

# ◆ Capability Brown at Petworth

By Tom Dommett

*In 1752 Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown was commissioned by the 2nd Earl of Egremont to transform Petworth Park in the new style of the English landscape garden. Brown’s association with Petworth left a lasting legacy, a landscape which 250 years on retains at its heart his vision for a perfected, romantic version of nature. Over the course of a decade Brown utterly transformed Petworth Park.*

*Through the prism of three years of archaeological research at Petworth Park it is possible to discuss in depth the scale and execution of his designs there, to examine how these fit into the wider context of the park’s development before Brown and also the changes which were made after his departure.*

*Brown’s creation at Petworth is one of contrast and sometimes contradiction which can be read in different ways: was he a visionary, a vandal, or both?*

## GREAT CAPABILITY

Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown (1716–83) obtained his first gardening position at Kirkharle Hall in Northumberland at the age of 16. He gained a reputation at Grimsthorpe as an engineer before being appointed to the position of head gardener at Stowe in 1742. Brown’s style of landscape minimalism broadly focussed on ideas of a perfected ‘natural’ landscape, with serpentine lakes and scattered planting. This stood in stark contrast to the formality and geometry of parterres and clipped topiary which had defined garden layouts in the 17th century. Brown has been described, not as a reactionary pioneer, but as responding to a growing admiration of ‘nature’, endorsed by intellectuals, promoted on economic grounds and practised by designers such as William Kent and John Vanbrugh. To some Brown’s style was simply the style of his times, even with roots in much older traditions of medieval deer parks (Gregory et al. 2013, 10, 20, 22; Mayer 2011 5–6, 34). Certainly Brown developed sufficient standing and reputation that in 1751 he was able to establish himself as an independent landscaper and architect (Mayer 2011, 35) and within a year the 2nd Earl of Egremont had received from him a proposed plan – the only one of many to have survived today – for a reimagined Petworth Park (Fig. 1). Over the course of his five contracts Brown had a dramatic impact through thorough demolitions, careful planting, bold expansion, ambitious landscaping and hydrological engineering to create the lawns, lakes and sweeping vistas of the new Park (Fig. 2).

## GRAND DESIGNS

To truly appreciate the boldness of Brown’s vision for Petworth’s new designed landscape, we must first understand the landscape with which he was confronted when he arrived at Petworth in 1751. With the assistance of George London the 6th Duke of Somerset had spent the early 18th century establishing a formal arrangement of gardens and avenues orientated around the single axis of the newly developed mansion, drawing on the fashion for order and symmetry which had reached its height on the Continent during the mid- to late 17th century (Colvin and Moggridge 2004, 3; Fig. 3). There was a parterre and orange garden, rampart terraces and ornamental canal gardens, quarter-piece lawns and the ‘Iron Court’ turning circle in front of the house. These features, the antithesis to Brown’s trademark sinuous curves and serpentes, had in many cases only been *in situ* for less than 50 years: in 1706 the area of the parterre was still under construction, simply recorded as ‘the new level’d ground’. For Brown to suggest such a radical change in removing these features in favour of the informality of his swathes of pasture speaks to a certain surety and strength of conviction, no doubt cemented during his work at Newnham Paddox in 1746, sweeping away similar 17th-century formal gardens, and at Warwick Castle in 1749 (Mayer 2011, 34; Rutherford 2008, 62).

Elements of the formal gardens at Petworth survive only as archaeological features. Geoarchaeological survey has recorded the unweathered bedrock into which the rampart terraces were cut (Wessex Archaeology 2013, 4)



Fig. 1. 'Capability' Brown's initial proposal of 1751 for Petworth Park, the only surviving of his plans (PHA 5177) (bottom); digital aerial photograph (2008 of the corresponding area (top) and georeferenced to OS map (inset).

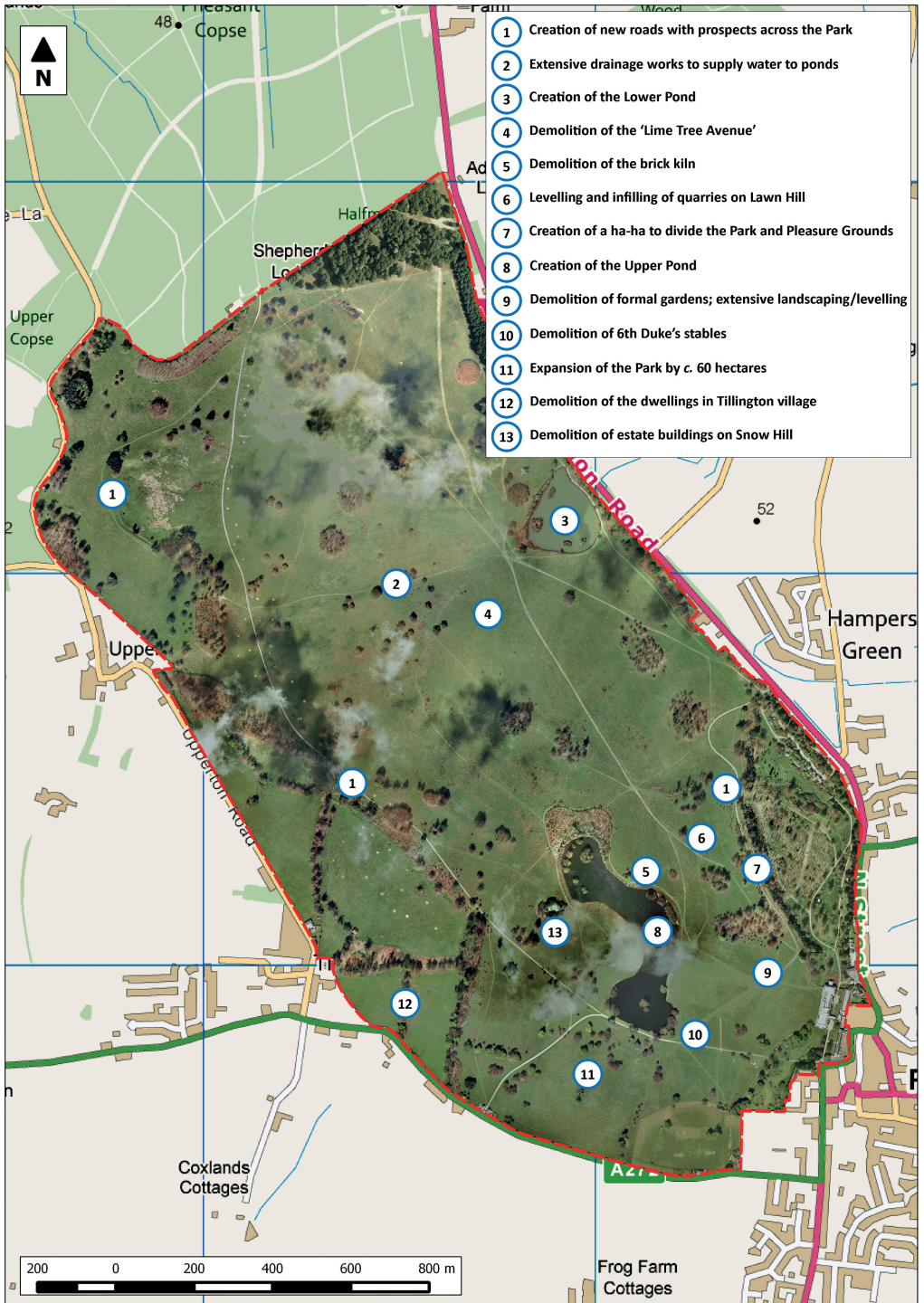


Fig. 2. Brown's major landscape interventions at Petworth Park.

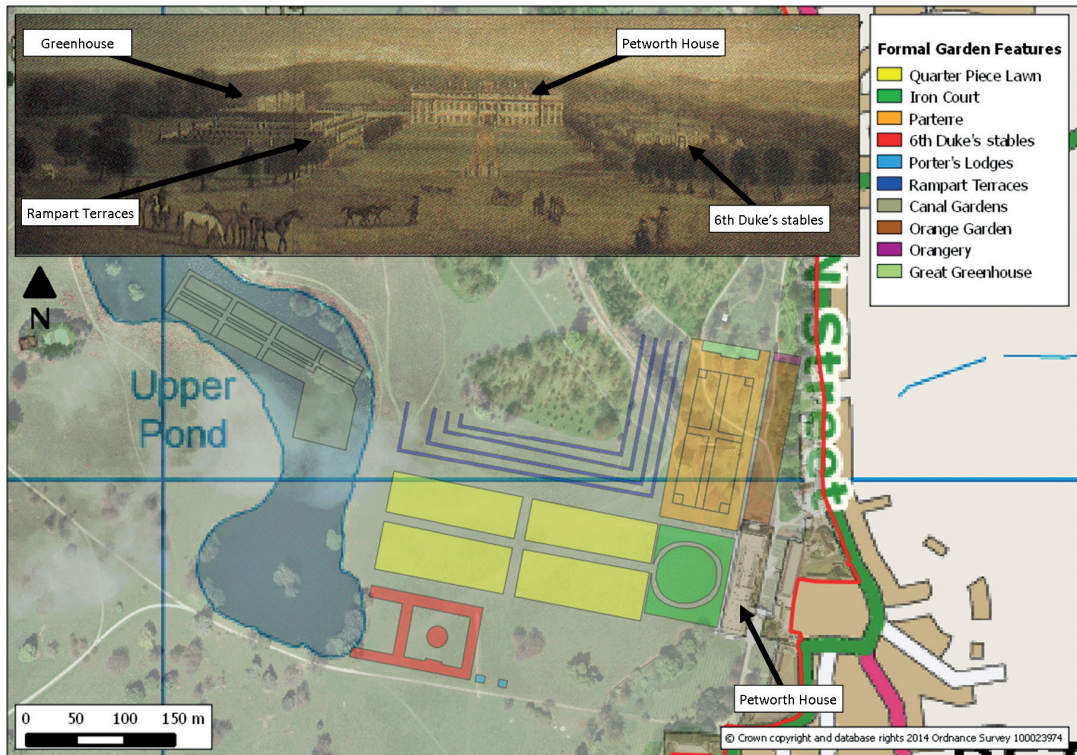


Fig. 3. The layout of the formal gardens when Brown began work at Petworth, from a painting of c. 1730 attributed to Peter Tillemans (inset).

and excavations have identified drains, paths and courtyard surfaces on the lawn immediately west of the mansion, buried barely ten centimetres below the turf which Brown must have laid over it (Archaeology South-East 2013, 7–8). Brown's 1752 plan for Petworth (Petworth House Archives, hereafter PHA, 5177) does, however, illustrate a practical approach, adapting the landscape rather than wholesale reinvention. He clearly entertained the possibility of retaining the parterre, albeit in a softened form; the long linear walks in the Pleasure Grounds were to continue being utilised, interlaced with new narrow winding paths; the 6th Duke's stables would be reduced rather than removed, masked by new planting. Even at the time of the second contract in 1754 the greenhouse at the northern end of the Parterre was still to be retained (Rutherford 2008, 39).

The 6th Duke's stables were constructed c. 1716 to replace the 9th Earl of Northumberland's stables (Rutherford 2008, 23). Geophysical survey in 2013

and 2014 was able to clearly show elements of the southern and eastern wings of this substantial quadrangular building, along with a possible gatehouse entrance and trackway (Fig. 4). The surveys also identified the Porter's Lodges either side of the entrance to the park from the Court Ditch Lane, and a geometric feature thought to represent an extension of the formal gardens, perhaps serving to mask the entrance from the surrounding landscape of fields and settlement. By 1758 the stables had been demolished by Brown who at this time wrote of work at the 'new stables' (PHA 6623, 45). Demolition was thorough, with the entire area reduced to the natural sandstone before being levelled with a layer of yellowish silty sand, typically 100–200mm in depth and finished with topsoil and turf (Archaeology South-East 2015, 38; Fig. 6 [501], [500]). Excavations in 2015 (Archaeology South-East 2015; Fig. 5) identified only heavily truncated wall footings relating to the stables in the south-eastern corner of the building (Trench 5, [509] in Fig. 6)

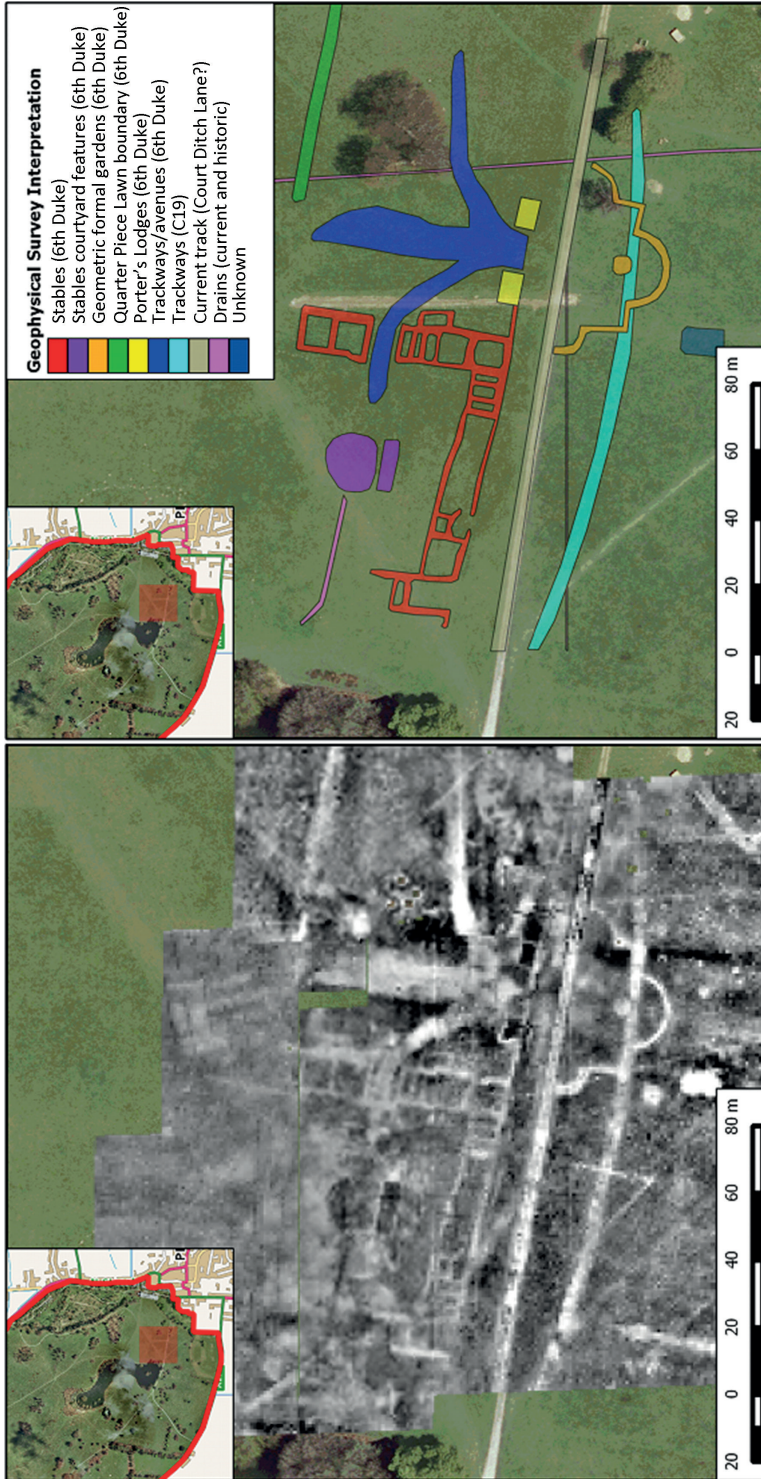


Fig. 4. Geophysical (earth resistance) survey results and interpretation in the area of the 6th Duke of Somerset's stables.

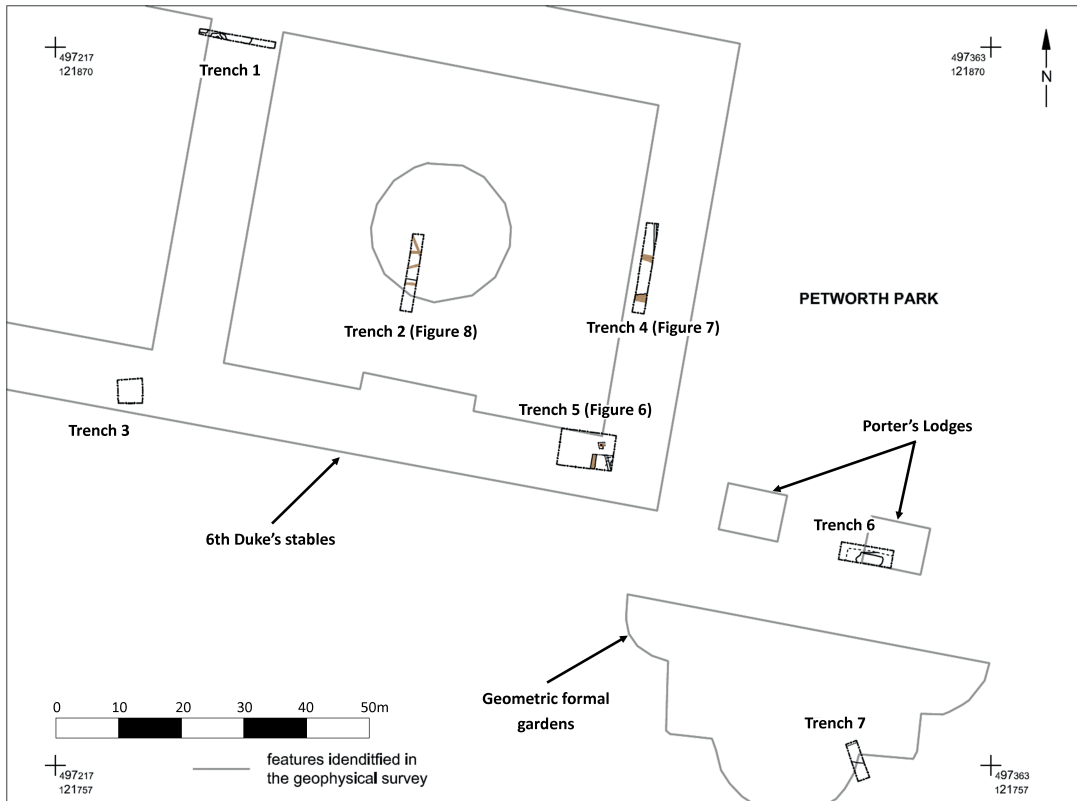


Fig. 5. Trenches excavated to investigate the 6th Duke's stables.

and in the area of the gatehouse entrance (Trench 4, [405] and Trench 4, [408] in Fig. 7), each being approximately 1m in width. Here a trench had been cut through Brown's made ground in line with the surviving wall footings and backfilled with a richer silty clay, presumably in an attempt to reduce the visibility of parchmarks which may have been impinging upon Brown's naturalistic designs (Archaeology South-East 2015, 11).

Indeed, the removal of the stables was so thorough, so *targeted* with demolition to a consistent level, that evidence for landscape use *pre*-dating the stables was far more prevalent, in the form of quarrying and of loosely bonded sandstone walls of width 300 to 400mm. These were noted across the northernmost trenches (Trench 1, Trench 2 and Trench 4 in Fig. 5), with four such walls, bonded with a clayey silt, being recorded in one trench ([202], [203], [204] and [205] in Trench 2 in Fig. 8), intercutting and with no common alignments,

sitting beneath the made ground of Brown's time ([201] in Trench 2 in Fig. 8). These walls can be attributed to the medieval and post-medieval settlement last shown on John Hutchinson's map of 1706 (PHA 3580), which occupied this area before being demolished to facilitate the expansion of the park noted in 1712 by Thomas Player, probably an Oxford undergraduate on holiday: 'His grace has turned the highway lately farther from his house, which now runs between two high walls' (Gloucestershire Archives D421/F32). It is possible that they reflect shifting property boundary walls over an extended period which also saw phases of quarrying and even the creation of water features (Archaeology South-East 2015, 8–9). Across the site the pottery recovered attests to this long-lived occupation, displaying a marked intensification of activity during the 13th and 14th centuries, continuing to increase in the later 15th and 16th centuries and peaking in the 17th century,

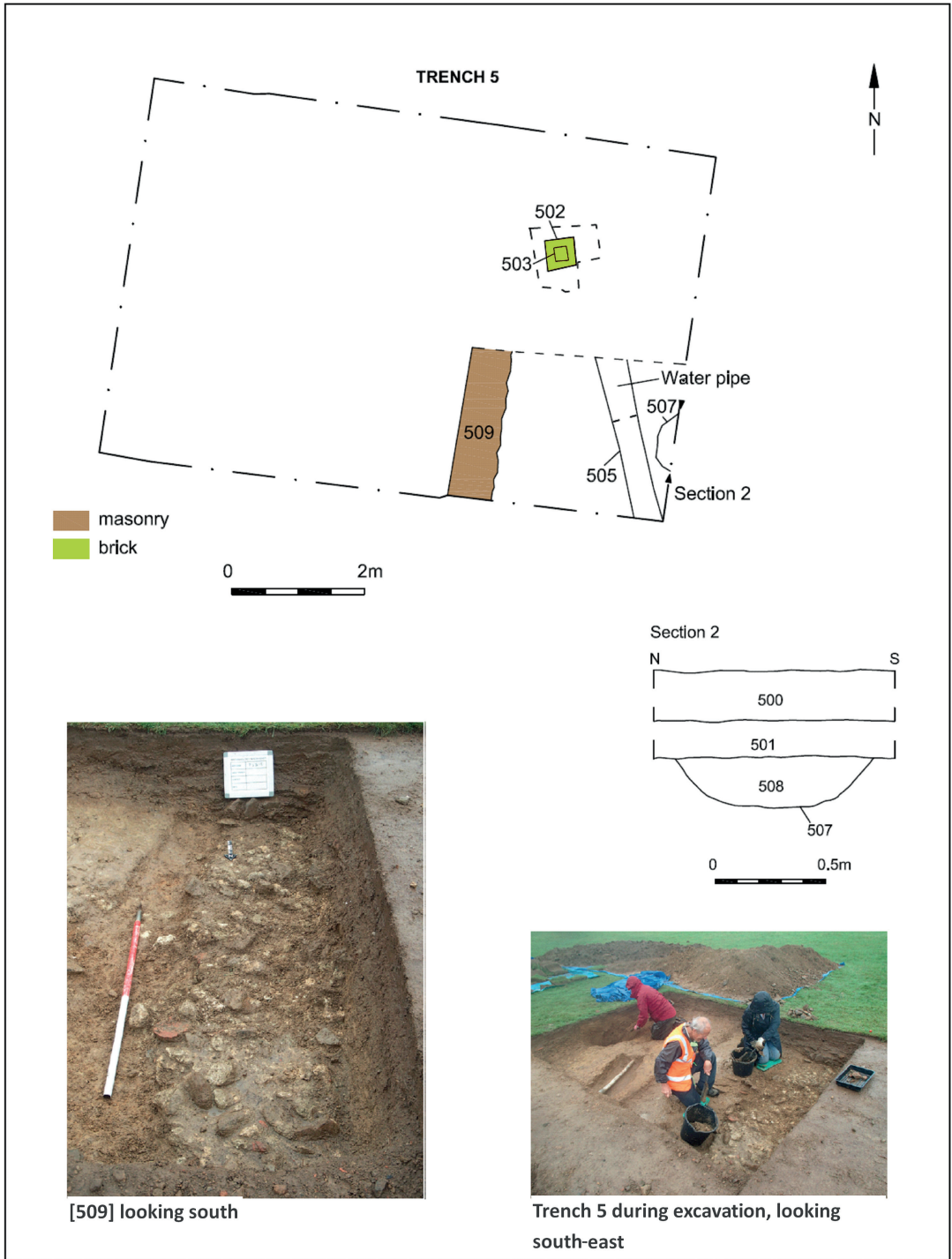


Fig. 6. Excavation of the 6th Duke's stables, Trench 5.



Trench 4 looking north



[408] looking east



[405] looking east

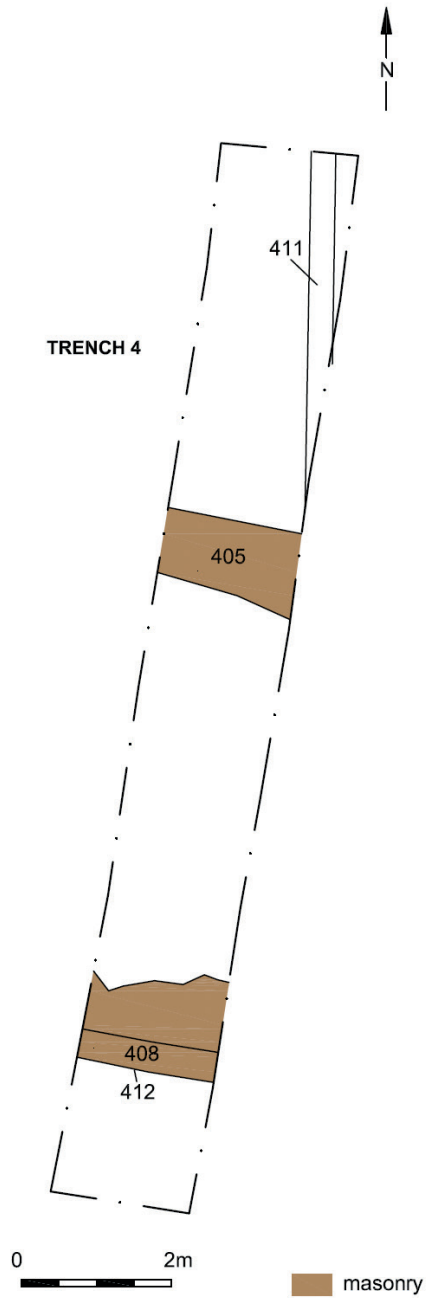


Fig. 7. Excavation of the 6th Duke's stables, Trench 4.



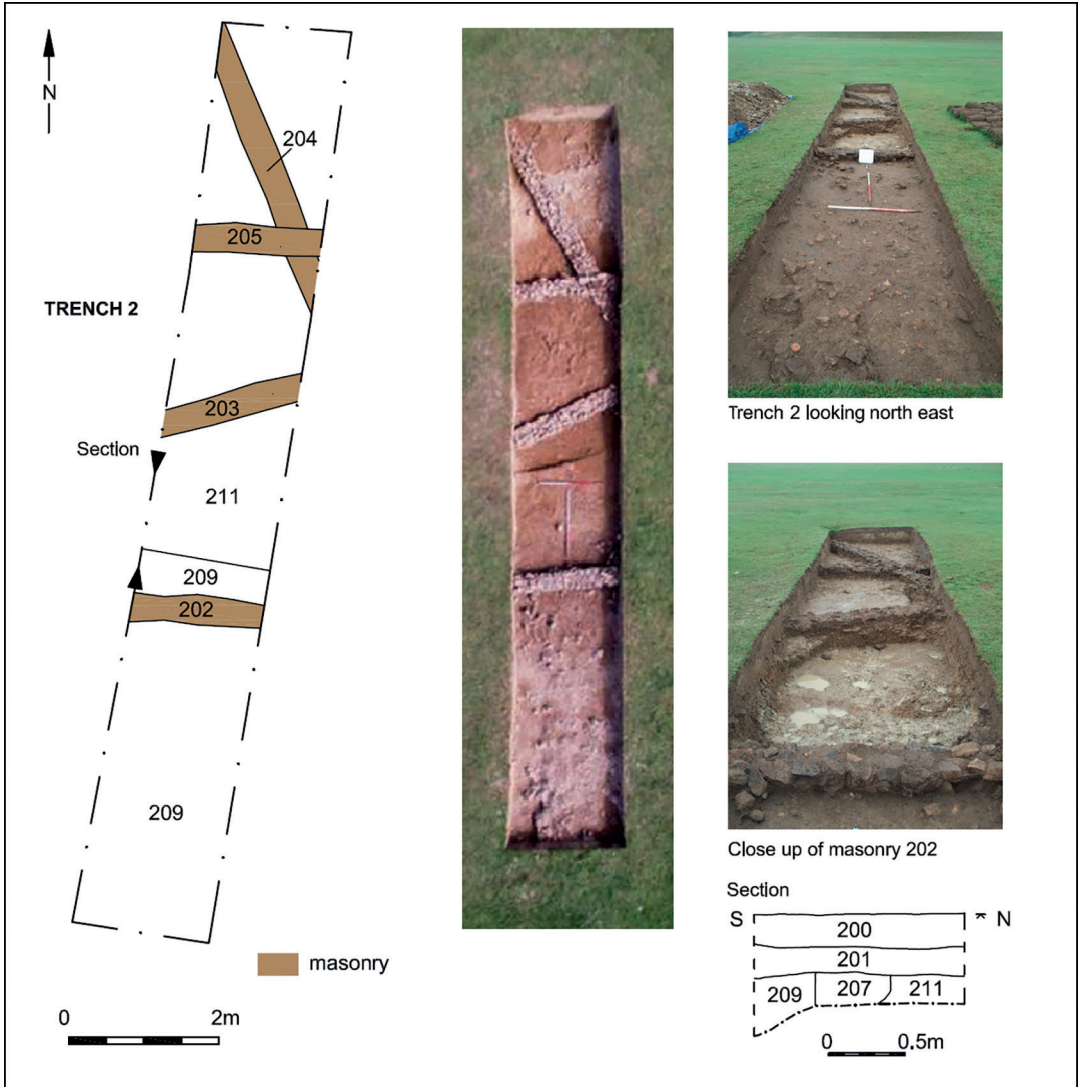


Fig. 8. Excavation of the 6th Duke's stables, Trench 2.

broadly supporting the image of a community expanding before clearance in the early 18th century (Archaeology South-East 2015, 17–18).

The total demolition of the stables was contrary to the proposals in Brown's surviving plan, in which half of the building was to remain, masked from the house by new planting. As the plan respects the original boundary, this change, and likewise the demolition of the Porter's Lodges and the small geometric garden identified through geophysical survey, are undoubtedly related to the expansion

of the Park (Fig. 9), conceived after Brown was initially employed at Petworth. Extending the park boundary to the south by about 300m necessitated a new road (on the current line of the A272) which Brown had completed and accounted for by 1763 (PHA 6623, 55), including two hundred rods, just over one kilometre, of walling originally to be ten feet high (PHA 6623, 55) but found to be thirteen feet high upon completion (PHA 6623, 57). The new layout rendered the Porter's Lodges redundant and left the stables isolated at the centre of the park, an

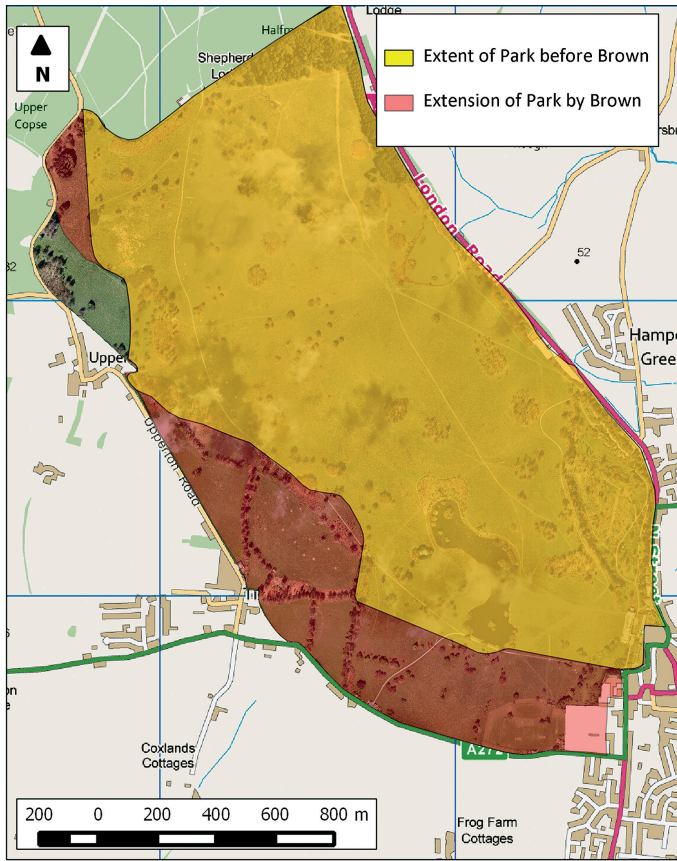


Fig. 9. The extension of Petworth Park undertaken by 'Capability' Brown.

impediment to the 'natural' landscape, swiftly and thoroughly removed.

The expansion required not only the removal of buildings relating to the Park, but also a large portion of the village of Tillington which now fell within it (Fig. 10). This settlement developed around the junction of the east-west 'Court Ditch Lane' and an unnamed north-south curvilinear lane which remains visible as a reed-filled depression. In 1610 (PHA 3574) eleven dwellings are shown in the area, in groups of three or four to a plot, increasing to sixteen by 1706 (PHA 3580). Evaluation excavations suggest activity in particular from the 13th and 14th centuries until abandonment in the late 18th century (Fig. 11; Chris Butler Archaeological Services 2015, 18; Anelay 2013, 23). Beneath an historic ploughsoil – created between c. 1785 and 1841 (Anelay 2013, 17) – in the eastern paddock,

evidence for the village itself still survives in the form of numerous pits ([401], [403], [405], [407], [409] and [415] in Trench 1 2013, Fig. 12; [609] and [610] in Trench 2 2013, Fig. 12), a posthole ([611] in Trench 2 2013, Fig. 12), ditches or gullies ([617] and [618] in Trench 2 2013, Fig. 12), stone-filled land drains ([613] and [615] in Trench 2 2013, Fig. 12) and substantial stone footings ([613] in Trench 2 2013, Fig. 12). Further excavations would help to clarify the village's layout and development. One boundary ditch ([413] in Trench 1 2013, Fig. 12) contained glass from onion-shaped wine bottles, clay tobacco pipe and pottery, providing dates between the 17th and 19th centuries and suggesting association with a alehouse, perhaps fronting onto the sunken lane (Anelay 2013, 17). The pottery included fragments of five drabware tankards, one inscribed with 'Boxett', another bearing a sprigged panel with a reverse stamp reading 'In<sup>o</sup>:Co / Petwo' (Anelay 2013, 29). Other finds included lead cloth seals and loom weights, ox shoes, a shaped pottery gaming counter and a fragment of a 'Raleigh' pipe probably dating to the first half of

the 17th century (Dallal 2004, 216) (Fig. 13).

Excavations in the western paddock by comparison yielded little artefactual material and few archaeological features beyond a ditch dating to the 13th or 14th century and a single post-medieval posthole (Chris Butler Archaeological Services 2015, 24; Fig. 11). While Brown's designs made the clearance of this portion of the village inevitable, it seems that Brown was not directly involved, as the buildings are still shown on James Crow's 'Rough Plan' (PHA 3605). This undated plan is likely to represent the state of the Park after Brown's association with Petworth ended, perhaps by as much as 15 years. Accounts from 1781 make reference to 'grubbing and levelling the banks at the Old Lane by the Upper Paddock' (PHA 12176), perhaps signalling a period of clearance of the

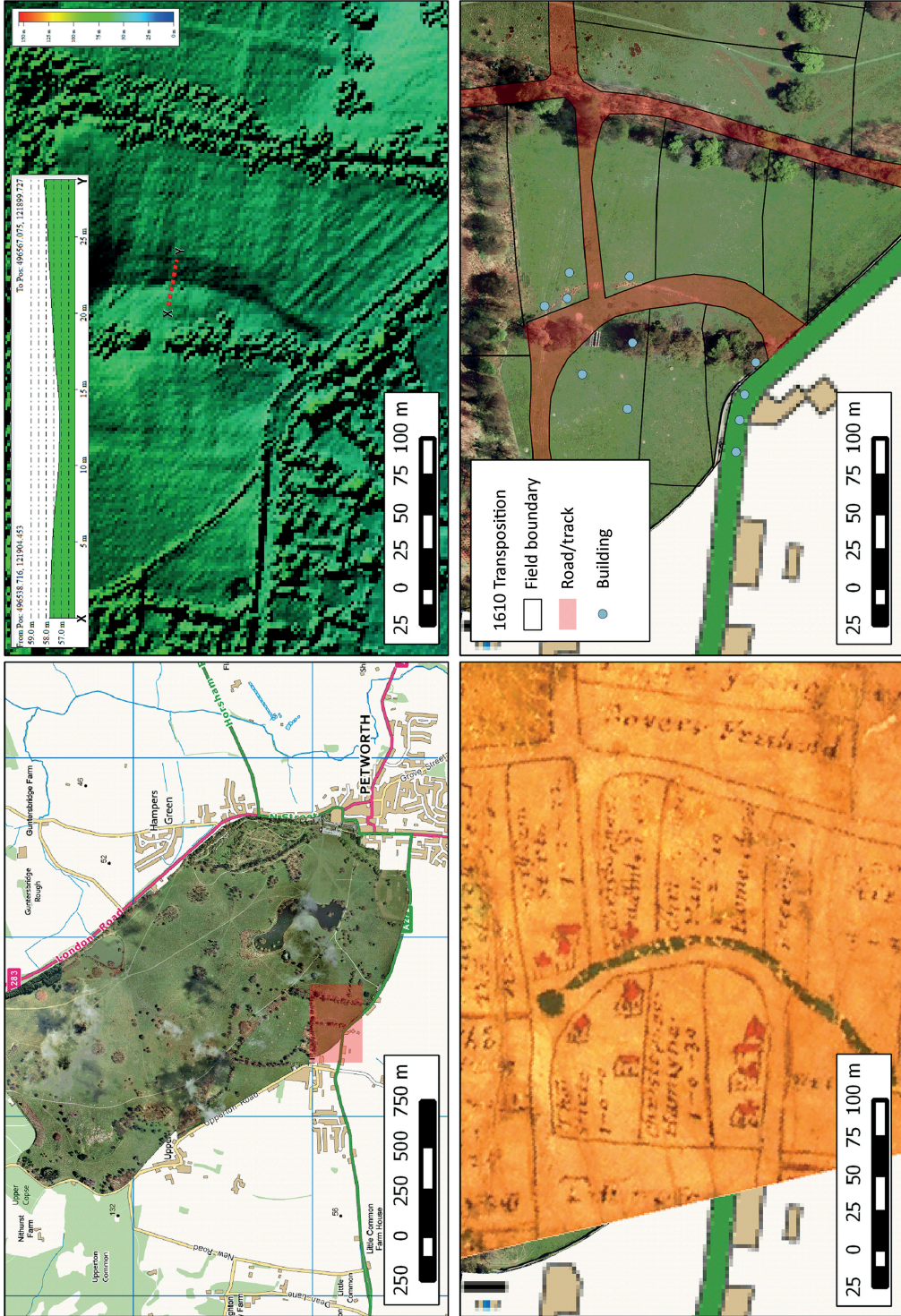


Fig. 10. The portion of Tillington village absorbed into Petworth Park, as shown on Treswell's 1610 map (PHA 3574) (bottom left) and transposed onto modern aerial photography (bottom right). LIDAR data (top right) picks out the curving sunken lane which is still evident in the landscape.

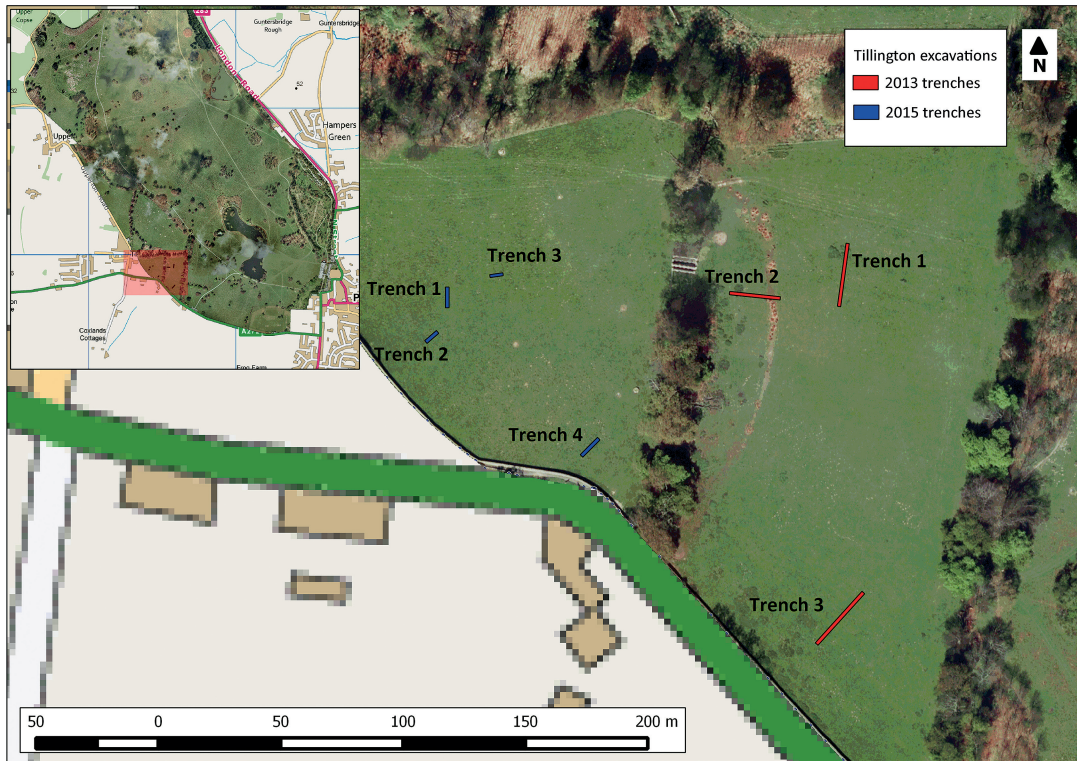


Fig. 11. Location of trenches excavated in 2013 and 2015 to investigate the 'lost' portion of Tillington village.

village. Tracing the occupants of these buildings through documentary research and investigating the conditions under which they were removed would be a significant step in understanding the execution and wider impact of Brown's landscape designs.

#### THE POINT OF A PARK

Brown's philosophy of landscape design saw for the first time at Petworth an end to the division between the House and Gardens, and the wider park. The 'Ocular Draught' of 1749 (Alnwick Castle Archives, uncatalogued) shows that the park was no longer compartmentalised by fencing, as it appeared on Treswell's map of 1610 (PHA 3574). But there was a clear functional separation between the two at the time of Brown's arrival, one being a focus for the ornamental, the other for the industrial. The transition to what Alexander Pope had referred to as the 'amiable Simplicity of unadorned Nature... a noble sort of Tranquility' (*The Guardian* no. 173, 29

September 1713) would lead to a dramatic change in how the park operated.

Letters between the 6th Duke of Somerset and his steward at Petworth in the early 18th century (PHA 6375) suggest that the park was anything but tranquil, being littered with references to brick kilns and lime kilns, teams of horses ferrying wood, stone and chalk, the cutting of clover and hay, and killing of deer to be sent to the Duke in London. The site of the brick kiln within the park is shown on the 1706 map (PHA 3581) near the current site of the Boat House on the northern edge of the Upper Pond. Brown's first contract in 1753 (PHA 6623, 1) actually included 'build[ing] a wall to enclose the brick yard' and to support an earthen bank disguising it. The enclosed area may simply have been infilled, creating a substantial area of raised ground. A tongue of higher ground extending south from the western end of Lawn Hill could represent this site, and geophysical survey has identified a rectilinear alignment of magnetic debris which could suggest a degree of preservation (Stratascan 2015; Fig. 14). The

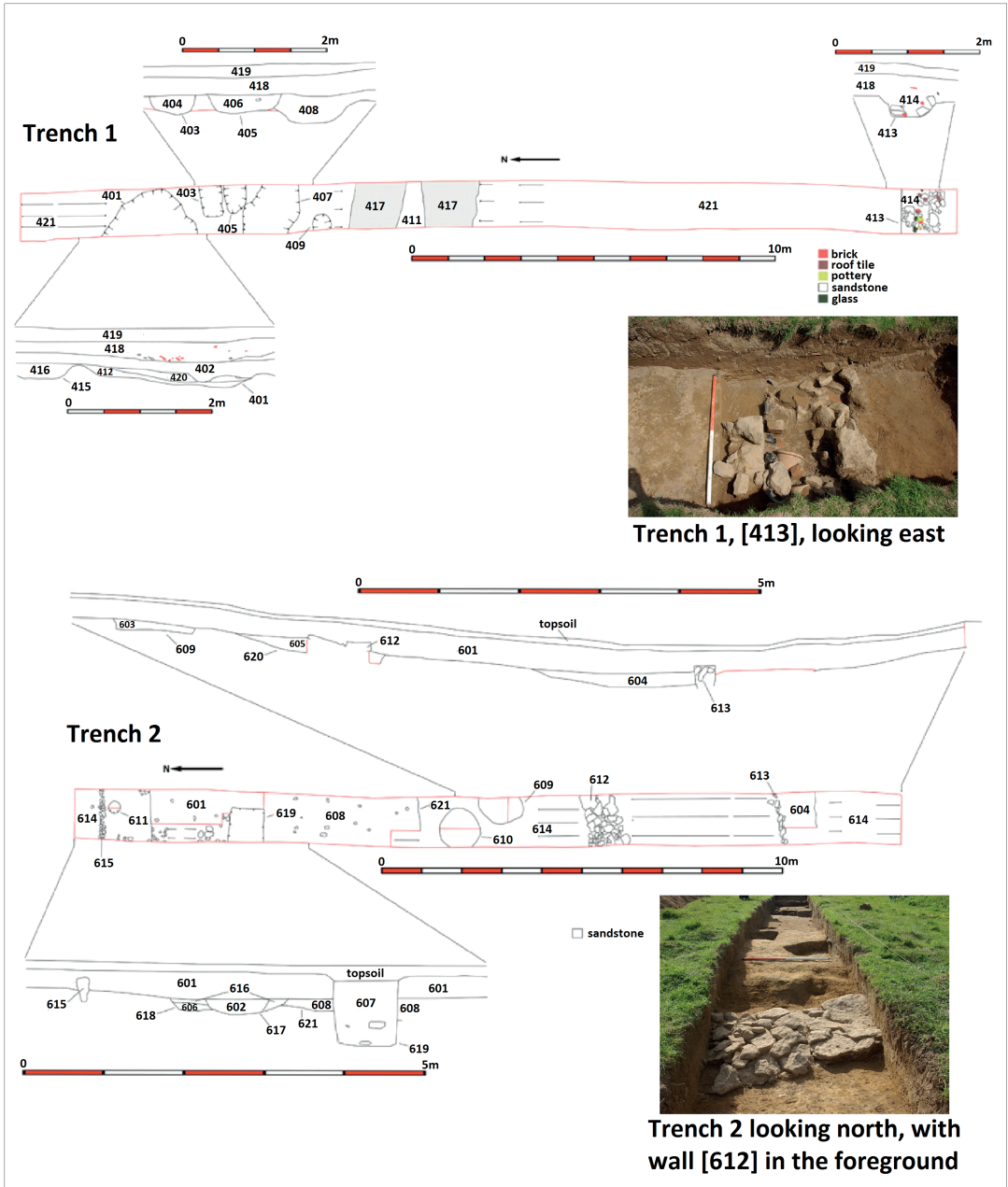


Fig. 12. Trench 4 (top) and Trench 6 (bottom) from the 2013 excavations at Tillington village.

site of 'Old Lime Kilns' is marked near Arbour Hill on Crow's 'Fair Plan' surveyed in 1761–84 (PHA 3606; Fig. 15): here spreads of chalk and large circular hollows up to 40m diameter and 1m deep may attest this former industrial activity. Excavations on Lawn

Hill identified extensive stone quarrying (Anelay 2013, 10–12), and there are several references to Brown infilling quarries, including with the stone from the dismantled rampart terraces in 1753 (PHA 6623, 1), and of stone pits near the Ice House in

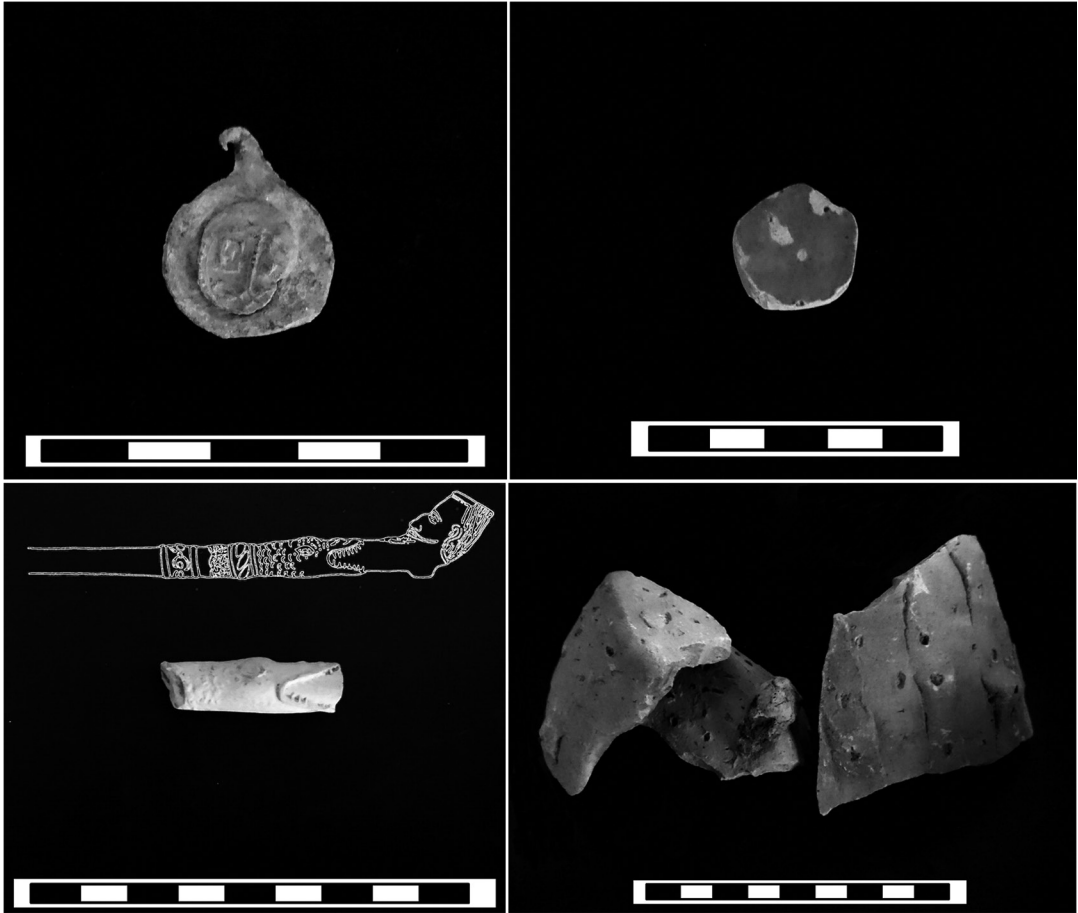


Fig. 13. Artefacts retrieved during the 2013 Tillington village excavations, clockwise from top left: a lead cloth seal; a ceramic gaming counter; fragments of a possible chimney pot; and a section of a 'Raleigh' clay tobacco pipe.

1754 (PHA 6623, 11), shown on Lawn Hill on the 'Ocular Draught' of 1749 (Alnwick Castle Archives, uncatalogued).

On the western side of the Upper Pond a complex of buildings had developed during the 17th century which supported the working estate, including a brewhouse, keeper's lodge, kennels and dovecote and perhaps other buildings planned by the 9th Earl such as a barn, bakehouse, slaughterhouse, malthouse, granary and dairy (Batho 1958, 113). Brown made reference in 1755 (PHA 6623, 24) to plans to demolish 'the Pigeon House and Dog Kennel' and the walls near them and to dig out their foundations, thoroughly typical of his approach. Geophysical survey (National Trust 2015; Fig. 16), however, has provided encouraging

signs of surviving archaeological features, including possible field boundaries forming a funnelling 'V' shape – commonly associated with droving animals and perhaps originally relating to Petworth Common which occupied this area before enclosure during the reign of Henry VIII (Dommett 2015, 90) – as well as rectilinear features which may represent the remains of buildings.

In some ways Brown was creating a different kind of working landscape. The cost of maintaining the elaborate formal gardens must have been extortionate compared to the 'natural' design which also acted as profitable pasture. It has been suggested that Brown's designs lent themselves to the growing fashion among the upper classes for country sports, particularly pheasant shooting

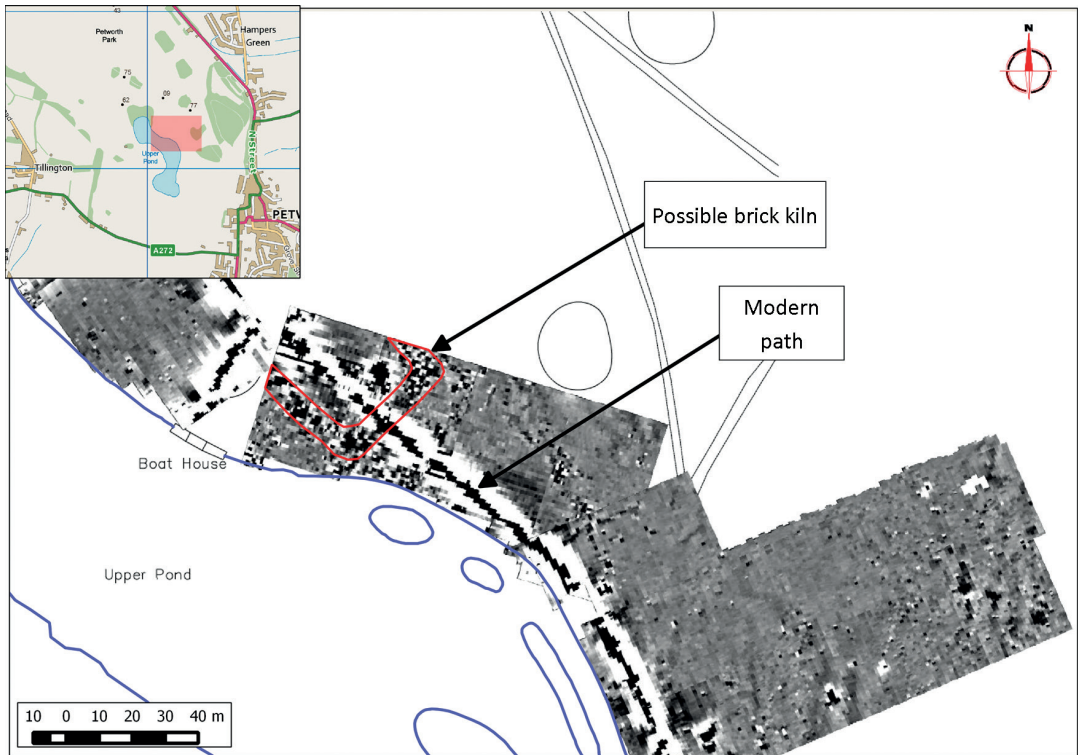


Fig. 14. An area of magnetic debris, possibly marking the location of a brick kiln adjacent to the Upper Pond which was cleared by Brown.

(Gregory et al. 2013, 28). But ultimately this landscape was a cultural statement rather than an economic strategy or a sporting arena. That the landscape itself at Petworth Park was a work of art, designed to inspire and entertain, is a proposition which is difficult to escape, particularly given its influence on notable artists such as J. M. W. Turner in the early 19th century, who reinforced and embedded its cultural significance through his own work. As conceived by Brown and executed under the 2nd Earl of Egremont (and in part the 3rd Earl) the park was surely an exclusive landscape, a symbol of status, wealth and taste, an assertion reinforced by the presence of tall park walls and by the removal of areas of settlement and agriculture through expansion. But Brown's design, capturing an idealised and recognisable (even iconic) 'English' landscape arguably contributed to a sense of collective ownership and *inclusivity*. Removing divisions, unifying the Park under one design and creating a sense of infinite parkland through

careful planting, has left a landscape with a sense of boundless freedom: even in the 18th century Brown's natural landscapes could be considered a symbolic representation of anarchic political and social systems (Gregory et al. 2013, 23). More widely, the introduction of Brown's informal landscape designs coincides with a period which, it has been argued, saw the appearance of more relaxed social interactions and a downplaying of differences in status, at least within the upper ranks of society (Gregory et al. 2013, 26). This freedom was embraced by the philanthropic 3rd Earl of Egremont in the later 18th and early 19th century. In 1810 Louis Simond noted that the 3rd Earl allowed 'the peasants of his village to play bowls and cricket on the lawn before the house' (Simond 1817, 325) and Witherington's *Fete in Petworth Park* (1835) literally paints a picture of a landscape shared and enjoyed by all. Whether consciously or inadvertently, Brown's legacy at Petworth was to lay the foundations for a communal landscape, a

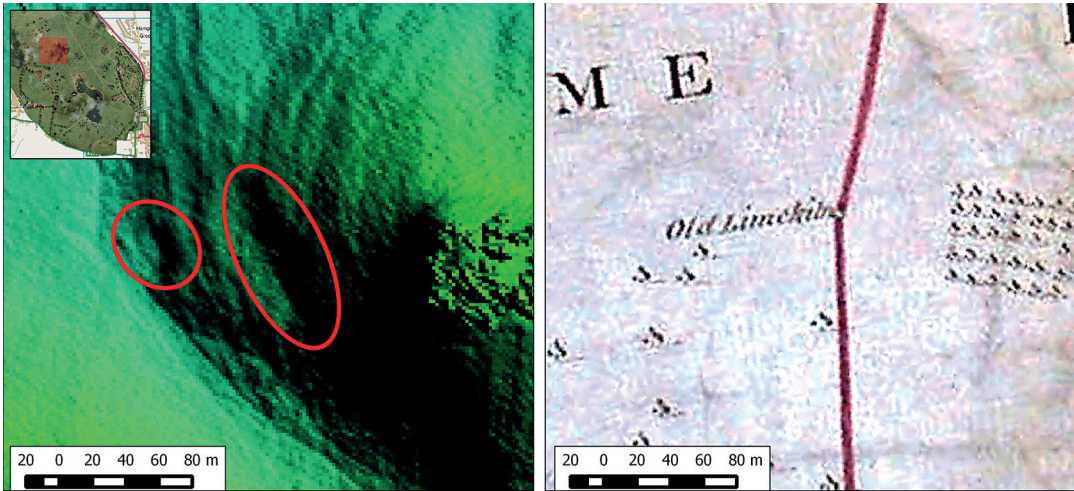


Fig. 15. Possible working platforms for a lime kiln visible on LiDAR data (left) and indicated on Crow's 'Fair Plan' surveyed in 1761-84 (PHA 3606) (right).

shared space in the way the park had never been before and which today is central to how the park is experienced by the local community.

#### HOW TO MAKE A LANDSCAPE

The effortless appearance of Brown's 'natural' landscape belies a complexity which is testament to Brown's skill as an engineer. Brown's contracts contain many articles relating to levelling within the park, including references such as 'lowering the hill where the stone was Dugg' (PHA 6623, 45) and 'levelling the hill near the Upperton Water House' (PHA 6623, 49), statements which are almost comical in nature given the casual phrasing of what appear to be major undertakings. For the most part, however, the documentary evidence does not give a clear sense of the location or true extent of this levelling, the work often being undertaken 'within the stakes' which Brown had used to mark out the areas. Mention is made in Brown's first contract (PHA 6623, 1) to 'reduce the level on Front of the House so as to correspond properly with the Hill', clearly identifying the West Lawn as an area for landscaping with reference to the terraces on Lawn Hill, which had been reduced and smoothed over to give them a 'natural form'. As a geoarchaeological survey showed that a substantial depth of material had been removed on the West Lawn (Wessex Archaeology 2013, 7), a survey by hand auger was

undertaken. This comprised 38 sampling locations along east-west transects running between the House and the Upper Pond (National Trust 2014a). At the western edge of the survey area the auger consistently encountered the natural sandstone geology at shallow depths of 0.2-0.3m (Fig. 17), corresponding with the depths of made ground of Brown's encountered during excavations at the 6th Duke's stables immediately to the south (Archaeology South-East 2015, 38). This, combined with the unweathered nature of the sandstone encountered in these areas, suggest that a ridge of higher ground up to 120m wide once extended across the West Lawn running north-northwest to south-southeast. The 17th-century 9th Earl's stables were located in the area of this ridge, and the lack of evidence for this monumental structure – presenting neither as cropmarks nor on geophysical surveys – provides support for the suggestion that ground levels here have been significantly reduced, though to what extent remains impossible to determine. Immediately to the west of this former ridge the area adjacent to the Upper Pond appears to have been raised – at the edge of the Upper Pond by up to 2.5m – to form a level surface extending to the stone-pitched edge of the lake. This overburden betrays the natural form of the valley within which the Upper Pond was formed, amply demonstrated by the valley's continuation towards Frog Farm south of the pond head.



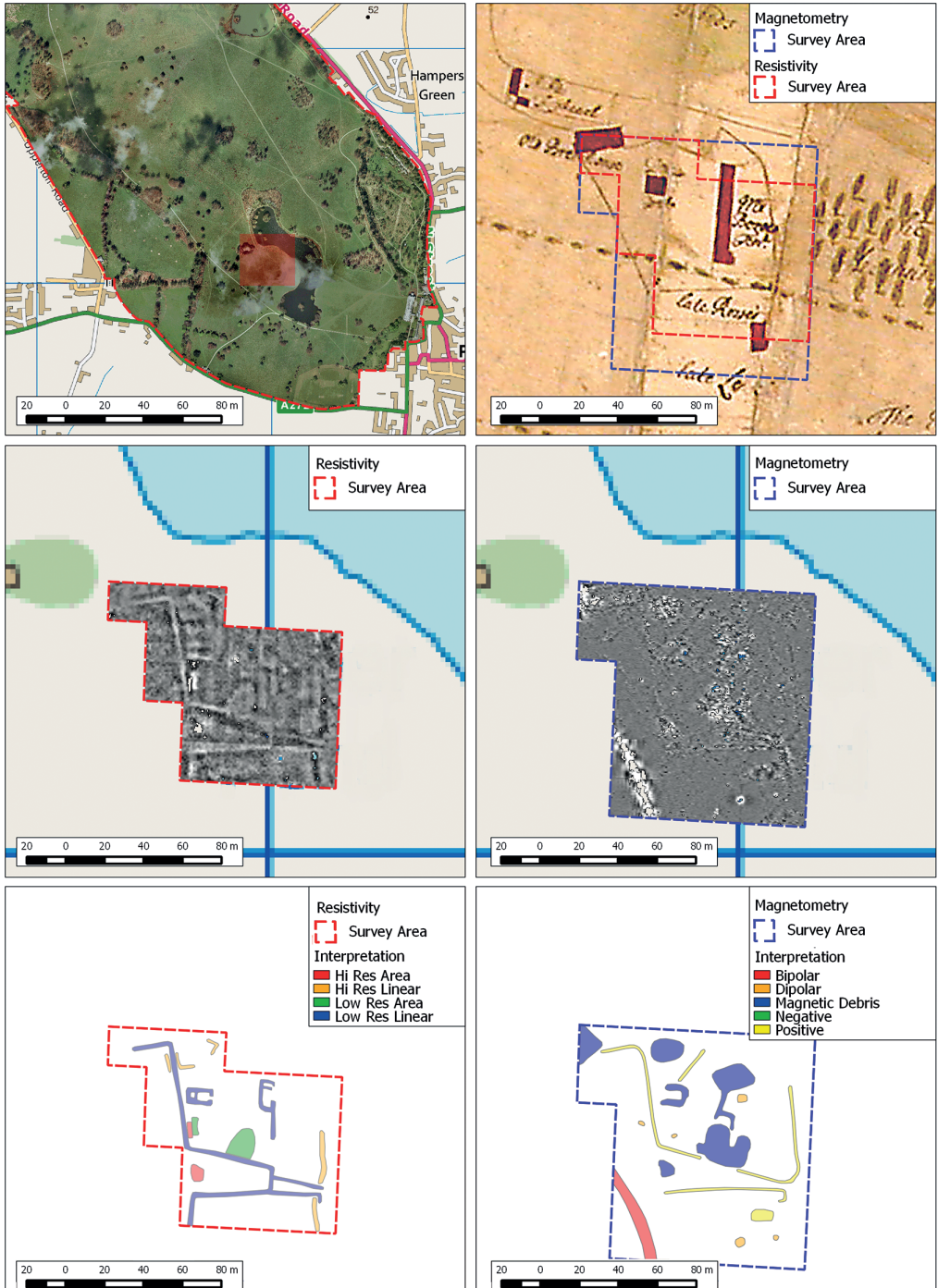


Fig. 16. A complex of working estate buildings shown on Hutchinson's map of 1706 (PHA 3580) (top right) with traces of the complex identified through earth resistance survey (middle left, bottom left) and magnetometry survey (middle right, bottom right).

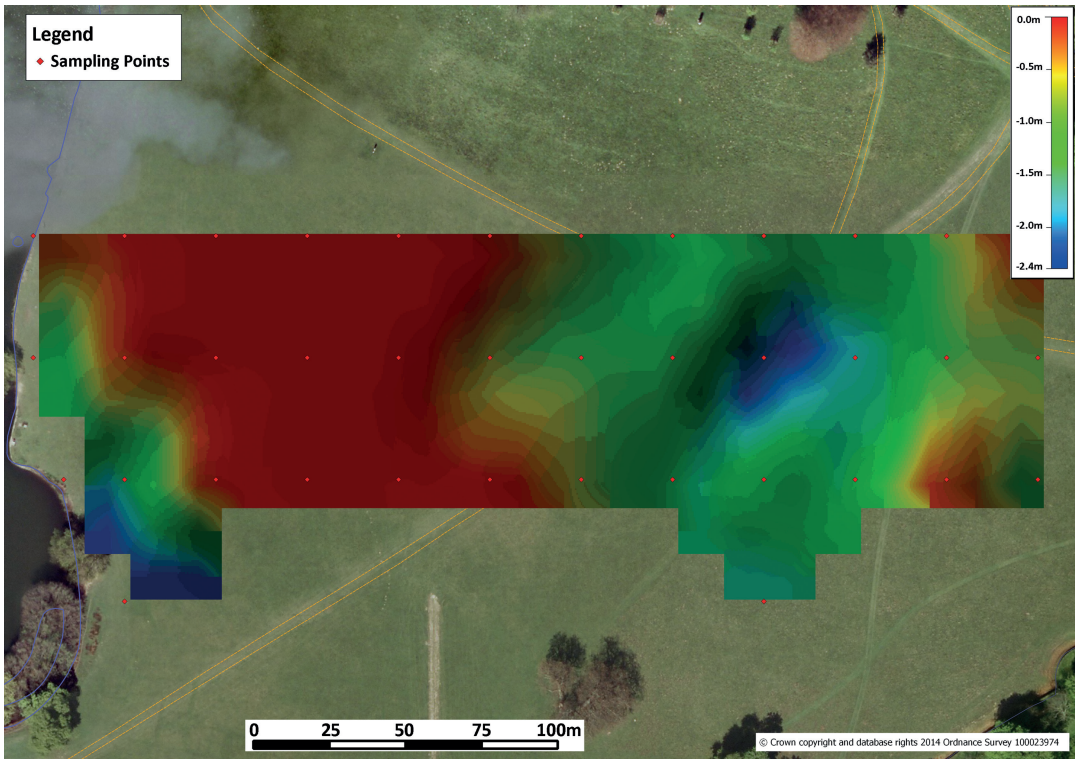


Fig. 17. Difference model showing depth to the natural geology, giving some indication of the original topography and potential impact of Brown's work.

Some of this landscaping could conceivably have been undertaken by the 6th Duke of Somerset in the early 18th century with the creation of the grand avenue through the Quarter Piece Lawns and the 'Vista to Tillington' shown on Hutchinson's map of 1706 (PHA 3580). Tillemans' painting of 1730 (see Fig. 3) certainly gives no impression of undulating topography, though some artistic licence may have been employed. Brown may certainly have played a part, but the increase in ground levels near the Upper Pond is almost certainly not *all* his work. A contract of 1755 stipulated the addition of 2460 feet and upwards of stone pitching (PHA 6623, 24), corresponding with a much smaller body of water than the current Upper Pond, being limited to the northern half of its current extent and hinted at by Crow's Rough Plan (PHA 3605) (Fig. 18). Although the Rough Plan appears to have been finalised in 1779, the survey work for it began in 1761, during Brown's time at Petworth, and it appears to contain traces

of features from this earlier period, including the original Upper Pond (Rutherford 2008, 40) (Fig. 18 inset). Brown's Upper Pond would not have required the levelling evidenced by geoarchaeological survey, but the extension of the Upper Pond by the 3rd Earl of Egremont in 1781 (PHA 12176) to its current form would have, and extensive landscaping on the lawn and Lawn Hill was commissioned in 1795–6 (Colvin and Moggridge 2004, 10).

The Upper Pond formed part of Brown's first contract in 1753. His original proposal shows a much larger lake than he executed. While this could be interpreted perhaps as displaying a lack of ambition, in truth it may speak more to Brown's practical approach. Brown's Upper Pond respected the geology, laid out on the clays of the Atherfield Formation rather than extending onto the sandstone of the Lower Greensand, thereby likely negating or reducing the need for a watertight puddled clay lining, and reducing both risk and cost. Reference in 1755 to making 'clay walls' for the pond

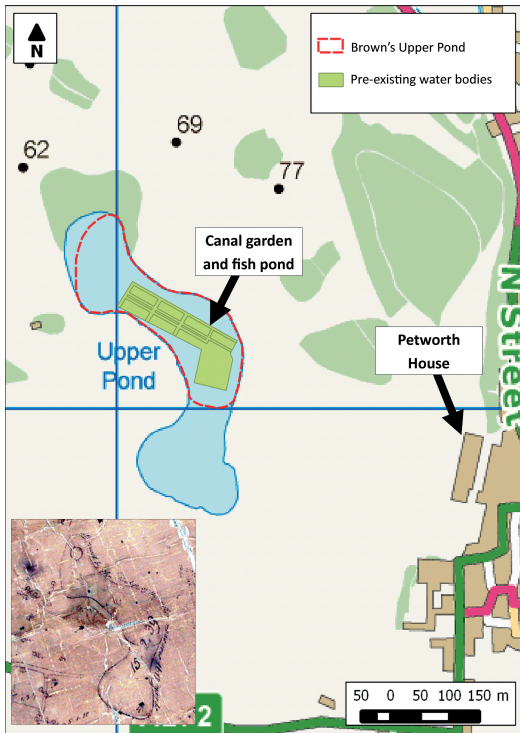


Fig. 18. The extent of the Upper Pond created by Brown, as indicated on Crow's Rough Plan (PHA 3605) (inset) and compared with the location of pre-existing water features and the extent of the modern Upper Pond, as executed by the 3rd Earl of Egremont.

(PHA 6623, 24) may suggest a lining was required, although potential issues with water leaking only appear to have emerged in 1756 when Brown noted in response to falling water levels that 'I am doubtful the springs have abated if that should be the case the sinkeing is the less to be wondered at however if there are faults they shall be mended' (PHA 6623, 36). A contract of the same year (PHA 6623, 45) required 'altering the Great Water in all its Parts', and that appears to have been the end of the matter. It is perhaps telling that the 3rd Earl's extension of the pond into an area of sandstone initially failed, requiring advice from the much-lauded engineer William Jessop twice, in 1783 and 1790 (Colvin and Moggridge 2004, 10). Brown also chose a practical approach in joining and expanding existing bodies of water – the ornamental canal gardens and fish ponds of the 6th Duke of Somerset (Fig. 18) – rather than creating entirely new ones, a strategy also used as Longleat and Newnham Paddox (Brown and

Williamson 2016, 67). Even so, a letter from Brown dated 12 August 1755 noted that 'there is a vast Deal of Earth must be moved or else Yr Lordship will have nothing but weeds and dirty water' (PHA 6623, 27).

A reliable supply of water was essential to Brown's focal points of the Upper and Lower Ponds. References to draining in the park are common throughout his contracts, even specifically noting construction of 'the drain in Home Park' (PHA 6623, 50). This water supply was secured through the construction of several miles of drains, the methodology for which included 'Opening, Filling in, and Sowing' (PHA 6623, 28), the excavation of a trench into which a stone or brick culvert was inserted and then covered over. Brown noted that for his work draining the park 'the stones have been very troublesome to get and vast quantities have been used and are still wanted' (PHA 6623, 40). Through field survey (National Trust 2014b) it has been possible to map the culverts running across the park (Fig. 19). The Upper Pond is partly supplied by water from the springs emerging at Upperton (possibly originally augmented by water from the concave further north), contouring along the north-eastern slopes of Snow Hill in a brick-built culvert for more than a kilometre (D001 in Fig. 19). The culvert is 30cm tall and 35cm wide with an arch formed from trapezoidal bricks. The Lower Pond is principally supplied by a drain of similar size to that supplying the Upper Pond, curving around the south-western and north-western sides of Arbour Hill in the valley bottom (D011 in Fig. 19). It is formed from sandstone blocks topped with a brick arch, made from rectangular bricks. Another different style of drainage (D013 in Fig. 19), apparently cut by (i.e. pre-dating) the principal drain for the Lower Pond, was recorded running east-west located north-west of Arbour Hill, using stone slabs to form a drain trapezoidal in section (National Trust 2014b, 37). The variations in materials, dimensions and forms in the culverts which criss-cross the park – even between those with direct associations with features formed by Brown – suggest a long-lived tradition of drainage which Brown no doubt augmented to meet his needs.

The scale of this engineering, however, should not obscure Brown's influence as a gardener. There is a tendency to associate the English Landscape Garden with native deciduous hardwood species (Gregory et al. 2013, 14). But bills at Petworth (PHA 6613; PHA 6623, 42) show orders for evergreens such

as Scots pine (ordered at a size of 13 feet or greater), spruce and large numbers of larch alongside alder, lime and plane trees of 6 to 8 feet. The period 1740–70 marked a high point in the fashion for importing exotic species from America and elsewhere and such planting was included at Petworth with American and Virginia maples, Virginia raspberry, Persian jasmine, acacias, weeping willow and over 200 of Brown's signature tree, the Cedar of Lebanon. Laurel and other low-growing shrubs are believed to have been widely planted around the margins of plantations to soften their appearance, and in the Pleasure Grounds Brown was to make borders along the paths, adding flowering shrubs and trees (Gregory et al. 2013, 14; Rutherford 2008, 37). Shrubs and climbers such as honeysuckle, hellebores, lily of the valley, sea buckthorn, sweet briar and butcher's broom are all listed in the accounts. We cannot say for certain where, or how, these were all planted at Petworth. The Pleasure Grounds may have been organised (as was common in the 1750s) into theatrical rows with distance from the winding walks, with the lowest bulbs and perennials progressing to taller shrubs and then to trees (Rutherford 2008, 102). Such schemes were difficult to maintain (Rutherford 2008, 103) and was soon eclipsed by the 3rd Earl's American-inspired planting: one visitor in 1810 described the Pleasure Grounds as like a 'heavy-timbered American forest' (Simond 1817, 326). The need for new planting within the Park would have been limited, already being well-furnished along the escarpments and ridges, and trees along former hollow ways and field boundaries (areas newly brought into the park by Brown's expansion) were retained (Colvin and Moggridge 2005, 9).

The final element of Brown's early designs for Petworth speaks to his training under William Kent at Stowe, with touches of the Arcadian style. The Doric Temple was moved from the rampart terraces into the Pleasure Grounds. Based on Doric temples in Hellenistic Greece, the building was flanked with planting to disguise the fact that it was only a temple façade. A prominent position was identified by Brown for the Ionic Rotunda, standing at the top of a steep north-facing slope invoking images of the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli outside Rome (Rutherford 2008, 41). It is possible that some of the earthworks which can still be seen within the park – particularly vestiges of the field systems once associated with the settlements at Petworth and

Tillington – were deliberately retained by Brown. These may have contributed to the sense of an ancient, lost landscape which the Doric Temple and Ionic Rotunda invoke. The alternative interpretation leans on Brown's efficient and pragmatic approach: because these areas were distant from the House and major carriageways they may simply not have merited the additional effort.

#### VISIONARY OR VANDAL

Brown's work was not without controversy during his lifetime, and continues to inspire debate today. Criticisms levelled at Brown include his wholesale destruction of formal gardens, the formulaic and repetitive approach which he undertook across the country, and the impact which his designs had on the wider working landscape. Even for those who appreciated Brown's aesthetic, the proliferation of his prescribed version of a designed landscape – attributed to 267 sites in England and Wales – must have been somewhat wearisome (Gregory et al. 2013, 7; Mayer 2011, 47). Petworth certainly bears his hallmarks: the sinuous body of water, the planting belt obscuring the park's perimeter, contrived views, gentle slopes and wide expanses of lawn. His landscapes were derided by some as little more than common fields (Mayer 2011, 47), and in the 19th century it was memorably suggested that Brown's parks bore 'no more resemblance to that nature which we desire to see imitated, than the rouge of an antiquated coquette, bearing all the marks of a sedulous toilette, bear to the artless blush of a cottage girl' (Anon 1828, 315). Similarly the expansion of parks and clearance of villages and agricultural landscapes with which he was associated was regarded with dismay by some. Oliver Goldsmith's critique *The Deserted Village* (1770) may well have reflected local views regarding the destruction of part of Tillington village and the loss of areas previously given over to arable and pasture:

O luxury! Thou curst by Heaven's decree,  
How ill exchanged are things like these for thee!

...

Even now the devastation is begun,  
And half the business of destruction done;  
Even now, methinks, as pondering here I stand,

I see the rural virtues leave the land.



Fig. 19. Various forms of drainage in the north of Petworth Park, mapped through field survey and analysis of LiDAR data.

We may likewise append the loss of the working landscape which the park hosted before Brown.

Brown's work should be viewed in the wider historical context and development of Petworth Park. Certainly it is true that at Petworth (as at so many other properties) Brown's designs came at the expense of elaborate formal gardens which had only recently been completed. This perhaps speaks to Brown's strength of conviction in his own vision, and his ability to convince his clients. But those gardens had themselves replaced earlier features: the renowned 9th Earl's stables, the North Wing of Petworth House, the Bowling Green and Rose Garden were all sacrificed to the formal garden designs of the 6th Duke of Somerset (Dommett 2015, 97). Likewise Brown's expansion of the Park was just the latest in a string of expansions in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries which had also enclosed common land, fields and settlement (Dommett 2015, 92).

Brown's work *was* transformational, but should be recognised in a tradition of transformation, reinvention and expansion in a landscape which had been a canvas for expressions of fashion and fortune since the Percy family took residence in the late 16th century, and which continued to change in form, design and function after Brown left. The last expansion of the park came some 30 years after Brown's time at Petworth. New entry routes and lodges were added at the edges of the newly expanded park, and Brown's carriageways were soon largely abandoned. The 3rd Earl of Egremont expanded the Upper Pond and undertook extensive landscaping. The addition of the boathouse, bathhouse, Gothic colthouse and turreted Monument Lodge in the first half of the 19th century demonstrates the continuing influence on the landscape of changing fashions, in this case the trend towards the 'gardenesque' and 'picturesque' in the aftermath of Brown (Colvin and Moggridge 2005, 15; Mayer 2011, 49). National circumstances too had an impact, such as the construction of a military camp within the Park during the Second World War, later serving as a small village for displaced Poles (Dommett 2015, 105).

There is sometimes a temptation to see Brown treating pre-existing landscapes with a certain disregard, sweeping away features and exerting brute influence over the landscape with spade and barrow. Brown certainly had a thorough approach

to demolition when it was required, with dire consequences for the archaeological record for features like the 6th Duke's stables. But in other areas Brown had a lighter touch. The fragments of formal garden layout around the House uncovered during excavation in 2013 were in remarkably good condition and merit further work.

We must also recognise the pragmatic and economical approach which a study of Brown at Petworth seems to imply. His original plans show elements of earlier structures, layouts and designs were to be adapted rather than eliminated. Brown sensibly sited the Upper Pond in a natural valley, and seems to have been willing to modify his approach based on the constraints of the geology he encountered (unlike the 3rd Earl of Egremont after him), a flexibility also noted in the surviving minutes from Brown's work at Burton Constable (Gregory et al. 2013, 12). His skill as an engineer, making best use of the topography, is demonstrated through the creation of the Upper Pond and the intricate drainage network which underpins his landscape design. While Brown's landscapes as a whole can be argued to be blandly formulaic, at Petworth at least he was applying his formula intelligently.

Whether Brown's work at Petworth can be considered beautiful is, of course, a subjective matter. But the cultural significance of his design can be shown through its inclusion in works of art by J. M. W. Turner, Samuel Hieronymus Grimm and Thomas Phillips. It can also be argued that the informality Brown brought to an exclusive landscape has helped to define the spirit of Petworth Park today as an inclusive, communal space. This may be the most important legacy which Brown has left. 'He does not die that can bequeath some influence on the land he knows' (Belloc 1912, 309). At Petworth, Brown will always be a presence.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank the Monument Trust for funding this important piece of work. Sincere thanks go to Lord Egremont for permission to use the Petworth House Archives, an invaluable resource. Thanks are also due to The National Trust Petworth House and Park staff for their unwavering support during all archaeological fieldwork. And the final acknowledgement must go to the volunteers whose enthusiasm, hard work and dedication lie at the heart of this project. The following bodies have kindly permitted reproduction of figures: Figs 1 (bottom), 10 (bottom left), 15 (right), 16 (top right), 18 (inset), reproduced by kind permission of Lord Egremont and the Petworth House Archives; Figs 10

(top right), 15 (left), LiDAR data provided courtesy of the Environment Agency Geomatics Group 2013; Fig. 3 (inset), National Trust Petworth House Guidebook (Christopher Dalton. Private collection); Figs 5–8 © Archaeology South-East;

Fig. 12 © West Sussex Archaeology Ltd; Fig. 14 © Stratascan; Figs 14, 19 © Crown copyright and database rights 2014 Ordnance Survey 100023974.

**Author:** Tom Dommett, National Trust Regional Archaeologist; tom.dommett@nationaltrust.org.uk

## REFERENCES

- Copies of all the cited unpublished reports are available at the West Sussex Record Office, accession number 19139.
- Anelay, G.** 2013. Report on an archaeological evaluation at Petworth Park, Petworth, West Sussex. Unpublished report.
- Anon** 1828. *The Quarterly Review* **37**, 315
- Archaeology South East** 2013. Festival of British Archaeology 2013 Community Excavation at Petworth House, Petworth, West Sussex. Unpublished report.
2015. The 'Big Dig' 2015 Community Excavation at Petworth House, Petworth, West Sussex. Unpublished report.
- Batho, G.** 1958. Notes and documents on Petworth House 1574–1632, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **96**, 108–34.
- Belloc, H.** 1912. *The four men*. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons.
- Brown, D. and Williamson, T.** 2016. *Lancelot Brown and the Capability Men. Landscape revolution in eighteenth-century England*. London: Reaktion Books.
- Chris Butler Archaeological Services** 2015. Community Evaluation Excavation at Petworth Park, Petworth, West Sussex. Unpublished report.
- Colvin and Moggridge Landscape Architects** 2004. Petworth House, West Sussex: Historic park restoration plan. Unpublished report.
- Dallal, D.** 2004. The Tudor Rose and the Fleur de Lis: Women and iconography in 17th century Dutch clay pipes found in New York City, in Mann R. and Rafferty S. (eds) *Smoking and culture: The archaeology of tobacco pipes in eastern North America*, 207–40. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Dommett, T.** 2015. Petworth Park's hidden past, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **153**, 83–112.
- Gregory, J., Spooner, S. and Williamson, T.** 2013 *Lancelot 'Capability' Brown: a research impact review prepared for English Heritage by the Landscape Group, University of East Anglia* Report Series 50–2013. Portsmouth: English Heritage.
- Mayer, L.** 2011. *Capability Brown and the English landscape garden*. London: Shire Publications.
- National Trust** 2014a. Petworth Park Archaeology Project Geoarchaeological Survey. Unpublished report.
- 2014b. Petworth Park Archaeology Project North Park Historic Drainage Survey. Unpublished report.
2015. Petworth Park Archaeology Project Geophysical Survey: The Stew Ponds. Unpublished report.
- Rutherford, S.** 2008. Petworth Pleasure Grounds: Historic landscape conservation statement. Unpublished report.
- Simond, L.** 1817. *Journal of a tour and residence in Great Britain during the years 1810 and 1811* **2**. Edinburgh: J. Ballantyne & Co.
- Stratascan** 2015. Geophysical Survey Report. Upper Pond, Petworth. Unpublished report.
- Wessex Archaeology** 2013. Petworth Park, West Sussex, geoarchaeological survey report. Unpublished report.

