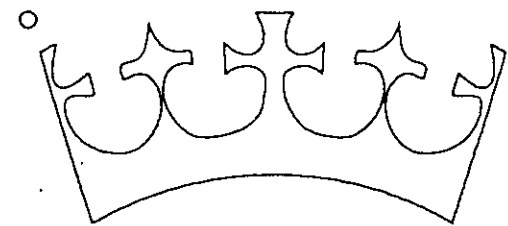


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RCHME SURVEY REPORT

BRAMSHILL GARDENS,
HAMPSHIRE



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





BRAMSHILL GARDENS

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

PARISH: Bramshill
DISTRICT: Hart
COUNTY: Hampshire

NGR: SU 7575 5948
NMR No: SU 75 NE 22

Surveyed: May 1998
Report by: G R Brown
Investigation: G R Brown, M Bowden, E Gawith
Illustrations: G R Brown
Photographs: G R Brown

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An Earthwork Survey of the Gardens at Bramshill - Hampshire

Summary

Bramshill is one of the most outstanding Jacobean houses in England. The house, together with the surrounding gardens and parkland, dates from the early 17th century. One of the gardens, which is now abandoned and survives only as slight earthworks, is remarkably similar to an undated plan of an Italian garden. An earthwork survey was therefore undertaken to try to ascertain whether the plan of the garden was ever executed.

INTRODUCTION

A garden, thought to have been an Italian renaissance garden, was surveyed by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) in May 1998 at the request of the Hampshire Gardens Trust. The garden lies on the southern side of the mansion house and is centred at SU 75855954; it comprises three sides of a sloping wedge-shaped area leading to a lake that is dammed on the south-western side. The opportunity was also taken to survey the area on the south-eastern side of the park as far as the perimeter fence, where a prominent tree-lined avenue is evident.

Bramshill Park is a grade II garden (EH Register of Parks and Gardens; Part 19). The soils are of two types: on the higher ground, in the area of the house and gardens, it is a sandy and clay soil of the Holiday Hill Association, whilst on the lower ground it is of the Hurst Association; this is a river gravel terrace soil which is variably affected by groundwater (Soil Survey sheet 6, 1983). Geologically, the region varies between the Plateau Gravel on the higher ground, and descends through bands of Bracklesham Beds, Lower Bagshot Beds, and London Clay, with Alluvium and Brickearth in the valley (Geology map 284).

BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The House

Bramshill has been described as one of the most important Jacobean houses in England, ranking alongside Hatfield House in Hertfordshire, Knole in Kent, and Audley End in Essex (Hills 1985, 1011). The house, built by Edward, 11th Lord Zouche of Harringworth, between 1605-1612, is situated centrally on high ground within Bramshill Park and overlooks the surrounding countryside.

Lord Zouche travelled widely on the continent, particularly in southern Germany and Vienna, he was also ambassador to Denmark in 1598, and in a similar manner to other travellers of his time he undoubtedly brought back to England some of the ideas of house and garden design he saw on the continent.

The house was built on the site of an earlier building (Anon 1899, 432), parts of which, such as the gate house on the south-east side and the undercroft, were incorporated into the Jacobean house (Hussey 1923, 766). Further evidence of the earlier fabric is suggested in an inventory of 1607 where of the twenty-seven rooms in the main house that are listed, only two were described as new (Hills 1985a, 1012). Bramshill has a narrower courtyard than other houses of the period; also the entrance is not on one of the longer sides of the house, which was common at the time, but on one of the shorter sides (*ibid.*). The choice of the position of the entrance and the absence of a larger courtyard was probably influenced by its incorporation into a pre-existing building and the topography of the area. Blickling Hall in Norfolk is a similar example; the Jacobean house, with the entrance along a shorter side, was built on a moated site and was clearly influenced by the earlier medieval house (Anon 1987, 34).

Lord Zouche died in 1625 and the estate passed to his cousin, Sir Edward Zouche. The house was still incomplete in 1638 when it was purchased by Randell MacDonnell, 2nd Earl of Antrim. MacDonnell held it briefly before selling to Sir Robert Henley. In 1699, Sir John Cope purchased the estate and it was to remain in the family's hands for the next 236 years before being acquired by Lord Broucket. Finally, in 1953, the Home Office purchased the house and part of the former estate and it became the Police Staff College (Anon 1899, 435; Hills 1985, 1012).

Since the early 17th century the mansion house has undergone a number of changes. For instance, the original intention was to have two projecting wings on the shorter sides, thus giving the house the appearance of an 'H' plan in outline; however, an estate map of 1699 (fig. 1) shows only the south-western side built; this wing was approximately 18m long and may well have been service ranges in a similar manner to those at Bickling Hall (Hills 1985a, 1013). The wing at Bramshill was demolished between 1699-1703, probably as a result of a fire some thirty-five years earlier (*ibid.*, 1015). The principal entrance to the house, which was originally on the north-east side, was moved to the south-west side.

The Park and Gardens

The Park

A park was created at Bramshill and Hazeley in 1347 when Thomas Foxley was given license to enclose an area of some 2,500 acres (1041 ha) (*ibid.*, 1011). The bounds of this medieval deer park are unclear; however, it is likely to have extended as far as the county boundary and the confluence of the River Whitewater and Blackwater River in the north, thus incorporating Bramshill Plantation. In the north-east it probably lay along Bramshill parish boundary (which is also close to the 1699 park boundary (fig. 1)); whilst in the west it probably extended as far as a tributary of the river Whitewater, which also forms the Hazeley parish boundary. By the mid-18th century the park was much reduced in area and covered some 599 acres (249 ha) (HRO M48/1889).

Since the late 17th century the principal approach to the house was from the south, along a tree-lined avenue (fig. 1). This avenue is approximately one kilometre long and crosses a 17th century bridge over the river Hart before ascending to two turrets before levelling out in front of the house. As the avenue begins to ascend the hill there is an earthen ramp and traffic is today directed to the side. This ramp is cut by another avenue some 300m north of the bridge and probably reflects the 'Lower Highbridge Moor' field boundary. The northern approach to the house was along an embanked tree-lined avenue, which extended beyond Black Pond to the edge of the park (fig 1).

Other survivals of the 17th- century park include the walled gardens set around the house; two of the original four ponds; the earthwork maze; the conduit or pump house, and island (Riley 1991).

In common with the house, the park and gardens have undergone a number of changes in the succeeding years, some of which are reflected on the estate maps, although others are not recorded and are only visible as earthworks and other field remains.

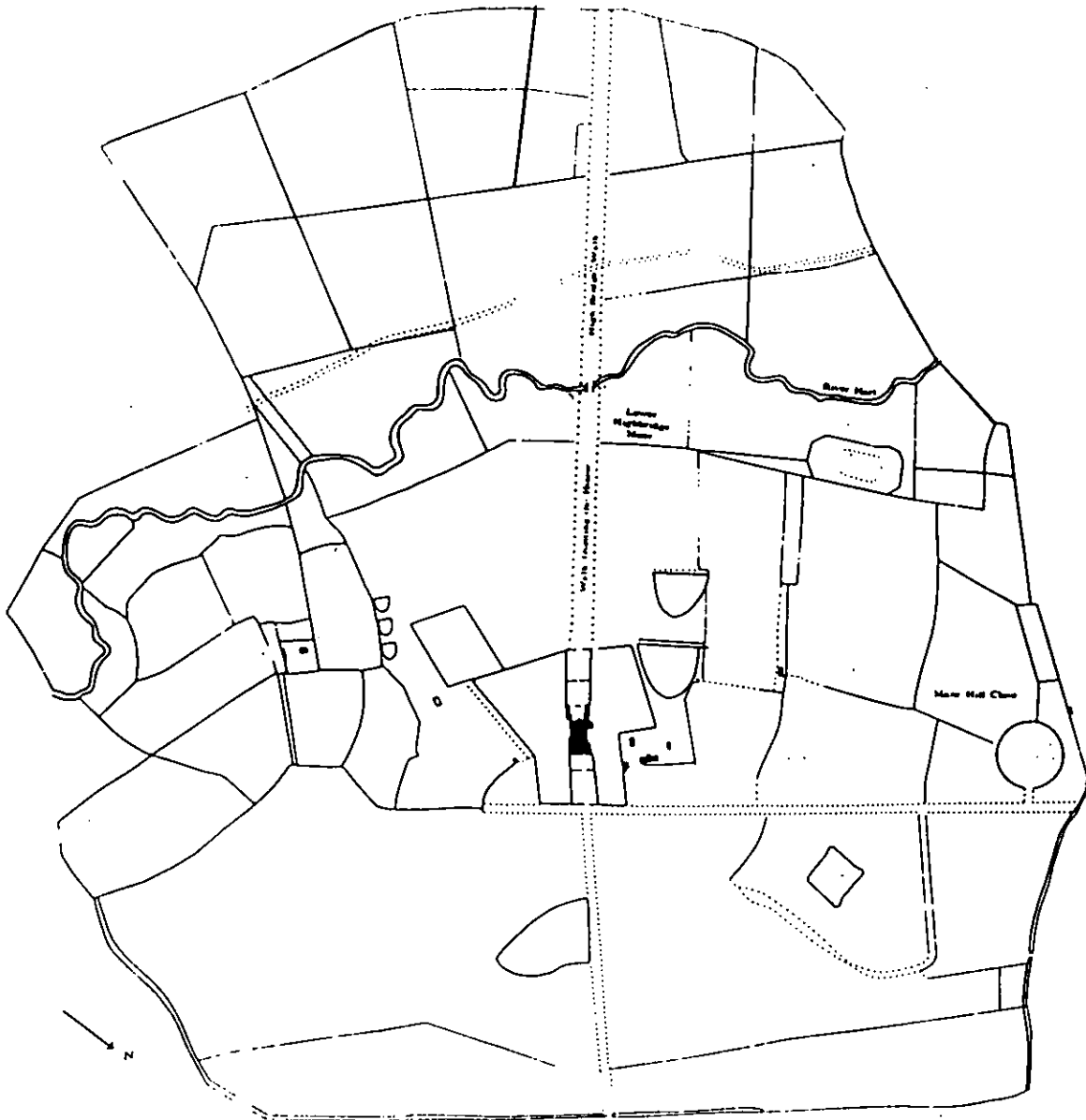


Fig 1 Isaac Justus's map of Bramshill park dated 1699 (after Bilikowski 1983, 4)

The Gardens

Surrounding the house are the walled gardens that date from the 17th century. On the south side there is a gravel and grass forecourt which extends as far as the two octagonal turrets previously mentioned and boundary fence; this gravelled area was formerly the location of the wings. On the north-west side, the area of the former entrance, are a series of compartmentalised walled gardens, including a rose garden that was designed by Cope in the 18th century. Changes in the texture of the stonework on the wall of the broad central garden would suggest that there were formerly lean-to buildings; also small niches in the wall are evident which probably held small statues.

On the south-east side of the house is a loggia terrace opening out to a parterre; above the parterre is a ballustraded 'trocco', or bowling green terrace, whilst below is the possible Italian garden.

PREVIOUS INVESTIGATIONS

Apart from the limited investigations carried out for the English Heritage Register, which appears to have been a desk-based assessment relying heavily on Bilikowski's work (1983) and 'Country Life' articles (Anon 1899; Hussey 1923a; Hussey 1923b; Hills 1985a; Hills 1985b), there appears to have been no archaeological fieldwork within Bramshill Park prior to the current investigations. However, a landscape assessment was commissioned by the Police Staff College in 1990 (Riley 1990; Riley 1991); the aim was to formulate a strategy for the restoration, where practicable, of the original layout of the park and the re-design of those parts that had been affected by the modern buildings (Riley 1990, 1.1). The fieldwork appears comprehensive and covered the planting in the parkland as well as a description of the formal gardens surrounding the house.

In addition to the earthwork survey undertaken by RCHME, Southampton University carried out a geophysical survey on the Rose Garden and parterre.

EARTHWORK SURVEY AND INTERPRETATION

The earthwork survey at Bramshill (fig 2) covered an area of 3.7 hectares and although the initial intention was to confine it to the area of the Italian garden, it was decided to extend it as far as the south-eastern perimeter fence in order to place the garden in a wider context. The survey is, therefore, divided into four main parts.

The Possible Italian Garden (plate 1)

The garden is situated on the southern side of the mansion house, below an enclosing courtyard brick wall; it is confined to an artificially sunken area covering 1.2 hectares and is defined on three sides by steep slopes, and on the fourth side by a dam.

The principal feature in this garden is the pond that covers an area of approximately 0.1 hectare. To the north-east of the pond the ground is particularly marshy almost as far as a low scarp that curves around the south-east side; this marshy area may represent the former limits of the pond. Along the southern side is an earthen dam measuring approximately 60m long and up to 3m in width. At the mid-point along the dam is a modern water outlet, or overflow pipe.

The best preserved earthworks in the garden lie along the north-western side. Here there are traces of five terraces descending the slope. The lower two terraces are both 35m long and approximately 4m wide. To the south of these is a low elongated mound, approximately 0.3m high. Above the two terraces and mound are a further two terraces. The lower of the two is of a similar width to the lower terraces; however, from a point opposite the mound, it follows a more sinuous route towards the southernmost of the turrets. The upper terrace is 55m long and 2m wide and is truncated by the lower terrace; however, its line can be traced beyond this point for a further 35m to the remains of a brick wall. This wall measures 2.5m long and projects from the southern turret. A slight hollow way, 20m long and 2.5m wide, extends from the upper terrace down the slope towards a walk along the top of the dam. Three further slight terraces are evident on the north-western side of the pond; the lower one continues the line of the dam before turning at right angles and measures 34 metres in length.

The north-eastern side of the garden is approximately 80m long and 5m high, at the bottom the ground continues to fall gently for a further 5m towards the edge of the lake (see profile). There are two features of note along this side. The first is a series of rotting wooden steps that are offset from the centre, just beyond the south-eastern edge of the parterre. Further south, at the bottom of the slope and almost on the corner is the Lady Well, a small stone relief set back and mounted on bricks. The ground between the north-eastern side and the pond is particularly rough and disturbed; however, a slight double scarp with a circular feature on the lower scarp was recorded. This feature is possibly a fountain depicted on the plan of the Italian garden (plate 2).

The third side of the garden is approximately 70m long. It slopes gradually towards the edge of the lake. Near the top is a slight terrace measuring 2m wide that opens up to relatively flat ground at the top. In the north-eastern corner is an area of disturbance defined by a pecked line on the plan. The slope has all the appearance of soil creep, which has effectively covered any archaeological features.



Plate 1. *A view from the house overlooking the area of the possible Italian garden.*

The Avenue

The avenue extends from the front of the mansion house in a south-westerly direction and comprises a gravelled area leading to a level lawn bounded in the east by a wall and in the north-west by a metalled road; beyond is a former kitchen garden. To the south, 106m in front of the house, is an iron gate bounded by two brick turrets previously mentioned. On the northern side the avenue is defined by a scarp which, at its maximum, is about 0.8m high. This scarp forms a ramp that leads down the hill, beyond the surveyed area.

The Parterre

On the east side of the house is a levelled lawn measuring approximately 50 x 50m. It is defined by a slight raised platform with scarps measuring up to 0.1m high on the south-east and south-west sides. Elsewhere on the lawn there are very slight amorphous earthworks and linear parch-marks, the latter probably marking the presence of pipes.

On the north-west side, 6m in front of the loggia terrace, is a slight scarp lying parallel to the house. The line of this scarp continues further south-west in front of the avenue wall and may well be a terrace between the house/avenue wall, and the gardens.

On the east side of the parterre, and extending diagonally almost from the corner of the trocco balustrade, is a slight hollow way measuring 55m long and 3m wide and up to 0.1m deep. This feature can be identified as Lady Abney's Walk, the line of which may be first depicted on the 1699 estate map, although it is not specifically mentioned until 1756 (HRO 6M63/3).

The Eastern Area

Beyond Lady Abney's Walk the ground drops appreciably to a marshy area and beyond this is the modern perimeter fence. On this lower ground there are a large number of trees, most of which can be identified from earlier estate maps. No trees are shown on the plan since they would detract from the earthwork survey; however, the majority were surveyed and their location is depicted on

fig 2 and the field drawing which is held in the archive at the National Monuments Record Centre (SU 75 NE 2).

A natural scarp defines the northern edge of the survey and extends east from the walled gardens. This scarp descends to a ditch and internal bank. The bank measures 95m in length and is up to 4m wide at the top and 9m wide at the bottom. At its maximum it is about 0.5m high, but diminishes appreciably in the east where an area of disturbed ground and thick vegetation masks its form at this point. The ditch measures up to 5m wide and 0.3m in depth and terminates at the western end.

Close to the eastern perimeter fence is another ditch with an internal bank. This feature may form part of the northern bank and ditch; however, it was not surveyed due to the dense vegetation.

To the north-west of the perimeter fence is a broad north-south avenue measuring 165m long and 10m wide at the top and up to 18m wide at the bottom. At the northern end the avenue is truncated by the bank. Near the northern end is a prominent tree mound measuring 9m in diameter and 1m high with small water drainage channel to the south.

To the south of the tree mound are two regular scarps, each approximately 30 metres in length and separated by a recess. The eastern scarp turns at right-angles for a further 15m thus forming an inverted 'L'; within this 'L' is a marshy area which has undoubtedly been created by the construction of the embanked avenue which has blocked the natural drainage. The area to the south of these two scarps possibly represents a former garden; alternatively it could be the site of the deer barn recorded on Isaac Justis's map of 1699 which had been abandoned by the mid 18th century.

To the south of the marshy area, and at the bottom of the natural scarp, is a slight terrace walk measuring 75m long and up to 5m wide. This terrace walk leads to an area that has been extensively disturbed by rabbits (delimited by a pecked line on the plan) but the walk probably continued west along the southern side of the dam, and then ascended the slope towards the southern turret. The northern side of the terrace way is further masked by an area of quarrying, or a possible grotto or seat. Another probable walk along this natural scarp can be seen near the top; it measures 70m in length and probably also linked with the walk across the dam.

DISCUSSION

The RCHME measured earthwork survey has revealed a number of interesting points about the gardens on the south-east side of the house and the park; however, detailed discussion about the latter is confined only to the part that was investigated.

The Italian Garden and Parterre

In many respects, the plan of the garden at Bramshill conforms to the principle characteristics of an Italian garden of the renaissance period identified by Strong (1998, 181) where terraces, geometrically layed out beds, water, and statues, are all important features. The garden plan (plate 2) shows a series of terraces along three sides with a walk along the fourth. Along the top of the three terraces is what may be a narrow band of statues or topiary. Below the topiary are two terraces; the lower one appears to be a walk around the three sides. These terraces are separated by flights of steps. Below these terraces, further flights of steps lead to a parterre. These geometrically laid out beds are separated by walks with circular features; in the centre of each of these features, and the beds, is a small circle, probably representing a statue or a tree. The focal point of the parterre is an oval bed, set slightly to the north of centre of the garden with a much larger monument, probably a fountain. To the front there is a larger wedge-shaped bed, or basin, with two flanking rectangular beds; these appear to be enclosed. Whether these were water features is unclear, although they are a slightly lighter shade of green which may represent a difference from the remainder of the garden. The water area is bordered by what appears to be walls or hedges. The garden, in some respects, resembles that shown in a painting by Cornelius Johnson of the Capel family and dating to 1639 (see Strong 1998, front cover).

The earthwork survey located some of the features depicted on the Italian garden plan, particularly on the north-west side where terraces and one of the circular features can be seen. Significantly, two walks, one across the top of the dam, and the other on the lower slope, were surveyed. These walks extended from the southern turret, along the dam, and then around the back of the garden; the lower walk linking to the possible garden near the avenue in the east. These walks were clearly designed garden features that provided stunning views across the pond to the house. Whether these

walks were in existence when the garden was first laid or whether they are, in part at least, later modifications is unclear.

The date when the garden was created is uncertain. The first securely dated indication of a possible garden on the southern side of the house is 1699 (fig 1) when the estate was purchased by Sir John Cope. This shows the perimeter of the garden but its actual form is not shown.

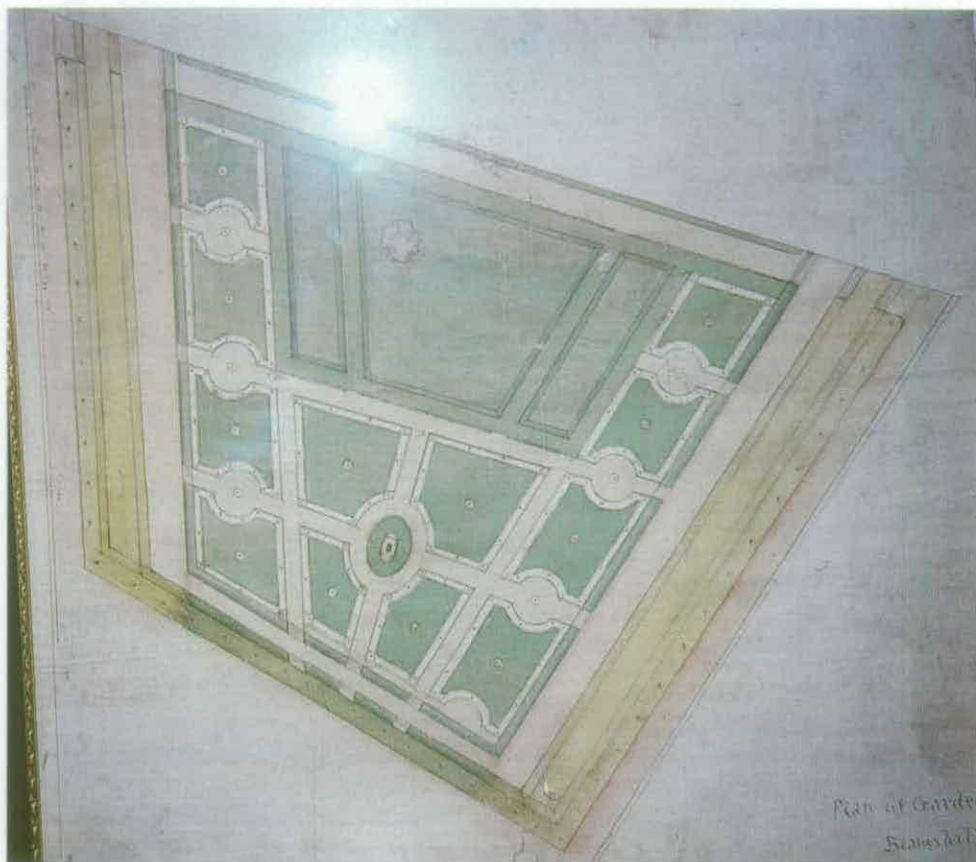


Plate 2. *The Italian Garden (undated)*. Note: north is to the bottom

The first indication of the form of a garden is on Dering's plan of 1715-16 (plate 3) which shows the perimeter of a garden with a lake, although somewhat larger, in a similar position to the one depicted on the Italian garden plan. It also shows the enclosed parterre in front of the loggia terrace with a small rectangular pond bordered by Lady Abney's Walk. This garden plan was undoubtedly executed, since the parterre platform is evident from the earthwork survey. In addition, the

northern bed, and parts of the remaining three, are clearly visible as crop marks on aerial photographs(OS/75338, 207-8, dated 29 July 1975).

Whether the Dering plan shows schematically the Italian garden is open to speculation. What is clear, however, is that between 1699 and 1715 the Cope family, having acquired the estate, had undertaken substantial alterations to the house, with corresponding changes to the garden. The wings at the front of the house, for example, were demolished and replaced by a parterre. Similar alterations to the rest of the garden may also have been commissioned at this time including the modification or completion of the Italian garden. By 1756 there were further changes to the garden and three basins had been created which were similar in size to those shown in fig 1 (HRO. 6M63/3).

It seems likely, therefore, that the Italian garden was commissioned some time in the 17th century; however, whether it was ever completed at this time is less certain, particularly since Lord Zouch was not a wealthy man and the house took a considerable time to complete. A later date for the garden is less plausible since there was a general move to a more 'natural' landscape in during the 18th century, away from the formal gardens of the renaissance.

Further evidence of the existence of a renaissance garden is provided by the observations of Joan Penelope Cope, who, in 1935, confirmed the existence of terraces (Cope 1938, 51). She also identified the Lady Well. This well is not depicted on either of these two plans and may be a later feature.

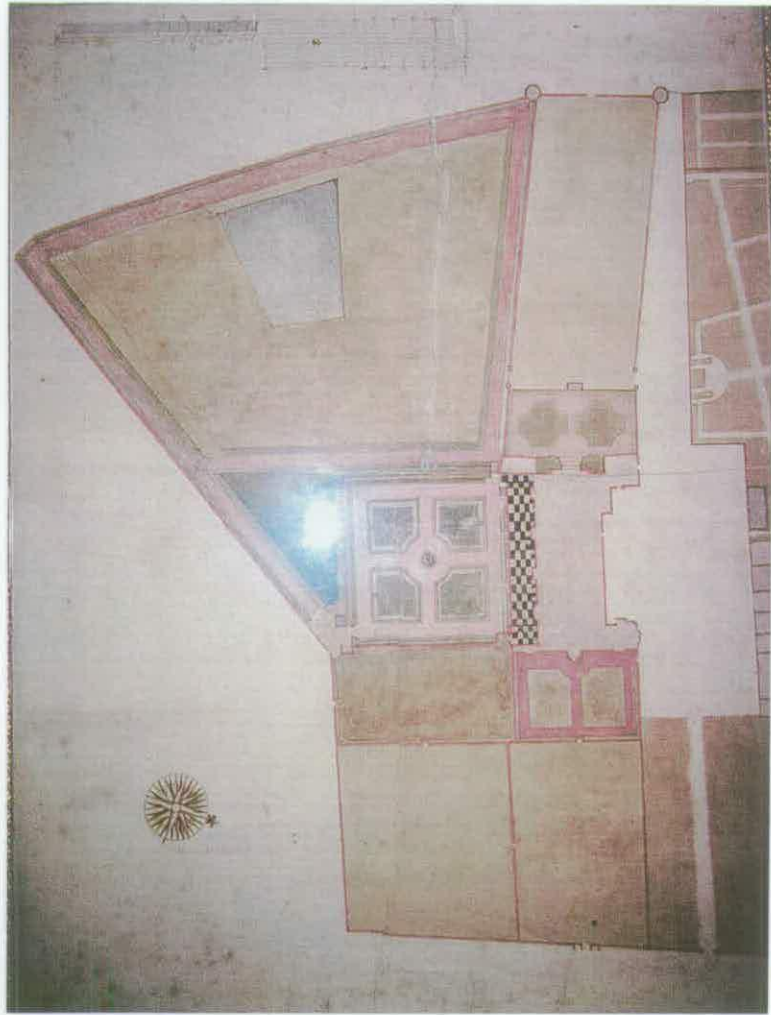


Plate 3. *A garden plan of Bramshill by G C Dering dated 1715-16*

The Park

The avenue close to the perimeter fence was probably constructed sometime in the first half of the 18th century, possibly at a similar time that other alterations to the house and gardens were taking place, since there is no indication of it in 1699 (fig 1), but is clearly shown in 1756. On the later map it is depicted on the east side of the long canal near the river Hart (HRO 6M63/3). This avenue, as well as the others in the park, were clearly symbolic and designed to impress; they would have both surprised and delighted visitors as they ascended the hill towards the house as it suddenly came into view, only to be momentarily hidden again by trees. From the top of the hill the avenue, which, on an undated 18th century map is shown now flanked by a double row of trees, continues to the edge of the park (HRO 43 M48/1889). Tree planting in 1756 had increased considerably, and in particular, a line of trees is evident along the line of the bank and ditch that can be seen truncating, and therefore clearly post-dating the avenue on the survey plan.

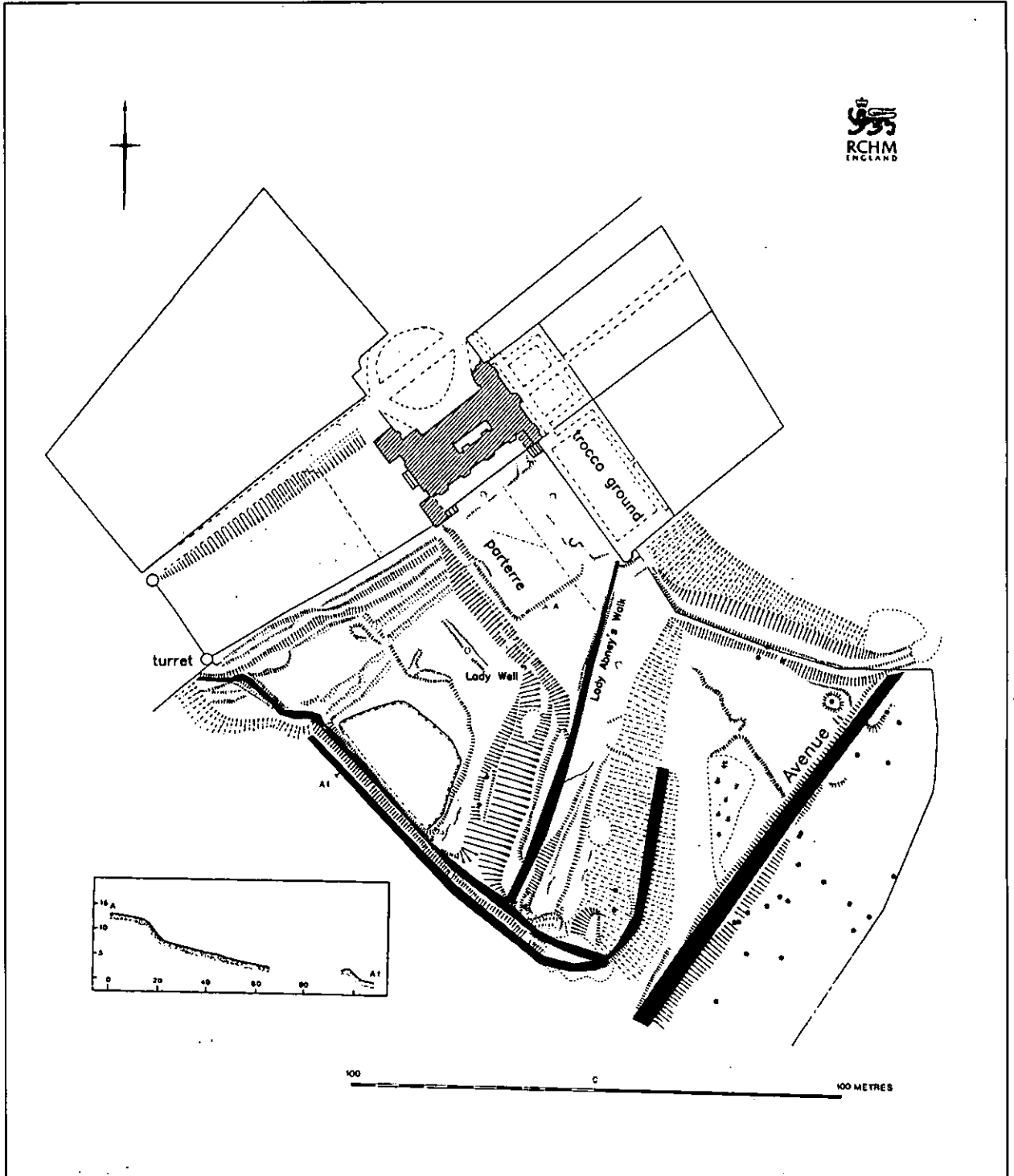


Fig 2. RCHME Survey showing walks and position of many of the trees

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the landscape assessment carried out in 1990, it is felt that Bramshill Park warrants a more detailed archaeological field investigation. The landscape assessment, although thorough, had clearly defined objectives, essentially identifying 16th - 19th century parkland and garden features. It is often found that areas of parkland contain features from earlier periods, such as field systems, evidence of abandoned settlement, and former medieval deer park boundaries, which are not necessarily depicted on any estate or Ordnance Survey map. It is also apparent that, despite the existence of estate maps that show features such as avenues, mounts, and canals, other parkland features may survive that are not shown on any map.

The 'Country Life' articles, the principle source of documentary evidence, are primarily concerned with the architecture of the house; however, tantalisingly, there is mention that '*sufficient documentary evidence has survived to make possible a reconstruction of its history*' (Hills 1985, 1015). Some of this evidence may also include the wider park and should be examined in more detail.

It is recommended that an archaeological field investigation should be conducted in two stages:

- a. A field investigation of the whole parkland. This would probably take approximately two days.
- b. Survey at large scale (e.g. 1:1000) specific sites of particular interest identified at (a), including features that may exist on the Island and The Maze. The timing would clearly depend on the number, extent and complexity of the site.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey was carried out to a scale of 1:1000 over a period of eight days by G. Brown, M. Bowden, and E. Gawith, a student on placement with RCHME, and involved an eight station closed traverse with a single spur. Survey stations, archaeological control points, and geographical features were surveyed using a Total Station instrument; taped offsets were then used to measure and plan the archaeological detail.

In addition to the archaeological survey, ninety-three vertical aerial photographs, held at the National Monuments Record Centre, were examined; of these only thirty-three were relevant to the survey area and are listed at Appendix A.

The Hampshire Gardens Trust and the library at Bramshill Police College kindly provided documentary evidence. This was supplemented by further limited research at Hampshire Record Office and the library of the National Monuments Record. The report has been written by G. Brown and edited by M. Bowden. The site plan was drawn by G. Brown.

The archive report and plan are deposited at the National Monuments Record Centre, Kemble Drive, Swindon, SN2 2GZ.

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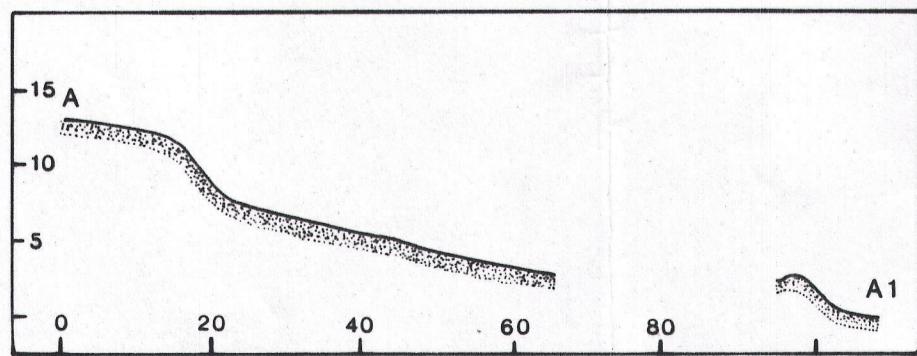
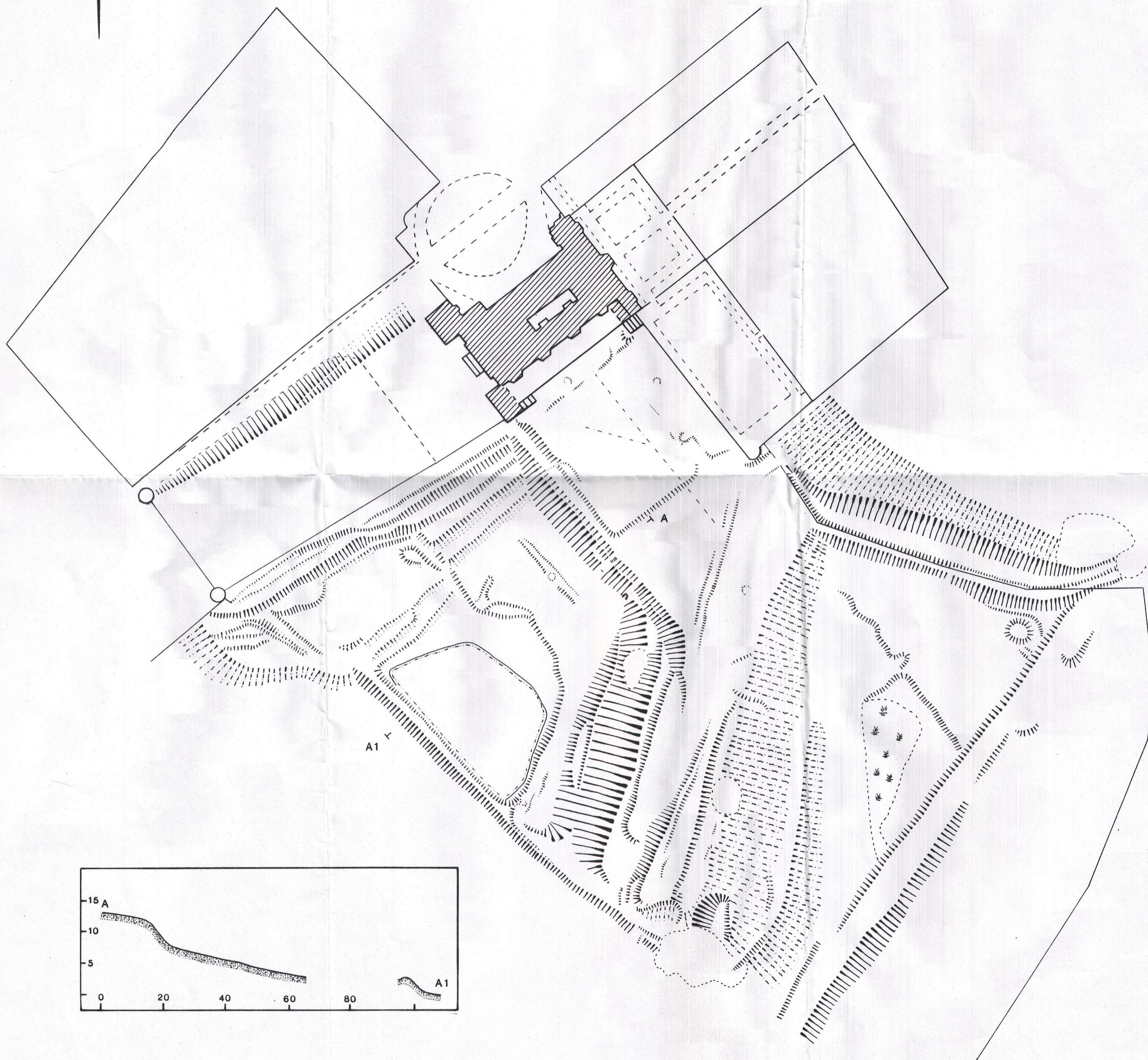
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BRAMSHILL



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*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
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