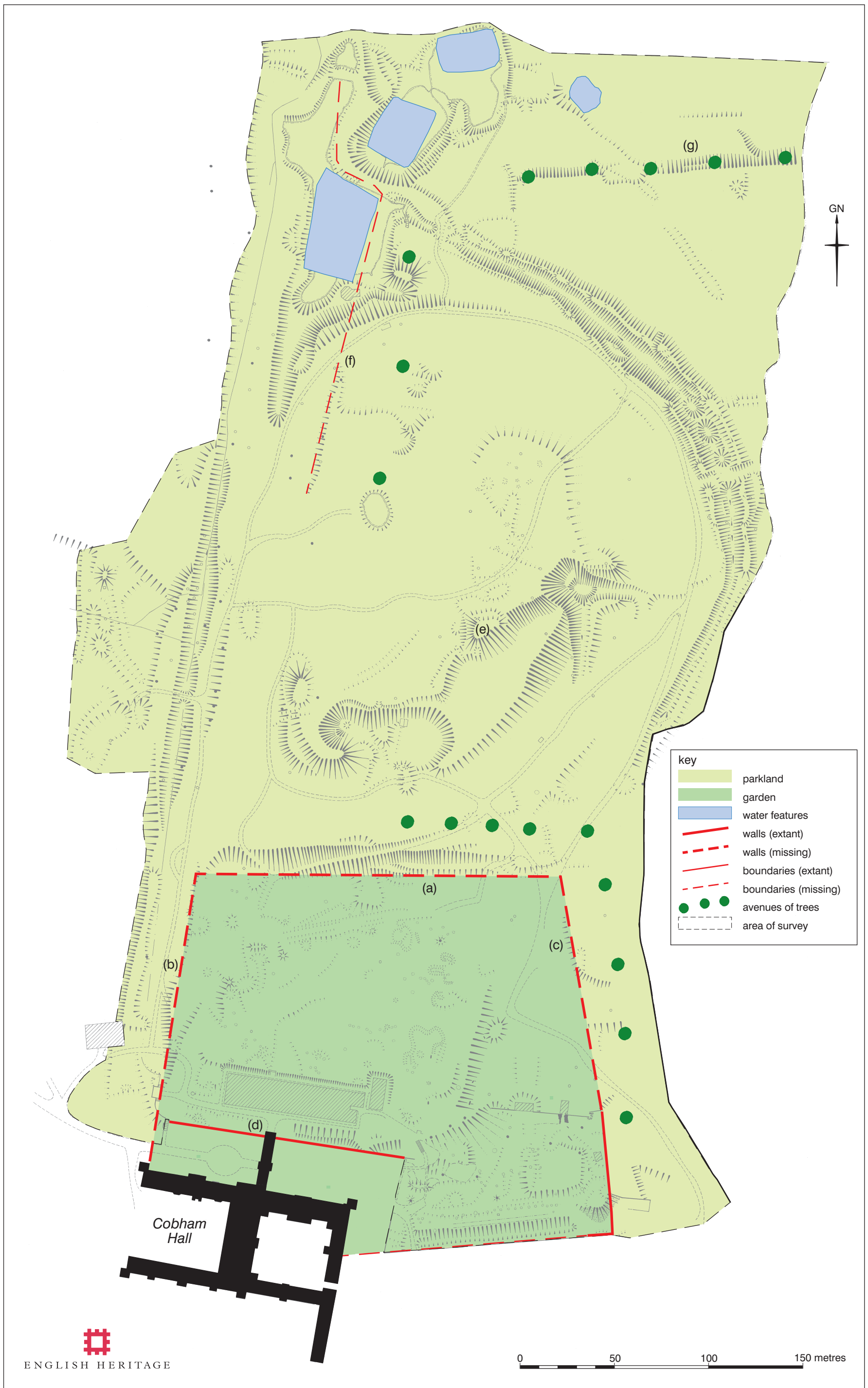


Figure 5 The North Pleasure Grounds: survey plan showing surviving and lost features of the Elizabethan and early Stuart period (1558-1660)



(b), falling to the west, and clearly aligned with the ends of the north and south ranges of the Hall's west court. This scarp might represent original terracing in the garden, though possibly also the result of removing the wall and landscaping over it in the mid-18th century; it may, therefore, conceal the wall foundations. The eastern edge of the garden is largely concealed by landscaping though a slight scarp (c) probably reveals its line.

The area formerly enclosed by the garden walls is not quite flat, there being a very gentle slope up to the north. It is unlikely that any of the earthworks in this area are associated with the compartmented layout of the Elizabethan or early Stuart gardens; most of them are ephemeral and result from later garden work. Nevertheless there is considerable potential for buried remains of the gardens of this period. Another feature of note is the brick wall (d) which forms a terrace revetment alongside the present approach on the north side of the Hall, on both sides of the *port couchère*. Although much modified by later rebuilding and patching, its lower courses may well be 16th/17th century work, the wall marking an important internal terrace in the garden.

In 1641, the area north of the walled garden, Windmill Hill, lay within the Park. The hill would have been a prominent feature, affording a great prospect across the hunting



Figure 6
A detail from Norton's map of 1642, showing the boundary and avenues north of the walled garden, and the four ovals marking Brewers Ponds. The map is rotated to place north at the top (Rochester upon Medway Local Studies Centre: U565/R1)



landscape and a comprehensive view of the Hall and gardens. As well as being an obvious place of prospect and recreation, for which some temporary structures may have existed, its name points to the former presence of a post-mill. The mound (e) on its summit might have formed the base of such a mill but its present form, truncated and disturbed by sand quarrying, does not allow a definitive interpretation.



Figure 7
A great oak tree in the eastern part of the North Pleasure Grounds. This tree may well have stood when Thomas Norton made his map in 1641. It stands just outside the former line of the garden wall (Paul Pattison)



On the 1641 map, the area between the walled garden and Brewers Ponds was traversed by a boundary, aligned roughly north-south, that seems to have separated The Ould Park to the east from an extension which we now call West Park (Fig 6). Part of the boundary survives as a broad and low earthwork bank (f) in the north-west quarter of the woodland on the hill, that fades on the crest of a steep scarp falling to Brewers Ponds. Two mature trees stand on the bank and may be old standards from a hedged boundary. The alignment of the bank in relation to the southernmost pond is exactly that shown in 1641, though the map shows its junction with the walled garden to the south much too far west than the alignment of the surviving section would suggest. This is entirely due to Norton's survey being effectively a sketch whose scale and proportions are only very approximate.

Also shown on the 1641 map - across the Park - are several avenues or lines of spaced trees in a rectilinear arrangement. Many of these co-incide with surviving earthwork banks and scarps which were part of the early field system described in 1.1.2 above. Some of the trees in these boundaries were probably retained in the Park long after the boundaries themselves had become disused. North of the walled garden, one of these avenues on the 1641 survey co-incides with a prominent scarp (g). Another avenue followed the course of the walled garden around its north-eastern corner, an interesting arrangement which might be further evidence indicating that the positioning of the garden was influenced by the boundaries and trees of the earlier landscape (Fig 7).

Fishponds were part of the standard accoutrements of lordly residences. Norton's 1641 map depicts four ponds, sketchily and in outline, close to the northern edge of the Park. These came to be called Brewers Ponds and although modified on several occasions since the mid-17th century, three ponds survive today. There is no reason to doubt that the ponds were constructed as part of the provision for Cobham Hall in the 16th century, or even earlier, trapping water from a spring issuing on the north slope of Windmill Hill.

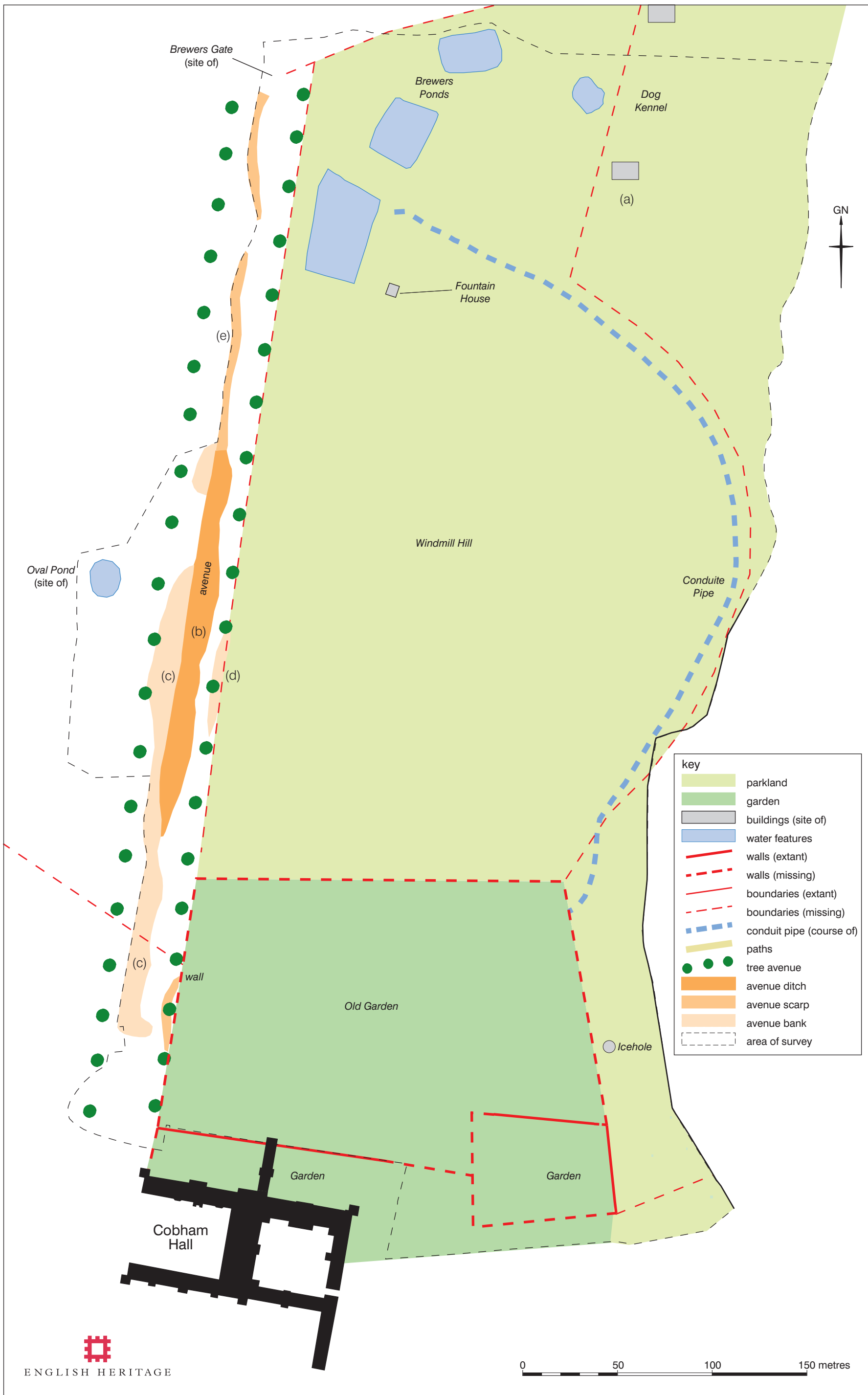


Figure 9 The North Pleasure Grounds: survey plan showing surviving and lost features of the Restoration period and after (1660-1718)



The end result of the works to 1672 can be seen both on George Russell's map of 1718 (Fig 8) and another of the Hall and Park, dated to 1719 and attributed to Brogley. These reveal that the design of the formal landscape in the western part of the Park was ultimately of continental inspiration, based around long avenues of trees in the symmetrical pattern of a *pate d'oie* (a goose foot) so typical of the years following the Restoration, projecting the Hall into the Park and wider landscape.

North of the Hall, the walled garden was retained but modified by new walls to form three separate compartments. On the 1718 map, the east and west compartments are labelled simply *Garden*, while the larger area to the north, on what is now North Lawn up to the base of Windmill Hill, is called *Old Garden*. These areas probably fulfilled different functions, with the eastern one possibly a private family garden, the western one, a more public strip garden alongside the North Wing, and the northern one the principal formal garden.

Windmill Hill is shown enclosed on Russell's map but there is no indication that it had an ornamental function; the enclosed area took in the four fishponds which are named as *Brewers Ponds*, with a *Fountain House* close to the south-eastern corner of the southernmost pond. East of the ponds two separate buildings are named as a *Dog Kennel*, for the hunting pack.

2.4.2 Archaeological evidence (Fig 9)

The north wall of Lady Darnley's Garden survives from this period, being part of the small Garden shown on Russell's map of 1718. Just to the north-east of it, outside the former enclosed area, Russell depicted an *Icehole*, where ice taken off the fishponds in winter was stored for summer use. There is now no trace of this structure on the ground surface: if it had a vaulted entrance then it has been removed, but the ice chamber will survive below ground. Its approximate position is shown on Fig 9.

To the east of *Brewers Ponds*, the site of one of the dog kennel buildings on the 1718 map may be marked by a rectangular platform (a) cut into a pre-existing scarp.

An *Oval Pond* was depicted by Russell on the south-west slope of Windmill Hill, immediately west of the north avenue. The site is now taken up by the underground reservoir.



The north avenue contained a driveway from the Hall that crossed the western margin of Windmill Hill, joining the public highway at *Brewers Gate*. Although the majority of the avenue trees were felled by Repton in 1790, a few were left and these tall limes remain today, although most are in a parlous condition (Fig 10). The course of the drive (b) is sunken to a maximum depth of 2m, in part due to erosion caused by traffic when in use, but possibly also from deliberate excavation to produce a gentler gradient for carriages



Figure 10
Remnant trees of the North Avenue, showing after clearance of undergrowth in February 2004 (Paul Pattison)



Figure 11

The sunken course of North Avenue, looking upslope from the south. The fence is later than the avenue and belongs to the early 19th century, part of the invisible fencing installed by Repton (Paul Pattison)

and carts (Fig 11). The sunken drive is flanked on the west side by upcast material shaped into a broad bank (c) that is up to 1.8m high. In one place on the eastern fringe, the hill is cut back to enable the avenue itself, leaving a clearly defined west-facing scarp (d). The northern section of the drive, descending the hill towards the site of Brewers Gate, is less clearly defined and marked only by a slight east-facing scarp (e).

Russell's map shows that the area of Windmill Hill was enclosed by the north avenue and by what was probably a fence that followed an earthwork which has become known as the Conduit, curving from the north-east corner of the Old Garden around to the north-eastern corner of the southernmost of Brewers Ponds (Fig 8). Inside and parallel to this fence, Russell depicted a *Conduit Pipe*. This pipe carried spring water pumped from a Fountain House around the east side of Windmill Hill and it has been argued that the Conduit earthworks were excavated to effect a uniform and gentle gradient for the simple pumping mechanism (Caiger 1969). The Fountain House stood close to the south-east corner of the southern pond. In 1984, its position was apparently determined during an excavation of an early 19th-century *Summerhouse*, situated on the edge of a steep scarp several metres *above* the spring level to the south of the ponds. The excavator, Arthur Harrison, was convinced that he had revealed the ruins of the Fountain House under the later Summerhouse (Laurie 1984, 165). However, the case is not compelling as the site is

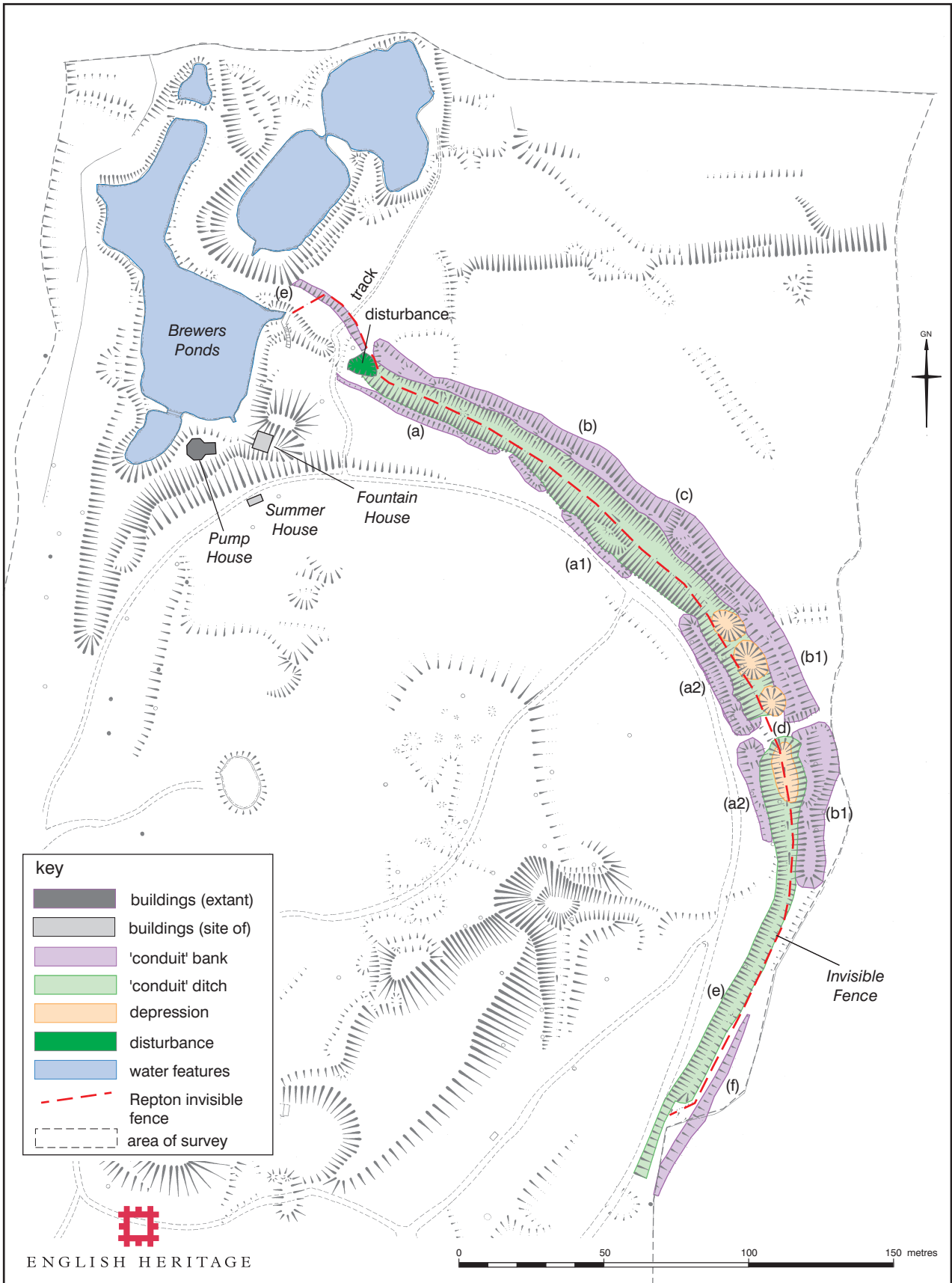


Figure 12 The North Pleasure Grounds: survey plan showing the conduit earthworks



simply too high above the spring. A more likely site is clear today and accords with Russell's map, in a deep u-shaped earthwork depression whose base is at spring level, only 15m east of the later Pump House; there is a large mound adjacent to the depression on the north, possibly spoil from its excavation.

2.4.2.1 The Conduit earthworks (Fig 12)

These earthworks were interpreted in the late 19th century as part of a late prehistoric *oppidum* (Roach-Smith 1877). This theory was effectively marginalised in 1959 when it was suggested that it may have been the course of a post-medieval water conduit (Tester 1959). Further research developed the idea and proposed that the earthworks were excavated to facilitate the passage of a conduit pipe carrying water from a spring near Brewers Ponds to Cobham Hall. The excavation of a large ditch enabled the pipe to be laid along a shallow gradient such that the simple pumping apparatus in the Fountain House could cope with the work required. Pond-like depressions in the base of the ditch were interpreted as the sites of settling tanks to remove sediment (Caiger 1969).

The conduit earthworks comprises a continuous ditch, deepest towards the centre where it crosses the tail of the east flank of Windmill Hill, and a bank running along each side



Figure 13
*The northern section of
the conduit ditch,
looking south-east
(Paul Pattison)*



(Fig 13). They are well-preserved except for the intermittent internal bank, though it is possible that this feature was altered by later landscaping in the North Pleasure Grounds.

The western end of the ditch is disturbed by a later track carried on a causeway of dumped material. West of the track, the external bank has been flattened into an outward-facing scarp while east of it, a straight-sided trench cut into the ditch looks like an excavation trench; probably one of the exploratory excavations undertaken by P J Tester in the late 1950s though not in the location he recorded. For over 100m south-east of this trench, the ditch (Fig 13) has a clean and even profile but the internal bank (**a**) is very slight and intermittent, the best section (**a1**) only 0.5m high. In contrast, the external bank (**b**) is prominent, up to 1.5m high, with an irregular and undulating top surface. The top is crossed by several scarps and cuttings, probably the remains of changing pathways over the earthworks; one in particular (**c**) is very well defined. In plan the bank resembles several sausage-like links, probably revealing its construction in stages.

The ditch is deepest and both banks (**a2**) and (**b1**) reach maximum proportions on each side of an original causeway (**d**). The causeway was left unexcavated to preserve a line of access in the park. Both banks are high, up to 1.5m internally and 2.5m externally, for 40-50m in each direction, though to the south they gradually taper out. The bank terminals have chamfered ends onto the causeway and were probably altered to effect a wider pathway.

The final stretch of the conduit earthwork is of different character, a straight ditch (**e**) 0.7-1m deep, with a slight external slope (**f**). It stops abruptly after some 120m (Fig 14).

The most interesting features - those thought by Caiger to be settling tanks - lie in the ditch adjacent to the causeway. To the north are three subcircular depressions cut into the base and sides of the ditch; they are intrusive, being 0.4-1.5m deeper. There is a fourth depression to the south of the causeway.

There is no doubt that a conduit pipe existed, following the curving line of the earthworks, but there are some problems over the origin of the so-called conduit earthworks. First of all, the ditch enters one of Brewers Ponds almost 50m north of and downslope from the site of the Fountain House, a line confirmed on Russell's plan of 1718. Water would have been conducted slightly downhill in the pipe alongside the pond, before turning a right angle to go uphill along the conduit ditch. A more logical course would have headed due



east from the Fountain House, just north of and alongside the present path. Secondly, the positions of the features interpreted by Caiger as settling tanks, as shown on Price's map of 1749, do not match the earthwork features with which he equated them. On the contrary, the four depressions in the conduit ditch form a *group* clustered around the causeway. This is a key position, lying on the watershed between Brewers Ponds and Cobham Hall, the perfect location for header tanks. Thirdly, these massive earthworks seem to be too clumsy and over-zealous to represent a considered solution to the problem of water supply. So it is possible that they already existed when a conduit pipe was laid in the 17th century, utilising the deep ditch as a matter of convenience. One possibility for their origin is in some form of extractive industry. Sand and gravel were taken off Windmill Hill in the 18th century; brickearth is also known across the Park and there was a lignite mine on the fringe of Ashenbank Wood in the 20th century. An opencast work following a seam of material would leave a ditch or trench, with upcast as banks on each side, an observation that might merit further investigation.



Figure 14
*The conduit ditch,
looking towards its
southern end. Along
this stretch there are no
flanking banks (Paul
Pattison)*



2.5 THE EARLIER GEORGIAN PERIOD, 1714-89

2.5.1 Historical outline

These years witnessed alterations to the Hall and gardens, recorded on maps produced by Price in 1749, Sloane in 1758 and Peckham in 1789 (RMLSC U565/P5; P6; unsorted). The beginning of the era saw protracted litigation over ownership of the Hall and consequent neglect of the estate. Woodland in the eastern part of the Park was felled, with Lord Harley commenting in 1723 that both Park and Hall had ‘the face of a great ruin approaching’ (Wingfield-Stratford 1959, 150). However, in 1733 the 2nd Earl of Darnley gained the estate and began alterations which appear to have been completed by the time of Price’s survey in 1749. His map shows the northern slope of Windmill Hill wooded, but rather than a hard boundary there was a gradation to more open parkland on the summit. One important change was the demolition of the 16th/17th-century walls of

the Old Garden north of the Hall and the return of that area to the Park. The two smaller walled Gardens shown on the 1718 map were retained, the one alongside the north wing known as the *Long Garden* on Peckham’s 1789 map.



Figure 15
A detail from Sloane’s map of Cobham Park, dated 1758. It shows that the old walled garden had been demolished north of the Hall, and a quarry made on Sand Hill. The course of the conduit pipe is faintly depicted (Rochester upon Medwal Local Studies Centre: U565/P6)

At Brewers Ponds a fifth pond was added by 1749 and only one Dog Kennel building survived, the northern of the two shown on the 1718 map, though now depicted inside a fenced rectangular enclosure. The course of the conduit pipe is indicated on both Price and Sloane’s maps of 1749 and 1758. In the former, it extends right up to the Long Garden (Fig 15).

After the 3rd Earl’s marriage in 1766, money and new inspiration resulted in alterations supervised by George Shakespeare. Despite the 3rd Earl’s

efforts until his death in 1781, an observer noted in the same year that the park was worn out with age and that hundreds of trees were torn, hollow and rotten (Arnold 1949, 65). It was the 4th Earl who commissioned the survey by Thomas Peckham in 1789, paying him



£10/10/- for 'Surveying and Planning the garden, Pleasure ground and part of the Park round the house for Mr Lapidge to make his intended alterations thereon'. This indicates that extensive alterations were to be made by Samuel Lapidge, a former assistant of Capability Brown, but who was almost immediately ousted by Humphry Repton. It was Lapidge who began alterations to the water supply in 1789, demolishing the Fountain House and replacing it with an Engine House powered by a horse engine. This engine pumped water via an underground pipe to the *Reservoir Pond* which was in fact the old Oval Pond just west of the North Avenue. This pond became the main supply to the house; it was roofed over with weatherboards and the old Conduit Pipe was abandoned.

Peckham's fine detailed map is a wonderful source for the late 18th-century formal gardens, before Repton radically altered the entire estate (Fig 16). It indicates that Shakespeare's work was concentrated on the gardens north and east of the Hall. There was a change in function of the small eastern Garden from kitchen garden to an informal private garden and the addition of a new terrace north of and parallel to the Long Garden, known as *America* on the 1789 survey. It is thought to have been devoted to North American herbaceous plants. By 1789, scrubberies separated these gardens from the Park.

The Icehole was still in use in 1789.



Figure 16
A detail from Peckham's map of Cobham Hall, dated 1789. It shows the elaboration of the formal gardens, including those north of the Hall, known as the Long Garden and America (Rochester upon Medwal Local Studies Centre: U565/unsorted)

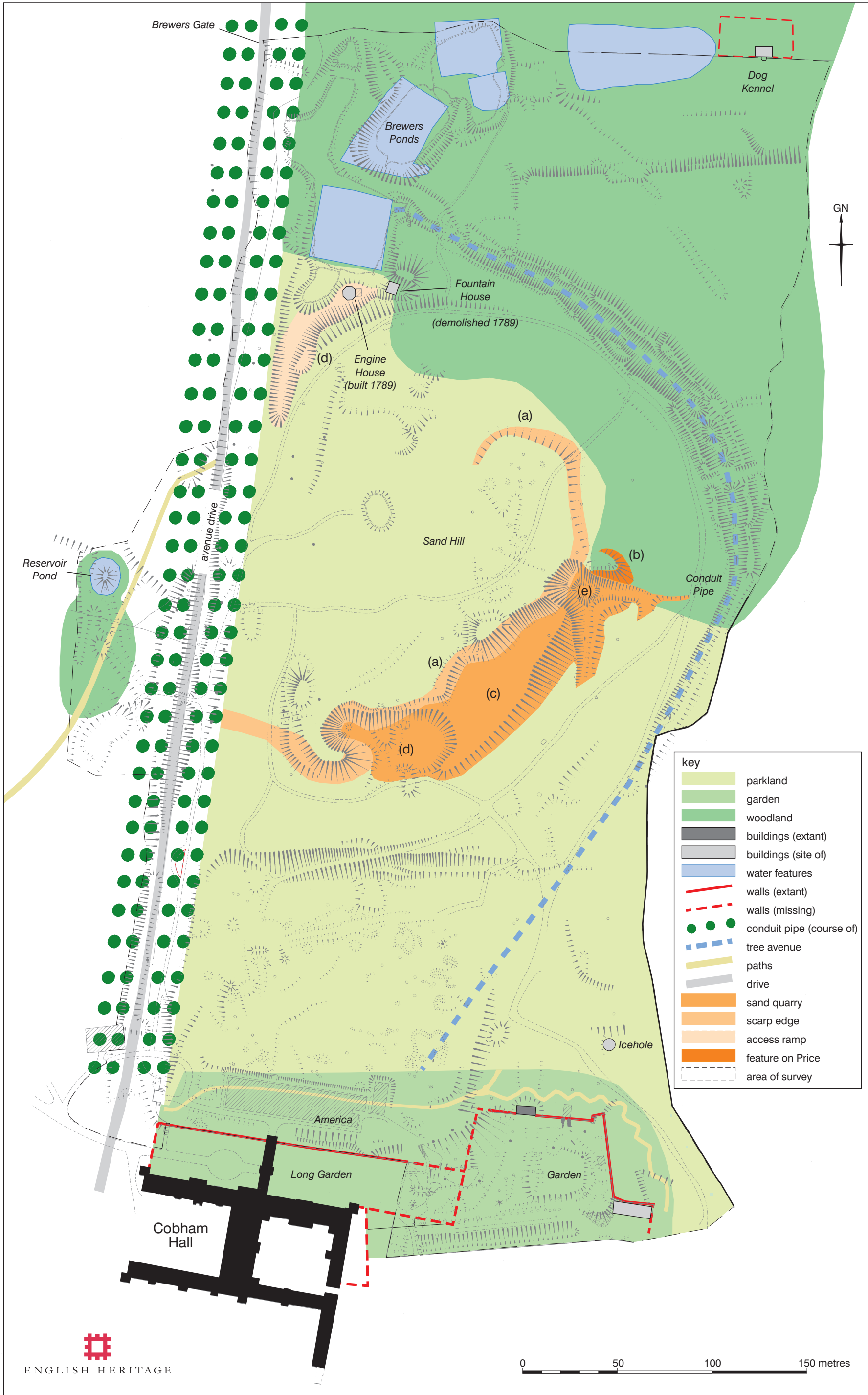


Figure 17 The North Pleasure Grounds: survey plan showing surviving and lost features of the earlier Georgian period (to 1789)



2.5.2 Archaeological evidence (Fig 17)

Throughout this period the top of Windmill Hill remained open. Price's map of 1749 uses shading to show the perimeter of the hill, closing matching an earthwork scarp (a) and perhaps indicative of some deliberate flattening of the hilltop. On the east side of the summit, a semi-circular feature (b) depicted in outline might be the mound visible there today. Its purpose is not known for certain and it is quite badly disturbed by sand quarrying, but it may at one time have supported a post mill. Sloane's map of 1758 calls the summit *Sand Hill* and depicts a quarry (c), probably taking sand for building operations on the estate. Quarrying of the hill may, therefore, have started in the early-mid 18th century. Archaeological evidence shows that quarrying extends along the entire south-east face of Windmill Hill where extraction has left a terrace defined by steep scarps on the long sides. At each end are smaller, irregular and probably later quarries (d) and (e) cutting deeper into the hillside. The latter has two access tracks leading from it.

The site of the Long Garden is now taken up by a car park and access road alongside the north wing of the Hall, though a small section of its former area survives in the western part of the present Lady Darnley's Garden. The greater part of America is also subsumed under later alterations, including school classrooms.



Figure 18
The mound on the eastern side of Windmill Hill, adjacent to the site of 18th-century quarrying. (Paul Pattison)



2.6 THE LATER GEORGIAN PERIOD AND HUMPHRY REPTON, 1789 - c1820

2.6.1 Historical outline

Between 1793 and 1813 regular payments are recorded from the 4th Earl, Lord Darnley, to the landscape designer Humphry Repton, whom he had commissioned to transform the setting of the Hall. This was one of Repton's longest commissions and his *Red Book* for Cobham, dating to 1790, proposed a twenty-five year programme of improvements, consistent with the principles rehearsed in the majority of his writings. These included the laying out of drives and walks to conduct the visitor through contrasting areas of the landscape and to provide dramatic glimpses of near and far off landmarks and features; the removal or masking of service buildings near the Hall and the planting of shrubberies which led the eye towards vignettes of the improved landscape, within which new garden buildings and flower gardens would provide novelty and variety (Fig 19).

Repton's 1816 work, *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, contains a summary and plan of his alterations at Cobham:

This venerable pile is situated in a valley in the middle of a large park, and was formerly exposed to the cattle on every side, except towards the east, where a large walled garden intervened. The operations were begun by enveloping the whole of the premises in



Figure 19
View of Cobham Hall from the south-west. An unsigned watercolour, dated 1790 (Repton's Red Book, 3-4)



plantations, shrubberies or gardens; and these after the growth of twenty-five years, have totally changed the character of the place. The house is no longer a huge pile, standing naked on a vast grazing ground, its walls are enriched with roses and jasmines; its apartments are perfumed with odours from flowers surrounding it on every side: and the animals which enliven the landscape are not admitted as an annoyance. All around is neatness, elegance, and comfort; while the views over the park are improved by the rich foreground, over which are seen from the terraces in the garden, or the elevated situation of the apartments.

On the whole Cobham furnishes a striking example of artificial arrangement for convenience in the grounds, immediately adjoining the house, contributing to the natural advantages of its situation and scenery, and enriched by the most luxuriant foliage and verdure. The home view gives a perfect idea of what a park ought to be, without affecting to be a forest; for although its extent of domain might warrant such character, there is a

natural amenity in the face of the country, that is more beautiful than romantic, more habitable than wild; and though in the valleys the view is not enlivened by water, which in a chalk soil is not to be expected, yet from the elevated points of the park, the two most important rivers of England the Thames and Medway from part of the distant prospect

(Repton 1816, 11-12 & Fig 11).



Figure 20
A detail from the Cobham Tithe Map, dated 1838. Repton's North Pleasure Grounds are depicted for the first time (PRO: IR30/17/91)

Simultaneously, the architect James Wyatt was employed to alter and enlarge the Hall, to re-invent its Elizabethan character and to provide new garden buildings and lodges, in Gothic and 'Tudorbethan' styles, so as to conceal their practical functions.

It was under Repton that the North Pleasure Grounds, more-or-less as they are defined today, came into being, as part of a new envelope of gardens and shrubberies around the house, with



more gentle lines, varied planting and picturesque irregularity. The Tithe Map, drawn in 1838, and an estate map by Adams dated 1851, are accurate depictions of the results of Repton's work in the North Pleasure Grounds as it began to mature and before it was overlaid by later Victorian changes (Figs 20-1). The southern part of the North Pleasure Grounds - the North Lawn - occupied the site of the Old Garden. North of it, Repton created an enclosed Sheep Walk extending onto and over Windmill Hill (or Sandhill) to Brewers Ponds and the public highway where new gates and a lodge were built at Brewers Gate. The principal driveway to the Hall entered here and was re-routed on a curving course in the more open parkland a little further west of the old north avenue. The avenue itself was removed, though a few of the mature lime trees were spared. The new

drive led to a new main entrance on the north side of the Hall, through what was formerly the Long Garden and leading to a new stable yard east of the Hall, thereby reducing the size of the old Kitchen Garden. A new walk, the North Terrace Walk, was laid out north of the Hall on the site of the earlier garden America.



Figure 21
A detail from Adams' map of Cobham, dated 1851. It shows the maturing landscape of the North Pleasure Grounds as established by Repton (Rochester upon Medwal Local Studies Centre: U565/P13)

The maps of 1838 and 1851 broadly agree, the principal difference being the North Lawn where the Tithe Map shows two enclosed areas, apparently fenced, the smaller of the two containing a pond and probably the menagerie transferred from its former location in Lady Darnley's Garden.

The North Pleasure Grounds were enclosed by timber fencing that was replaced by 'invisible fencing' in 1808. These were hand-made and designed

so as not to distract from any views of the park, being of delicate wire mesh panels painted green to blend in. They were slung between posts set in blocks of stone buried in the ground. Most of the fence has long gone but small sections survive as do many of the uprights. The enclosed area was defined on the west by the linear hollow of the old



avenue drive, along which the fence was erected, and on the east by the deep curving banks and ditch once followed by the conduit pipe, though the fence did not always run along the ditch bottom. On the deeper parts of the ditch, the fence was positioned on the inner slope; a position along the ditch bottom would have allowed an easy jump over the fence for a deer on the outer slope. The enclosed area was allowed to be ‘semi-wild’, or light woodland with a sward of long grass that was lightly grazed by sheep. Just inside the perimeter, there was a continuous circular walk, from which other more sinuous paths - some turfed and others gravelled - led to the interior and onto Windmill Hill. The perimeter path led past the *Pump House*, which in 1804 Wyatt rebuilt from Lapidge’s *Engine House* in a decorative Gothic style to disguise its function (frontispiece). The ponds were altered in 1803-4 and the southernmost greatly extended and made sinuous; the others retaining their rectangular plan, while improvements to the water supply comprised the removal of the Reservoir Pond and its replacement, on the same site, by an underground reservoir. Another pond was made close to the top of Windmill Hill and became known as *Repton’s Pond*.

In 1813, a neo-classical *Summer House* was built to the south of the Pump House, on the edge of a steep natural scarp with a view over Brewers Ponds. A large clearing was maintained on the top of Windmill Hill, from which vistas were contrived into the Park



Figure 22
An original iron gate in Repton’s invisible fencing, on the western boundary of the North Pleasure Grounds, giving access into West Park (Paul Pattison)

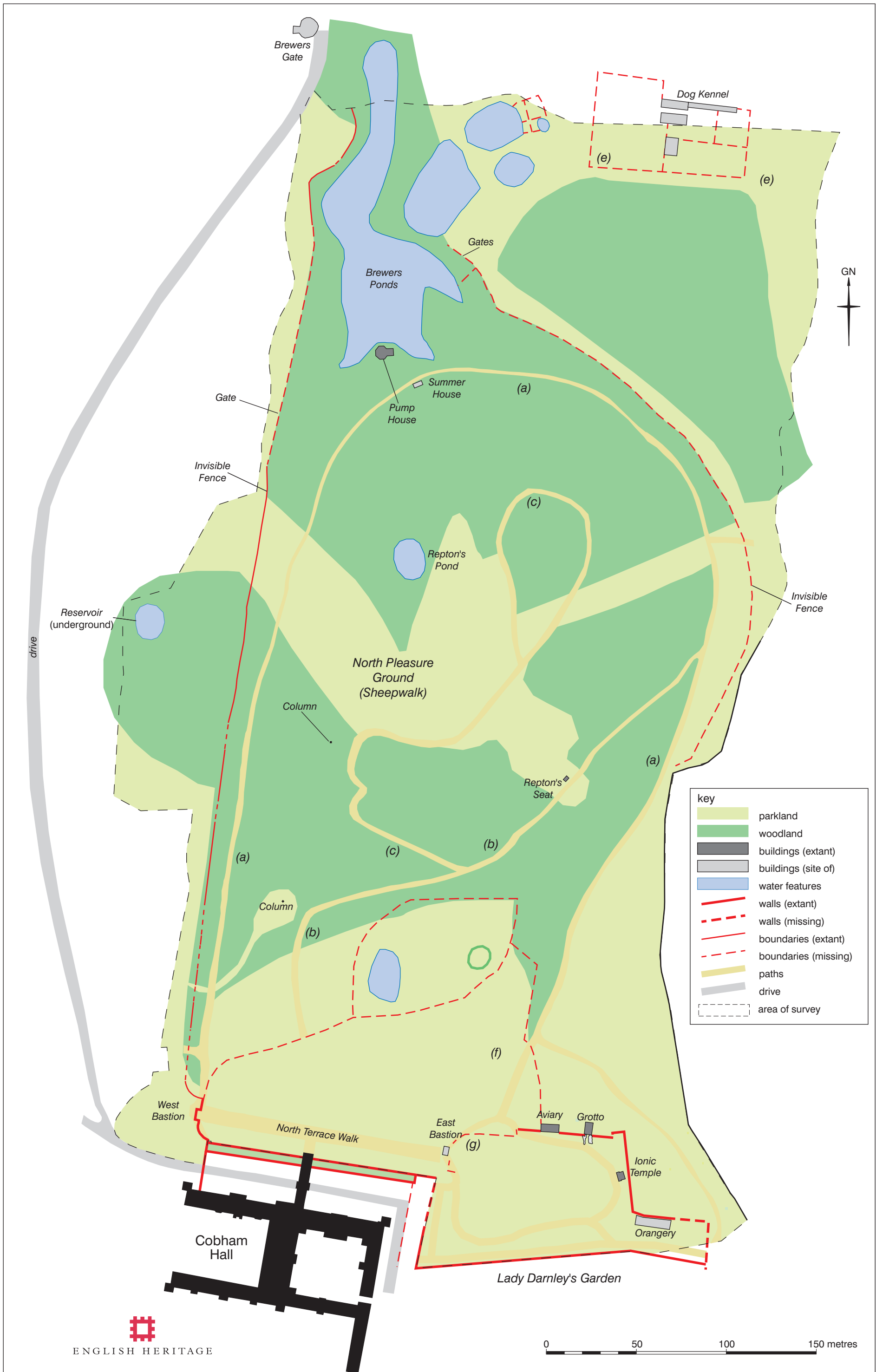


Figure 23 The North Pleasure Grounds: survey plan showing surviving and lost features of the late Georgian period following Repton's work (1798-1820s)



and beyond. In another clearing on the south-eastern fringe of the area, Repton's sons erected *Repton's Seat* in 1818 to commemorate the work of their father and from which there was a vista across the Park to the great Mausoleum that Wyatt had completed in 1786.

After Repton had completed his work, the 4th Earl and his wife continued to ornament the gardens. This is particularly clear in Lady Darnley's Garden where antiquities, neo-classical pedestals, urns, sarsen stones and a temple were placed to enhance the theme of natural wonder and age (Barker and Pattison 2003, 40-3). It was probably at this time that the two neo-classical columns were placed in the North Pleasure Grounds, one in the north-west corner of North Lawn and another on the south-west fringe of Windmill Hill. The former occupied a lobe-shaped clearing among the shrubberies, the latter was placed close to one of the internal paths; each one may have supported an urn or a piece of sculpture.

By the end of the period, the Dog Kennels had expanded into three buildings within fenced enclosures east of Brewer's Ponds.

2.6.2 Archaeological evidence (Fig 23)

Something of the framework of Repton's creation in the North Pleasure Grounds is intact; the western boundary loosely survives as the edge of woodland next to West Park, and there are badly decayed sections of invisible fencing *in situ*, though the remainder of the circuit is marked only by the iron uprights between fence panels (Figs 11 and 22). The perimeter path (a) follows its original course, as does another path (b) leading up the steep scarp from North Lawn along past Repton's Seat. Another path (c) has succumbed to woodland growth, probably because it was too ephemeral - possibly turf - but its course ascended the south-western part of Windmill Hill and looped around the northern part.

Of the former sand quarries, Adams' map of 1851 singles out only the one north-east of Repton's Seat, which may therefore have been planted ornamentally.

A ramped hollow (d) cuts back into the steep natural slope south of Brewers Ponds. It would have provided a gentler descent to the water's edge for visitors and also for a horse used to power the engine in the Pump House. East of the ponds, the site of the Dog Kennels has been truncated by the works for the CTRL, but a slight east-west scarp (e)



Figure 24
*A neo-classical column
in the north-west corner
of the North Lawn; the
piece on the ground at
lower right is probably
the base of an urn
which the column
supported (Paul
Pattison)*



Figure 25
*A neo-classical column
on the south-west fringe
of Windmill Hill (Paul
Pattison)*



seems to mark its former southern boundary. South of the Pump House, the foundations of the Summer House are partly exposed.

North Lawn is now more open than envisaged by Repton and generally lacks the shrubberies he established. A scarp (f), up to 1m high and aligned north-east to south-west, marks a drop in level from the North Lawn towards Lady Darnley's Garden. It seems to be a landscaping feature marking the eastern edge of the North Lawn. Just south of it is the prominent slope (g), up to 1.7m high, constructed by Repton over the demolished wall at the north-west corner of the old Garden to create a gentle slope down to Lady Darnley's Garden.

Two neo-classical columns, probably added after Repton had finished his work, remain *in situ* one in the north-west corner of North Lawn and another on the south-west fringe of Windmill Hill (Figs 24-5).

The North Terrace Walk has been largely taken up by tarmac and by the adjacent school classrooms, though the West Bastion is intact (Fig 26). The east end terminated in another small bastion with iron balustrade overlooking Lady Darnley's Garden. This has gone but a flight of steps leads down from its site.



Figure 26
The West Bastion (Paul Pattison)



2.7 THE VICTORIAN PERIOD, 1837-1901

2.7.1 Historical outline

Although there were few changes to the wider Park during this period, Repton's work in the Pleasure Grounds matured and was overlaid or modified with new and more varied plantings. Displays of colourful bedding plants and herbaceous perennials surrounded the Hall, attracting many visitors and Cobham frequently appeared in horticultural

publications and illustrated magazines and journals. This form of gardening required high maintenance and numerous staff; flowers were cultivated and more glasshouses were erected to keep pace with the household demand for hot-house flowers, exotic fruits and vegetables.

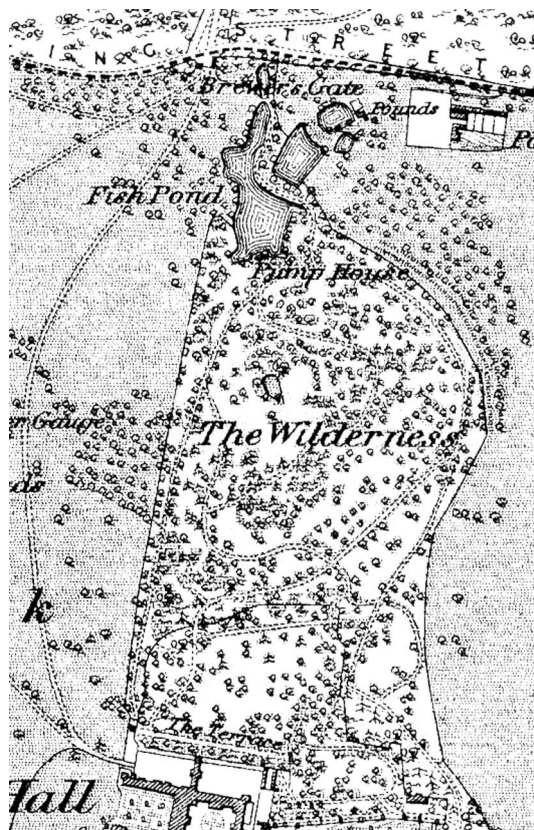


Figure 27
A detail of the
Ordnance Survey
6-inch map showing the
North Pleasure
Grounds, renamed *The
Wilderness*, in 1869
(Ordnance Survey 1st
edition 6-inch sheet
Kent 18; not to scale)

The North Pleasure Grounds became known as *The Wilderness*, where the path structure became a little more elaborate (Fig 27). In 1859-60, a pinetum was established on Windmill Hill, containing specimen trees including *Wellingtonia* and Western Himalayan Spruce, and there was an arboretum on the North Lawn. After his death in 1870, Charles Dicken's writing house, the Swiss Chalet, was placed in an old sand quarry on the

southern slope of the hill, surrounded by rhododendron which had been planted extensively by the 1850s and 60s. Naturalised woodland flowers abounded in an area whose semi-wild character was deliberately maintained (Bowdler 2002, 32). At this time the grass was mown two or three times a year, after the blankets of spring flowers had died back. There were also naturalised hardy flowers in the woods, along with pampas grass and tritomas. Dells were formed in the old gravel and sand pits, in which varieties of fern were planted. In 1884 it was noted that some paths were gravelled and others turfed (*ibid*).

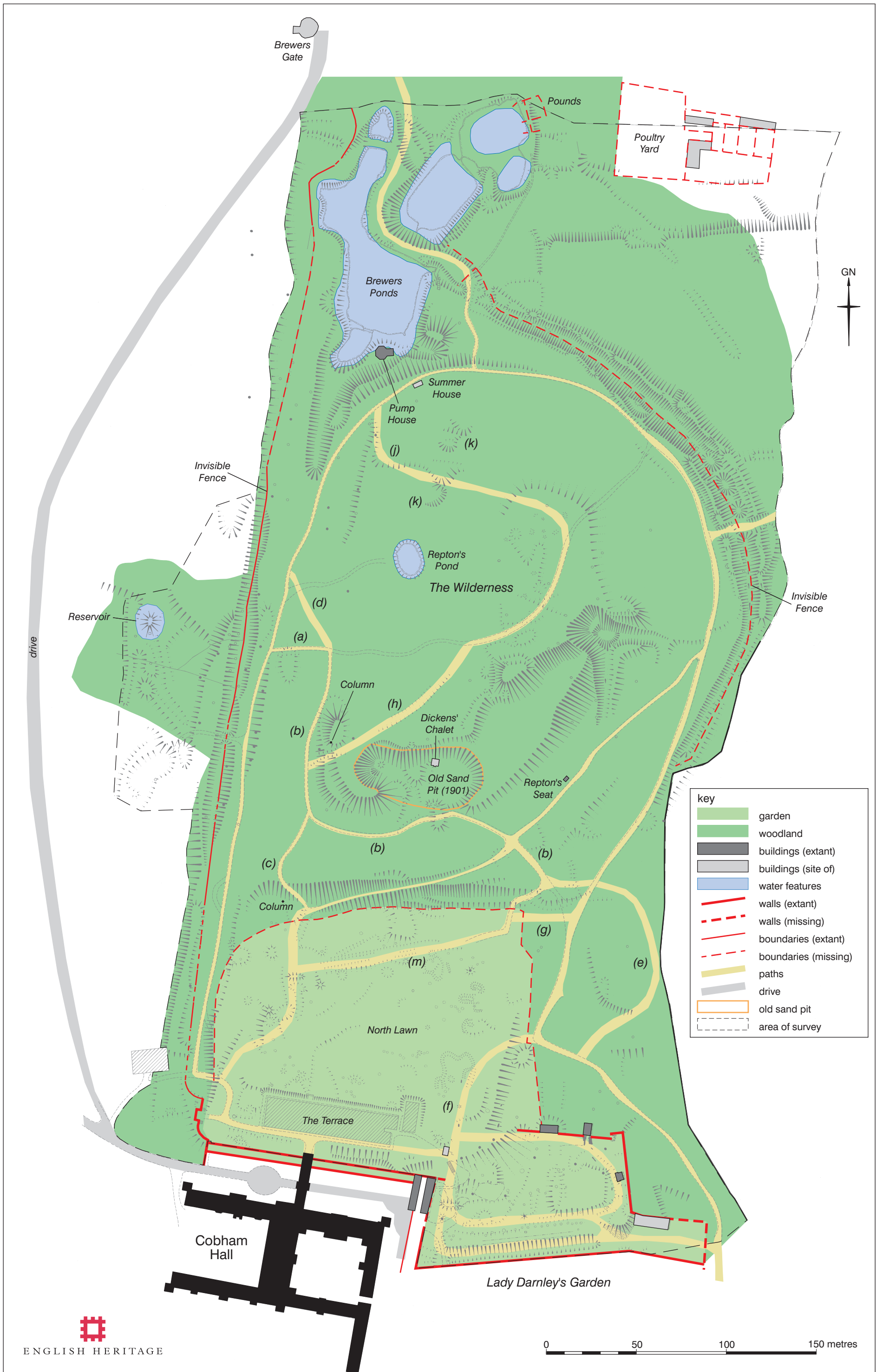


Figure 28 The North Pleasure Grounds: survey plan showing surviving and lost features of the Victorian period (1837-1901)



2.7.2 Archaeological evidence (Fig 28)

With little structural change to the Wilderness in the Victorian period, there is in consequence very little to chart on the ground today. The exception is the path structure which became more elaborate. Some of the new paths **(a)**, **(b)**, **(c)** are still in use (**c** passes close to a classical column), others **(d)**, **(e)**, **(f)** and **(g)** are no longer visible on the surface. Two other vanished paths are traceable as slight earthworks. One is a linear hollow **(h)** on the flat summit of Windmill Hill, which then cuts deeply through the natural scarp on the south-western fringe of the hill. Above the cutting, a classical column stands, probably placed there in this period to be viewed by passers by. The second path descended the north-eastern slope of the hill and has left a trace in the form of a slight east-west scarp **(j)**. Four crescentic terraced scoops **(k)** in the hillside nearby are of unknown function; one could have been the site of a seat overlooking Brewer's Ponds but four makes this interpretation a problem. The third path **(m)** traverses the northern edge of North Lawn and its broad cambered profile remains visible.



2.8 THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

2.8.1 Historical outline

During the First World War, the Hall was used as a military hospital, although photographs testify that the grounds continued to be well maintained. In 1939 the gardens of Cobham achieved fashionable pre-eminence, when they were featured in *Country Life* and grouped with Munstead Wood and Bodnant under the title '*Gardening Trends and Pioneers of the last thirty years*'.

'Lupins in a wide range of shades, planted in large and irregular drifts, and rhododendrons play the chief role in this early June display. The massed array of plants cunningly arranged to fit into a pictorial setting provides a charming natural scene and illustrates the ultimate expression of present day tendencies in garden layout'

(*Country Life*, 1939)

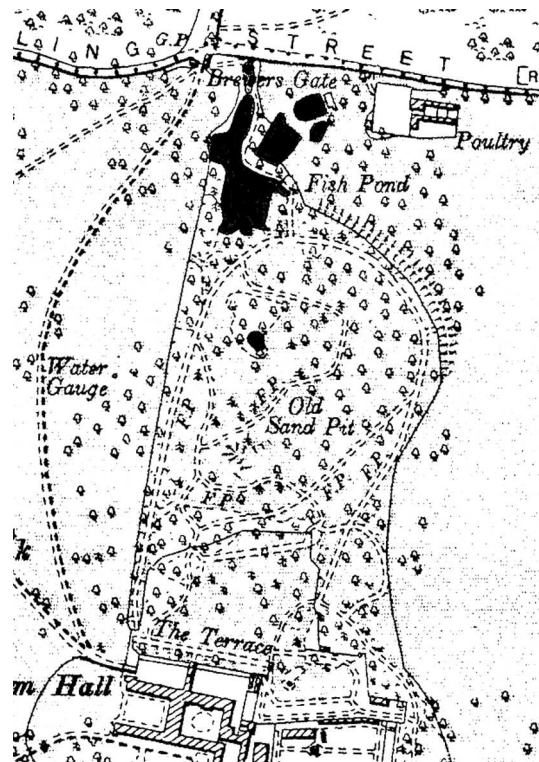


Figure 29
A detail of the
Ordnance Survey
6-inch map showing the
North Pleasure
Grounds in 1907
(Ordnance Survey 2nd
edition 6-inch sheet
Kent 18; not to scale)

The new planting was begun by Lady Darnley, the wife of the 8th Earl, who introduced drift planting on the north, south and west sides of the house, in the style of Gertrude Jekyll. There were large beds of flowers creating informal drifts which graduated from one colour to another (Elliot 1986, 206).

Her son Esme, the 9th Earl, also an artist and amateur landscape gardener, continued this style of impressionistic gardening but on a larger scale, using bolder colour combinations and perennials rather than bedding plants. He devised the planting at Cobham as a tourist attraction with the gardens opened to the public as a commercial

venture, complete with nurseries at the Hall, at Strood and at Shorne, and a flower shop in Rochester supplying both the London and local market. Cobham became famous for its massed displays of perennial Lupins, especially the unique Russell Lupin, for which the



Cobham Nursery was the first and only trade supplier. The kitchen gardens and lawns around the house were treated to lavish drift planting of daffodils, cherries, laburnums, irises, tulips, lupins, azaleas and tritomas. Belts of daffodils survive to this day.

In 1904, the North Terrace Walk was replanted by William Goldring in a 17th-century revival style (Bowdler 2002, 37). Five years later, the Rose Arbour was moved from Lady Darnley's Garden to the northern edge of the North Lawn (ibid, 38).

Despite these many and varied changes in planting style, there was little alteration in the garden framework during the course of the century. By 1930 the north and east slopes of Windmill Hill were largely devoid of trees, prompting the planting, in the following year, of 2000 laburnums there and elsewhere in the Pleasure Grounds (OS 1931; Bowdler 2002, 37).

In 1955 the Hall and Park passed into public ownership following the death of the 9th Earl. By 1959 The Ministry of Public Buildings and Works purchased the Hall and part of the grounds. In 1963 the Westwood Educational Trust bought the Hall, landscape gardens and West Park for the creation of a school. New school buildings were put up throughout the 1960s, notably overlying most of the North Terrace Walk in 1965; others followed in the 1970s and in 1989, particularly in the Kitchen Garden. In 1983 the Cobham Hall Heritage Trust was set up to protect and restore the parkland and garden buildings.

2.8.2 Archaeological evidence (Fig 30)

There is very little archaeological evidence for this period. It is mainly confined to the North Lawn, where there are many slight scarps and undulations, notably on the fringes of the area. Given the extensive and varied planting of the early part of the 20th century, most of these are probably the positions of former shrub and flower beds, and tree throws. One significant feature is a low sub-square flat-topped mound (**a**) which might have formed the platform for a small temporary garden building; it lies just west of the dismantled remains of the Rose Arbour. The central part of the lawned area appears to have had some surface treatment in more recent times: it is markedly flattened, with very few features and in low light there are narrow and close-set linear striations indicative of a harrow or similar machine.

The period saw the loss of several paths across the whole area.

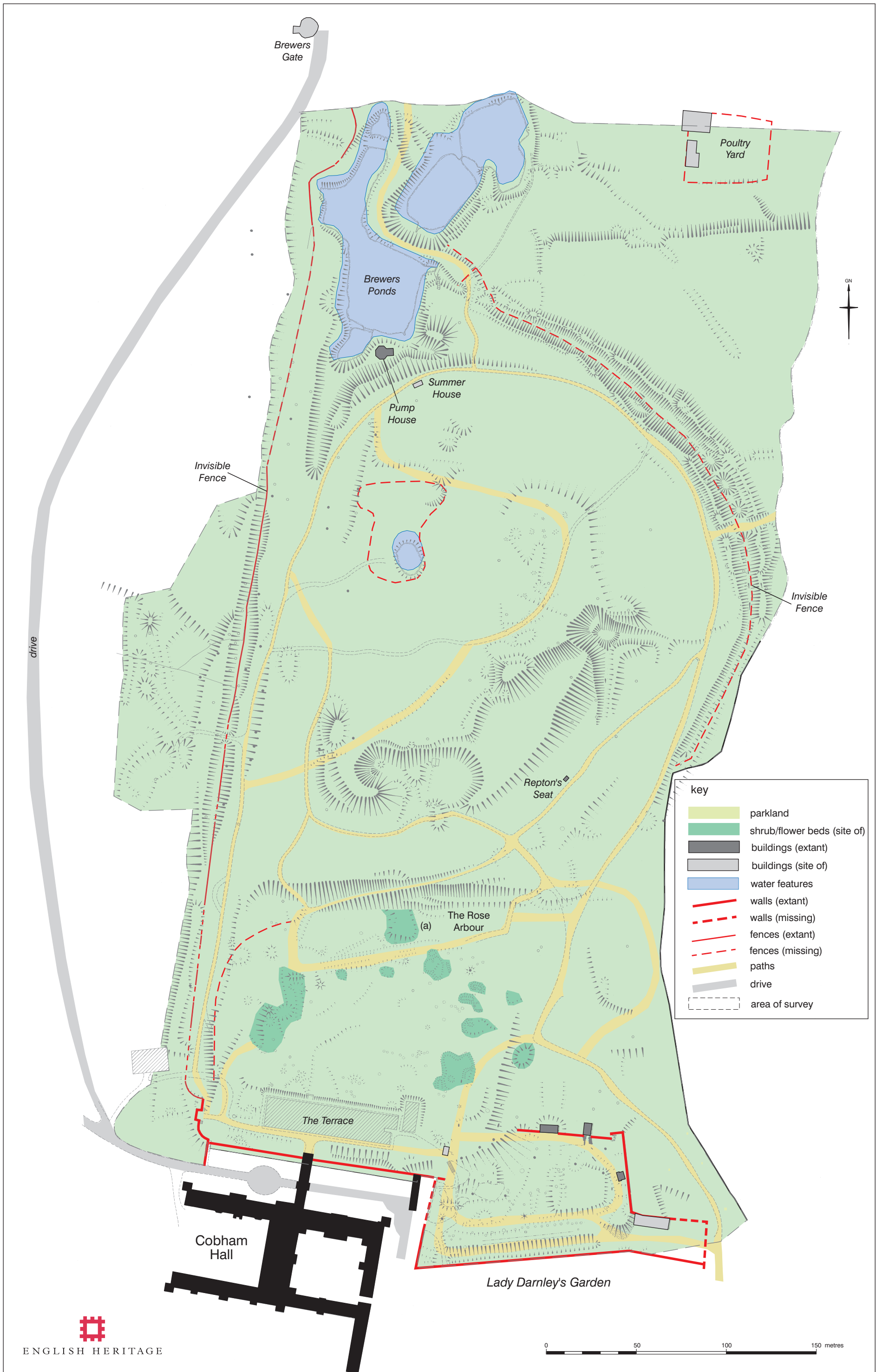


Figure 30 The North Pleasure Grounds: survey plan showing surviving and lost features of the 20th century



3. CONCLUSION

The earthwork and structural remains on the North Lawn and North Pleasure Grounds, combined with the excellent historical maps and accounts for Cobham Hall and Park, have made it possible to document, in some detail, the development of the area through the post-medieval period.

Whilst as an entity the North Pleasure Grounds dates from the 1790s onwards, the area it occupies has high potential for the survival of buried features relating to the earlier periods. Of particular significance is the proximity of the Romano-British structures found on the west slope of Windmill Hill in the late 1950s, the redundant field boundaries in the surrounding parkland landscape and the site of the Tudor and Stuart walled garden.

Before Humphry Repton, the area formed part of the working landscape of the Park. A hunting pack of dogs was accommodated in kennels within an enclosure near Brewers Ponds, while the ponds were a source of fish, and of ice in the winter. The spring that fed the ponds was harnessed for the Hall water supply from the late 17th century and perhaps even from the 16th; research on this subject has not been exhaustive. The survival of features associated with the water supply is both rare and remarkable, although the origin of the conduit earthworks remains enigmatic. Windmill Hill itself always had topographical significance within the Park, having not been wooded for much of its history and affording fine views which would have been exploited during the business of the hunt and for prospect in regards to the ornamental aspects of the Park. The summit appears to have been partially levelled and there is evidence that the slopes were quarried for sand and gravel for use in building on the estate, certainly in the 18th century. Finally, the top of the hill may once have supported a post-mill for the estate.

Today, the surviving framework of the Pleasure Grounds belongs to Repton; its shape, the main paths and the Pump House are of the period but most of the planting has gone. Only a few standards survive of his planting. Even the Victorian elaborations have suffered badly, notably exceptions being some trees of the pinetum and rhododendron surviving on Windmill Hill. The underplanting of shrubs and specimen plants has long gone and there is much secondary woodland growth, in places choking all else. Yet it remains a remarkable and beautiful place, notably in the spring when Windmill Hill supports a carpet of yellow *narcissi*.



4. SURVEY and RESEARCH METHODS

The 1:500 scale archaeological survey was carried out during February and March 2004 by Paul Pattison, Louise Barker and Nathalie Barrett. Control and most archaeological detail was surveyed using a Trimble 5600 series (DR 200+) theodolite with integral electromagnetic distance measurement (EDM). A closed traverse was linked to a permanent control network, tied to Ordnance Survey national grid co-ordinates. Data were processed using GeoSite (version 3.22) software and plotted from AutoCAD Map 2004 at 1:500 scale. Remaining archaeological detail was then supplied in the field using conventional graphical methods.

The report was researched and written by Paul Pattison, employing material collected by Louise Barker, while the illustrations were prepared by Moraig Brown.

The site archive has been deposited in the National Monuments Record Centre, Great Western Village, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 2GZ.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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