



## THE MEDIEVAL DEFENCES OF THE CINQUE PORTS

Dr Helen Clarke

17 September 2015

Dr Clarke explained that she had been concentrating recently on the history of Sandwich and wanted to examine other towns in Kent and Sussex in order to compare Sandwich with them. She had wanted in particular to look at those which had built defensive walls. There had not been many of them. In Kent they had been Rochester, Sandwich, Canterbury and Tonbridge. In Sussex, they were Rye, Winchelsea, Hastings (to a certain extent), Lewes, Arundel and Chichester. The majority of inland towns, such as they were, did not have walls which weren't necessary because the Weald provided a natural defence. The walled towns on the other hand were those most in danger of attack from the sea.

These were the Cinque Ports. There were originally five – Sandwich, Dover, Hythe, New Romney and Hastings. They traced their origins back to Edward the Confessor who wanted ports to act in the defence of England against the Vikings, but the term Cinque Ports was not officially employed until 1161, and the first charter granting them common liberties was issued only in 1260. New Romney and Hythe were never important enough to be worth attacking because their harbours had silted up early on and therefore they never needed to build solid defences. No doubt because these two ports were no longer viable, Winchelsea and Rye joined the confederation, thereby keeping the number at five. Both had been previously associated with it but under the name of 'Antient Towns'.

Dr Clarke discussed Dover first which must have been very grand with a great circuit of stone walls. She showed how the town, which was built round the river Dour and was dominated of course by the castle, was surrounded by walls which had now completely disappeared, apart from some traces under one of the streets, and she deplored the fact that the old town had been devastated by the new road from the west running along the front to the port. Much the same applied to Hastings; the ruins of the castle overlooked the town still but there was no trace of the old walls, which must have defended the old town, apart from some traces attached to the castle.

Dr Clarke turned to Sandwich about which she had already written extensively. We can understand why. From the modern photographs, including aerial photos, of the town and surrounds and from the images of the old maps that she put onto the screen, it was clear that a great deal of the old defences had survived. Because the land was completely flat, the town needed to be defended from all sides. The defences made up a total circuit round the town and consisted of stone walls built up along the river on the sea side of the town, from which of course attacks were mainly to be expected, and of earth ramparts with timber and dykes around the rest of the perimeter. There had been a castle but it had long since gone; all that was left was the name in 'Castle Field'. The remains of the castle had been destroyed in the 1890s to make more space for farming. The so-called Rope Walk on the western edge of the town was nothing to do with ropes. The name was often given in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to any long straight walk. It is in fact the top of the defensive rampart on that side of the town. There was also a fort, known as the Bulwark, built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century when cannons started to be used, guarding one of the parts of the town most likely to be attacked from the sea, but that too had been knocked down. In its place, a large house, designed by Lutyens, had been built in 1910 while the area surrounding the new house was turned into a garden designed by Gertrude Jekyll – who had thus destroyed any chance of discovering what archaeological remains there might have been, something much regretted by Dr Clarke the archaeologist.

She next concentrated on the gates in the walls, especially along the river, showing some excellent photographs of the walls and the stone-work itself. There was little or no stone in the area so some had come from Folkestone (Kentish ragstone) and some from the Roman remains at Richborough and



*The Fishergate, Sandwich*

Reculver. She pointed out the chequerboard stone-work on the Davis Gate, now called the Barbican, and showed the Fishergate, both in the sea wall. Two of the town gates had disappeared completely. One was the Canterbury Gate on the west side of town and the other was the Sandown Gate guarding the Deal/Dover road, both demolished in the 1780s as obstacles to traffic. There were only traces of two other gates. Dr Clarke illustrated much of her talk here not only with photographs of the walls and gates to-day but with images of drawings, paintings and maps from earlier periods.

Dr Clarke next turned our attention to Winchelsea. The town had been founded in 1283 to replace the old Winchelsea port, abandoned because washed away by storms, by Edward I who had had it built on a grid pattern. The site chosen was on the top of a hill so that it would not be washed away. On the other hand, on the north east side there is a steep drop down to the river and altogether the site was not a perfect place for a port. The walls were built between 1295 and 1330 and rebuilt frequently after attacks but the traces of them left are now difficult to find apart from a pile of stones on the side of the by-pass road and evidence of where the wall was built into the Strand Gate (built 1300). This and the Pipewell Gate, both of which survive although not in their original form, defended the harbour. The South or New Gate also survives. There were earth ramparts on the west side and the remains of the dykes, which ran all the way round the town, can clearly be seen on the east, making up an integrated defence, particularly on the side facing the sea, with the walls and gates.

The town retained its importance for only 150 years. It was burned and sacked by the French in 1326, in 1336 there was another devastating attack and the town was already becoming deserted in 1363 when there was a further French raid in 1377. By 1415, the harbour had silted up and there was hardly anyone living there.

It was Rye which took over as the port in that area when Winchelsea collapsed. The town was built on what was almost an island with the sea on one side and St Mary's Marsh on the other. Indeed, at that time the only way to the town from the mainland was by a causeway. On the south and east of the town there was no need for walls because of the steep cliff on that side. There was, however, the Ypres Tower, in effect a castle, originally called the Baddings Tower, which still of course survives and was renamed after John d'Ypres who leased it in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. Other remains of the fortifications are



*The Ypres Tower, Rye*

a length of wall along Cinque Ports street, and the Land Gate. This must have looked, and looks now, very imposing from the outside but is very simple inside – very much a façade and nothing else. It is not as impressive as the Strand Gate in Rye but Dr Clarke speculated that there was a shortage of money in 1340 when it was being built. Like the Barbican in Sandwich, the main purpose of the Gate was to make a statement to the outside world to show how important the town was while inside the Gate, the same display was unnecessary. Dr Clarke showed us an image of a fascinating map of 1591 of a ‘Plott of the Towne of Rye’ from which we saw clearly the lay-out of the town as it was then with a view of some of the familiar landmarks we see to-day, particularly the Gun Garden where the map showed an array of cannons pointing out across the harbour.

Finally, Dr Clarke flattered her audience by showing a photograph of the Gatehouse of Battle Abbey, not part of a town wall, of course, because Battle had none, but an impressive piece of work with a high standard of workmanship.

Dr Clarke lectured without notes and used magnificent photographs of maps and of the towns and areas she was describing. It was an impressive lecture and well deserved the unusually large numbers who came to hear her.

Hugh Arbuthnott



## RICHARD III – A BLOODY TYRANT?

Dr Philip Stone

15 October 2015

**R**ichard III: hero or villain? The jury remains out even within the Richard III Society, despite their powerful advocacy of his innocence. Whilst his guilt is unproven, he was hardly heroic – certainly not in the chivalric sense. The Plantagenets of the 15th century, split between the Yorkists (Richard's party) and the Lancastrians were a remarkably devious, disloyal and dysfunctional family whose greatest talent was a facility for self-destruction. Richard fitted perfectly within the mould, at one point being a devoted brother to the King Edward IV and a loving uncle to the Royal Princes and then turning viciously upon his brother's widow, Queen Elizabeth, casting doubts upon the legitimacy of the marriage.

His villainy, of course, was the supposed murder of the Princes in the Tower and, although his supporters try to shift the blame onto Henry Tudor, the old cliché – who benefits? – remains, and clearly this could only be Richard.

Henry Tudor is one of the least attractive British monarchs and is the sort of man who would have removed any obstacle to his ambition, even by murder, but the fact remains that he was not in the country at the time; his contacts had little influence at Court and the removal of the Princes – whilst clearing one obstacle to his ambitions – still left Richard alive and powerful.

The Richard III Society was founded in 1924 and has attracted 5,000 members worldwide. It proclaims its belief that 'many of the features of the traditional accounts of the character and career of Richard are neither supported by sufficient evidence nor reasonably tenable'. The proof that these sentiments have been adopted by the general public was vividly shown when Richard's remains were buried in Leicester Cathedral. York Minster felt that they were the proper location, but public pressure deemed otherwise. Public opinion seems to be on Richard's side and it is only fair to point out that contemporary thoughts (1483) were sympathetic. On hearing of Richard's death, the Council of the City of York recorded 'King Richard late mercifully reigning upon us through great treason piteously slain and murdered to the great heaviness of this Citie.'

It was Shakespeare more than anyone else who created the stereo-typical villain. Richard III, as brilliantly acted in the film version by Sir Laurence Olivier, was the embodiment of evil and malevolence but, of course, Shakespeare was a product of the Tudors and was hardly likely to point the finger of suspicion at Henry VII, Elizabeth I's grandfather.

Richard was depicted as a crookback, yet recent skeletal analysis has shown that although he had a deformity of the spine which would have twisted his body and shortened his stature, this would not have seriously affected his physical activities. He was perfectly capable of warfare, as indeed he displayed at Bosworth. Similarly, a reconstruction of his skull shows an attractive face, in keeping with the good looks of the Yorkists. Edward IV was widely regarded as one of the most handsome men of his time and his Queen, Elizabeth Woodville, as one of the most beautiful women. Shakespeare's representation of Richard has coloured and blackened his reputation for four centuries. In his lifetime others held more positive views.

In 1483 the Bishop of St David's wrote, 'he contents the people where he goes best that ever did Prince for many a poor man that hath suffereed wrong many days have been relieved and helped by him. God has sent him to us for the benefit of us all.'

Richard was the youngest brother of Edward IV and was not expected to succeed to the crown. He loyally supported the King, participating in the invasion of France in 1475; represented the King in the north of England and in the war against Scotland. He proved himself a capable administrator with an astute, legal mind. He was very proficient as a warrior and seemed to be a man of virtue and dependability.



Unlike his elder brother George, Duke of Clarence, (who had a superior claim to the throne), Richard was regarded as reliable and safe. Clarence on the other hand was ambitious, devious and spiteful. He was executed for treason in 1478 and his heirs excluded from the succession. This moved Richard nearer to the throne.

As for the campaign to undermine the King's authority, it was Clarence who sought to challenge the legitimacy of the King's marriage. He claimed that Edward had been 'troth plighted' to Lady Eleanor Talbot (later Butler) and that such an arrangement was as legally binding as a conventional marriage unless it was dissolved by mutual consent. Clearly a previous marriage would invalidate Edward's marriage to Elizabeth Woodville and make their children illegitimate. (If this was so, why would Richard need to kill them?)

However, it *was* Richard who spread the allegation that Edward himself was illegitimate by claiming that their mother, the Duchess of York 'had been false to wedlock' – a suggestion that horrified the population and not unnaturally enraged

the Duchess who was still alive. It has to be said that later historical research has indicated that the allegation may be correct.

The real villainy would be the murder of the young King Edward V and his brother within the Tower of London. There is no dispute that they were within Richard's control; that they were seen in the Tower then vanished from sight, and that bones of 'pubescent' boys were uncovered near the White Tower in 1674. Forensic examination in the 1930s established that animal bones were mixed with human ones. Charles II was sufficiently convinced by the discovery to commission from Wren a white marble urn with an inscription upon it stating that it contained the bones of the Princes. The memorial was placed in the Chapel of Henry VIII in Westminster Abbey. In the unlikely event of the bones being re-examined, matrilineal DNA (if recoverable) would establish their authenticity.

Richard's own remains were rediscovered beneath a carpark in Leicester after a brilliant piece of historical research and were verified by DNA. They were interred in Leicester Cathedral in 2015 with great and respectful ceremony. The speaker, Dr Stone, was present and remarked, in passing, that he was surprised that only a minor member of the Royal Family had attended. Had this any hidden meaning?

So was Richard a hero or villain? My personal view is that the evidence points to his guilt, but my heart would like to acquit him.

David Sawyer



## SIMON DE MONTFORT, MAGNA CARTA AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARLIAMENT

Professor David Carpenter

19 November 2015

Professor Carpenter began by noting that the year 2015 marks not only the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Magna Carta but also the 750th anniversary of the Great Parliament of 1265, which for the first time included a House of Commons. Simon de Montfort's actions in developing Parliament were influenced by the Magna Carta.

The Magna Carta is of course one of the most important constitutional documents in the world influencing, among many others, Simon de Montfort, 17th-century jurists in their arguments against the divine right of kings, and the founding fathers of America. It is still quoted today: on 9 October 2015, the Lord Chief Justice ruled that Court fees were against the Magna Carta, resulting in a retreat by Government Ministers. The Magna Carta asserts the fundamental principle of the rule of law, preventing tyrannical rule by the monarch: this was not new in 1215 but it was the detail of the 63 chapters, covering the whole range of government activity, which was so remarkable. There was no other contemporary document of such a kind. It was well known in the 13th century and there were a number of different versions. In addition to the four copies that were initially sent out to the Cathedrals at Canterbury, Lincoln, Salisbury and possibly to St Paul's, a large number of unofficial copies were quickly in circulation and can be found in chronicles, regulations, and lawyers' papers of the period. After John's death in 1216, the minority government of Henry III decided to issue a new version; another was issued in 1217 after the war against the French occupiers was won. The 1225 version of the charter has special significance as a consensual document – the King agreed to it in return for taxation.

The term 'parliament' first appears officially in 1237 but had been used unofficially even earlier, for instance in referring to the 'parliament of Runnymede'. During the 13th century, the whole nature of parliament was being transformed, particularly in the 30s, 40s and 50s. The Magna Carta was linked to this transformation. It was a great lever and source of political power, the first time that there was control of taxation. The King often asked for taxation to be levied and was not infrequently refused. This would not have mattered if the King did not need tax revenue, but Magna Carta made it inevitable that he would, as it stopped or limited previous sources of revenue. For instance, before 1215 a baron often had to spend a considerable sum in order to be allowed to access his inheritance; Magna Carta limited the fee to £100.

The second great change was the appearance of a House of Commons. The Magna Carta in Chapter 12, mentions only tenants-in-chief, in effect a House of Lords. However, the Parliament of 1265 included knights from the country and burgesses from the towns, as confirmed in the contemporary chronicle of London alderman, Arnold Fitz Thedmar.

So how did Simon de Montfort come to have a hand in all these changes? He was the younger son of a great French noble family, whose father led the Albigensian crusade and established a new French lordship in the south of France based around Béziers and Carcassonne. In 1230, Simon de Montfort arrived in England to try and claim the earldom of Leicester, to which his father had a vestigial claim. Henry III took a liking to him and within a few years, Simon had been given the earldom and was married to the King's sister. If Henry thought he had found a great supporter, however, he was mistaken.

There were several reasons for the deterioration in relations between Simon and Henry III:

- Material grievances undoubtedly played a part: Henry III was deemed excessively generous to his



half-brothers and his wife's relatives which created considerable resentment; Simon de Montfort had benefited to an extent but he had a large family and needed money and had not received any landed endowment on his marriage;

- The easy-going, naïve and vacillating nature of the King also exacerbated the difficulties. Simon de Montfort was the exact opposite with a heart of steel and a huge belief in his own self-righteousness; he was a capable soldier and administrator and doubtless found dealing with the King very frustrating. This was evident by 1241 if not earlier: following a failed campaign in Poitou, arising from the King's changes of mind, an exasperated de Montfort told Henry that he should be locked up like King Charles the Simple
- Simon de Montfort was also extremely religious and close to reforming clerics, Grosseteste and Marsh. He was a man looking for a cause, like his father, and in 1258 he found it in the reform of the realm.

During the 1240s de Montfort spent much of the time abroad, including acting as viceroy in the disaffected Duchy of Gascony. Relations with King Henry remained uneasy but in 1253 he made his peace with the King at the behest of Bishop Grosseteste. However, it was a hollow reconciliation and in 1254 de Montfort led opposition in Parliament against a royal demand for a subsidy. Some confusion has arisen by the presence of knights in the Parliament of 1254 but that was a peculiar situation with the King out of the country and no precedent appeared to have been created.

In the 'Mad Parliament' at Oxford in 1258, he was again at the head of the opposition: the King was effectively stripped of power and a Baronial Council took control of the administration. Simon de Montfort was probably the most vigorous leader of the rebels but the Provisions of Oxford in 1258 did not mention a House of Commons.

Following the King's revocation of the Provisions in 1261, de Montfort left the country but returned again, invited by the barons to head up opposition as they were then convinced that the King was against reform. The aim of the rebellion was to reinstate the Provisions of Oxford. After his victory at the Battle of Lewes in 1264, de Montfort set up government based on the Provisions. Henry had the title and authority of King but decisions were made by a Council led by de Montfort and subject to consultation with Parliament.

The Great Parliament of 1265 marks the watershed. By this time, Simon de Montfort was under threat, with limited support from the magnates, so he looked for support from the knights and burgesses. He was a superb politician. As Earl of Leicester he had a large number of knights following him not only from his lands but also from elsewhere, e.g. Fletching, who were telling him what they wanted. He also knew how to connect with the English political community – his slogan was 'England for the English!' Although a Frenchman, he was regarded as an honorary Englishman as distinct from the disliked foreigners surrounding the King. In 1263 he was responsible for introducing a Statute against Aliens, which excluded foreigners from holding office; many foreigners were expelled. His ideology also played a part; he was close to reforming clerics and friars which translated to concern for the whole community; his will included instructions for peasants on his lands to be properly looked after.

To some extent, Simon de Montfort left Magna Carta behind by including knights and burgesses in Parliament and turning the King into a cypher. However, he would consider that Magna Carta provided the foundation for his actions. Indeed, the Great Parliament confirmed Magna Carta and copies were distributed throughout the kingdom with a letter. Simon de Montfort made two changes in his own interest to the 1225 version (i) he reduced inheritance tax to £66 and (ii) he altered the whole passage relating to the inheritance of an earl, stressing that earls would inherit earldoms not 'baronies of earldom' as expressed in the original version. If the King were to break the new constitution, it was made clear that rebellion was permitted: this clause was modelled on the Security Clause in the 1215 version (omitted from 1225).



*Simon de Montfort's seal and his statue on the clock tower of Leicester Cathedral*

Would Parliament have developed without Simon de Montfort? It may well have done but there is no doubt that his actions accelerated its development and by the end of the reign of Edward I, the House of Commons was firmly established.

Sarah Hall



## WHO REALLY GOT US TO THE MOON FIRST?

Dr David Baker

15 December 2015

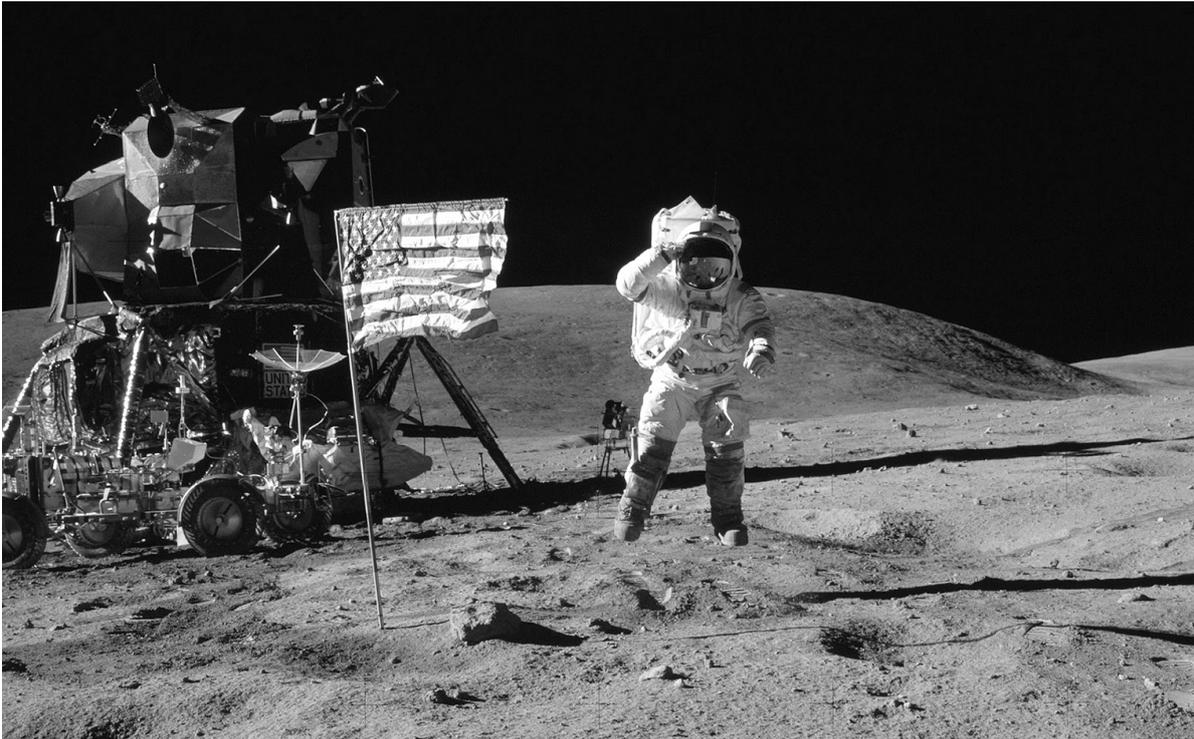
David Baker, formerly of NASA and a Fellow of the British Interplanetary Society, sought to remove some myths about the current space programme by examining its history. Beginning before the Second World War, it was international collaboration which had led to the current space programme and the International Space Station. While normally and mistakenly seen as a purely American conception, Britain and others had, in fact, played key roles.

The space programme, sometimes seen as an expensive luxury, has repaid its cost ten times over in terms of benefit to humans on earth (e.g. discovery of and work on the ozone layer) and increased understanding by scientists of earth-based problems. The entire cost of the space programme did not yet amount to a single year's spend of the US defence budget, or a single winter's cleaning of parks across America.

The British history of innovation in the space programme stretched back to 1933 and the founding of the British Interplanetary Society (BIS), and continues today – in recent years there have been significant increases in the budget of the British space programme as part of the European Space Agency effort (Dr Baker noted in passing that the Agency was not part of the European Union and that work contracted to the Agency's members like Britain, benefited the economy). In the intervening years, Britain punched well above its weight. International BIS names as well-known as Arthur C. Clarke and lesser known such as Robert Goddard, had contributed many papers and projects opening up new understanding of elements for space travel such as rocket propellant and engine construction. In the late 1930s, work led by Robert Watson Watt in Bawdsey, Suffolk, led to the USA realising the importance of radar. In this period, the Cavendish and Clarendon Laboratories also made significant contributions through their work in nuclear science.

International collaboration in the space effort also had a German element in it because much of the post-war American work had at its foundations the V2 ballistic missile and the person who designed it, Wernher von Braun, technical director at Peenemunde during the war. He and many of his colleagues were removed by the USA from Nazi Germany at the end of the war as part of Project Paperclip and put to work on development of high altitude rockets for the US military and then from 1960 for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) when it was formed. At NASA he was the architect of the Saturn V super-booster rocket which would propel Americans to the moon. In that context, British scientists such as Arthur C. Clarke and Alexander Sabin were among those who persuaded von Braun to 'go smaller' as his rocket engines were developed – some of the original designs were impractically large. British scientists also developed the celestial sighting device which proved essential in the trips to the moon made during the Apollo Programme.

After the war, while the USA continued the development of nuclear weapons leading on from the work of Oppenheimer and others. Britain, through Ken Gatland, took the lead in development of civilian nuclear-powered rocket engines, intended for Earth/Moon shuttles, and now used for probes into the solar system. British scientists started work in 1949 on how vehicles would rendezvous in space and in this period another BIS member, Harry Ross, and Ralph Smith designed a space station – primitive by today's standards but visionary at the time. Meanwhile in 1951 it was in Britain that a foil balloon was sent to high altitude to test the feasibility of bouncing communication signals off it: the success of this project led to the satellite technology which is today taken for granted as the basis of international TV and communications. Rocket work in Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, such as the Blue Streak programme,



indirectly supported the efforts of NASA.

When announcing in 1962 America's ambition to put a man on the Moon by the end of the decade, President Kennedy had been pressured by adverse events such as the Bay of Pigs fiasco and the successful launch into orbit by the Soviet Union of Yuri Gagarin. But in support of this ambitious target, Kennedy had not only the efforts of scientists in the USA but also those of Britain. Even as the NASA Moon programme worked on through the 1960s – with increased efficiency from military routines and planning methods – it was a British scientist working at Farnborough, who solved the problem that spacesuits tended to self-combust.

Today, private contractors such as Skylon, are coming into the equation, aiming in the near future to take on shuttle work for the International Space Station, while NASA turns its attention to longer journeys in the solar system and beyond.

In the course of the lecture Mr Baker set out several of the following areas in which the British Interplanetary Society were first or facilitated discussion:

- first serious engineering study of a rocket capable of taking humans to the moon and returning (1938)
- first development of an instrument specifically designed for spaceflight (1939)
- first proposal of geosynchronous orbit for worldwide communications (Arthur C. Clarke 1945)
- first design of spacesuit for walking on the moon (H. E. Ross 1949)
- earliest scientific paper on the possibility of nuclear rockets (1952)
- concept and utility of a large orbiting space telescope (Hubble 1955)
- first proposal on the manufacture and use of concrete for construction on the Moon (1976)
- first international conference dedicated solely to the concept of warp drive (2007)



## THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME: FILM BY GEOFFREY MALINS

Introduced by Neil Clephane-Cameron

21 January 2016

There had been photographers in earlier wars, notably beginning with Roger Fenton in the Crimea, but motion pictures were something new, at least on the scale now contemplated. The authorities must have been understandably nervous about the effects that any film would have on the public at home, but nevertheless in June 1916 they withdrew their ban and authorised Geoffrey Malins and John McDowell to film what was intended to be a walkover British victory on the Somme.

When viewing the film it is important to note that the cameramen would have had no other concept in mind as to the ultimate use to which their footage would be put, nor of course of the momentous significance the events themselves were to assume. This, coupled with the still primitive and cumbersome state of cinematographic equipment, means of course that much of interest to posterity was not recorded. However, it is remarkable that so much of historical interest and significance was captured through the skill and luck of the two cameramen, Geoffrey Malins and J. B. McDowell. Their equipment was large and heavy (and of course hand-cranked) and itself exposed to attack (and indeed it did suffer minor damage). The photographers had to be close to the front if they were to film the actions, and therefore exposed themselves to considerable danger but they escaped serious hurt. A draft report to GHQ Intelligence in November 1916 stated:

No operator has been killed or wounded yet, though they have been near it often enough ... I have seen [Malins] very nearly hit by shells on 5 or 6 occasions, also by a gust of machine-gun bullets during the attack of 7th July near Contalmaison.

I have also seen McDowell have very narrow escapes, notably from machine-gun bullets on 1<sup>st</sup> July when trying to cross 'no-man's land' behind the advancing infantry, and several times from shell. ...He has also been gassed [i.e. shell gas]. So has Malins.

McDowell (was in the front line) during the successful attack on Mametz, and Malins during the successful attack on Martinpuich. They have been in the front line on many other occasions, but in these instances they got excellent pictures of successful fights. They have had their apparatus damaged more than once.

Malins arrived in France on or about 26 June 1916 and was attached to Major-Gen. de Lisle's 29<sup>th</sup> Division in front of Beaumont Hamel. A prominent feature, Jacob's Ladder, gave a notable vantage point over the German lines (from which the detonation of the Hawthorn Ridge mine and other scenes were filmed). McDowell was operating opposite Fricourt and Mametz in the south; Malins subsequently moved to the La Boisselle sector.

The footage was shot from about 26 June to about 7 July 1916, and therefore shows some of the preparations for the attack and its first few days. To modern eyes there are antique touches: the first obvious one is the enormous number of horses, used for towing equipment and provisions and for carrying officers. As the film continues one sees the great labour needed to arm the artillery and the use of trench mortars such as the 'plum pudding', which was unlike the more conventional mortar in that it was spherical and it was not dropped into the barrel but sat on top of it while the firing men scattered to safe places in case of accident.



*Geoffrey Malins filming*

The men coming up to fight look cheery enough, smiling and waving, quite a few smoking as was the near-universal habit then. There are shots of infantry, artillery and engineers (the sappers carrying their spades and other impedimenta) across a wide range of units. There were also shots of trenches before the battle, with men waiting for action, and one series of men going over the top (though this may have been posed and filmed elsewhere). The battlefield was chalky and largely flat, making the German positions clearly delineated where the British occupied higher ground such as in front of Mametz. Understandably, no German attacks on the British lines are shown. There are some good sequences of shelling – the artillery firing and the shells exploding beyond the barbed wire – and one (a repeated sequence) of a major mine explosion leaving a crater forty feet deep.

Then towards the end there are some of the dead, mainly German, and many German prisoners. It really does look like a British victory until the very last shot, which must have been added much later: a map showing the British and German positions on 30 June 1916, at the end of the battle and after the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg line early the next year. Distances are marked. No comment is needed.

The film was edited and prepared for showing with remarkable speed. On 12 July, only a week or so after Malins left France, 'rushes' viewed in London; on 10 August the film was premiered to a select audience; on 21 August it was released to 34 cinemas in the London area; and on 28 August there was a general release of 100 prints across the country.

At the premier a letter was read to the audience from David Lloyd George, the Secretary of State for War who in December would be Prime Minister:

You are invited here to witness by far the most important and imposing picture of the war that our staff has yet procured. The Battle of the Somme, furious and desperate as it has been, is a first and most important phase in what is an historical struggle, unique in its scope and world-wide significance.

I am convinced that when you have seen this wonderful picture, every heart will beat in sympathy with its purpose, which is no other than that everyone of us at home and abroad shall



see what our men at the Front are doing and suffering for us, and how their achievements have been made possible by the sacrifices made at home.

Now, gentlemen, be up and doing also! See that this picture, which is in itself an epic of self-sacrifice and gallantry, reaches everyone. Herald the deeds of our brave men to the ends of the Earth. This is your Duty.

Ladies, I feel that no word is necessary to urge upon you the importance of throwing on the whole ardour and strength of your invaluable aid. Mothers, wives, sisters and affianced ones, your hearts will beat, your voices speak in honour and glory of the living and the dead. You are great and powerful. This is your mission.

The authorities were proved right in allowing the film to be made and shown. The public responses were generally and strongly favourable. The *Kinematograph Weekly* wrote on 10 August:

We would impress upon every showman that it is his duty ...that he should screen it ... with as little delay as possible. It will do more to hearten the people and hasten the day of final and complete victory ... than all the newspapers and all the books ever printed.

*The Times* reviewed it on the following day:

In years to come, when historians want to know the conditions under which the great offensive was launched, they will only have to send for these films and a complete idea of the situation will be revealed before their eyes....

[One may observe that they were either ill-informed or trying to keep morale up.]

The Dean of Durham replied to contest the showing but he was clearly in the minority.

The film has gone down in history under Malins's name alone, which is unfair to McDowell. Malins was the better showman, and soon wrote a memoir entitled *How I filmed the war*, which does not mention his partner. Both made further films of the war.

All that said, the Somme film was a remarkable beginning and well-worth seeing.

Neil Clephane-Cameron



## VICEROYS OF INDIA

Mr Christopher Lee

17 February 2016

The Society was delighted to welcome Mr Lee, writer, historian, broadcaster, and a former resident of Battle. Mr Lee opened by explaining that would not be running through a chronology of the various Viceroys as that would be boring, but instead seek to illustrate how England initially became attracted to India and how India went on to become synonymous with the British Empire.

In 1601 the English East India Company was founded when a group of London merchants decided to risk their capital only after there had been favourable reports about trade prospects in the East. They sought a monopoly of the East for trading purposes, dealing in silk, ivory, spices and cotton. When the East India Company came to India in the early 1600s, India was ruled by the Mughals. They were a land-based culture (originating from Uzbekistan and later getting foothold in Afghanistan) and didn't appreciate the importance of the seas or a navy. Thus, the benevolent Mughal Emperor Jehangir had no issues providing trading ports on the Indian coast to the East India Company, having little appreciation for the strategic importance of India to Europe, and specifically the English who hit upon India as an eastern trading base because the Dutch were already established in the East Indies. The Mughal rulers generally viewing these 'barbarous northern fishermen' with disdain due to their lack of refinement in contrast to the long cultural history of the Eastern civilisations. Within the next 150 years however this naivety and the vastness of India meant that the British were no longer alone, other European companies having established bases and were also busy trading, accumulating profits and growing navies.

The British needed to find a way to influence the native rulers in order to exclude other Europeans, and events duly obliged.

The imposition of Islam had left much of India very discontented and there were rebellions everywhere. Temples were destroyed and Sharia laws were imposed. Hindus wanted to get rid of the Islamic rule quickly. In 1707–17 there were 5 emperors each betrayed by those closest to him. This made the empire fragile. This was the time for the Hindus to hit back. One of the key empires that emerged from the 17th century was the Marathas, based in Western India. By 1730 the Marathas overran all of India. This was a period of big confusion as the Marathas had little time to set up bases and many of the local rulers were still loyal to the Mughals. The switch of allegiance was not swift and there was a lot of hard fighting. It was in this period of the mid eighteenth-century that the East India company started flexing their muscles. As they saw the fledgling Hindu Marathas battling what was remaining of the Mughal territory, the Company found a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

The Company had got a new leader Robert Clive. He knew India and its politics. The Nawab of the province of Bengal was facing huge challenges. The Company deftly made deals with many of the conspirators and founded a strange coalition of Hindus and Muslims ready to betray their leader who was defeated at the Battle of Plassey, 1757.

In just four years the biggest power in India was defeated and the Company had control over Bengal. In the next 40 years, the Company would overrun the rest of India.

Clive's reforms marked a new development in the history of the East India Company. By 1765 no longer was it using puppet Indian governments to beat down European rivals in competition for trade but had overwhelmingly defeated Indian forces struggling for independence from European control. The company had become a government as well as a trader. However, the Company clung to the idea that it was still only a trading company and refused to admit that it had territorial responsibilities. Huge areas of India were acquired by the Company, not by the British government. Company officials were trained to buy and sell, to run warehouses and offices and to deal with book-keeping. They were not trained to



govern. The British government gradually took over from the Company the right to govern vast provinces of India.

In 1767, following the victory over the natives of Bengal, the Earl of Chatham decided to claim that all Indian territory must be under the sovereignty of the Crown. It might then be leased out to the Company as a favour. However dissent within the government followed and in June 1767 the Duke of Grafton patched up the dispute. Although the Company paid lucrative dividends, and its servants (the so-called 'nabobs') took fortunes from India, its finances generally were unsound. The military and administrative costs, plus the debt to the Treasury imposed heavy burdens which a private company was unable to carry.

The Regulating Act for India (1773) was the first step along the road to government control of India. A system was established whereby the government supervised the work of the East India Company but did not take power for itself. The Governor-General and his council were appointed for five years, with control over the territories in Madras and Bombay as well as Bengal. The Company was still managed by the Board of Directors although parliament had to be informed about military, financial and civil affairs. The Crown also claimed the right to administer justice in specified cases. Generous salaries were fixed and the accepting of bribes by servants of the Company was forbidden, the government attempting to make the East India Company less a commercial enterprise than a respectable delegated authority of itself. To organise this effectively meant that parliament had to regulate the company's policies from the top and thus overcome its very real powers of direct administration and patronage.

The first Governor-General to be appointed was Warren Hastings. He behaved like a benevolent despot. He set up a civil service, dismissed native tax-collectors and appointed British collectors who were strictly forbidden to take bribes. He sent a British army across India to Bombay to fight the first Mahratta War (1775–82) against the tribes of central India. Hastings' actions saved Bombay and extended the influence of the Company in the western provinces.

By the 1780s, there was a growing humanitarian feeling which led to attacks upon the company for neglecting – or outraging – the basic rights and decencies of the Indian population in areas of British influence. In the India Act (1784) the British government took another step along the road to control India. Subsequent Governors-General were embroiled in successive wars against local leaders but by 1823 all India was directly or indirectly under British control. This system of dual control between Company and Crown worked for the next 34 years until the Indian Mutiny. After that, parliament took over complete responsibility for India.

In Calcutta, the Governor-General remained head of the Government of India as the Crown's representative to the nominally sovereign princely states, becoming Viceroy in 1876 when Disraeli created Queen Victoria as Empress of India. He was, however, now responsible to the Secretary of State in London and through him to Parliament. The Governor-General in the capital, Calcutta, and the Governor in a subordinate presidency (Madras or Bombay) was each required to consult his advisory council. In the years of post-rebellion reconstruction immediately after 1858 the Viceroy, Lord Canning, found the need to make efficiencies and initiated the 'portfolio system', promulgated in the India Councils Act (1861).

The Government of India Act (1935) abolished the Council of India with effect from 1 April 1937 and a modified system of government enacted. The Secretary of State for India represented the Government of India in the UK. He was assisted by a body of advisers numbering from 8–12 individuals, at least half of whom were required to have held office in India for a minimum of 10 years, and had not relinquished office earlier than two years prior to their appointment as advisers to the Secretary of State. The Viceroy and Governor-General of India, a Crown appointee, typically held office for five years though there was no fixed tenure. He headed the Viceroy's Executive Council, each member of which had responsibility for a department of the central administration. From 1 April 1937, the position of Governor-General in Council, which the Viceroy and Governor-General concurrently held in the capacity of representing the



*European trading stations in India*

Crown in relations with the Indian princely states, was replaced by the designation of 'HM Representative for the Exercise of the Functions of the Crown in its Relations with the Indian States, or the 'Crown Representative.' The Executive Council was greatly expanded during the Second World War, and in 1947 comprised 14 Members (Secretaries).



## THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF BATTLE BEFORE 1066

Casper Johnson BA (Hons) MCifA FRSA FSA 17 March 2016

Casper Johnson joined Kent County Council's heritage team in 2002 before becoming County Archaeologist at East Sussex County Council in 2006.

The aim of his talk was to impart an idea of the richness and complexity of the archaeological landscape of East Sussex before the Battle of Hastings in October 1066. First we need to understand the chronology of the various archaeological periods that make up the 'Sussex Timeline'.

- Palaeolithic up to 10,000 BC
- Mesolithic 10,000–4,000 years BC
- Neolithic 4,000–2,300 BC
- Bronze Age 2,300–700 BC
- Iron Age 700–AD 43
- Roman AD 43–450
- Saxon/early Medieval AD 450–1066
- Medieval to AD 1543 ('*Annus Mirabilis*' or 'the Year of Science')\*
- Post Medieval to AD 1914

In order to teach British pre-history in East Sussex primary schools, a series of visual aids had been prepared containing objects from each of the archaeological periods, and these were used during the talk to illustrate some of the common traits in the finds which helped to identify the age and period from which they came.

It was also important to be reminded of the topography of the Battle area, which had been dynamic and changing over the archaeological periods depicted in the Sussex Timeline. Recent excavations in the County, not least those exposed by the Bexhill to Hastings Link Road project at Combe Haven, have proved how rich and diverse the settlements of our ancestors were in this area. The evidence ranges from the late Mesolithic and Neolithic periods through to the Bronze, Iron, Saxon and Medieval ages.

The earliest hominid evidence in Britain of man's existence has been placed at over 700,000 years ago by recent dating of finds on the Norfolk coast. As far as Sussex is concerned, a hominid find at Boxgrove in West Sussex has been dated to 400,000 years ago, during the Palaeolithic period. Finds in North Kent have been dated to around 350,000 years.

Since these proven periods of hominid occupation, there have been many periods of climatic change largely brought about as a result of glaciation. In the most recent inter-glacial Ice Age, which began about 12,000 years ago, the glacial line stopped well to the north of southern England, but the peri-glacial effects of very cold temperatures had a dramatic effect on the landscape and the geomorphology. One of the most significant effects of this on the East Sussex landscape has been the relative change in sea levels since the end of the last Ice Age. The Sussex coast has experienced a dramatic rise in sea levels of about 45 metres during this period, whilst during previous glacial periods it has been judged that sea levels were up to 130 metres below current levels. So when early hominids were living in Britain the sea was a very long way from its present shoreline, not least because Britain as we know it today was still attached to the European Continent and the English Channel had yet to form. Early English Mesolithic cultures were thus essentially tied to those of northern Europe.

Since the late Palaeolithic period, valleys have been carved out of the landscape by melting ice water to give us the topography we might recognise today, but are now filled in by sediments. The geological consequence has resulted in three main layers of alluvial sediments, clays and organic peats where evidence of human activities and changing landscapes have been well preserved. So, here we find the valleys on



the present East Sussex coast, not least in the bays of Pevensey, Bulverhythe, and Romney Marsh, which have since filled with deep levels of silt but retain their discernable shape. Only 1,000 years ago much of Combe Haven consisted of tidal creeks and marshland, which has given added importance to the recent archaeological work undertaken on the Bexhill–Hastings Link Road archaeological site. The extent of the area excavated is from Upper Combe Haven, or Bulverhythe in Bexhill, through the Combe Valley following the line of the Bexhill to Crowhurst railway, and on through Crowhurst itself and Powdermills, to link with the Battle–Hastings road. The total area of the Link Road scheme is a crescent, six miles long, in places up to half a mile wide, and six to eight metres deep where the valleys are filled with alluvium and colluvium, and traverses a series of streams and rivers running off the Wealden clays into the Combe Valley. Various methods have been used to uncover the evidence of early man's activities and occupation, including a LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) aerial laser survey, geo-electric and topographic surveys using magnetometry and ground penetrating radar, stratigraphic mapping, test-pits, boreholes and a metal detector survey.

In the area around Battle and south towards the modern coastline, the earlier Palaeolithic periods are not well represented by archaeological finds. Whilst hand axes and other material from these earlier periods have been found, it is not until the end of the last Ice Age in the Upper Palaeolithic period that the first evidence for early human habitation presents itself. The Link Road development has provided an opportunity to discover the complex past of an area of considerable historical and archaeological importance. The archaeological evidence ranges from the late Mesolithic and Neolithic periods to the Bronze, Iron, Saxon and Medieval ages.

At the end of the last Ice Age some 12,000 years ago, the landscape around Battle was being newly colonised by forests of birch, hazel and pine providing sanctuary for large herbivores, which attracted the early human hunters. Evidence of people living here from the end of the last Ice Age through to the present day has been uncovered mostly through flint finds. These indicate that, initially these were small groups of people living in campsites rather than in permanent settlements. Oxford Archaeology and the Hastings Area Archaeological Research Group (HAARG) have recorded what is thought to be one of the most significant finds of Late Upper Palaeolithic and Mesolithic hunter-gatherer flint-working sites near Acton's farm, and is one of the earliest evidences of prehistoric activity in the country. These flint finds are characterised by bi-faced long-blade flint tools used for hunting large game.



*A 'long blade' style flint tool from the Mesolithic period  
(9,600–4,000 BCE)*



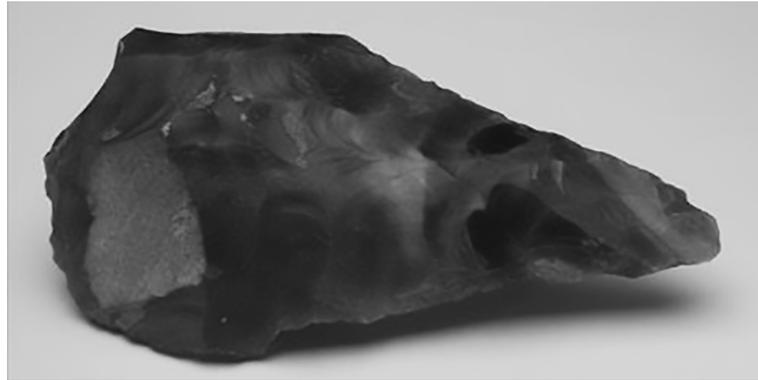
During the Mesolithic period the landscape changed considerably. About 8,000 years ago with the rise in sea levels Britain became an island as the Channel formed to divide us from the Continent. This led to an immense increase in the number of people living in the area, evidenced by over 200 individual lithic artefacts which have been unearthed on the Link Road site, which show a high level of occupation, perhaps even permanent or repeated settlement over a period of 4,000 years.

By *c.* 6,000 BC it is likely that the land had been lived in for such a long time that permanent trackways had been created; occupied sites used on a seasonal basis had been formed; sites of flint concentrations would have been worked and in general the landscape was showing clear evidence of being modified by human occupation. Archaeological evidence of charcoal deposits show that the land was being cleared by burning, perhaps to open the area for hunting rather than for agricultural use. Oxford Archaeology teams working on the Link Road have found over 500,000 pieces of worked flint from 300 sites – many hundreds of pieces per square metre – dating from the Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze ages. The flints are of different sizes and types and made for specific uses, such as harpoons and arrows for killing different types of prey. Finding hundreds of small, precisely cut ‘microliths’ of just one type in a particular spot, is not only evidence of the skill and organization of those that produced them towards the end of the late Mesolithic period, but that the game they were hunting was much smaller with hunting taking place in woodland rather than open country. The quality of these flints is extraordinary, and it is possible to identify different flint types and their sources. There are no flints found naturally on any of the sites, and as the sea was a considerable distance out from the present coast at the beginning of the Mesolithic period, their presence represents a considerable investment in time and effort fetching them in to what was then a relatively inland, and upland location. Carbon dating evidence from a HAARG excavation site near Whatlington of about 7,000 BC, shows a site of a post hole and worked flint, which along with other sites in the Upper Rother Valley and even on the high ground at Brightling, indicates that this was an area of relatively high population density for early hunter-gatherers.

The Link Road site has also revealed evidence of a very early Mesolithic structure, one of the earliest found in Britain, and with its associated flint field it is likely to have been a hide used for hunting game, given its field of view. Around this time, 6000 BC, long shore drift of shingle began to close off the mouths of the river valleys as they entered the sea, blocking off the outflow of sediment from the rivers, which created large areas of coastal marsh of brackish water. These were rich ecological environments attractive to late Mesolithic man, which the Link Road excavations have confirmed as being one of the most important sites of this period in Britain.

The Neolithic period (4,000–*c.* 2,300 BC) is characterised by woodland clearance and the introduction of many new economic and social ideas into Britain. It is difficult to be precise as to when the Mesolithic period ends and the Neolithic period begins due to the successful adaptation of early man to this environment. Instead we see a very complex overlap of different ways of life and the development of a rural economy over an undetermined period of time, in which societies in this area moved from hunter-gathering to a more settled agricultural way of life. It is, however a period of very significant change. We see the introduction of pottery, much of its style copied from that in use at the time on the Continent. It is also the period of introduction of cultivated crops such as wheat and barley, and domestication of animals like sheep, pigs and cattle. Typical objects of the period found in the Battle area are flint axes, spears and arrowheads, but archaeological ritual monuments are rare.

The earliest structural examples of the period in East Sussex are causeway enclosures found towards Brighton, but until now very little evidence has been found of Neolithic structures in the eastern end of the county. However one has been found at Combe Haven, again from the Link Road excavations. Oxford Archaeology is currently working to determine whether a series of oval-shaped rings about 15 metres in diameter, excavated in 2015, originated as a form of henge or a sacred space, in the Neolithic period and then developed into a round barrow in the Bronze Age. A polished axe head found at the site is clearly Neolithic in date and may indicate that this is a causeway enclosure. This exciting find may be



*Neolithic Handaxe*

the precursor to other Neolithic ritual monumental structures in eastern Sussex hitherto undiscovered. The Link Road site has also revealed some worked timbers from the Neolithic period that may be part of a trackway across marshland or a platform edge. Preservation of material in these wetland environments is particularly good, as proven by Neolithic finds in the Fens and Somerset Levels, and it is hoped that the marshland of eastern Sussex may reveal similar evidence in time. The headwaters of the Brede valley in the area between Whatlington and Sedlescombe would seem to hold considerable archaeological potential.

During the Bronze Age (2000–700 BC) we see the Neolithic people of the area adapting to the appearance of new commodities and cultures, not least the ability to smelt and work metal and weave cloth. And this area of East Sussex is hugely rich in Bronze Age material. We are now sure that by the end of the late Bronze Age period, the landscape shows well-used tracks and lanes, fields, settlements and ritual monuments such as barrows. Today the South Downs in West Sussex clearly reveals evidence of such early land use, but we can be sure that the eastern Sussex landscape contained similar scenes, given the richer soils of the High Weald suitable for agriculture and settlement. Good quality Early Bronze Age barbed-and-tanged arrowheads, decorated pottery beakers and evidence of metalworking have all been found on the Link Road dig, which indicate the introduction into Britain at this time of Continental artefact types. Some of the adzes found at the Link Road site are of very high quality and all deliberately different to work wood in very particular ways. But perhaps the most exciting find is a very rare example of an archer's wrist-guard made out of an antler, similar in type to others found in excavations made in barrows near Stonehenge. This hints at a high-status burial, but further evidence on this site has been lost over time to the plough. Nonetheless, such finds, not least the Dover Bronze Age Boat, show how sophisticated Bronze Age society had become.

Recent eastern Sussex archaeological excavations, including on the Link Road, have revealed the existence of about twenty other circular ditched ritual monuments of likely Bronze Age date. These ring ditches or barrows were used as burial sites and few have been excavated before, but it would be very unusual to find any evidence of burials. The one found on the Link Road dig disproves a common misconception that this area was densely forested and lightly settled by sporadic communities, but unfortunately no objects have been preserved to reveal its true purpose other than some evidence of cremated human bone currently being analysed. All these barrows range in date and were constructed for different uses, some possibly being built on previous Neolithic sites. The Link Road barrow shows a series of nearby ridges and ditches indicating a Bronze Age field system and drove way running down to the wetland area from higher ground. This evidence of Bronze Age land-use is similar to other large open-area archaeological excavations in the southeast showing that by the later Bronze Age much of the flatter open ground on free draining soils was being divided up into coaxial field systems. LIDAR surveys on the downs of West Sussex reveal the true and large extent of these coaxial field systems, which have survived over the recent centuries despite the heavy agricultural use of the land. No similar LIDAR survey has yet been conducted



in this area of East Sussex and would prove to be very revealing. A scheduled barrow in Wellhead Wood near Salehurst on the edge of the Upper Rother, and another in the Marley Lane area between Battle and Sedlescombe overlooking the headwaters of the Brede, amongst others in the area between Battle, Hastings and Rye, are evidence of sophisticated Bronze Age settlements.

Twenty circular pits with sluice gates have been revealed in the Link Road dig which would have been close to the edge of expanses of water to control the flow of water into the pits. Examination of the pits shows evidence of burnt clay and sandstone, known as burnt mounds that are believed to be either an early kind of sauna or 'sweat lodge', or more likely areas for industrial processing of hides and other materials requiring heat and water. There is no evidence that these were used for making salt. A third possible use of the burnt mounds is for communal cooking and processing of food which was taking place by the late Bronze Age and into the early Iron Age. The most spectacular late Bronze Age find made near Claverham College in the 1920s in Battle, was of a unique trumpet of similar design to those found in Denmark, and a slashing sword, but alas both have been lost since the 1950s. Equally spectacular was the Mountfield Hoard, a late Bronze Age find made in 1862 by William Butcher as he ploughed his field close to Taylors Cottage. Thinking the yellow metal was brass, he sold it to a local ironmonger, who recognised that it was, in fact, about 12lb of gold ornaments, and melted most of it down to avoid it being claimed by the Crown as treasure trove. All we have today is a description! So we should imagine our Late Bronze Age landscape to be not too dissimilar to that which we see in the present day.

Next we come to the relatively short Iron Age period from 700BC to the arrival of the Romans in AD 43. We do not have much good archaeology for this period in eastern Sussex, due to climate deterioration (cold and wet), but we do see major changes to the landscape through the development of hill forts, improved pottery and other socio-cultural developments, such as an interest in styles of art and types of clothing, as well as the introduction of coinage. Two Iron Age hill forts are known to have been sited at Hastings on the promontories astride the Old Town but neither has been well excavated. Consequently we have little idea of how long they were in use or their purpose, other than defensive. Coastal erosion in the interim has removed much of the archaeological evidence, as well as later development of the sites, not least by the construction of the Norman castle on one of the promontories. A recently excavated site near Eastbourne at Pocock's Field shows an entire archaeological sequence from prehistoric (from about 800 BC), through Iron Age and Roman to medieval settlement, including a substantial double-lynchet trackway. So we can find some sites in East Sussex which cover the Iron Age period, but they are not extensive. The most interesting of these are at Crowhurst and Footlands Wood where there is good evidence of pre-Roman iron working.

The final intervening period leading up to 1066 covers the Roman and Anglo-Saxon eras. Whilst we can still see today the clear evidence of Roman Roads in the County, this area is best known for its Roman iron workings. The Roman Empire was particularly interested in the natural iron resources contained in the Wealden Sandstones of East Sussex, which might explain why Julius Caesar's invasion of AD 43 was driven by a wish to take control of this part of Britain. Roman historians and others have put forward the idea that the iron-ore mining and smelting in this High Weald Area was part of a large estate operated by the Roman Navy (Classis Britannica – 'British Fleet', i.e. the Roman fleet based in Britannia). Stamped tiles of the Classis Britannica have been found at sites associated with the production of iron. The largest of these is at Beauport Park, near Battle, where more than 1000 tiles were used to roof a substantial bathhouse adjacent to a large iron-smelting site, discovered by Gerald Brodrigg and Dr Henry Cleere in 1967. This is thought to be the third largest iron works in the whole Roman Empire. Other iron production sites where tiles have been found are at Bardown, near Wadhurst, and Little Farningham Farm, near Cranbrook. In order to extract and ship out the iron ore the Romans needed an elaborate support structure with linking roads and access to navigable waterways. Three sites where tiles have been found had access to navigable water in Roman times, and two of them, at Bodiam – just north of the K&ESR railway station, and at Boreham Bridge near Ninfield, have associated iron workings. The



*Roman Tile from Beauport Park stamped CLBR (Classis Britannica)*

implication is that the Classis Britannica not only transported iron but was involved in its production as well. And the road system developed by the Romans in the area was superimposed on existing trackways and drove roads going back to the earliest settlers of the late Bronze Age. The straight Roman Roads were more often built for military use but many others were built as links to service the iron industry.

Work carried out by HAARG at Footlands between Sedlescombe and Cripps Corner has revealed late Iron Age and pre-Roman era iron workings and associated settlements, field systems and a complex network of tracks and roads. This is one of many sites yet to be properly excavated in the area which is further proof that the early iron industry flourished in the Battle area. Battle Museum contains an exhibition and much information on the Wealden Iron Industry. At Kitchenham Farm near Ashburnham, five miles west of Battle, an area of Roman era waterside settlement, recently excavated beside Waller's Haven, shows evidence of tile manufacture. So the area has a well-developed network of roads and ports for both imports and exports of trade goods and raw materials relating to the Roman period.

On the Link Road excavations near Upper Wilting Farm, the footprints of Roman buildings and enclosures with roasting platforms have been found, in association with up to eighteen iron smelting bloomery furnaces and slag deposits. The slag exists as a huge bank falling into the valley, and covers a succession of furnaces of several different types and sizes on terraces set into the slope. The earliest iron working may have been late Iron Age, but it was the Romans who turned its production into a massive industrial undertaking. The sheer number, variety and scale of the furnaces, together with their repair and re-use are evidence of a very important aspect of the Roman occupation of Sussex which will be made clearer once Oxford Archaeology publish the results of their research. Dating has already been made from pottery finds of Gaulish Samian ware of about AD150 matched to a known potter working in Bordeaux at the time, as well as black burnished ware and several other types. These pots tell us much about the sophisticated lifestyle of those living in the area 2,000 years ago, as they were used for the import of olive oil, salted fish, and wine that we would associate today with the Mediterranean diet.

For the period from the end of the Roman Empire in AD 410 to 1066 there are some hints in the archaeological finds of the area that tell us about those that lived in the landscape with which we are now familiar. The excavations at Waller's Haven and Bodiam have revealed pieces of waterlogged wood that



have been worked to form parts of bridges or revetments dated to the Early and Middle Saxon periods. And more familiar to us at Pevensey is a late Roman port, with its associated castle and Saxon foreshore settlement. Although Battle at this time appears not to have had any obvious settlement, however it is clear that it lies on an ancient ridge trackway leading off north from Hastings. After the fall of the Roman Empire there was an economic collapse in Britain and an element of resettlement. But the occupation of this landscape was so intense over such a long period of time, there is no doubt that elements in the landscape from the Bronze Age run right through to the Roman and Saxon period. Some historic boundaries are still in place today that have Bronze Age and Iron Age ditches beneath them that prove continual occupation and use by our ancestors over thousands of years.

The Link Road excavations at Upper Wilting Farm, where we know there was a Saxon Manor, have exposed three corn-drying ovens complete with charred cereal grains and a collapsed roof with posts, giving a date of 6th or 7th century AD, and provide a glimpse of cereal production in the area. These results allow us to date some of the early farms and hamlets whose place names provide clues to their Saxon origins. Hastings itself was a very important poly-focal port during the Saxon period with its main area of settlement on the White Rock promontory rather than at the 'Old Town' end. There was a very important Mint located at Hastings, pre Conquest, producing significant quantities of money. A hoard of Late Saxon coins found near Appledore contained 21 coins from the Hastings Mint. The only other producers of coinage in the south of England at the time were London, Chichester, and Canterbury, so Hastings was clearly an important town and port before 1066.

As for Battle, the Abbey Estate or Lordship of the Manor created after the Conquest was formed from a patchwork of lands owned by several other manors all located within a three-mile radius of Battle itself. This indicates that, far from being the dark, forested no-mans land that some pre-Conquest myths might suggest, there were settlements of cultivation and stock farming within close proximity to the modern town at the time of the battle, developed from a complex pattern of land use and settlement based on centuries of previous human occupation.

Hugh Willing



## THE WEALDEN IRON INDUSTRY IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Jeremy Hodgkinson

21 April 2016

The Wealden geology of sands and clays contains rich deposits of iron ore and the great forests have throughout history provided abundant supplies of wood to produce charcoal, the fuel for iron-making. Thus when the Romans arrived in AD 43 they found a well-established local tradition of iron-making to develop, largely using the same 'bloomery' techniques, for the Weald to become the main iron-producing region in Britain with several large smelting sites. Nearby Beauport Park became the third largest iron works in the Roman Empire fulfilling the needs of the British fleet, the *Classis Britannica*.

We know little about iron-making in the Weald in Saxon times, however, and it would seem to have declined. A primitive Middle Saxon iron-smelting furnace at Millbrook, near Nutley, which operated in the ninth century, is the only furnace of the Saxon period to have been found in the Weald although a further site near East Grinstead is recorded in the Domesday Book.

During the Middle Ages, however, the archaeological evidence is clear that iron production again grew steadily. All over the Weald smallish (2 to 4m across) 'minepits' were dug to extract the iron ore and then filled again with the debris to stop people and animals falling in. These left slightly indented depressions which are easily recognized; 250 of these minepits have been discovered in the area around Hartfield alone.

Mr Hodgkinson explained the processes involved in mediaeval iron production. First came 'roasting': burning the ore on an open fire to make it more smeltable. Wrought iron was then produced by means of what is known as a 'bloomery'. A round shallow hearth was dug out, clay hard-packed to line it, then layers of iron ore were put down and the lot was covered by a beehive structure with holes for the insertion of bellows. The iron extracted was a spongy mass or 'bloom' which could be immediately worked or forged.

Most of the evidence for mediaeval Wealden iron-making is archaeological, from minepit craters or heaps of 'slag', the by-product left after smelting. However, from the 12th and 13th centuries historical records start to appear such as Royal Orders to the Sherriff of Sussex for iron, particularly for its use in building castles such as Leeds Castle in Kent. Much of it came from the vast estates in the Weald of the Archbishops of Canterbury although it is difficult to establish where the main sites were. However, the fact that there were in the 14th century six smiths working in Lindfield and five in Wadhurst suggests that substantial iron making took place nearby if not in the villages themselves.

Actual accounts survive of a mediaeval bloomery at Tudeley near Tonbridge perhaps owned by the De Clare family of Tonbridge Castle (and elsewhere) from which it is clear that iron-making at that time was an uncertain business with frequent highs and lows. It actually came to a halt during and immediately after the Black Death (1346 to 1353) owing to a shortage of 'brothers', as the ironmakers were known.

From the 14th century on water-power began to be applied to bloomeries but only about 10 sites have been clearly identified. There must have been more – the 100 Years War produced a great demand for arrowheads, armour, horseshoes, etc. and it is unclear from where the demand was met. It has recently been speculated that ironmaking actually took place in mediaeval towns now covered by houses, shops and offices. The redevelopment of an urban site in Crawley into a supermarket, permitting a dig, would seem to support that idea as vast amounts of iron slag were found.

In the late 15th century a new iron-making process was devised in Belgium involving a blast furnace and a finery forge. It spread to France and then to England where it was first introduced at Queenstock in Buxted in 1490. This enabled a far greater amount of iron to be produced and by the mid-16th century there were 50 furnaces in the Weald and that number had doubled 25 years later.



*Experimental bloomery made by the Wealden Iron Research Group in October 2012. Here the furnace is being preheated to 800°C with charcoal. © WIRG*

The Weald thus became once again the most important iron producing region in Britain until the industrial revolution took heavy industry north competition from foreign iron increased, and the last blast furnace in the Weald closed, at Ashburnham, in 1813.

Nick Hollington



## TWO KINGS: WILLIAM RUFUS AND JOHN AND BATTLE ABBEY

Professors John Gillingham and David Carpenter

16 June 2016

### Part 1: King William II by Professor John Gillingham

**I** 066 *and All That* says ‘Rufus’ death was a good thing and he died in a memorable way.’ As John Gillingham added, that is all most people know about William II. He was killed by an arrow whilst out hunting in the New Forest in 1100 with no conclusive evidence about whether or not it was an accident or an assassination.

What is in question in this talk is whether or not Rufus was a good king. He succeeded his father, William the Conqueror, in 1086. What is clearly on the record is that he then defeated those who conspired against him; extended the rule of England into Cumbria; and finally took over Normandy and Maine from his brother Robert Curthose. In addition he built Westminster Hall and completed the White Tower of the Tower of London.

Ninety-eight percent of William Rufus’s story is to be deduced from writings soon after his death, by *Eadmer of Canterbury*, 20 years later by *William of Malmesbury*, 100 years later by the *Chronicler of Battle Abbey* and about 70 years later by the poet *Geoffrey Gaymer*.

The work of *Eadmer the Monk*, which is well written and vivid, was taken further by *Malmesbury*, and was critical of Rufus and his attitude to the Church, and in particular to Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury. This became the baseline of William II’s history for centuries. It was embroidered for the worse at every repetition. He was even labelled ‘the worst king ever, from a moral standpoint.’ John Gillingham questions these interpretations.

Rufus was in Hastings with his court, waiting to cross to France for some time in early in 1095. Whilst he was there Archbishop Anselm visited and the consecration of Battle Abbey took place. Anselm wished to hold a Council of Bishops with the King present. He particularly wished to debate sodomy and incestuous marriages; celibacy for all priests (at the time only monks were celibate). He preached a very long sermon – almost certainly at Battle Abbey – criticising the vogue for long hair, effeminate manners and style of life and the need to curtail homosexuality. Rufus said ‘No’ to the Council and the reformers and this refusal is the basis for his history as written by churchmen.

Rufus did not get on well with Anselm, who was in fact a great theological scholar. William II was certainly not very religious, appeared indifferent to religion, and secular. His portrait in Matthew Paris’s later work shows him holding a secular building (Westminster Hall) [see extract from Royal MS 14 C vii f.8v in the British Library on right] whereas every other king’s portrait shows him holding a religious building. Their rift ended with Anselm going into voluntary exile. When asked by the Pope why he had not excommunicated Rufus, Anselm replied that it would have made no difference and that Rufus would have just joked about it. The *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, written for internal consumption, speaks highly of Rufus and his multiple visits and generosity to the Abbey. The monks of Battle had good reason to praise him. But this history was discounted for many years. It was not until *Geoffrey Gaymer’s poetic works*, written in French, resurfaced in the 1930s that a fairer view was taken of Rufus.

Professor Gillingham concluded his section by saying that the history of Rufus is dominated by the negative views of churchmen and that he hoped that in the future the achievements of Rufus and the views of the *Chronicle of Battle Abbey* and *Gaymer* would become more widely accepted.



*William Rufus by Matthew Paris from Historia Anglorum, 1250*



## Part 2: King John and Battle Abbey by Professor David Carpenter

David Carpenter started his references to King John by noting that it was his financial exactions that led to Magna Carta of 1215 and that John Gillingham had called John a sh\*t live on radio! Professor Carpenter agreed with the latter analysis but noted that John had other dimensions as recorded by *Anonymus of Béthune* such as a cynical sense of humour and a friendly manner such as putting arms around shoulders which left the recipient wondering when the stab in the back might come.

But how often did John come to Battle Abbey? The *Chancery Rolls* for 1199 onwards record when and where a king was when a letter or charter was written, but if nothing like that occurred there was a blank. John Carpenter identified three actual visits by John – 6<sup>th</sup> April 1206 when he was entertained and gave a chasuble, 25<sup>th</sup> April 1213 and 30<sup>th</sup> June 1213, all in passing. He had no particular reason to visit otherwise, although in 1200 he gave the abbey relics from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem brought back by King Richard I.

But he did recognise the special status of Battle Abbey and issued letters of protection for it, which included that no suit could be made against the abbey except directly to the king or chief justiciar.

In 1208 an interdict was served on John as he would not accept the papal appointment of Stephen Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury. Although Langton was English he had served at the French court for many years and John would have been extremely suspicious of him. The property of the abbey passed at this time into John's hands and on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1208 he appointed the Sherriff of Kent 'to take care of the abbey and to give Battle abbey reasonable sustenance'.

But to return to financial exactions much detail can be found in the *Pipe Rolls*, which are being published by the Pipe Roll Society. In 1212 we find that there is an account of the revenue of Battle abbey in the king's hands. This shows that the monks are still being looked after, but £146 was extracted for the Exchequer funds and £100 directly to the king. Worse financially was the issuing of a Charter to Battle abbey which allowed the monks to run the abbey and appoint their own abbot if there is a vacancy from amongst their own. This was at a charge of £1000, to be paid over three years... a massive sum at that time. This was tested when there was an abbatial vacancy when the monks requested to appoint the new abbot to which John agreed, but sent William Brewer – an ex-Sherriff of many counties, some of whose folk had bribed John to remove him as he was so unpleasant – to supervise the election 'to speak for the king and preserve the king's honour'. Abbot Richard was elected and it was confirmed by letter and the new abbot was sent to see the Archbishop of Canterbury, by now the *in situ* Stephen Langton.

Questions were raised at the end of the two talks.

The first concerned the precise role of the Archbishop in appointing an abbot at the time of King John, which was not clear.

The second asked about the further character of King John to which Professor Gillingham responded by adding that he was an obsessive micro-manager, probably one of the most intelligent of the English kings but still a sh\*t.

A final question asked if there was more detail of Rufus's death. John Gillingham referred to further theories about this but returned to the fact that there is no definite answer.

Keith Foord



*King John by Matthew Paris*



## BATTLE BEFORE THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS

Julian Porter

19 May 2016

Julian Porter, Curator of Battle Museum, gave the society a breezy run from 140 million years ago until 1066 and then as a bonus offered a fast overview of 1066 to 2016.

140 million or so years ago the siltstone, sandstones and clays of the Wealden rocks of the Hastings beds were laid down in fresh water, this can be compared to the chalk geology of more western areas of Sussex which is 'only' 90 million years old and was laid down under seawater. Thus we find evidence of vegetation and dinosaurs in 'our' rocks with findings of dinosaur footprints and occasional fossilised dinosaur bones.

We were then reminded that human history only goes back 5 million years, and that it was not until 40,000 years ago that *Homo sapiens* turned up. However at that time there were severe climatic fluctuations and it was very cold in Sussex. Although the area was never under ice sheets, Sussex was a polar dessert with no humans, and we were still joined to mainland Europe as sea levels were so low. The last glacial period slowly ended and the Mesolithic period began, later merging into the Neolithic, and the first few inhabitants migrated northwards from Spain and southern Gaul. From about 6000bc sea levels rose and Britain became separated from the mainland.

The Mesolithic period sees the earliest finds of flints from the area of the Hastings to Bexhill link road across the Combe Haven valley, which at that time was heavily forested. Seasonal hunters arrived and huge quantities of flint Mesolithic objects have been found associated with these and later peoples. Over 500,000 flint objects will soon be lodged at Bexhill Museum, once they are released by Oxford Archaeology who are undertaking detailed analytical work on all the Combe Haven valley findings. Archaeologically it is believed that the area may turn out to be of national and even international importance.

Unfortunately much of the Hastings area pre-history has been lost under buildings and some to the sea, and the Combe Haven finds represent a re-discovery of the pre-history of this area, possibly including the first find of a 'school of flint knapping'. Most of the flint nodules to be knapped would have come from areas to the south, now under the sea. Unfortunately as the soils of the area are so acidic no bones or other organic items were found.

Following on from the Neolithic period finds were made from the Bronze age, with evidence of clearance of forests, the introduction of agriculture and the development of local field landscapes. The Combe Haven valley is truly an ancient landscape, and finds have been made of Bronze age pottery and of burnt mounds, whose origin and purpose still seem to be incompletely understood – suggestions have been made that such piles of shattered stones and charcoal were used for cooking, bathing, dyeing or leather treatment, even as saunas. The area also had finds from the Iron age pre-Roman period.

When the Romans arrived they used local resources, iron ore and wood for charcoal and at the eastern end of the link road finds were made which demonstrated every phase of the Roman ironworking process. We await the final papers on the Combe Haven valley work with interest.

Away from the Combe Haven zone, Roman amphora and Samian ware objects have been found nearer Sidley and the Romans also worked on large sites to the east notably at Beauport Park, where there are huge slag heaps, although this site is still not well understood. The Roman bath house ruins there may only be part of what previously existed. Tiles stamped CLBR were found there, indicating that the Classis Britannicus Roman fleet was closely involved with managing iron production and shipping the product to the wider Roman Empire.

Later, after iron extraction was virtually finished around Hastings, the late Roman Saxon Shore fort



was built at Pevensey. This was sacked by invading Saxons in around AD 400 at the time of the end of the Roman occupation of Britain.

It is believed that St Wilfred brought Christianity to Bexhill in the 680s. King Offa took eastern Sussex over from the 'Hastingas' peoples in 771, and issued a Bexhill Charter and built a minster at Bexhill in 772.

After a semi-final brief discussion of relevant images in the Bayeux tapestry, the audience was treated to a final entertaining gallop through local history to the present day.

Questions afterwards mainly concerned the local geography of Battle before the battle and the site of Battle Abbey, on which the speaker admitted he was not an expert. However for the interested reader this subject is well covered in the Society's recent publication '*1066 and the Battle of Hastings – Preludes, Events and Postscripts*' copies of which are available at most Society meetings or from the Society Secretary.

Keith Foord



## BATTLE HIGH STREET INSIDE AND OUT

David Martin

21 July 2016

It is always a delight to hear a lecturer whose knowledge of his subject is profound, won not only from archives but from experience in the field, and who can deliver his words not only with enthusiasm but also accessibly, avoiding the obscurities found in so many works about architecture. Such was David Martin's talk, which concentrated on the period from mediaeval times to the eighteenth century.

He took us through the development of the town, which is particularly well-documented through the Abbey archives, many of them now held in the United States and at the time of the lecture being transcribed by Christopher Whittick of the East Sussex Records Office. From these one can accurately deduce the size of each property and its occupier, and relate it to the town as it now stands. The lecturer provided clear diagrams of occupation in 1105, 1367 and 1569.

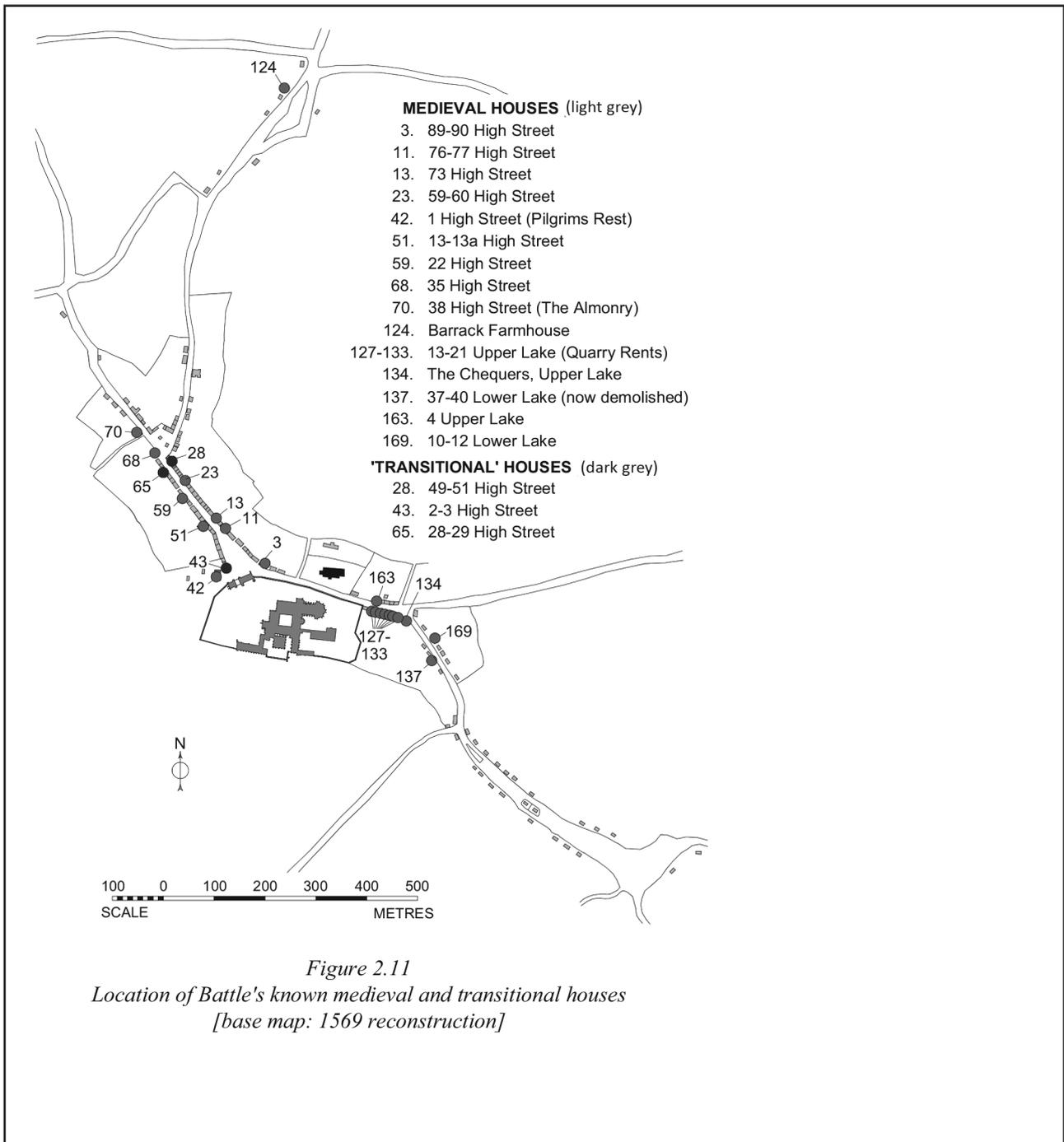
Even in 1105 there were 109 house-holders, each of a property of precisely-known dimensions, concentrated in the core area we now know as the High Street, lower Mount Street and Upper and Lower Lake. There were two 'barres', one on Mount Street and the other at the foot of Lower Lake, almost certainly functioning as toll gates; Marley Lane led only to Marley Farm. At the next survey point, 1367, growth had continued as far as Virgin's Lane to the north and the market square had been established at the foot of Mount Street. The Black Death of 1349 afflicted Battle perhaps less than other towns, but still had a serious effect: by 1433 the town had shrunk back into its original core. By then the smithy had been established in the then market square – and it remained a smithy after the square was filled in, in the sixteenth century; it is now Cook's shop, rebuilt in the nineteenth-century. Contraction continued after the dissolution of the Abbey in 1538. By 1569 there were only 124 houses, though the core area remained well-populated, with 79.

Despite the contraction, or perhaps because of it, Battle has a remarkable collection of unusual houses. The row on the southern side of Upper Lake appears to be one of only three such survivors in England dating from the late fifteenth century. Each of the nine dwellings probably incorporated a shop, though there is evidence now for only one of that period; and as one can see, the two western-most houses have been replaced. In general the houses elsewhere were later refronted to follow the fashions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, usually with brick, but the original houses remain behind, often with distinctive internal features showing their structures and in some cases with the original decoration. Some have been much altered, particularly at ground floor level.

Of the 21 known mediaeval houses in Battle, 16 are examples of Wealden-style houses with a frontage partly recessed at the centre. The hall would have been in the centre, with the front entrance to the house at the end of the hall; the family would have lived behind the far end of the hall, and servants (along with other functional areas) at the other, closer to the door.

Among these properties 76–77 High Street is particularly interesting. Over the years it had two such recesses, because it was originally two houses, being later merged into one, one of the two being rebuilt as a kitchen at that time. Like almost every property it has been much altered but its original structure is obvious although now concealed behind a brick and stucco frontage.

89–90 High Street (until recently Yesterday's World) is another excellent example, with some exceptional features. This was built for Richard Curteys, the Abbey beadle, early in the fifteenth century, who was clearly the coming man of Battle although the Abbey would always emphasise his dependence on his employers. From the outside the most obvious mediaeval house is the Pilgrim's Rest, which dates from 1443–45 (but has older stonework in it). It is large and has not been refronted. Like 89–90 it has a large hall, in this case obvious to any visitor. The northern end of the house was remodelled in 1528/9, when



*All illustrations are taken from Child of Conquest: Building Battle Town: An Architectural History 1066–1750, by David & Barbara Martin and Christopher Whittick with Jane Briscoe, 2016.*



*Decline, Infilling and redevelopment of the market place*

the present chimney was added. Originally it would not have been easily seen, as a row of shops with chambers above lay between it and what is now the Abbey Green, hiding the house and its yard, except where two gatehouses led through the shops to it.

Other houses worthy of particular mention include of course the Almonry (named after the farm close to it, originally run by the Abbey almoner), where the hall survives but there has been considerable alteration. The staircase is seventeenth century. On the site of an earlier house, Langton House is sixteenth-century with later additions and alterations up to the last century. Particularly notable is the plastered ceiling close to the public entrance. The interior has been much altered over the years, particularly since



*View of Upper Lake c. 1500 and in 2015. Reconstruction of the 2 houses and detailing of the Abbey church's superstructure are conjectural. Illustration by Andy Gammon.*



its conversion into the Memorial Halls over fifty years ago; it originally had an internal courtyard. Some ceiling paintings and wall panelling survive, as do some wooden structural and decorative features.

The western side of the High Street is particularly noteworthy. 12–13 High Street retains its roof over the former hall as well as other features; 17 High Street has been rebuilt (it includes some apparent Flemish bond brickwork actually made of plaster applied over the timber-frame and then painted, and a seventeenth-century staircase) and 18 is recognisably older though with a much later shop front and internal gallery. 22 High Street was originally a Wealden-style house. 35 contains the only known vaulted cellar in the town.

Of course there were many properties to which David Martin referred, and they are discussed at greater length in his book (see below). If few small towns can have so many survivals from the mediaeval and post-mediaeval periods, even fewer can have benefitted from such meticulous attention and explanation.

This was not just a talk but also a book launch: David and Barbara Martin and Christopher Whittick, *Child of Conquest Building Battle Town: an architectural history 1066–1750* (Domtom Publishing, Burgess Hill), and members were allowed a generous discount on copies purchased at the lecture.

George Kiloh

