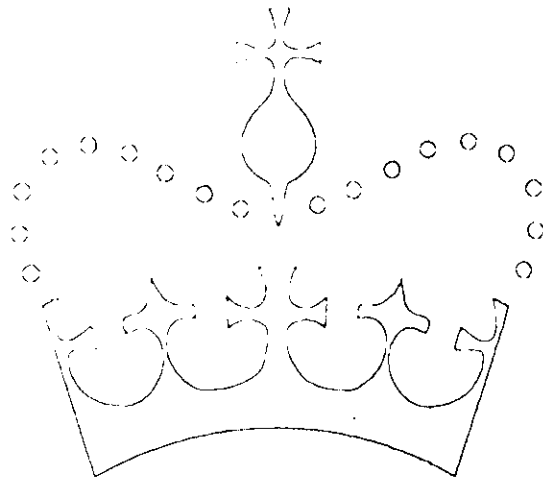


Library Copy

RCHME SURVEY REPORT



**FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS  
AT THE DUCK GROUND,  
MOTTISFONT**

An archaeological survey by the Royal Commission on  
the Historical Monuments of England

©Crown Copyright January 1999



## FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS AT THE DUCK GROUND, MOTTISFONT

County: Hampshire  
District: Test Valley  
Parish: Mottisfont  
OS Map No: SU 32 NW  
NGR: SU 33152690  
NMR No: SU 32 NW 45

Surveyed: December 1998  
Report by: G R Brown  
Investigation: G R Brown, D Field  
Illustrations: D A Cunliffe

## INTRODUCTION

Following the recommendations of the report on an area known locally as The Duck Ground at Mottisfont (SY 32 NW 45), further field investigation and survey was carried out at a scale of 1:1000 by the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England (RCHME). The work was undertaken in December 1998 at the request of the National Trust and was confined to the woodland to the west and north of the unusual spiral earthwork which formed the focus of the previous report. The purpose of the survey was to ascertain whether there were any associated features in the woodland, and to complete the network of regular linear channels that had been identified during the first phase of survey.

## EARTHWORK SURVEY AND INTERPRETATION

The surveyed area is bordered in the east by the River Test and in the west by a leat that flows south and then south-east to the river. The spiral earthwork lies on the west bank of the river and this feature, together with a broad ditch to the east and south, were surveyed in December 1997 (RCHME report SY 32 NW 45, 1997); these earthworks will not be described further here.

Features within the remaining area include a series of narrow drainage ditches, the most prominent being a dog-legged ditch (a) that separates an area of open meadow from the woodland in the east. A second drainage ditch (b), located closer to the river, flows south and then curves around the spiral earthwork before joining the dog-legged ditch and ultimately flows into the river further south. Between these two ditches there are a number of other, more shallow earthworks, one of which is a continuation of the broad ditch, or channel identified in the first phase of survey, whilst others may have been associated with water management and the removal of peat. To the west of the wood, the continuation of the broad channel to the leat was also surveyed.

The area is dominated by two linear broad channels aligned east/west and set 135m apart; linking them is another channel aligned north/south, thus forming a series of sub-rectangular, or trapezoidal, compartments. These channels are c. 0.3m deep, and although at the time of survey they were particularly boggy, they did not hold water. The southern channel (c) extends west from the river for 380m to the leat; it is up to 14m wide. Along the southern flank is an embanked walk, or avenue, with trees set along much of its course. More recent drainage ditches have been cut on either side of the avenue for much of its length.

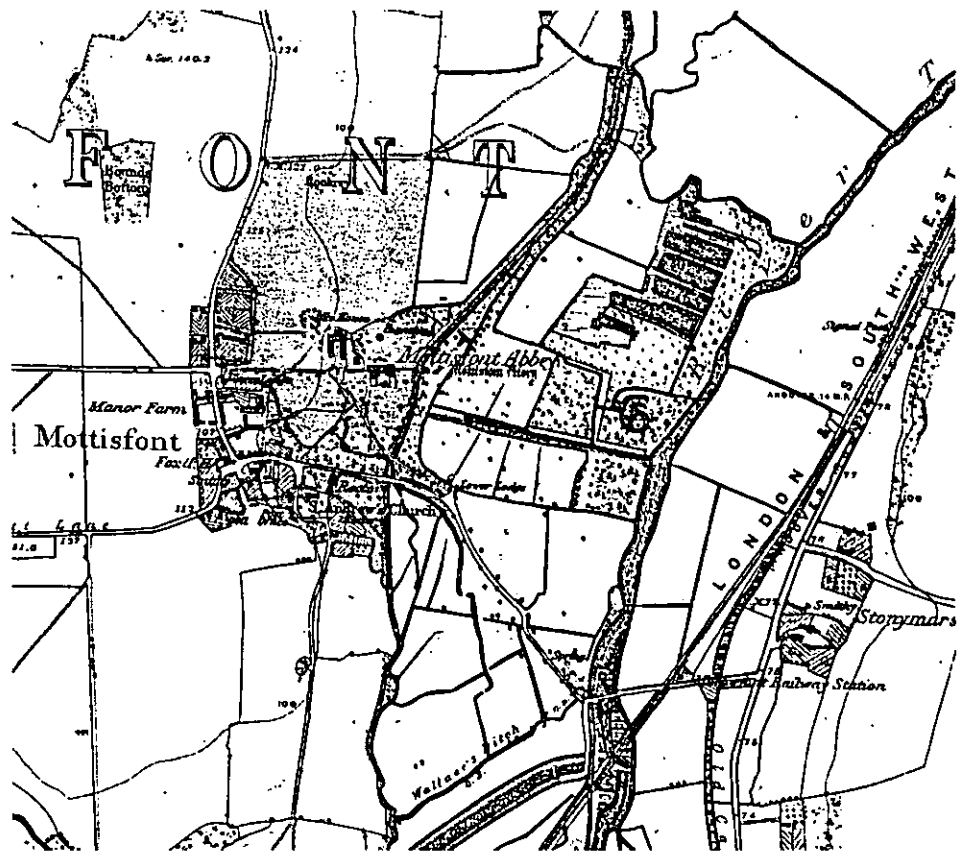
The northern channel (d) is of similar length. Its eastern end, however, is much narrower than the southern one. In the meadow it is less well preserved and survives as a slight ditch cut by the dog-legged ditch on the edge of the wood. East of the ditch it is heavily overgrown; nevertheless both sides of the channel are evident and well preserved, and extend a further 110m to the junction with the north/south channel. Along this part the channel is 15m wide and set within it is a linear bank surmounted by trees. This wooded bank, which is very degraded by fallen trees, measures 87m long; at the eastern end it is less evident, but it may have continued further towards the spiral ditch. A curving water channel defines the western end of this linear wooded bank. Beyond the junction of the two channels the northern scarp of

the east/west channel continues east to the junction with another ditch that it meets at right-angles; however, the channel narrows appreciably to c. 5m wide.

Along the north side of the northern channel there are a series of rectilinear and polygonal enclosures (e), all no more than 0.3m deep. These enclosures extend to the north, beyond the surveyed area, where they form much larger rectangular water-filled ponds. The positions of some trees and undergrowth would suggest that some of these enclosures may have been further sub-divided; however, the dense vegetation obscured these more subtle earthworks. It is interesting to note that the enclosures are confined to the north of the northern channel.

To the west of the spiral earthwork is a flat trapezoidal area of c. 1.1ha. covered by dense trees and undergrowth (f). Despite intensive field investigation the only earthwork feature recorded in this compartment was a small ditch along its western side, close to a modern drainage ditch (a); this ditch measures 40m in length and is c. 0.1m deep.

In the meadow to the west of the wood a number of very shallow, amorphous earthworks (not surveyed) survive all of which are probably associated with drainage. The most prominent feature is a very spread ditch that extends from a group of trees towards the wood. In the southern compartment, in the area now occupied by a car park, the only feature of note was a platform (g) that lies close to a house and projects slightly into the stream; this feature is a probable boat mooring-point. The house was known as Lower Lodge in 1872 (Fig.1).

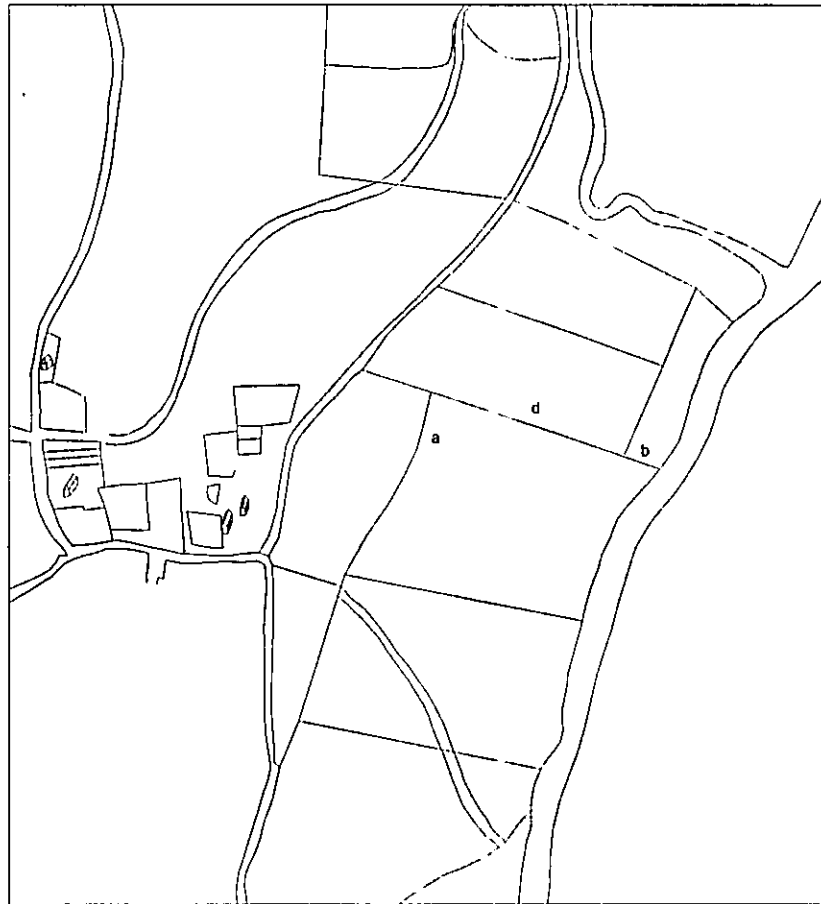


*Fig.1 - Mottisfont, 1872 (OS 1st edition map, Hants 48 NE)*

## DISCUSSION

The second phase of survey shows a relatively complex landscape development but nevertheless confirmed much of the interpretation of the first phase of work; in particular, the completion of the survey of the two wide water channels confirms that this area was formerly a compartmentalised ornamental garden. Water management was clearly crucial and water appears to have been deliberately 'tapped off' the leat in the west, initially to form large rectilinear field boundaries, and later to provide water for the wide channels, and finally to drain the meadow and woodland.

Three surveyed features can be identified on the earliest estate map: the northern channel (d); the northern part of the dog-legged ditch (a); and the second drainage ditch (b). These all appear as part of a complex of field boundary ditches (HRO 13M63/420; fig 2). In addition, part of the drain along the south was also evident. Although the field pattern reflects the landscape at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it is possible that it reflects a much older pattern.



*Fig. 2 - Simplified copy of an estate map of Mottisfont, 1724 (letters refer to letters on earthwork survey)*

By 1839 the meadow had undergone further changes with some field boundaries being abandoned whilst others were created or widened (HRO 21M65/F7/164/1-2). The northern part of the meadow contained a number of rectangular pits that were dug for peat extraction. Further south, an avenue from the house to the river, sited beside a wide channel, was

probably in existence. This avenue has the characteristics of a formal walk linking the house to the river with trees set along its course, predominantly on the northern side (although some trees and undergrowth have encroached across the avenue). These trees may have been designed to mask the northern part of the estate - the industrial side.

The creation of the two east/west channels, together with the north/south channel, effectively formed a number of compartments that may have been part of a garden probably dating to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Additionally, the spiral water feature, which was contained on a trapezoidal island, was created. This spiral was probably an ornamental water feature in the compartmentalised garden. It is interesting to note that the peat diggings are confined to the north of the northern channel and do not encroach south, thus providing a deliberate demarcation between the industrial exploitation, and the more aesthetic landscape in the south.

By 1872 the garden was abandoned as the drain (b) was extended around the spiral and through one of the channels, thus further draining the area. The peat diggings may also have suffered a similar fate since the whole area, particularly the garden area, was in woodland (OS 1st edition map, Hants 48NE - 1872).

The area of the spiral earthwork and peat pits is known locally as Duck Ground and it is possible that, following the abandonment of the garden and peat pits, the area was utilised for field sports such as wildfowling - the large quantities of shotgun cartridges attest to this. It is also possible that part of the area was used for the artificial rearing of wild duck (RCHME report 1997, SU 32 NW 45). The spiral, however, should not be regarded as a duck decoy since it does not contain any of the characteristic 'pipes' into which ducks were lured. Fishing was also undertaken on a large scale, particularly to the north of the surveyed area.

Some of the peat pits along the northern side of the channel are quite slight and laid out in a less regular manner, compared to the more developed and deeper pits further north; they are also appreciably smaller and not depicted on any map. The reason for this is unclear; however, they may reflect a different function such as ponds for duck, or they may have been dug at a different time to the pits further north.

## METHODOLOGY

The survey was carried out over a period of five days by G Brown and D Field and involved a closed traverse of eight stations. A single-leg traverse was necessary to record detail in the west. Archaeological detail and geographical features were surveyed using a total-station instrument.

The archive report and plans are deposited at the National Monuments Record Centre.

This report is Crown Copyright © : RCHME.

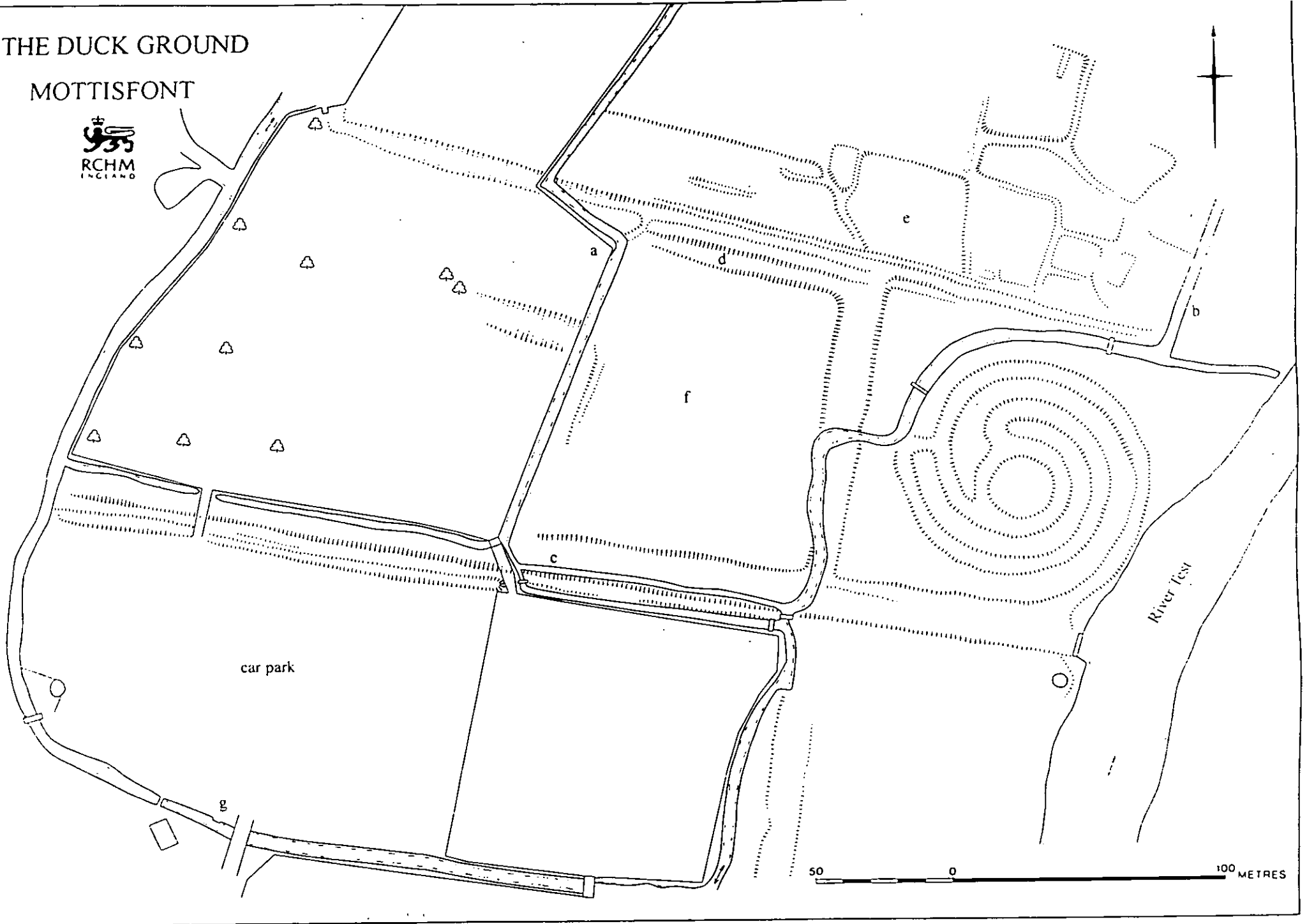
## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Hampshire Record Office (HRO)

- |                  |   |   |
|------------------|---|---|
| 13M63/420        | - | Estate map of the Manor of Mottisfont, 1724 |
| 21M65/F7/164/1-2 | - | Tithe award and Map, Mottisfont (1839)      |

RCHME 1997, *Duck Ground - Mottisfont Abbey* (RCHME report SY 32 NW 45)

THE DUCK GROUND  
MOTTISFONT







NATIONAL  
MONUMENTS  
RECORD

*The National Monuments Record contains  
all the information in this report – and more:  
original photographs, plans old and new,  
the results of all RCHME field surveys, indexes of  
archaeological sites and historical buildings,  
and complete coverage of England  
in air photographs.*



*The Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England gathers information on England's heritage  
and provides it through the National Monuments Record*

*World Wide Web: <http://www.rchme.gov.uk>*

*National Monuments Record enquiries: telephone 01793 414600*

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