



ENGLISH HERITAGE
DRF 2

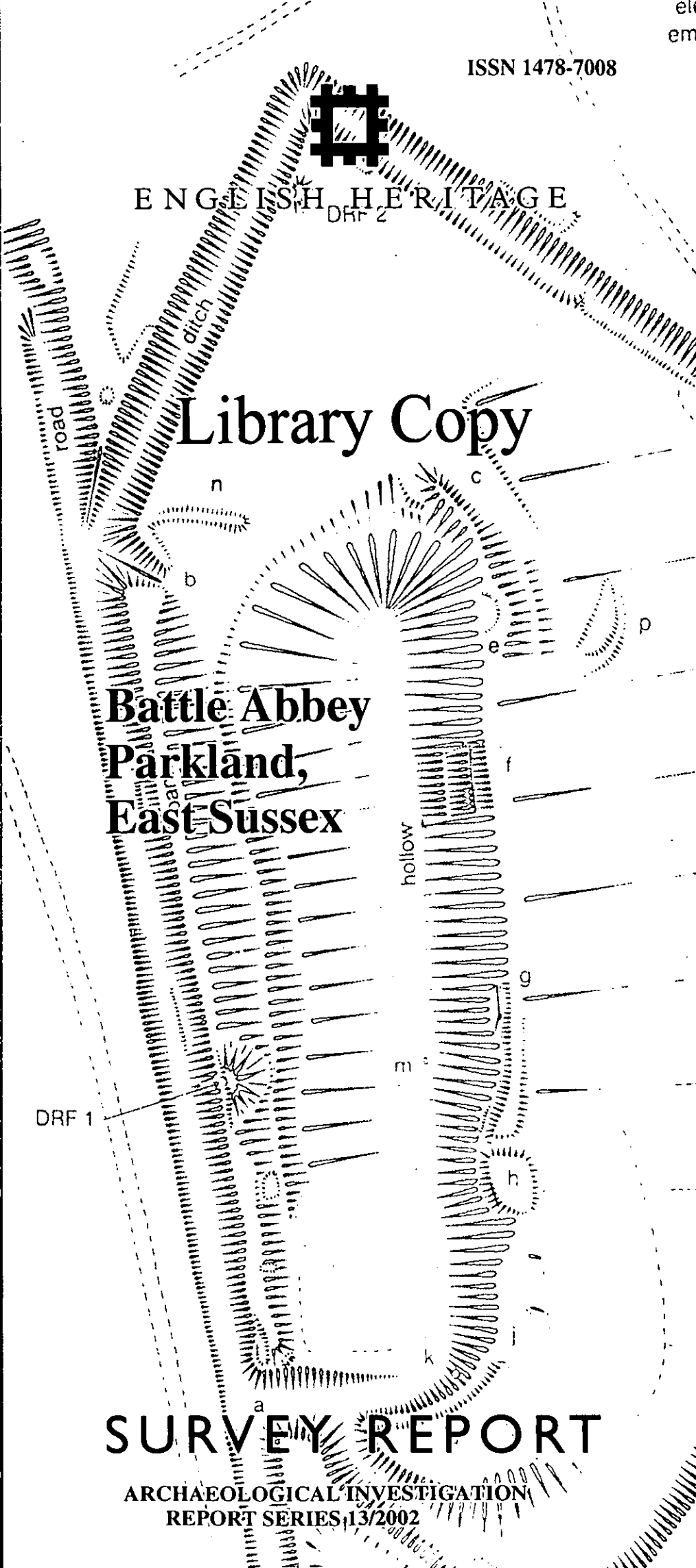
Library Copy

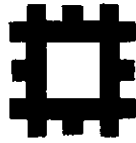
Battle Abbey
Parkland,
East Sussex

DRF 1

SURVEY REPORT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION
REPORT SERIES 13/2002





ENGLISH HERITAGE

**An Earthwork Survey and
Investigation of the Parkland at
Battle Abbey, East Sussex**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION REPORT SERIES

AI/13/2002

NMR No: TQ 71 NW 22

NGR: TQ 748153

Archaeological investigation: G Brown, M Bowden, D Field, S Connor
Archaeological report: G Brown,
Drawing: G Brown, D Cunliffe
Photography: G Brown, I Leonard

© Copyright English Heritage 2002

ISSN 1478-7008

Applications for reproduction should be made to English Heritage, NMR Services
(tel. 01793 414600)

English Heritage, National Monuments Record Centre, Kemble Drive, Swindon SN2 2GZ
Fax 01793 414707 *World Wide Web:* <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk>

CONTENTS

List of figures	ii
1. Introduction	1
2. Historical Background	3
3. Previous archaeological research	6
4. Earthwork Description and Interpretation	
The Lower Garden Terraces	7
The parkland	8
Water features	10
Industrial features	11
The 'southern fields'	11
Miscellaneous features	12
5. Discussion	13
The natural landscape	13
The park landscape	14
The post-suppression landscape	16
The Landscape Park	16
6. Methodology	18
7. Bibliography	19

FIGURES

1. Location Map	2
2. Budgen's engraving of Battle Abbey	3
3. Buck's engraving of Battle Abbey	4
4. Earthwork survey (1:2500)	insert
5. Earthwork survey (1:1000)	insert
6. Early 18 th century estate map	8
7. 1650 estate map (re-drawn from ESRO: BAT 4419)	13
8. Little Park Farm	15
9. Early 19 th century map	17
10. The 'landscaped' quarries	18
11. Earthwork survey (1:2500) showing features identified on early 18 th century map	insert
12. Earthwork survey (1:2500) showing position of mature trees	insert

INTRODUCTION

Background

An earthwork survey was undertaken in the late summer and autumn of 2001 of the parkland, part of the former monastic 'Great Park', at Battle Abbey, East Sussex (NMR: TQ 71 NW 22) by the Field Investigation team of English Heritage (EH) based at Swindon. The survey, at scales of 1:1000 and 1:2500, was carried out in response to a request from English Heritage's South-East Regional Office.

Battle Abbey is famous as the site of the Battle of Hastings and therefore a particularly popular tourist attraction. The site includes the remains of the Benedictine monastery and its attendant parkland. These two elements, the monastery and battlefield, form the basis for information and display, but totally ignore other features in the landscape that formed part of the long history of the park. The primary objective of our work, therefore, was to investigate the parkland, including the area to the south-west, which is beyond the normal tourist 'battlefield perambulation', in order to provide additional insights into this unique landscape and to provide data to inform its future management.

Location and Geology

Battle Abbey is situated on relatively high ground (OD 85m) at the southern end of the small market town of Battle, some 10km north of Hastings (fig 1). Immediately in front of the abbey's Outer Gate is a large triangular market place with burgage tenements set on either side of the central street; the remainder of the town follows a road that 'skirts' around the north-eastern precinct wall.

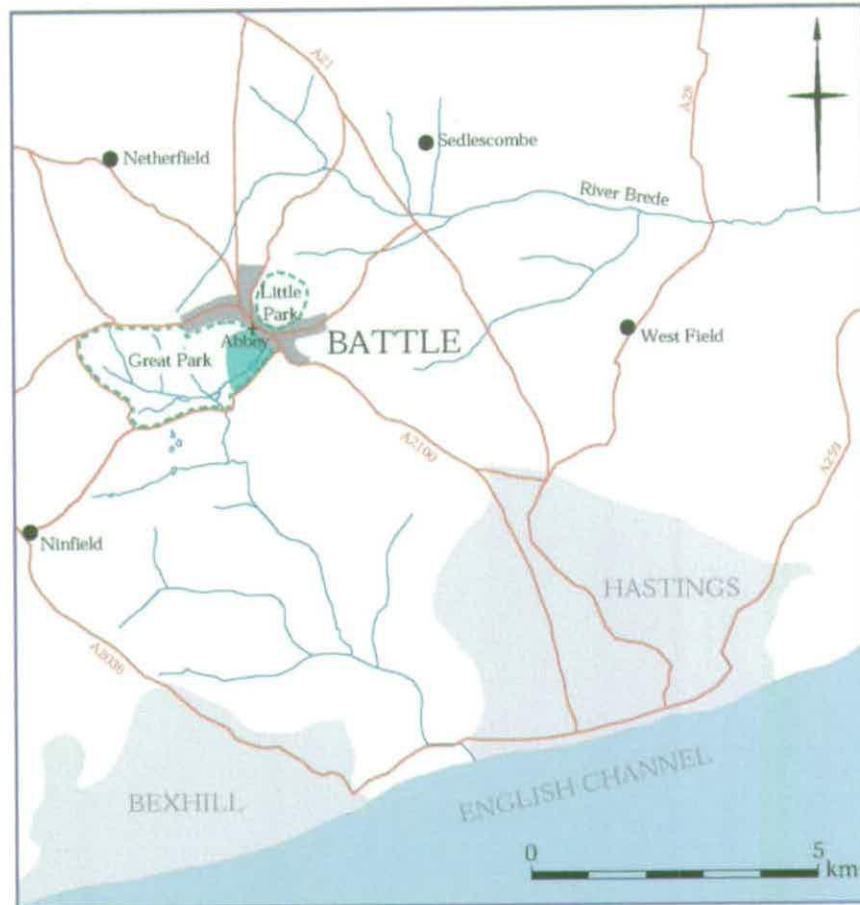
Battle lies near the headwaters of a number of minor streams that issue from the eastern and western sides of the town and flow north-east to meet the River Brede at Whallington, and further south-east near Sedlescombe. In the parkland to the south of the abbey, another minor stream flows in a south-westerly direction, first to a series of ponds (one of which is called New Pond), and then beyond the present park boundary to a former gunpowder mill. It then flows south to meet a number of other minor streams before ultimately flowing into the English Channel at St Leonards.

The parkland covers an area of c54ha and is situated on sloping ground to the south of the conventual buildings, in an area of otherwise gently undulating land. In the east and south it is bounded by the fence-line beside Powder Mill Lane and in the west by an overgrown hedgerow. A woodland belt marks the northern boundary. Despite its bloody and later monastic roots, it is essentially a landscape park that has been adapted and changed over the centuries since the suppression of the abbey in the mid-16th century, but nevertheless retains some earlier elements. It has been used for agriculture, both cultivated fields and pasture; exploited for its industrial potential, recreation and country pursuits such as shooting and fishing; as well as providing a military facility. These functions reflect the challenges and pressures, as well as the interests and fortunes of the gentry, on a landscape that can be witnessed elsewhere in the country, but are here seen in the earthworks.

The Great Park at Battle was considerably larger during the medieval period, covering some 725a (c250ha) (Gardiner 1996, 129). There was also another park to the north-east of the town, near the parish church, which was known as Little Park (no investigation was carried out here since it is beyond the bounds of EH ownership). The size and proximity of the parks undoubtedly had a constraining influence on the settlement and its development as a market town.

Fig 1. Location diagram. The boundary of the former Great Park probably followed the course of the road to the west of the abbey and is shown here as a pecked green line. The EH park is depicted by green shading within the Great Park.

Little Park lay to the north of the abbey and is here defined by a green pecked line.



The solid geology of the area, which clearly influenced its land-use, is of Wadhurst Clay of the Cretaceous period. This is mainly grey mudstone that weathers at the surface to form heavy clays, with a subordinate geology that includes sandstone, siltstone, conglomerate, clay-ironstone and shelly limestone (Lake & Shephard-Thorn 1987, 27; Geology Map). There are two principal soil types. Immediately to the south west of the abbey the soil is of Wickham 3 Association; this soil is slowly permeable and seasonally waterlogged. Elsewhere the soil is the Curtisden Association, which is a silty soil over siltstone with slowly permeable subsoils that causes slight seasonal waterlogging (Jarvis *et al* 1984).

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

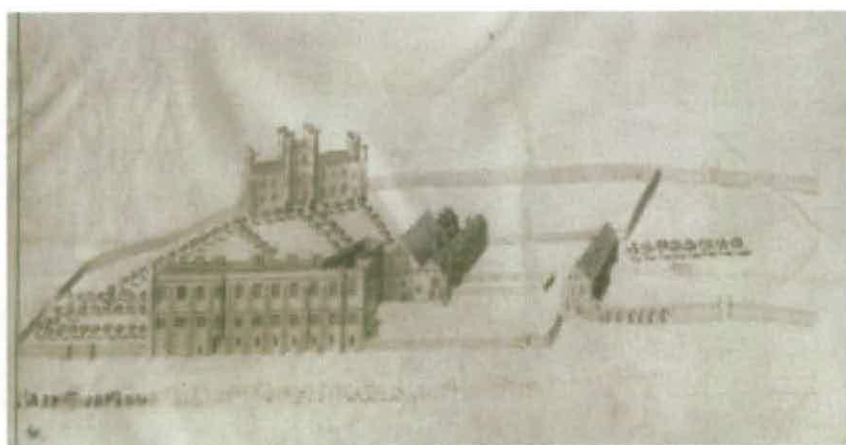
William the Conqueror founded Battle Abbey in 1090. The abbey, a Benedictine house, was dedicated to St Martin, a soldier turned monk who founded a number of monasteries in France during the 4th century, including Marmoutier on the Loire, whence Battle's founding monks originated (Brakspear *et al* 1937, 102; Farmer 1997, 333). The chosen site for the abbey was not ideal since it was on high ground and appears to have lacked an adequate water supply; however, William insisted that the high altar of the abbey church should be built where the Anglo-Saxon king, Harold, was killed (Turner 1865, 2). In 1435, the water problem appears to have been improved by the construction of a conduit from *Feldresland* (*ibid*, 6). All the land within a league (*c*3 miles) of the abbey, in addition to a number of other estates, was endowed to the monks. Within Battle the abbot was autonomous but the diocesan bishop could not interfere, which inevitably led to disputes (*ibid*, 33).

Battle Abbey was granted to Sir Anthony Browne in August 1538, some three months after its suppression (*ibid*, 49). Sir Anthony, despite being a Catholic, was influential in county and national politics. He had been Master of the Horse under Henry VIII and one of the executors of his will (Manning 1968, 104; Manning 1969, 153). Apart from Battle Abbey, Sir Anthony was also granted another monastic estate at St Mary Overy Priory. Five years later, following the death of his half-brother, the Earl of Southampton, he acquired Easebourne Priory in West Sussex (where he built Cowdray House), the Cistercian abbey at Waverley, Calceta near Arundel, and lands of Newark Priory and Syon Abbey (Manning 1968, 104).

At Battle, Sir Anthony oversaw the destruction of the church, chapter house and cloister, but retained the abbot's lodge as his principal residence. In the abbey grounds he laid out a garden in the area of the former church that included an avenue of yew trees which, at either end, was joined to two other avenues that extended to the precinct wall (*ibid*; Anon 1877, 498).

Fig 2.

Budgen's illustration of Battle Abbey c1700 viewed from the park, with the Guest Range, two storeys over a monastic sub-vault, in the foreground.



In 1545, Sir Anthony was appointed the guardian of Princess Elizabeth (later Elizabeth I) and began building a Guest Range for her reception. It was built over a monastic sub-vault and was two storeys high (figs 2 & 3; Anon 1877, 498; Hussey 1966b, 921). Sir Anthony died in 1548, before it

was complete, and was succeeded by his son, Anthony, who was created Viscount Montague by Queen Mary (Hussey 1966b, 921).

Viscount Montague was an even stauncher Catholic than his father but nevertheless loyal to the Crown when Elizabeth succeeded to the throne. He was clearly an influential individual in regional politics; for example, he shared the lieutenancy of Sussex and Surrey with Sir Thomas Sackville between 1569-1585 (Manning 1968, 104). However, from 1585, he became increasingly marginalised and even contemplated exile (Breight 1989, 150). Although he made Cowdray House his principal residence (where he entertained Queen Elizabeth in 1591), Battle Abbey remained an important seat and the town continued as a focus for the Catholic faith until at least the 1590s (ibid; Fletcher, 1975, 98). Lord Montague died in 1592, and soon after, his wife returned to Battle Abbey to live (ibid, 162). The abbey and estate remained in the family ownership until 1721 when the Sixth Lord Montague sold them to Sir Thomas Webster for £56,000¹.

Sir Thomas, as well as holding land in Sussex, also held land in Essex where he was sheriff in 1703-4, verderer of Waltham Forest in 1718, and MP for Colchester in the first quarter of the 18th century. However, financial difficulties in the later 1720s caused him to adopt Battle Abbey as his sole residence. His landholding in the region was extensive and particularly rich in timber; however, this resource was depleted in 1729 when at least thirteen thousand trees were destroyed during a hurricane (Anon 1888, 123). In 1726 he added the Robertsbridge Abbey estate, which included iron and timber resources, to his holdings.

Sir Thomas was active in the iron industry in the region. In 1724 he and Lord Ashburnham were leasing Beach Furnace in Battle (Lower 1850, 246). Further leases occurred in the region throughout the century (ibid).

THE SOUTH-WEST VIEW OF BATTLE-ABBY, IN THE COUNTY OF SUSSEX.



Fig 3. Buck's engraving of Battle Abbey (1737). The Guest Range on the right is complete. Note the tree-lined avenue in front of the Tudor house. The precinct gate to the left appears to be blocked (copyright NMRC).

Apart from iron production, the manufacture of gunpowder was an important industry at Battle during the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1750 Defoe commented that 'the finest gunpowder and the best

perhaps in Europe' was made there (Bloe *et al* 1937, 102). There were five gunpowder works at Battle. They were all beyond the bounds of the EH park although most were on the stream that emanates from the park with another to the north at Sedlescombe (Blackman 1923, 111).

Sir Thomas died in 1751 and was succeeded by his son, Whistler Webster. Despite Whistler continuing his father's iron-working enterprise, he did not share the same interest in historic buildings; it was he who pulled down the Guest Range (but interestingly retained the two western towers) and part of the conventual buildings. The estate, however, must have already been in a fairly dilapidated state when Horace Walpole visited in 1752 (and only a year after Sir Thomas's death) during his tour through what he called, '*the Holy Lands of Abbies and Gothic Castles*' (ie Sussex). He remarked:

'Battle Abbey stands at the end of the town, exactly as Warwick Castle does of Warwick; but the house of Webster have taken good care that it should not resemble it in anything else. A vast building, which they call the old refectory, but which, I believe, was the original church, is now a barn, coach-house, etc. The situation is noble, above the level of abbeyes; what does remain of gateways and towers is beautiful, particularly the flat side of the cloister, which is now the front of the mansion house. A Miss of the family has clothed a fragment of a portico with cockle-shells. The grounds, and what has been the park, lie in a vile condition' (Cleveland 1877, 207).

Whistler had parliamentary ambitions and was an MP in 1741 and in the Whig Opposition in 1754, but appears to have gone over to the Administration a year later. His career as an MP spanned twenty years. He married in 1766, at the age of 58, but there were no children, and on his death in 1779 the estate passed to his brother Godfrey, who survived him by only six months. The estate passed to Sir Godfrey, 4th baronet (d. 1800), great-nephew of Whistler Webster. However, since the widow of Whistler Webster, Martha, held the abbey for life, he could not take up residence.

Another Godfrey (d. 1836), son of the 4th baronet, inherited the estate when he was only ten years old, and it was not until 1810 that he succeeded to the now ruinous house and estate. He soon embarked on a programme of repairs to the house and improvements to the estate. It was he who built the New Pond in the park; however, it would appear that rather than running the estate himself, he preferred to leave it to his stewards.

In 1853, Sir Augustus Webster inherited the estate and four years later sold it to Lord Harry Vane (later to become the 4th Duke of Cleveland) who was survived by his widow until 1901. The Duke and Duchess devoted a considerable amount of time and energy to the house and its parkland. Much of their endeavours were recorded in the Duchess of Cleveland's book '*A History of Battle Abbey*' (Cleveland 1877). However, some of their work, such as the planting of Turkey Oaks in the park, was considered by some as inappropriate (Hussey 1966b, 923).

On the death of the Duchess, the estate was bought by Sir Augustus Webster's son, another Augustus Webster. In 1922 it was leased to a school and in 1976 the estate was bought for the nation.

PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Archaeological investigation at Battle Abbey has concentrated on the conventual buildings, where a number of excavations have been carried out from the early 19th century (Hare 1985, 16). Watching briefs have also been undertaken in the area of the walled garden, to the east of the abbey, and to the south of the reredorter (Greatorex 2000). However, apart from a contour survey in 1989, there appears to have been no archaeological investigation in the park (EH archive: NMRC).

The early 19th century excavations were in the area of the church where the three eastern crypts of the church were uncovered. Later in the century trenches were dug to the east of the parlour. Sir Harold Brakspear was next on the scene, in 1929 and again in 1934; his approach was small-scale excavations following the course of walls (a practice he appears to have adopted elsewhere). He was able to reveal the plan of the original east end of the church and the foundations of the frater, kitchen, and parlour (Hare 1985, 16). He also carried out work in the Outer Court where architectural fragments were found in the medieval passageway leading from the abbot's lodge to a cellar (ibid, 192).

Nearly fifty years later, in 1978, a programme of excavation began which was to last eleven weeks over the next three years. These excavations concentrated on the East Range, and included the chapter house, dormitory and reredorter (Hare 1985). Five phases were recognised, from the foundation of the abbey, through a period of re-building in the 13th century, to subsequent developments in the medieval period; finally a post-suppression phase and more recent activity was identified.

There is no intention here to give a description of the excavations since they have little direct relevance on the parkland. However, there are a number of points that have a bearing on our understanding of the development of the post-suppression phase of the house, gardens and parkland.

There are three main points to be drawn from the excavations: the effect of building the abbey on a hillside; the type of building material; the sequence of post-suppression destruction. Battle Abbey was built on a hillside, which would have required considerable levelling, or terracing to accommodate the buildings, particularly in the area of the dormitory and reredorter. The abbey was also susceptible to hill wash exacerbated by rainwater from the roofs: stone-lined drains were therefore constructed to carry away surplus water. These drains were evident in the chapter house and also the area to the east of the reredorter where they led to the east and south (and presumably down the slope into the park, possibly along the ditch that leads towards the three fishponds).

Following the suppression of the monastery and the destruction of the buildings there was a considerable build up of material on the lower levels of the hill; in the area of the reredorter, for example, up to 2.4m of accumulated material dating from the 11th century was found (ibid, 18). This process of firstly terracing the hillside and then the depositing of material clearly exaggerated the hill's profile.

The building material for the abbey was mainly of local Wealden sandstone that was probably

obtained from a quarry immediately to the east of the precinct, behind the street boundaries (ibid, 66). Apart from the local sandstone, a quantity of Caen stone and marble from Sussex and Purbeck was also found (ibid).

The final point is the sequence of destruction of the buildings, which started with the church. The chapter house was left in ruins but the remainder of the buildings survived. A substantial wooden structure was built to the east of the East Range (ibid, 41). There is also evidence of relining of some of the drains with brick. In the 18th century, the chapter house and most of the reredorter were destroyed, as well as the Guest Range. A new stable block was then built to the south of the reredorter. These stables were moved in c1810 to the first floor of the monastic dormitory. In 1819 a new stable and coach house was built nearer the house.

EARTHWORK DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION

The survey of the earthworks has been grouped into two main headings, for convenience named 'The Lower Garden Terraces' and 'The Parkland'. The letters in the text refer to letters annotated on the plans. All isolated trees, tree stumps and tree holes were also surveyed and are shown as tree symbols or small circles respectively. These features, as well as field boundaries identified on an early 18th century map (fig 6), have also been highlighted on separate plans (figs 11 & 12).

The Lower Garden Terraces (fig 4)

There are two terraces in front of the former Guest Range. The first is a gravel terrace that extends along the precinct wall and Guest Range and measures between 6-10m wide and was known as the Lower Terrace in the mid-19th century (Cleveland 1877, 229). Interestingly, it is not parallel with the former Guest Range wall and precinct, but narrower at the western end. The last Lady Webster, who planted fig trees and called it her 'fig-walk', constructed the terrace in the 19th century. Formerly it was much wider, and probably sloping, and formed part of the approach to the house, through the park, from at least the early 19th century (ESRO: BAT 4435/1; *below*). The Duchess of Cleveland, who lived here after Lady Webster, clearly had a high regard for this terrace, calling it her 'bit of the South of France' because of its sheltered aspect (Cleveland 1877, 257). The spaces between the buttresses on the former Guest Range provided ideal planting conditions, even for greenhouse plants (ibid).

To the south of the terrace is a steep scarp measuring 2.5m high with small projections at both ends. The eastern one is bulbous and more clearly defined, and lies within an area of dense rhododendron bushes. The western projection is more spread and covered by undergrowth. Beyond the eastern projection the scarp continues for a further 40m before merging with the natural slope.

Spiral stairs, beside the former Guest Range, lead from the Lower Terrace, through a tunnel (a), to a lower garden terrace. This flat terrace (b) measures c190m x 20m with a path along its front edge. The remnants of stone steps (c) lead from the path to the parkland at the south-eastern end. The earthworks are very slight, measuring no more than 0.1m high, and divide the terrace into two or

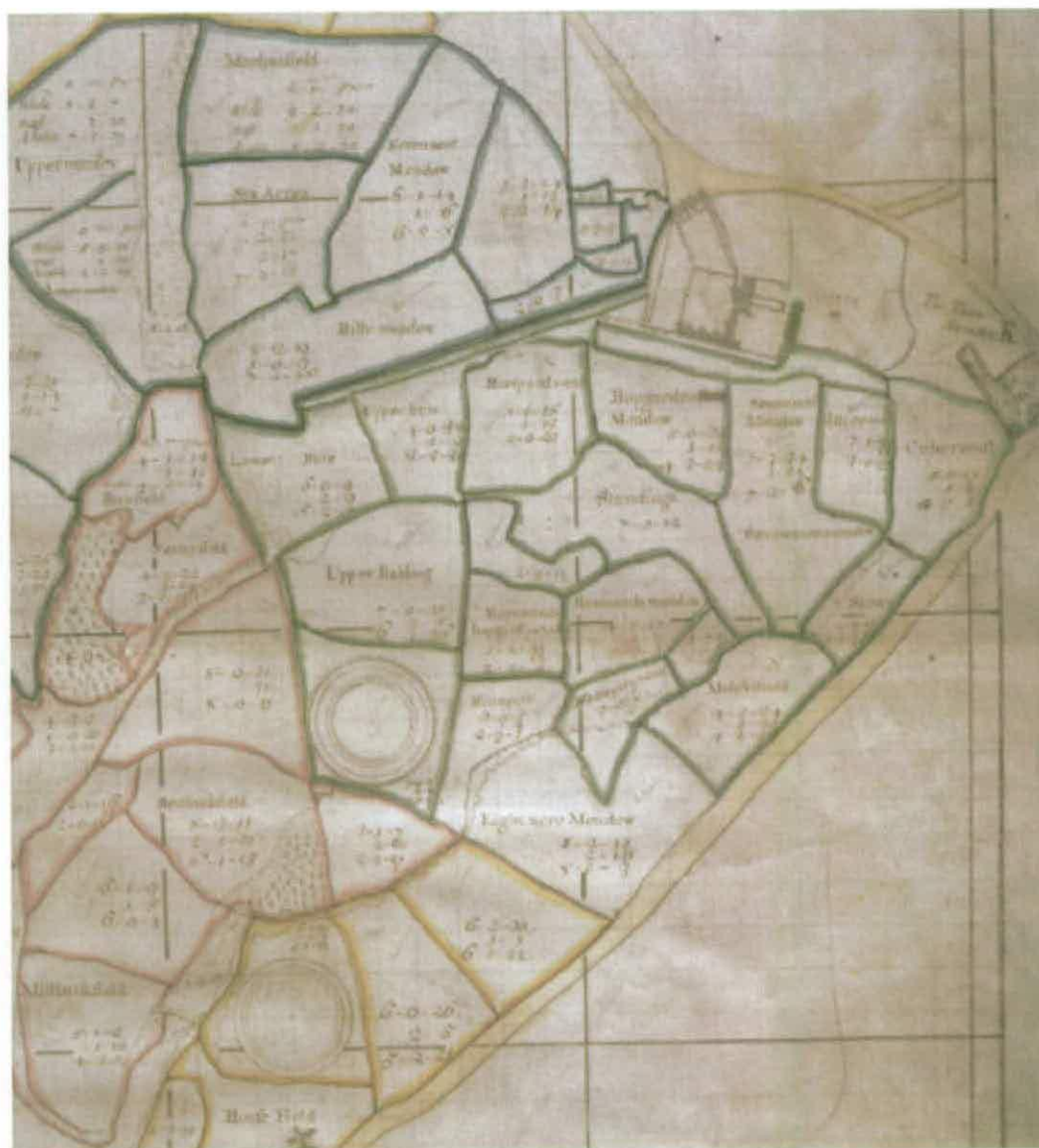
three compartmentalised gardens. In the centre is a slight circular depression, which may have been either a tree hole or a garden feature. Since it is positioned almost centrally on the terrace, the latter suggestion appears more credible. Ground disturbance and dense vegetation masks any continuation of these garden earthworks at the eastern and western ends. Along the sloping front edge of this terrace is another, smaller terrace (d), which may represent part of a garden planting.

The Duchess of Cleveland constructed this lower garden terrace in the later 19th century (Cleveland 1877, 260); however, it was not flat as she intended, but sloping. She also constructed flights of steps at either end of the scarp, which are presumably the bulbous projections, as well as the walk along the front edge.

The Parkland (fig 5)

Many of the field boundaries on the survey can be identified on Sir Thomas Webster's 18th century estate map (ESRO: BAT 4421/7; fig 6 & 11).

Fig 6. Early 18th century estate map (ESRO: BAT 4421/7)



A boundary bank (e) lies along the north and north-west side of the park and curves to the western side of a wood in the west (known as Devil's Wood in the mid-19th century (ESRO: BAT 4491)). It is well preserved in the north, but becomes progressively less well-defined and fragmentary, particularly where it crosses the modern track and where it is overlain by dense vegetation. At the eastern end, the boundary comprises a ditch with banks on either side. Both banks measure up to 1.5m high while the central ditch is c0.2m deep. At (f), the boundary bank is no more than 0.1m high where it abuts the Lower Terrace. The inner bank is aligned precisely on this terrace scarp-edge. Unfortunately, dense vegetation at this point masks the relationship between the bank, the terrace, and a hollow way that extends south from the bank. Interspersed along the boundary bank are a number of mature trees and more recent wooden rectangular and triangular 'tree enclosures'. The mature trees have not been reliably dated but are thought to be at least a couple of hundred years old (*pers com* Virginia Hinze). The boundary is also not shown on the early 18th century map (fig 6) and this, together with the age of the trees, would suggest that the boundary is of at least post-medieval date. Beyond the wood in the west, the course of the boundary bank is unclear; however, its alignment would suggest that it probably continued southwards along the field boundary to Powder Mill Lane.

To the north, and diverging from the boundary bank in the east, are a number of slight linear scarps aligned on the main house, which probably define a former drive that appears as a prominent, straight alignment between two hedgelines to the west of the house in the early 18th century (fig 6). At (g) is a sub-rectangular platform, possibly a building platform, measuring 10m x 5m and c0.2m high.

In the west, a broad bank (h), with a slight ditch on the south side, extends from the field boundary to the wood where its course is obscured by thick vegetation and a deep quarry. However, it appears to be aligned on a prominent scarp (j) to the east of the wood that curves along the front of the park and is probably the same feature. Despite the lack of earthwork evidence of the bank continuing into the field to the west of (h), a crop mark is evident on aerial photographs, which could either be a more recent track (a gate here provides access to the field) or the course of the track that dates from at least the early 18th century. This earthwork feature is clearly shown on Webster's map (fig 6, 11) as a field boundary between Upper Balding and a series of closes to the north including Lower Butts and Upper Butts. To the west of the sports field a north/south ditch forms the field corner with the scarp (j). This field corner is the south-western corner of Horsepondmead, which is separated from another field boundary to the south by a narrow gap that provides access to Standings field. To the west of this field corner a north/south scarp again joins scarp (j) to form the south-western corner of Upper Butts.

Immediately in front of the garden terrace are four field boundaries defined by linear ditches, which are orientated north/south and extend as far as the prominent east/west scarp (j) thus forming four closes. The scarp (j) measures up to 1m high here, while the ditches are 140m in length and vary in depth from 0.1m to 0.3m. The western ditch (k) is less well defined than the others, measuring no more than 0.1m deep, and may not be contemporary. A hollow way defines the edge of another, much narrower close, and is overlain by the sports field but re-emerges on the east side and continues to a quarried area. Dense vegetation masks the relationship of the hollow way and scarp.

These close boundaries, apart from the slighter one, are depicted on Webster's map (fig 6, 11) where they were known as Three Acre Meadow, Seven Acre Meadow, and Hopgarde Meadow. Interestingly, the scarp (j) is not shown in Seven-Acre Meadow (fig 6), suggesting that it was enclosed later or of little consequence.

The eastern ditch of Three-Acre Meadow is unlike the others in that its profile is narrower and sharper and appears to have been re-dug. It extends almost as far as the three rectilinear ponds to the south and probably acts as a drain. A small footbridge crosses the ditch some 65m from the northern boundary. On the northern side of the close is a sub-rectangular platform (l), which was probably a building platform, while in the south there are two depressions. The eastern depression, which measures up to 1.5m in depth, is substantially larger than the other, with access routes to the south and north-east. The western depression is cut along its western side by one of the close boundary ditches. The form of these depressions, and the access points, suggests that they were probably former quarries, perhaps for clay, dating before the 18th century, that have later been 'landscaped' within the parkland setting.

The western boundary ditch of Seven-Acre Meadow is spread at its northern end where it curves east towards the garden terrace. A slight ditch extends in an east/west direction across the northern part of the meadow.

Water features

Three ponds (m) lie along the south-east side of the park. In the early 18th century they were known as 'Stews' (fig 6). The ponds are rectilinear in outline and vary in size between 38m x 20m in the north-east to the largest (50m x 25m) in the south-west. Narrow causeways separate the ponds, but there is no visible conduit or sluice linking them. The ground near the ponds on the southern side is marshy, despite two small cuts draining into the southern pond.

The ground rises on the south-east side of the ponds as far as the park boundary. Between the ponds and the boundary are two terraces extending along the full length of the ponds. The function of these terraces is unclear, but their siting above the ponds may suggest they formed part of a walk, or perambulation, around the park providing an 'elevated' view across the ponds towards the abbey, and west towards New Pond.

Describing an arc from a tree enclosure towards the south-eastern tip of New Pond is a broad, shallow bank measuring c0.1m high (n). This bank is probably Molehill Field boundary (fig 6).

Linking the three ponds to New Pond, is a heavily overgrown stream; the northern side is particularly marshy. The New Pond's shape closely conforms to that of Weanyerspond Field from which it was constructed (fig 6). The most note-worthy feature in the pond is the substantial dam on the western side, which is up to 2m high on the western, downhill side. A metal hatch (o) and conduit, controlling the level of water, are positioned on the northern part of the dam. On the waters-edge are a number of small 'jetties' or 'stands' used as fishing points.

On the western side of the dam the ground is also particularly marshy. A broad scarp (p) marks the

probable course of the stream before the pond was constructed. The stream itself is sinuous with up-cast, the result of periodic clearing, principally on the southern side. The stream continues west to the park boundary where thick vegetation prevented any detailed survey.

Industrial features

Describing an arc in the north of the park is a series of quarries, or pond bays. Unfortunately dense vegetation prevented a full survey of this area and, apart from a basic description of the visible elements, meaningful discussion is limited.

At least five pond bays are 'stepped' down the natural slope. The largest (q) is oval in outline and up to 4m deep. A slight causeway that leads up to the hollow way (r) separates it from another pond to the east. The second pond measures c18m x 15m and is c3.5m deep. The third pond is c35m x 20m and c2m deep with a sluice on the southern side separating it from another pond. The fourth pond is D-shaped and c2m deep. A broad causeway separates it from the final pond, which is heavily overgrown, but nevertheless drains into a leat that ultimately leads to the stream between the three ponds (m) and New Pond. A ditched field boundary lies against the south-western side of the fourth pond but, because of undergrowth, the relationship between the two is unclear. This boundary is probably the field boundary between Standings field and Hammonds Meadow (fig 6, 11), with the ponds within Standings. Hammonds Meadow is defined in the northwest by a right-angled field corner, which extends south as a very spread bank towards New Pond. To the west of the spread bank (s), and along the northern side of New Pond, the ground is again marshy.

To the west of the dense vegetation is a deep cutting (t) leading towards the sports field and ponds. A large mound (u) lies to the east of this cutting; it is of irregular shape and stands c5m high. On top is a central depression with a broad convex platform on the north side. A slight linear cutting on the western side was the probable access to the mound. The true form and function of these two features, the cutting and mound, are unclear, since the vegetation to the east hampers a more informed interpretation. Nevertheless, a probable interpretation for the complex is that they were part of the quarrying activities in this area, which, on their abandonment, the depressions may have been used as pond-bays and then part of a perambulation around the park with the mound providing an ideal 'viewing point' to the abbey and across the park. This is perhaps supported by its name, 'Mountain Plantation', in the mid-19th century (ESRO: BAT 4491), and 'Mountain Pond' at the beginning of the 20th century (ESRO: BAT 4511A).

The 'southern fields'

The 'southern fields' lie to the west and south of New Pond. A field (v) covers an area of c8ha and extends from the wood in the north to the stream in the south. A bank, surmounted by hedge with a public right-of-way along its western side, marks the western boundary while in the east it is defined by a fence-line between the wood and stream. The ground rises gradually from the stream towards the wood. On this rising ground are slight traces of ridge and furrow cultivation orientated north/south. The furrows are 3-5m apart and c0.1m deep. Whether this cultivation extended much beyond the woodland boundary is unclear since dense tree cover masks any evidence; however, at least two furrows abut the boundary and it is probable that cultivation extended as far as the Lower

Buts southern field boundary. Some trees, probably dating to the early 19th century, overlie the ridge and furrow, which suggests that this cultivation dates to at least the late 18th century, or possibly earlier (*below*).

In the west is a broad hollow, probably a dry streambed that measures c0.1m in the north, gradually deepens to c1m in the south. In the north-west is a sub-circular mound (w) measuring 18m x 8m. The eastern part of the stream doglegs east and then north before it imperceptibly merges with one of the furrows and was possibly a former field boundary. In the east, a slight north/south scarp defines the edge of the ridge and furrow and can be identified as a field boundary in the early 19th century (fig 6, 11).

The southern field (x) covers an area of c3.5ha. It is bordered in the north by the stream and in the south by a modern fence-line along Powder Mill Lane. In the west, it is marked by a continuation of the hedge-line from the northern field (v). In the east a track from Powder Mill Lane and ditched on the west side, forms the field boundary.

Cutting through the field in a north-easterly direction is a slight hollow way (y), measuring c0.2m deep, that leads from Powder Mill Lane for 90m. Its course continues as a spread scarp towards the stream where it terminates at a mound. This hollow way/scarp is aligned precisely on a modern track that leads north towards the quarried area and may have been a former route to the abbey.

Overlying the hollow way and scarp, and much of the western part of the field, are traces of ridge and furrow. In common with the cultivation to the north of the stream, the furrows are 3-5m apart and no more than 0.1m deep and the two are therefore probably contemporary. Cultivation extends from the field boundary in the south towards the stream. In the east it is bounded by a broad ditch and, although there is no cultivation evidence to the east, it is likely that it extended over the field since the ditch cuts the cultivation strips at an oblique angle. This field boundary can be identified from the early 18th century map, re-inforcing the earlier date for the ridge and furrow.

The third field, to the north-east of the modern track from Powder Mill Lane, also contains slight traces of ridge and furrow, which is similar to that in the other two fields. At (z) there is a slight change in orientation, although one of the ridges is more pronounced, suggesting that this was an early 18th century field boundary (figs 6, 11) overlying the western furrows, but nevertheless still respecting the slight change in alignment. The cultivation probably did not extend much beyond the field boundary, into what is now New Pond, since the outline of the pond conforms closely with the former field outline (fig 6).

Miscellaneous features

Situated at the eastern end of New Pond are two concrete platforms (a1). To the north-east of these platforms, and along the northern side of a spread bank, are a series of tree-holes and square brick footings measuring c0.5m². The date and function of these features is unclear, but they are probably of 20th century date. The linearity of the brickworks and tree-holes suggest a military origin and they may represent a small encampment; however, these features are not evident on any of the available aerial photographs.

DISCUSSION

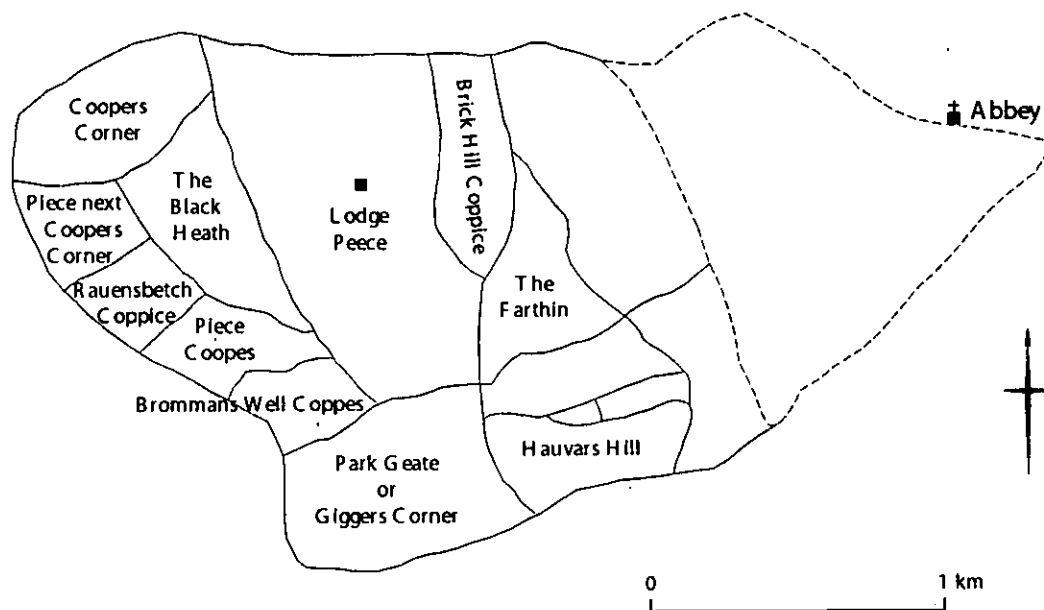
The survey and investigation of the parkland at Battle Abbey has identified a range of features that are common in many landscape parks. However, a number of issues require further discussion. These include the effect of the natural landscape; the monastic parkland; the post-Suppression landscape.

The first point to make, however, is that there is no earthwork evidence that a battle actually took place within the park. This seems hardly surprising since it was probably a 'mobile' battle conducted over a relatively short period of time, and by its very nature would have been fluid with the opposing sides using the ground to best advantage. However, given that the battle took place here, the tree cover was probably similar to what it is today since archery appears to have been one of the main weapons, which suggests that the land was probably 'open'.

The natural landscape

The parkland gently slopes from the north towards New Pond before rising again to Powder Mill Lane in the south-east. This in effect creates a low-lying area that extends from the three fishponds and along the stream to the west. The stream itself emanates from the quarried area; two further dry streambeds follow a similar southward course to meet the stream. Course grass, indicative of boggy ground, is particularly noticeable to the north and west of New Pond, in the area of the streambeds, and on either side of the fishponds.

Fig 7. The 1650 estate map which probably shows the extent of the medieval Great Park (re-drawn from ESRO: BAT 4419). The pecked line in the east represents the area of the current park, which did not form part of the survey.



It is likely, therefore, that prior to the excavation of the quarries and creation of the pond-bays, this low-lying area was quite boggy, which would clearly have had an effect on its land-use. It would, for example, probably have been a factor in any deployment of troops during a battle since it would have afforded an obstacle to an attacker. In addition, these areas are largely devoid of ridge and furrow suggesting that they were not drained during the medieval or early post-medieval periods and that they were mainly used as pasture and waste.

The park landscape

There were at least two parks at Battle Abbey during the medieval period. The largest was the Great Park, which measured c250ha. It probably bounded the southern edge of the burgage tenements in the town and extended westwards as far as Great Park Farm and Parkgate Manor (known as 'Parke geate' or 'Giggers Corner' in 1650 (ESRO: BAT 4419; fig 7)). The curving road pattern enclosing this area may reflect the former course of the park boundary (fig 1). Although the park is specifically named in 1480 it was probably in existence in the late-11th century (ESRO: Huntington Library archives 1019 vol 53; Bloe *et al* 1939, 107).

A boundary bank identified during the survey, and dated to at least the post-medieval period, suggests that there was another park, or at least an enclosure, within Great Park. This is perhaps supported by Turner (1865, 32) who mentions three parks here, 'the greater', 'the middle', and 'the lesser' parks. It is also conceivable that it was the 'new park' recorded in 1317 (ESRO: Huntington Library archives T51/1.811 Vol 43). Changes to parks are not uncommon; for example, at Highclere, Hampshire, the park that lay beside the bishop of Winchester's palace was enlarged in the early 14th century. The former boundary is still visible slicing through the extended park (Brown 1998, 12).

The park boundary bank is well preserved in the east, but progressively diminishes in the west. The cause of this erosion is not entirely clear, but is probably due to an 18th century avenue overlying it. Although the bank is aligned on the Lower Terrace, it is unlikely that it continued beyond the precinct boundary since it would have restricted access to a barn that is thought to have stood along the precinct boundary.

Within the park, field-names and documentary evidence suggest a number of land uses, although the actual location of some of these activities is unclear. For example, the field-name 'Brickhill Coppes' on the 1650 estate map (ESRO: BAT 4419; fig 7), which lay beyond the surveyed area, suggests brick manufacture. Further evidence of industrial activity comes from a lease dated 29th Sep 1520. It records '*the abbot's tilery, with the buildings and closes anciently relating to it, a close called The Butterclose between the tilery and the Great Park, the land in the park for digging clay and sand as was done (excepting plainland there called Laundes)*' (ESRO: Huntington Library archives T134/7 Vol 55). Although the tilery, which had six kilns (*ibid*), lay outside the park, the clay and sand was dug from within it, and it is tempting to see some of the quarries identified during the survey as the source of this material. The 'laundes' mentioned in the lease, is also of interest, since it suggests a deer pasture.

Later field names include 'the warren', which lay immediately north of Powder Mills (ESRO: BAT 4421/7; BAT 4435/2) and it may be associated with the gardens at Powder Mills. To the north of the

warren the 1650 estate map shows another large enclosed field called 'Lodge Piece', with an isolated building set centrally within it (fig 7), which was probably a park lodge. By the early-18th century, this field was known as Lodge Field (ESRO: BAT 4421/7).

The Little Park, lay to the north of the town, and covered an area of c50ha in the 18th century (ESRO: BAT 4435/5; fig 8). The date of the creation of this park is unclear, although it is specifically named in the mid-16th century (Bloe *et al* 1937, 107). The park, which was bounded in the south by the burgage tenements, may be fossilised by the area of Little Park Farm (fig 8). There appear to have been two entrances, the first on the western side of the church while the second was in the north-west (fig 8). In the 18th century, the field-name against the northern entrance was 'Lodgfield', while that to the south was 'Housemead' with another 'Lodgfield' on the northern side of 'Housemead' (ESRO: BAT 4421/6 & 7). This would suggest that park lodges or a keeper's house once existed at the entrances.

Minerals and other natural resources (i.e. trees and timber) were exploited in Little Park during the post-medieval period, and it is probable that it was continuing an earlier practice. In 1652, soon after the park was disparked (ESRO: Huntington Library archives 67/15), marl pits were dug, and in 1695 there was a lease for timber, trees, quarries, iron and stone. Thirteen years later there was also mention of stone, metals and the right to make charcoal pits and sawpits (ESRO: Huntington Library archives 67/16; 68/34; 69/19). The area of the marl pits can be identified from an 18th century estate map (fig 8), which mentions a 'marl pit field'.

Fig 8. The early 19th century estate map of Little Park Farm, which probably shows the extent of the medieval Little Park (ESRO: BAT 4435/5). The two roads show the entrances to the park (north is to the right).



The post-suppression landscape

Apart from the church and chapter house, most of the remaining conventual buildings seem to have escaped the Suppression largely intact. The abbot's lodge appears to have become the principal residence, although the Guest Range was also a grand building (fig 2 & 3), and gardens were laid out over the site of the former church and further north and east towards the precinct boundary. Whether there were any changes within the park is unclear, but since the Brown's main seat was at Cowdray House at this time, it seems unlikely.

Unfortunately the 1650 estate map only covers the western half of Great Park (fig 7); however, more information can be gleaned from the early 18th century map when the parkland was divided between four farms (fig 6). The field pattern is one of enclosed fields, many of those in the EH part of the park were pasture, meadow, or hop fields. Immediately to the south of the abbey they appear quite regular; however, others, such as the Standings, are amorphous. To the west of the Standings, the field boundary curves west and then south-west through a broad gap and along a track between two fields (the northern one is named Sextry Field) and into an even larger open space. Standings field is in the general area of the surveyed quarries or pond-bays (in the area of dense vegetation), which would account for the irregular shape of the field. This is supported by the first element 'Stand' in the field-name, since elsewhere it is interpreted as meaning quarries (Field 1972, 217). A hollow way to the north, and the curving field boundary, were probably the routes to the quarries.

Quarrying took place within the parks at Battle from at least the medieval period. Much of the Wealden stone to build the monastery, for example, came from an area to the east of the abbey precinct (Hare 1985, 66). Another source was Tower Hill Farm (Anon 1963, 45), which lay in the western part of Great Park. Other quarries of unknown date include two in the western wood (known as Devil's Plantation in 1859 (ESRO: BAT 4491)) and those immediately to the south of the Guest Range. The latter quarries were meadow in the early-18th century (fig 6), which suggests that they were abandoned by this date.

The growing importance of gunpowder manufacture in the Battle region probably resulted in the quarries being utilised as pond-bays. Although there is no evidence of gunpowder being manufactured here, it seems likely that they were 'holding tanks', ensuring an adequate water supply to Powder Mill, from an otherwise quite small stream.

New Pond, which was constructed by Godfrey Webster in the first quarter of the 19th century, may have had a dual purpose: as a pond-bay (morphologically it is similar to others elsewhere in the Battle region); it may in fact be the 'new pond-bay' referred to in 1824 (ESRO: BAT 3501). Another purpose, and one it was clearly used for by the mid-19th century, was as a fishpond. Apart from fishing, hunting and wildfowling also figured in the social calendar of the Websters from at least the 19th century (Cleveland 1877, 221) and reflects the growing importance of such pursuits during the post-medieval period that is witnessed elsewhere in the country (Williamson 1997).

The Landscape Park

The creation of a landscape park can probably be dated to the mid-18th century (despite Walpole's

castigating comments) when Sir Whistler Webster systematically dismantled the Guest Range, but leaving the two octagonal turrets and a room on the eastern end (this room was dismantled in the 19th century (Cleveland 1877, 236)). This probably followed a long period of neglect, but nevertheless reflects a desire to retain an important aspect of the building – its commanding view over the park and surrounding countryside. The retention of the turrets, with what became the long Upper Terrace and eastern room, was therefore quite deliberate, and would have provided a series of excellent ‘viewing platforms’. Lady Cleveland describes rather poetically her enthusiasm for this terrace, its views over the ‘battlefield’ and to the English Channel, and the sunsets she delighted in watching from this elevated position (ibid, 238).

The field pattern and routes in the park were radically altered by the early-19th century when most of the fields were either open parkland or cow pasture (fig 9). The formal avenue appears to have been abandoned and the southerly route altered; instead of leading to ‘Standings’ field, it curved north at Devil’s Plantation, and along the brow of the hill and along the south side of the Upper Terrace. The entrance to the park in the west was at Park Gate Farm (as it was in 1661 (ESRO: Huntington Library archives 67/19; BAT 4419)).

The western part of the former ‘Standings’ field was known as Mountain Plantation in the later 19th century, with two ponds to the east indicating the quarries were abandoned by this time (ESRO: BAT 4435; BAT 4491). The rather unusual name, Mountain Plantation, suggests another parkland feature, perhaps a prominence. In addition, the two quarries near the three fishponds were probably ‘landscaped’ at this time (fig 10).

Another issue, and one that is important in understanding the landscape development, is the date-range of the mature parkland trees. Some are apparently *c*200 years old (*above*), which would suggest they date to the period when Sir Godfrey Webster was undertaking improvements in the park. Hussey (1966b, 922), however, states that Lady Cleveland planted Turkey Oaks here, which

Fig 9. The early 19th century estate map of part of the former Great Park (ESRO: BAT 4435/1).



would date the trees to the mid-19th century. Until the trees are reliably dated this issue must remain unresolved.

Fig 10. The 'landscaped' quarries



METHODOLOGY

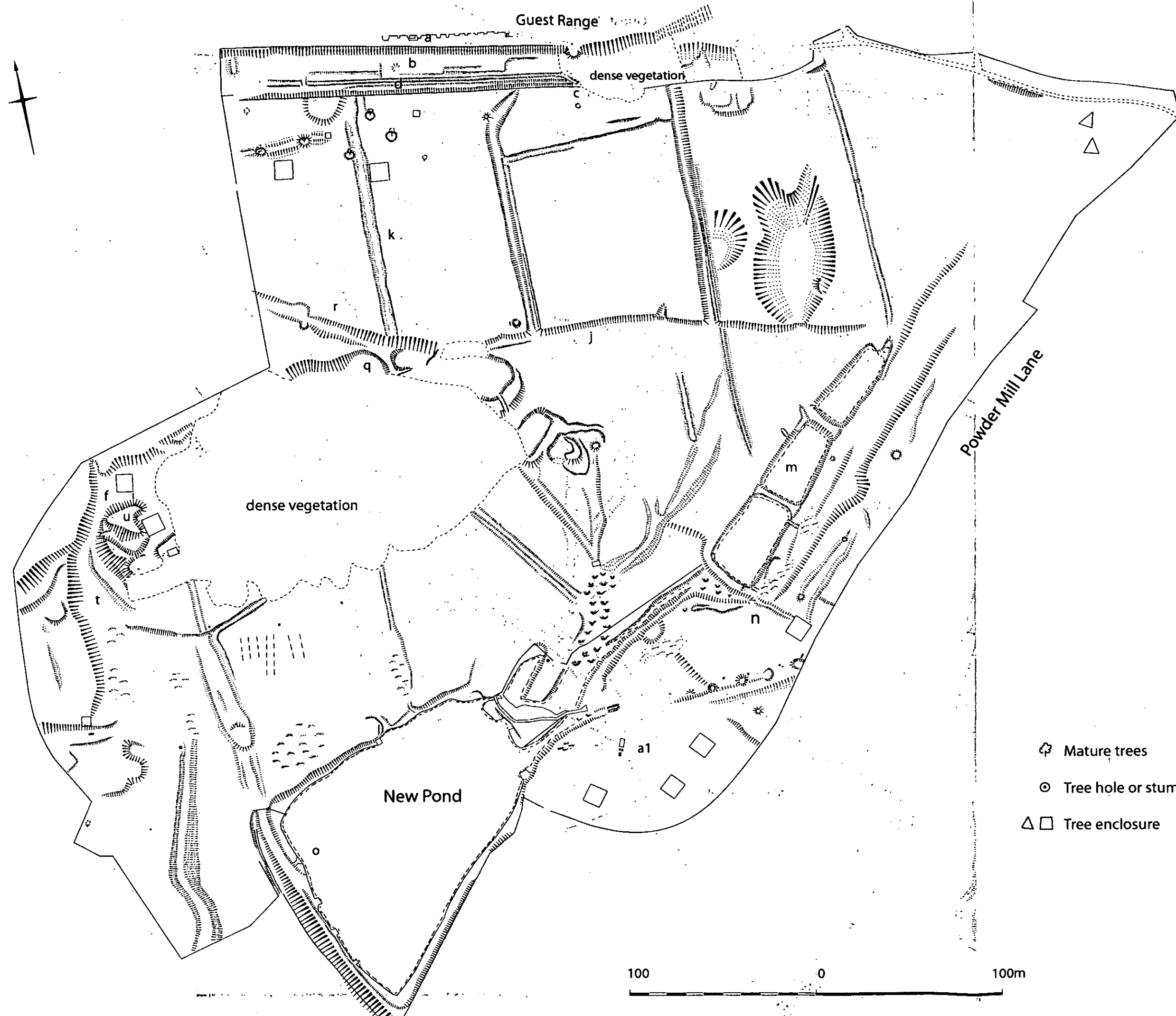
The survey and field investigation was carried out by G Brown, M Bowden, S Connor, and D Field over a period of fifteen days. It was undertaken in two phases: first, the area immediately to the south-west of the Guest Range was surveyed at a scale of 1:1000. This involved a closed traverse of nine stations from which a control network was established and the archaeological and topographical features were plotted. Taped offsets were used to survey the finer detail.

The second stage was a survey of the remainder of the parkland in EH ownership and was undertaken at a scale of 1:2500 using GPS to survey the archaeological and topographic detail and establish control framework. The archaeological detail was recorded in a similar manner to the 1:1000 scale survey.

Limited field investigation was also undertaken in the surrounding countryside. In addition, two days were spent on research at the East Sussex Record Office in Lewes. The report was researched and written by G Brown with additional comment from M Bowden and P Everson. G Brown drew the earthwork plans and I Leonard took the photographs of the estate maps. D Cunliffe prepared figs 1 7, 11, and 12.

- Gardiner, M 1996, 'The geography and peasant rural economy of the eastern Sussex High Weald, 1300-1420' *SAC* 134, 125-39
- Greatorex, C 2000 *An Archaeological Watching Brief maintained on landscaping work undertaken at Battle Abbey, Battle, East Sussex* Archaeology South-East unpublished mss
- Hare, J N 1985 *Battle Abbey. The Eastern Range and the Excavations of 1978-80* London: Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England Archaeological Report 2
- Hussey, C 1966a 'Battle Abbey, Sussex – 1. The Monastery' *Country Life* 140, 822-26
- Hussey, C 1966b 'Battle Abbey, Sussex – 2. The Abbot's House' *Country Life* 140, 920-23
- Jarvis, M G Allen, R H Fordham, S J Hazeldon, J Moffat, A J and Sturdy, R G 1984 *Soils and Their Use in South East England* Harpenden: Soil Survey of England and Wales Bulletin 15
- Lake, R D and Shephard-Thorn, E R 1987 *Geology of the country around Hastings and Dungeness: Memoir for 1:50,000 geological sheets 320 and 321 (England and Wales)*, London: HMSO
- Lower, M A 1850 'Iron-works of the County of Sussex' *SAC* 3, 240-48
- Manning, R B 1968 'Anthony Browne, 1st Viscount Monatgue: the influence in county politics of an Elizabethan Catholic Nobleman' *SAC* 106 103-12
- Manning, R B 1969 *Religion and Society in Elizabethan Sussex: a study of the enforcement of the religious settlement 1558-1603* Leicester: Leicester University Press
- Turner, E 1865 'Battel Abbey' *SAC* 17, 1-56
- Williamson, T 1997 'Fish, fur and feather: Man and nature in the post-medieval landscape' in Barker, K and Darvill, T (eds) *Making English Landscape: Changing Perspectives*, Exeter: Bournemouth University Occasional Papers 3, 92-117

1. The history of Battle Abbey during the 18th and 19th centuries is drawn from the introduction to the Battle Abbey catalogue that deals with the Whistler Webster papers held at East Sussex Record Office. It is also covered in Brent, J A 1973 *A Catalogue of the Battle Abbey Estate Archives* East Sussex Record Office Handbook 6



- ⊗ Mature trees
- ⊙ Tree hole or stump
- △ □ Tree enclosure

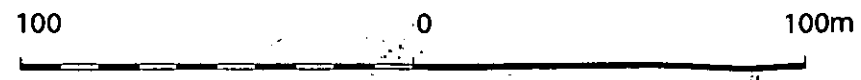


Fig 4.



Fig 5



-  Mature trees
-  Tree hole or stump
-  tree enclosure

Fig 11



Fig 12


ENGLISH HERITAGE
NATIONAL
MONUMENTS
RECORD

*The National Monuments Record
is the public archive of English Heritage.
It contains all the information in this report - and more:
original photographs, plans old and new,
the results of all field surveys, indexes
of archaeological sites and historical buildings,
and complete coverage of England in
air photography.*

World Wide Web: <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk>

National Monuments Record enquires: telephone 01793 414600

*National Monuments Record Centre, Great Western Village, Kemble Drive,
Swindon SN2 2GZ*

