

GREAT DIXTER ESTATE

NORTHIAM EAST SUSSEX



Cover Image: The Long Border at Great Dixter, looking west towards the site of the 18th century oast [demolished between 1860 and 1890) in the field called Orchard alias Upper Oast Field, possibly called Milking Close in the 16th century. [N. Bannister]

HISTORIC LANDSCAPE & ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

As part of the Great Dixter Biodiversity Audit
funded by the
Heritage Lottery and
Great Dixter Charitable Trust

October 2018

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Great Dixter is an internationally renowned garden and the home of the late Christopher Lloyd gardener and landscape designer, whose bold and unusual methods of design and planting rethought much of garden design in the late 20th century. Christopher Lloyd set up the Great Dixter Charitable Trust just before he died in 2006 whose role under the guidance of Fergus Garrett the Head Gardener it was to take over the running and management of the gardens and house.

Great Dixter is also the site of a nationally important medieval hall house and barn, restored by Nathaniel Lloyd and Edward Lutyens in the early 20th century. A Conservation Management Plan for the House and Gardens has already been prepared and put in place. Now the Trust has turned to the wider estate to assess its biodiversity in order to draw up a conservation plan which will managed for both the wildlife and the garden. The Biodiversity Audit is being funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. As part of the audit research into the history of the setting of the house and gardens together with an assessment of the heritage resource was commissioned from the author.

This report sets out the findings of this research (based on field survey and selected archive research). It looked at the fields, woods and gardens, to identify the archaeological and cultural features surviving which contribute to the character and biodiversity of Great Dixter. The report should be read in conjunction with the other commissioned reports, which form the evidence base for the Conservation Plan for the Biodiversity at Great Dixter.

The Archaeological and Historic Landscape Survey has shown that Great Dixter retains its medieval farmstead character which underpins the present landscape. The ancillary hovels and sheds are a rare example of late 18th and early 19th century animal and cart sheds. The garden 'rooms' preserve for the most part the older farmstead divisions. The remaining fields are those which have a long period of cultivation in close relationship with the farmstead, and the boundaries reflect this. The woods preserve a range of heritage features pertaining to their historic management, and their links with the wider landscape such as the bell pits.

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Separate .pdf HE 7056 P3 & P14 GIS Specification for Fieldscapes GIS

Ditto Excel Spreadsheet of GIS data

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the Great Dixter Charitable Trust for the privilege of carrying out this Archaeological and Historic Landscape Assessment of the Great Dixter Estate, in particular to Victoria Williams and Fergus Garrett. Appreciation is also extended to the other members of the Biodiversity Audit Team for contributions to the survey, in particular Lynn and Kevin Cornwell of the Hastings and Area Archaeological Research group; Dave Rossney of Esus Ltd, Phil Sansum, Kate Ryland, Barbara and David Martin. I would also like to thank Christopher Whittick and the staff at The Keep for their help and for the permission to reproduce the map images, and also to the East Sussex HER for the information on known archaeology at Great Dixter. Lastly I would like to thank Angus Foad for his help with the field work.

ABBREVIATIONS

FC	Forestry Commission
GDCT	Great Dixter Charitable Trust
HAARG	Hastings Area Archaeological Research Group
HW AONB	High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
HE	Historic England
LiDAR	Light and Distance Aerial Reconnaissance

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

The Archaeological and Historic Landscape Assessment of Great Dixter forms part of a suite of projects undertaken in 2017-18. These form the evidence base for the Biodiversity Audit of the Great Dixter Estate. The Audit is being funded by HLF and was commissioned from the author by The Great Dixter Charitable Trust set up 2004 to manage the Great Dixter Gardens after the death of its owner Christopher Lloyd on 27th January 2007.

Whilst the Biodiversity Audit concentrates on the ecological and species diversity of the Estate, an understanding of the history of the landscape, its management and the heritage features is important in understanding why the biodiversity of the site comes to be.

1.2. METHODOLOGY

The Archaeological and Historic Landscape Assessment follows the guidance set out by Historic England and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists for Level 2 desk-top and field walk over.¹

1.3. ARCHIVE RESEARCH

The archive research for the historic landscape assessment concentrated on historic map regression [See Appendix I] together with a search of the archives for descriptions of the estate and how it was managed. A detailed history of the manorial tenements and ownership has been commissioned from Christopher Whittick [Senior Archivist at East Sussex Record Office]. From the initial draft supplied a summary time line given at the beginning of the report has been produced. This report will be available in November 2018 and will form an addendum to this report.

Great Dixter and to a certain extent the parish of Northiam has a very complex history with regard to its owners and to the manors in which it lies. There is no medieval manor of Northiam, the Manors of Ewhurst and Robertsbridge claim this part of the parish. The Manor of Dixter was created as a sub-manor from that of Ewhurst.

1.3.1. TNA and ESRO

There is an extensive archive of images and manuscripts at NMR and ESRO relating to the ownership of Great Dixter by Nathaniel Lloyd and detailing his rebuilding of the medieval hall house and gardens with the help of Edward Lutyens. This material was not covered in this assessment being too large and not of direct relevance. Some material was viewed at TNA but the main source of material was held at The Keep ESRO, with some references to adjacent land in the Tufton Family ownership at the KHLC.

¹ Historic England 2007. Understanding the Archaeology of Landscapes. A guide to good recording practice. 51320. See also <http://archaeologists.org.uk/standards>

1.3.2. East Sussex Historic Environment Record [ESHER]

An extract from the ESHER which covered the Great Dixter Estate together with a 50m buffer was commissioned from East Sussex. The output from ESHER had little information on, it apart from the listed buildings. This Archaeological & Historic Landscape Assessment, together with the geophysical surveys commissioned from the Hastings and Area Archaeological Group will make a significant contribution to the HER.

1.4. FIELD SURVEY

The field survey was carried out at Level 2 recording the positions of heritage features using GPS, and obtaining descriptions of extent, size and condition. These features were annotated on maps at 1:10,000 and 1:2,500 scale before being uploaded on to GIS from which the maps in this report were produced. These maps and images form part of the Project Archive. The field survey walk over covered the Great Dixter Charitable Trust property. The Public footpath from Dixter to Strawberry Hole was also walked in order to obtain a feel for the wider landscape setting and to observe any other heritage features. The records were also entered on to an Excel spreadsheet for aiding subsequent input into the ESHER.

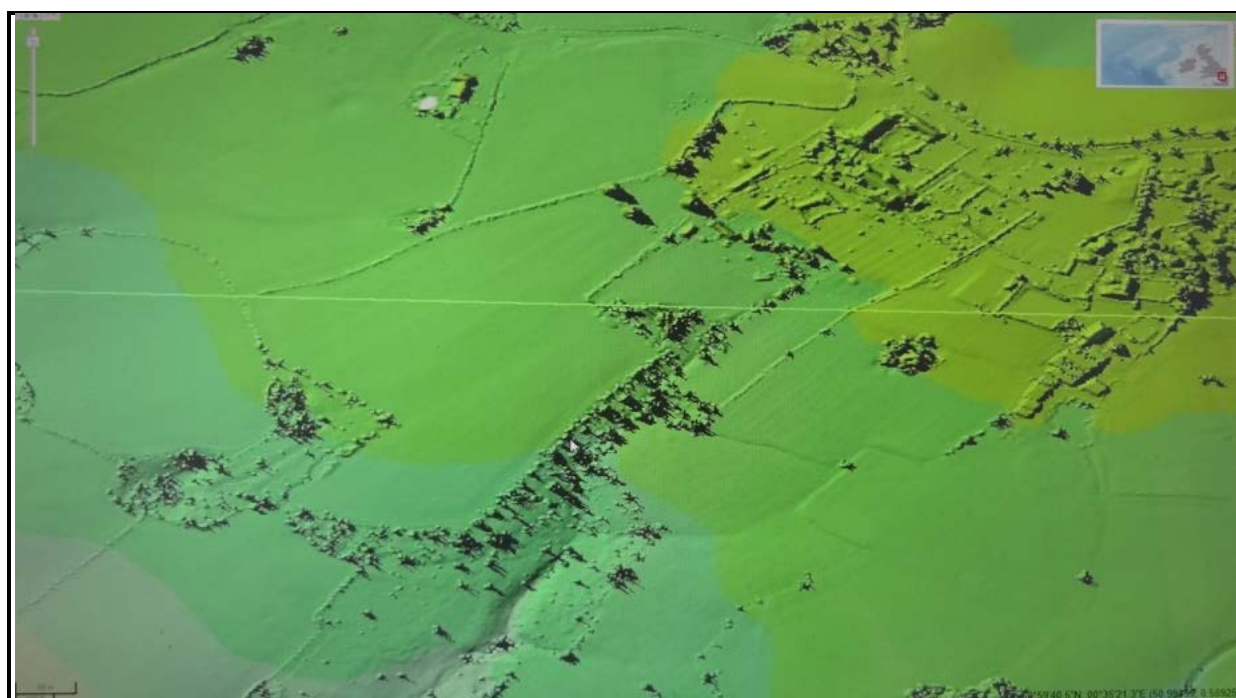


Figure 1 Extract from Environment Agency's Digital Surface Model [DSM] at 1m interval for Great Dixter

1.4.1. LiDAR and Aerial Photographs

The Environment Agency LiDAR data covers the area of Northiam and the Rother Valley.² Images from this data set were used as base line for identifying features in the field. These images were taken from the Composite Digital Surface Model [DSM] at 1m resolution.

² <https://data.gov.uk/data/map-preview>

The LiDAR recorded the majority of the earthworks found on the Great Dixter Estate. They were of particular use in the woodland where the extent of the bell pits could be ascertained. These images were compared with extracts from Google Earth. ³ The images were also used to identify features in the wider landscape. The latter features have been added to the data set but have not been ground-truthed (i.e. checked out in the field).

1.4.2. Fieldsapes and Boundaries

The historic landscape assessment for the Great Dixter Biodiversity Audit provided an opportunity to undertake a Fieldsapes Assessment of the Estate. In 2017 the High Weald together with Historic England developed and piloted a “High Weald Fieldsapes Characterisation and Assessment Methodology”. ⁴ For details on the method of survey see Section 1.2. and for the meta data and pro forma see Appendix IV.

1.5. The Buildings

Great Dixter is a place of national importance for its early example of a medieval hall house, which was restored and enlarged by Nathaniel Lloyd and Edward Lutyens, incorporating another Wealden hall house from Benenden in Kent. In addition there are two late medieval barns. All these buildings have been the subject of detail study by Barbara and David Martin. The reports for which are deposited at ESRO and on ESHER. ⁵

As part of this Biodiversity Audit the Martins were invited to undertake assessments of the remaining farm buildings and their report forms part of the Appendices of the Audit. The author draws on their findings as part of the outline Historic Farmstead Assessment in Section 3.3.

Historic England provides guidance on how to prepare a historic farmstead assessment prior to any proposed changes to a property. ⁶ This is in order to inform those making the changes on how to understand how the farmstead has evolved and how best to manage it for the future. Whilst the method is primarily aimed at developers where farms are converted to residential use, the method is useful in understanding the history of any farmstead.

³ <https://googleearth/>

⁴ The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Historic England 2017 Fieldsapes Assessment and Character Statement. www.Highweald.org.uk

⁵ Martin, D & Martin, B. 2012a. A revised Archaeological Interpretative Survey of Great Dixter House, Northiam East Sussex, commissioned by Great Dixter Charitable Trust. Project Ref 4137. Archaeology South East. Institute of Archaeology. University College, London.; Martin, D & Martin, B. 2012b. A revised Archaeological Interpretative Survey of The Great Barn, Great Dixter, Northiam East Sussex, commissioned by Great Dixter Charitable Trust. Project Ref 5141; Martin, D & Martin, B. 2012c. An Archaeological Interpretative Survey of The Minor Barn (White Barn) Great Dixter, Northiam East Sussex, commissioned by Great Dixter Charitable Trust. Project Ref 5141; Martin, D & Martin, B. 2012d. A Brief Archaeological Interpretative Survey of the Ancillary Farm Buildings, Great Dixter, Northiam, East Sussex. Report ref 1800.

⁶ Historic England 2015. Farmstead Assessment Framework; National Farmsteads Character Statement. www.historicengland.org.uk/characterisation

1.6. The Gardens

The gardens of Great Dixter are of international importance, the inspired by his mother Daisy Lloyd, Christopher Lloyd explored and demonstrated different approaches to garden design and innovative planting using the historic medieval setting as the back drop and frame to his work.

The gardens were not subject to this assessment rather a greater understanding of the history of the Great Dixter landscape underpins the future management of the Estate as it moves forward with its Biodiversity Conservation Plan.

2. SETTING THE SCENE

2.1. Introduction

The Estate of Great Dixter lies within the eastern end of the Sussex High Weald on a ridge of land between the rivers, Rother and Brede. Historically this landscape is characterised by scattered medieval farmsteads set within their fields and intermixed with enclosed woodland. The historic character of this landscape primarily developed in the Early Medieval period, under pinned by prehistoric routeways and earlier settlements.

Great Dixter is a medieval manor house dating from the mid-15th century and farmstead with its demesne lands extending north and west to the valley of the river Rother. The estate was much larger in the medieval and post-medieval periods than today encapsulating lands from the valley meadows to the enclosed fields on the ridge top. This was a relatively high status manor owned in the medieval periods by well established local families such as the Etchingham and Elryngtons. At some point in the medieval period the farmstead of Little Dixter farm was created, with its lands also extending down to the Rother. As the status of the manor declined, Great Dixter developed as a mixed Wealden farm, with its buildings, fields and farms. In 1910 it was purchased by Nathaniel and Daisy Lloyd and together with John Ray and Edward Lutyns it was given a significant restoration and 'make-over'. The manor house with its farm buildings became the setting for the development of gardens by their youngest son Christopher Lloyd, who pioneered garden design and planting in the latter part of the 20th century.

After Christopher Lloyd's death in 2007 the Great Dixter Charitable Trust was formed and led by Fergus Garrett, the Head Gardener, the gardens and house are now conserved and used as a training centre for horticulturalists from all over the world.

The historic landscape assessment forms one of several research reports being undertaken under the umbrella of an HLF funded "Biodiversity Audit and Conservation Plan" for the Great Dixter Estate.

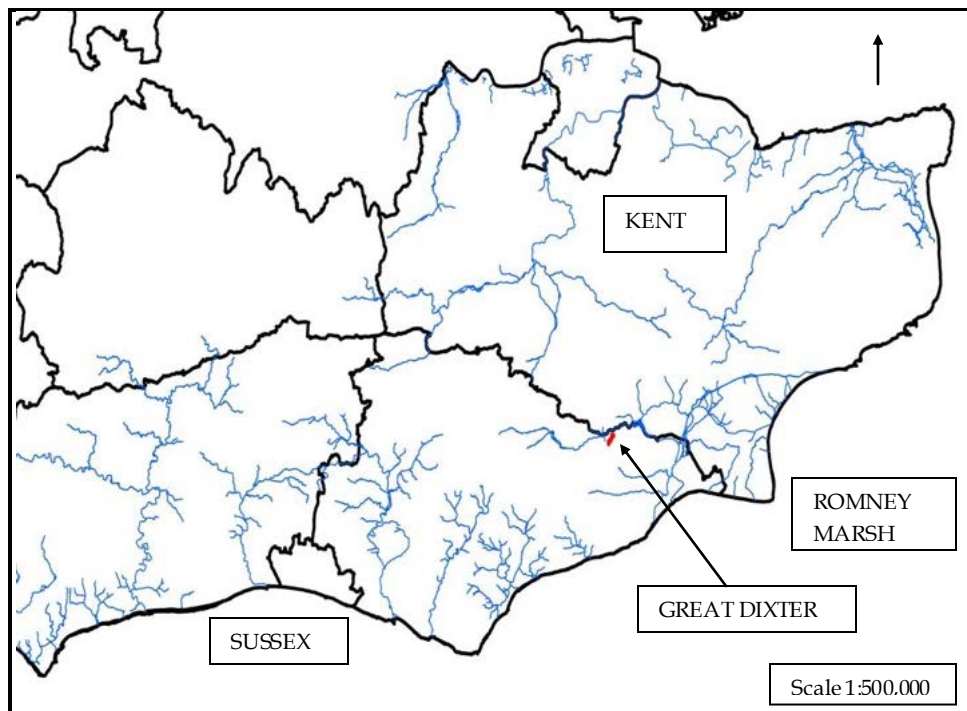


Figure 2: Location of Great Dixter



Figure 3: Extract from Google Earth 2013 for Great Dixter Gardens

2.2. Topography

A spur of higher ground extends from a ridge of high ground between two tributary streams of the River Rother. Great Dixter is located on the edge of this spur looking upstream to the north-west of the valley of the River Rother. From the former farm yard of Great Dixter, panoramic views across towards the parish of Newenden can be seen. The land gradually slopes to the north and west, with small gill streams (such as that in Four Acre Shaw) draining into the water system of the Rother. Some of these gill streams run through Weights Wood also part of Great Dixter. The manor of Great Dixter is located at the end of a track which forms part of a network of lanes linking the dispersed medieval settlements of Northiam. This area to the east was formerly a large downland common and was gradually enclosed in the Medieval period.⁷

2.3. Geology

The estate of Great Dixter extends over several different bedrock deposits of the Hastings Beds. At the southern end, the estate extends down towards the alluvial deposits in the valley bottoms. At Northiam, the area called High Park and the area of the quarry at the entrance to the Great Dixter farmstead overlies Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation.⁸ This is the younger of the bedrock in the area. It comprises inter-bedded silts and fine silty sandstones. The quarry at the entrance to Great Dixter must have been dug to extract this sand stone deposit. The Tunbridge Wells Sandstone extends through Great Parks Field and along the south eastern boundary and in to part Weights Wood. The presence of the sandstone outcropping here is likely to be a contributing factor of the development of open downland in the early medieval and medieval periods where the village of Northiam then evolved.

The predominant part of the land of Great Dixter Farm lies on the Wadhurst Clay formation, which extends around High Park and Great Dixter. This formation comprises dark grey shale, sands, mudstones and pale grey silty mudstone with subordinate beds of silt sandstone, shelly limestone and clay ironstone. The bedrock was the source of iron ore mined in this part of Sussex from the Iron Age through to Post-medieval.

In Four Acres Shaw an outcrop of Ashdown Sand Formation occurs at the southern end of the wood and then extends upstream in the valley of the gill. This formation comprises fine grained silty sandstones and siltstones with subordinate amounts of shale and mudstone. Within wood the medieval bell pits lie immediately to the north of this outcrop. This suggests that the clay ironstone layer within the Wadhurst Clay formation was located just above the Ashdown Beds. The other pits dug at Great Dixter were probably dug for marl (a calcareous deposit) for spreading on the fields and for clay for making bricks and tiles.

⁷ David Martin pers. comm..

⁸ Gallois and Edmunds, 1965 The Wealden District British Wealden Geology. NERC London HMSO
www.bgs.ac.uk

To the west of Great Dixter the river Rother has eroded down to the Ashdown Beds but much of the valley is now filled with alluvium. This deposit dates from the prehistoric period when the first farmers started to clear areas of woodland and cultivate the soil. It is thought that a layer of loess covered much of the south-east after the last glaciations and this fertile soil was easily eroded when the tree cover was removed. The resulting silts ended up as alluvium in the valleys and contributing to the development of the flat bottomed flood plains of the valleys. The Ashdown Beds form the bedrock along the foot of the lower slopes through Dixter Wood and Dyneshill Wood.

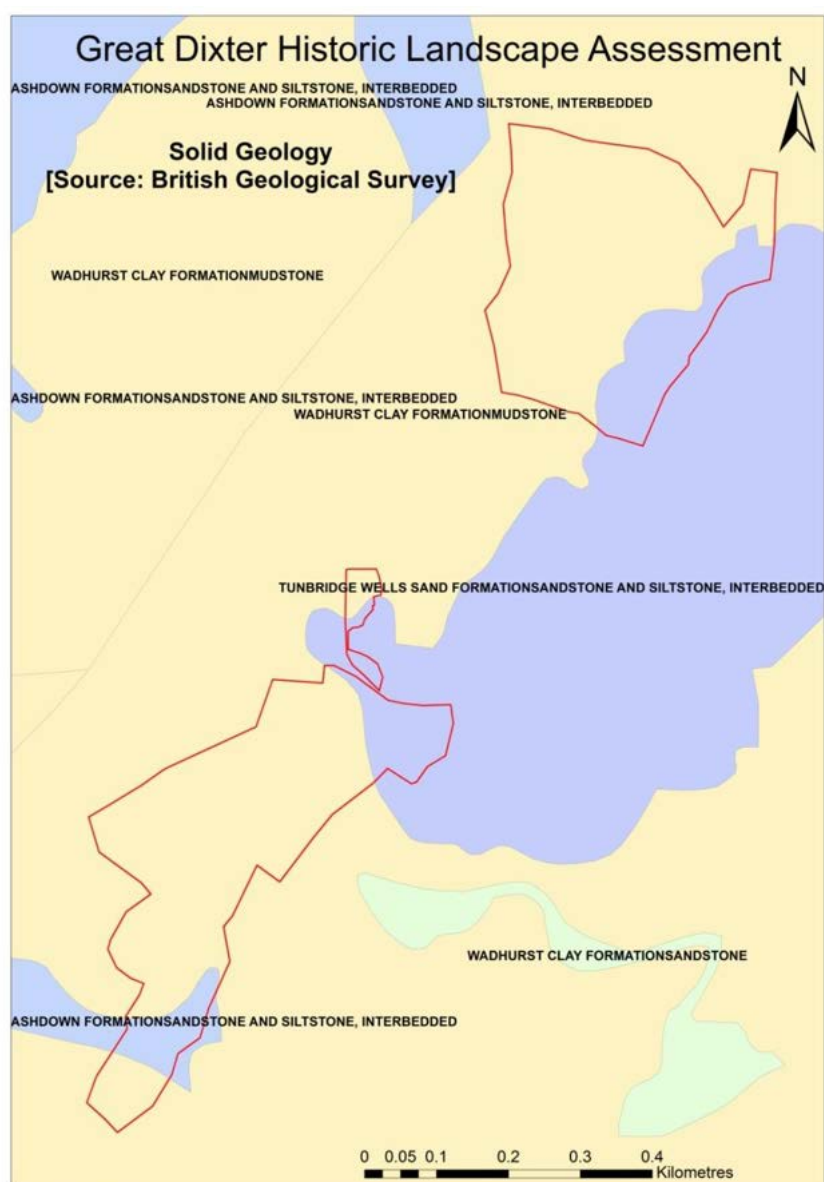


Figure 4: The Solid Geology underlying Great Dixter⁹

⁹<https://www.mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/index>

Small streams, fed by springs arising at the junction between the Tunbridge Wells Sand and the Wadhurst Clay, have eroded small valleys or gills in the woodland, such as Weights Wood and Four Acres. Here Ashdown Beds and the lower layers of Wadhurst Clay are exposed in local outcrops.

2.4. Soils

Tunbridge Wells Sand formation gives rise to slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage. These soils lie on the higher ground and contributed to the Early medieval development of a more open downland or heathy environment. The soils on the slopes where the Wadhurst Clay bedrock dominates give rise to slowly permeable seasonally wet acid loamy and clayey soils. These are the soils over which the calcareous marl was spread in order to reduce the soil acidity and help the soil structure. These are the fields which were cultivated and laid to pasture. In the valleys the alluvium gives rise to loamy and clayey flood plain soils with naturally high ground water.¹⁰ Once drained, these soils provided rich lush meadow grazing.

2.5. Historic Landscape Character

The area of East Sussex – in the High Weald - where Great Dixter lies has a historic landscape character dominated by scattered medieval farmsteads strung along routeways and on the high slopes of the ridge tops overlooking the valleys. Small irregular fields inter-mixed with enclosed ancient woodland and ancient gills dominate the countryside.

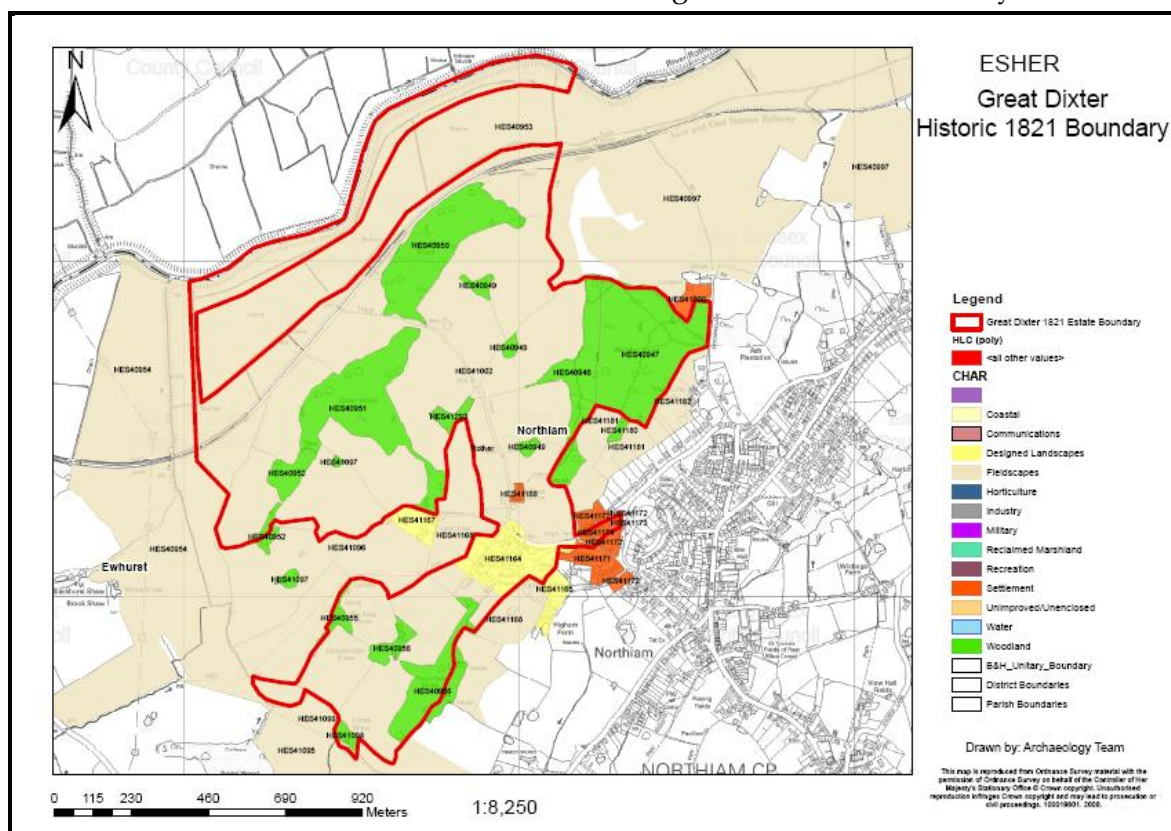


Figure 5: Historic Landscape Character map showing Broad Character Types [Source ESHER]

¹⁰ www.mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/ukso/home

The eastern part of the High Weald is a landscape which evolved in the early medieval and medieval periods with the elements of Roman and prehistoric land use under pinning, such as many of the main routeways.

The historic landscape character of this part of the High Weald comprises scattered medieval farmsteads occupying the higher ground, and valley sides, linked by drove ways and main arterial ridge top routes from the Wealden hinterland to the coast. Today the river valleys are silted, and enclosed to arable. But in the Prehistoric and up to the 14th century these rivers were part of the routeway network providing access into the heartland of the Weald and linking these wooded landscape with the coastal settlements and the Continent beyond. Resources, such as iron and timber were then exported out from the Weald, whilst fish and other goods were imported.

The farmsteads are set within their network of fields intermixed with enclosed ancient woodland. This is an ancient landscape with much of its medieval structure, character and features intact. In the medieval period villages such as Northiam and Beckley developed as centres to serve the numerous farmsteads and associated settlement. Ridge top routes are linked by droves and by tracks running down into the valleys and to the rivers.

Into this ancient landscape and layered over the medieval layout are post-medieval changes to the land use. Open and unenclosed land was enclosed to fields, and in the 18th and 19th centuries the hop industry developed. Meadows in the valleys were converted to hop gardens as the silty soils were deep and fertile, and oast houses were built in many farmsteads. Although few hops are now grown (the gardens long disappeared) the majority of the oasts have been converted to residential use, but still contribute to the local character. Great Dixter has a fine example of an unconverted oast built on to the medieval barn. The original oast and kilns located in front of the manor house were demolished to make way for gardens and orchards.

Essentially the main form of farming in the medieval period was of cattle breeding and fat stock, together with production of draught animals, which developed into mixed farming in post-medieval. Hops began to be introduced as high input high output but high risk crop. Today the hop gardens are under arable for corn with rape and beans as a break crop. Although small irregular fields dominate the character of enclosures, there has been significant boundary loss to create larger fields. This can be seen in the area of Great Dixter, where several smaller fields have been laid open to larger fields. Pasture is retained on more steeply and inaccessible slopes for cattle and sheep grazing. Few if any hops are now grown and orchards are in decline. Unploughed hay meadows are now rare as many ploughed to arable or improved with grass leys.

The structure of the medieval landscape is still in place with its woods, shaws and fields though many fields have lost boundaries and been amalgamated, in order to facilitate the use of larger machines.

2.6. Environmental Evidence for the early landscape

This section is a summary from the *Archaeology of Sussex to AD 2000 and Romney Marsh Survival at the frontier*.¹¹ It sets the context for the origins of the early landscape from which Great Dixter was created. The study of the silting of the river valleys has drawn on several silt cores taken in the river valleys in this part of the High Weald, such as at Brede near Pannel Bridge.¹²

Northiam lies close to areas fringing the Romney Marsh where research has taken place on the peat deposits preserved within the several river valleys which drained into the area of the marsh. These studies provide an insight into the vegetational history of this part of the Eastern High Weald; a history which has been influenced by sea level changes as well as the impact of human communities exploiting their environment.

Soon after the end of the last Ice age (10,000BP), alder was developing in the valley floors, whereas in the drier areas birch and pine became established with the expansion of hazel at c. 9,500BP, Oak and Elm between c.9,000 and 8,400 BP and lime soon after that in 7,000 BP.¹³ This is an overall picture but at the local level there were variations in tree and ground cover. However there is no direct palynological evidence that human activities at this time were having an influence on the vegetation, for example the persistence in openings in the tree cover after the development of the deciduous forest, as glades for hunting or to perpetuate local environment for the growth of favoured species for seeds, nuts etc. However the occurrence, albeit at low frequencies, of dryland herbs in the area of Pannel Bridge in East Sussex is consistent with the archaeological evidence of a late Mesolithic short stay camp.¹⁴ Openings in the tree cover could have been formed by natural fires and perpetuated by grazing herbivores.

The research studies from the Lower Rother, Brede and Pannel valleys also show a fairly consistent sequence with the replacement of pine and birch woodland, with mixed deciduous woodland in the 9th and 8th millennia BP with lime becoming the dominant tree species.¹⁵ This consistency suggests that the soil cover was different at this time than today and that an even covering of loess provided the uniformity in soil conditions. This loess layer was then washed into the valleys (rivers in the lowland, and dry valleys on the Downs) probably as a result of the introduction of farming in the Neolithic period. By the 6th millennium valleys draining into the area of the Romney Marsh were inundated by the sea, the result of changes in the shingle barriers brought about by eustatic rise in sea levels. Alder dominated fen carr developed in these river valleys leading to the build up of peat deposits, with mixed deciduous woodland dominated by lime along the upper slopes of the

¹¹ Rudling, D. (ed) 2003 *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD 2000*. University of Sussex; Eddison, J. *date Romney Marsh: Survival at the frontier*. Tempus.

¹² Waller, M. P. 1994b. Flandrian vegetational history of south-eastern England. Stratigraphy of the Brede valley and pollen data from Brede Bridge, *New Phytol.* **126**. 369-392

¹³ Holgate, R. 2003. Late Glacial and Post-Glacial hunter-gatherers in Sussex. In D. Rudling ed. *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD 2000*. University of Sussex. Heritage Publishing p31. Citing Waller, M. 1993.

¹⁴ Holgate, R. and Woodcock, A. 1989

¹⁵ Holgate 2003, p 33

river valleys. Further sediments began to build up in the river valleys comprising inter-bedded peat and silts. This is the environment that was developing at Combe Haven west of Hastings and could be postulated was occurring elsewhere in East Sussex.¹⁶

Around c.5000 BP the pollen record shows a significant decline in the cover of Elm species, probably thought to be the result of disease as the “Dutch Elm Disease” event in the 1970s happened relatively quickly.¹⁷ Another marker in the pollen record is the decline in Lime trees c. 37000 BP which is considered to be due to anthropogenic clearance.¹⁸

A number of river valley sites in East Sussex have been investigated and the evidence from pollen and sedimentation records seem to suggest that Mesolithic and Early Neolithic groups were making and managing clearings in the woodland which had an effect on the composition and extent of the deciduous forest cover. The opening up of the tree canopy through small-scale tree clearance would have led to the erosion of the loess top soil cover, and increased re-deposition and sedimentation in the valleys, though the mechanism of clearance is not yet known.¹⁹

Waller (1983) found in the pollen record for Pannel Bridge, relatively high values for bracken (*Pteridium*) spores and the presence of herbs such as Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), dock (*Rumex sp*) and Nettle (*Urtica*) indicating possible woodland clearings for the period c.8000 and 6400 BP. The Mesolithic activity recorded at this site does not appear to be linked to this activity.²⁰ However at a nearby site at Brede Bridge the pollen record does not show any evidence for openings in the dryland forest until immediately before the elm decline at c. 5150 BP suggesting that those at Pannel Bridge were localised events.²¹ The elm decline is clearly associated with anthropogenic indicators (such as cereal-type grains and *Plantago lanceolata*). The rate of organic sediment accumulation declined after this time, but conditions were likely to have remained open.²² This sequence of events also occurred at Combe Haven west of Hastings, where the lime decline is associated with a decline in tree pollen and slight increase in herbs associated with clearance, with significant deforestation at c. 2900 BP.²³ Other sites also record this pattern of change.²⁴ Recent archaeological investigations such as the Bexhill by pass and the area at Hastings Country Park are likely to add further detail to the palaeo-environmental record in this part of Sussex.

¹⁶ Smyth, C. and Jennings, S. 1988. Mid- to late-Holocene forest composition and the effects of clearance in the Combe Haven Valley, East Sussex. *SAC* **126**, 1-20, p7.

¹⁷ Somerville, E. 2003. Sussex: from environmental change to landscape history. In D. Rudling, 2003. *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD 2000*. University of Sussex. p237

¹⁸ Waller, M.P. 1994a. Paludification and pollen representation: the influence of wetland size on *Tilia* representation in pollen diagrams. *The Holocene* **4**, 430-434.

¹⁹ Somerville, E. 2003 p239; Robinson, D.A and Williamson, R.B.G 1983. The soils and vegetational history of Sussex, in The Geographical Editorial Committee (ed) *Sussex: Environment, Landscape and Society*. Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 109-126.

²⁰ Somerville, E. 2003 p239; Holgate and Woodcock 1989. pp1-10.

²¹ Waller, M. P. 1994b. Flandrian vegetational history of south-eastern England. Stratigraphy of the Brede valley and pollen data from Brede Bridge, *New Phytol.* **126**. 369-392

²² Waller, M.P. 1994b *ibid*

²³ Smith and Jennings 1988, 1-20.

²⁴ For the Upper Cuckmere Valley see Scaife and Burrin 1985; for Chiddingly see Scaife and Burrin 1983

This pattern of change recorded in the pollen record of sites in this part of the High Weald might also have taken place in the upper valley of the River Rother around Great Dixter. Dryland woodland cover being gradually cleared resulting in the silting up of the Rother valley, a decline in both elm and lime, with an increase in pollen species related to anthropogenic activity.

2.7. Prehistoric Evidence

According to the output from the East Sussex HER there is no recorded evidence for prehistoric activity at or in the vicinity of Great Dixter. This is due not to an absence of anthropogenic activity, rather archaeological investigation has not taken place in this area, nor any stray flint finds recorded in the archaeological record. Most of the fields in the area are under pasture limiting the opportunity for field work or the recovery of stray finds. The new housing developments in and around Northiam should provide an opportunity for archaeological field walking prior to removal of top soil for ground works to proceed.

2.8. Roman Settlement and industry – iron production

Great Dixter is located in an area of the Sussex Weald where the Roman Fleet, the *Classis Britannica* organised the iron working and exportation along the rivers to the coast. Their role is identified through stamped tiles found iron working sites. The Roman operation in this part of the Weald probably centred on the iron works at Bardown located on the main ridge top towards Hastings. Other sites lie at the headwaters of the rivers Brede and Tillingham and a potential new site at Northiam has recently been identified.²⁵ This site would have had access to the coast via the River Rother.

Although, the industrial sites have been found, there is little evidence for the support industries to maintain the Roman work force, such as the food production in fields and the settlement farmsteads, and places where the iron workers stayed. It might be that the indigenous Romano-British communities provided the food, livestock and shelter ?

By mid-3rd century the iron industry was in decline and the sites in the eastern Weald were abandoned. However, it is unlikely that settlement was also abandoned, rather the indigenous population continued to farm, manage woods, and export goods to the coast.

2.9. Early-Medieval origins

There was no manor for Northiam in its own right, rather the lands in the parish comprised parts of other manors such as Ewhurst, Robertsbridge and Mote etc.

The earliest record for settlement is for the large Manor of Ewhurst in the valley of the Rother recorded in 1086 which indicates that there was a well established farming community operating in the upper valley of the River Rother in Saxon times.

²⁵ Lynn and Kevin Cornwell HAARG pers. comm..

The Count of Eu holds Ewhurst himself, in lordship. Alfhære held it from King Edward. Then it answered for 6 hides ; now for 4 hides and 3 virgates; 5 virgates are foregone because 1 hide is in the Count of Mortains' Rape. Land for 20 ploughs. In lordship 4 ploughs.

*12 villagers and 10 smallholders with 6 ploughs.
4 slaves; meadow 12 acres; woodland for 10 pigs.
Osbern holds 1 hide and 3 virgates of this manor's land in Bodiam; it always lay in Ewhurst (lands); the Hall was there.
Roger ½ hide; Ralph 2 virgates. In lordship 1½ ploughs;
7 villagers and 10 smallholders with 4½ ploughs.²⁶*

Ewhurst was a large manor divided into beadlewicks, as recorded in the late 17th century surveys of the Manor. The Manor of Dixter was created from the lands held of Ewhurst and was subordinate to it.

Another valley manor was that of the Manor of Robertsbridge, which was formed in the founding of the Cistercian Abbey of St Mary at Robertsbridge in c. 1176 by Alured de St Martin. It had tenements extending into the parish of Ewhurst and into Northiam. Also this time it was divided into boroughs; the borough t for Purfield closely abutted the tenement of Dixter.

2.10. Medieval Period

For the full account of the descent of ownership and the tenants of Dixter see Christopher Whittick's Report. The earliest recorded extent or description for the land at Dixter, are the surveys of the tenements of the Manor of Ewhurst ²⁷ in the early 17th century.

The farmstead at Dixter was certainly established by the mid-15th century, though when Little Dixter evolved is not clear. Little Dixter was sold by Thomas Glydd to John Holman circa 1580s. ²⁸ Dixter Farm was one of several medieval hall farmsteads scattered through Northiam. Its position on the edge of the ridge overlooking the valley was probably partly strategic. The Etchinghams held land along the valley from their manor upstream, and Great Dixter would have provided a fine place to stay on their travels up and down the Rother, passing Bodiam and Robertsbridge. Smaller farms were created out of or were purchased to enlarge the estate, such as Usbournes and Copland Farms on the edge of the area of down land and the possible deer park. [See below].

Crockers land on the northern edge of Weights Wood was a copyhold tenement of the Manor of Ewhurst. In 1645 John Iden was holding 8ac land, ²⁹ which by 1673 was held by

²⁶ Morris, J. 1976. *Domesday Book: Sussex*. Phillimore, Chichester, 9-120.

²⁷ ESRO AMS 4441 Survey of the Manor of Ewhurst 1645; AMS 4440 1673

²⁸ Christopher Whittick 2018 Archive Research; TNA PROB11/77/28 Thomas Glidd 1591

²⁹ ESRO AMS 4441 Survey of the Manor of Ewhurst

Thomas Frewen of Brickwall. It included marshland in the valley of the Rother. The Frewens held large tracts of marshland, and were involved with the management of the brooklands.

Several processes have shaped the landscape, the continuing exploitation for iron, the gradually draining and enclosing of the marshlands, the emparking of a deer park at Dixter and the continued farming to provide produce and food, not only for home consumption but also to sell at local markets. The presence of the sandstone outcropping here is likely to be a contributing factor of the development of open downland in the early medieval and medieval periods where the village of Northiam then evolved. This pattern is indicated by the network of inter-linking lanes which are so characteristic of tracks across an unenclosed environment.³⁰

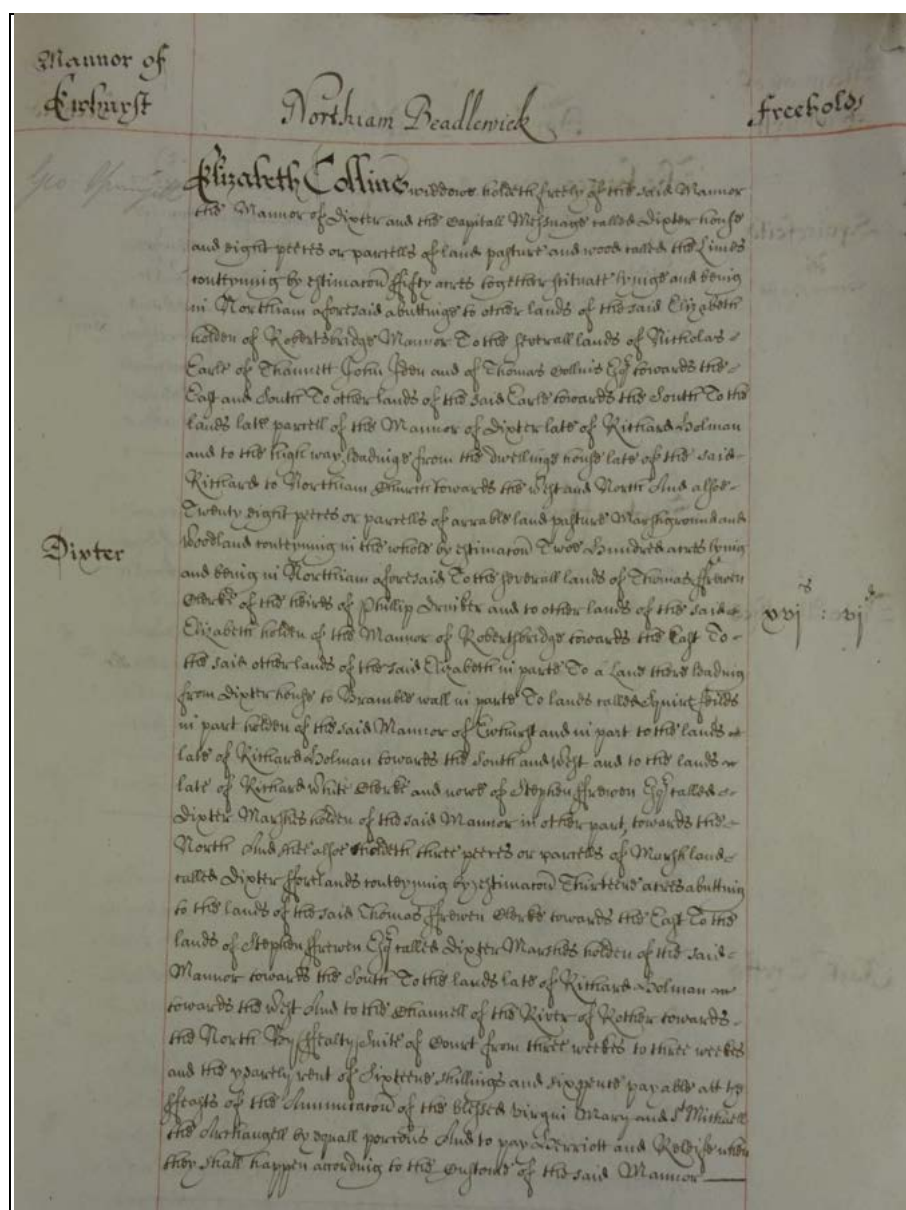


Figure 6: Extract from the Survey of the Manor of Ewhurst 1673 [Source ESRO AMS 4440]

³⁰ David Martin pers.comm.

The iron industry required charcoal and wood in large quantities, which kept the enclosed woods in regular coppice cycles. Wood was also an export, being loaded onto boats and taken to the port at Rye before being shipped to the continent. Iron stone was mined across the Weald, in areas where the bed rock was easy to dig out. Sites were often located in woodland on edges of gills.

Part of the Dixter Estate comprised brook land in the valley of the River Rother. Fifty-two acres of marsh were attached to Great Dixter but were sold by Thomas Glydd in 1625 and purchased by the Frewens of the Brickwall Estate.³¹ At this time Thomas Glydd may have been selling off property in order to meet alleged debts to his business partner Thomas Hayes. Glydd ended up in Hastings gaol.³² The marsh or brooklands would have formed an integral part of the management of the farm providing valuable hay for winter fodder and spring grazing on the rich alluvial grasslands. These brook lands were probably enclosed in the 13th century using a network of straight ditches which also drained the land, and allowed for watering the fields during winter months. However by the early 14th century the lower levels of the River Rother were being seasonally flooded by sea water. Sir James Etchingham who had a market at Salehurst and depended on the Rother for export complained about the works being done to control flooding especially the construction of the Knelle Dam across the Wittersham level.³³



Figure 7: Possible area of deer park from south end of Weights Wood

The location of the deer park is pure speculation based on knowledge of how a typical Wealden deer park might have appeared in the landscape. At Great Dixter it may have been a compartmentalised deer park with areas of enclosed woodland such as Weights Wood and with areas of open ground – lawn together with field boundary pollards.

³¹ ESRO LIB/501911/29

³² Cleere and Crossley 1991 p 155.

³³ Eddison, J. 2000. *Romney Marsh Survival on a Frontier*. Tempus pp 103-105

More detailed fieldwork and archive research is needed to test this hypothesis. The medieval woodland called Limes (remnant left is Four Acre Shaw) also suggests that tree fodder was being grown and cut for stock and possibly for deer.

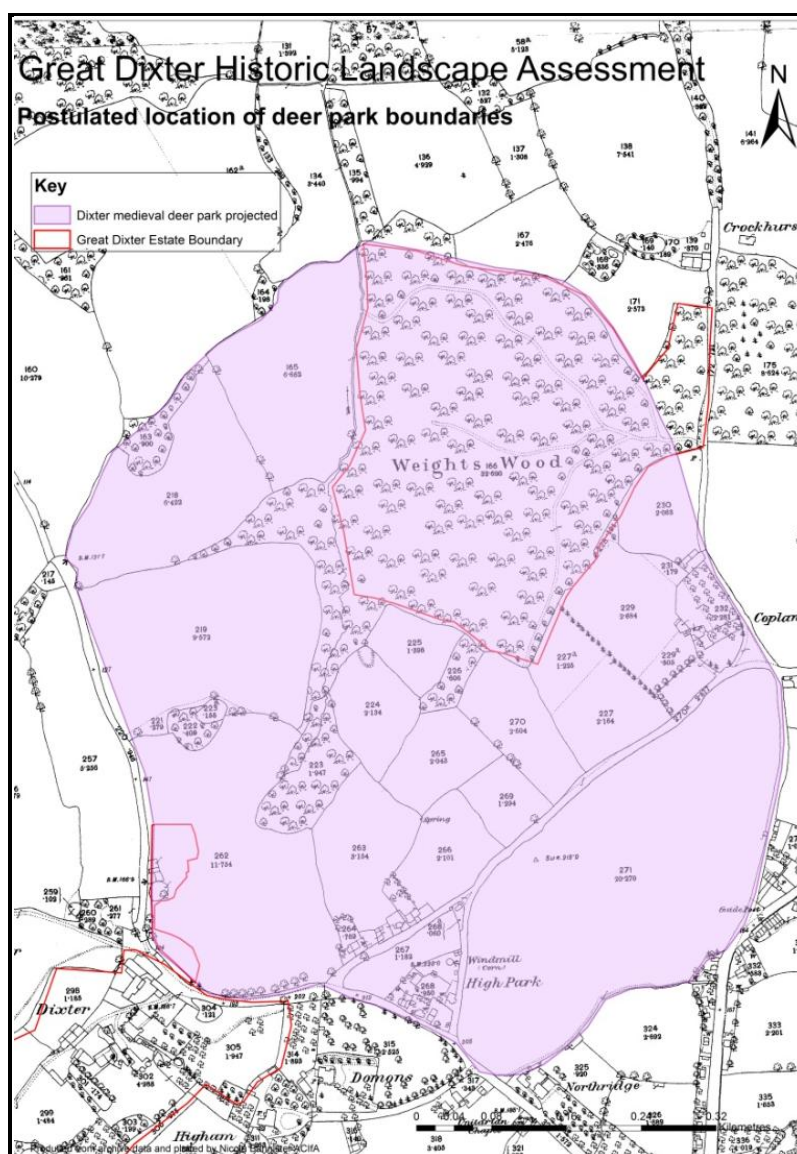


Figure 8: Postulated medieval deer park at Dixter

2.11. The Post-medieval Period

See Christopher Whittick's Report 2018 on the descent of ownership of Great Dixter for the full details on ownership and tenants.

2.11.1. Post-medieval farming

Mixed farming was the Wealden method of agriculture, but dominated by cattle breeding and fattening. Cattle or oxen were also used for haulage, being more robust, tractable and economic than compared with horses. After several years of haulage they could be fattened for meat. The manure from the cattle when housed in yards during the winter was then turned out on to the arable land and also used to manure hops, a crop which was 'hungry' for nutrients. Corn, grass and latterly crops that delivered nitrogen to

the soil were grown. Figure 9. shows the land use in the early 19th century based on George Springett's Estate map. Pasture dominated the farm, with orchards near to the farmstead

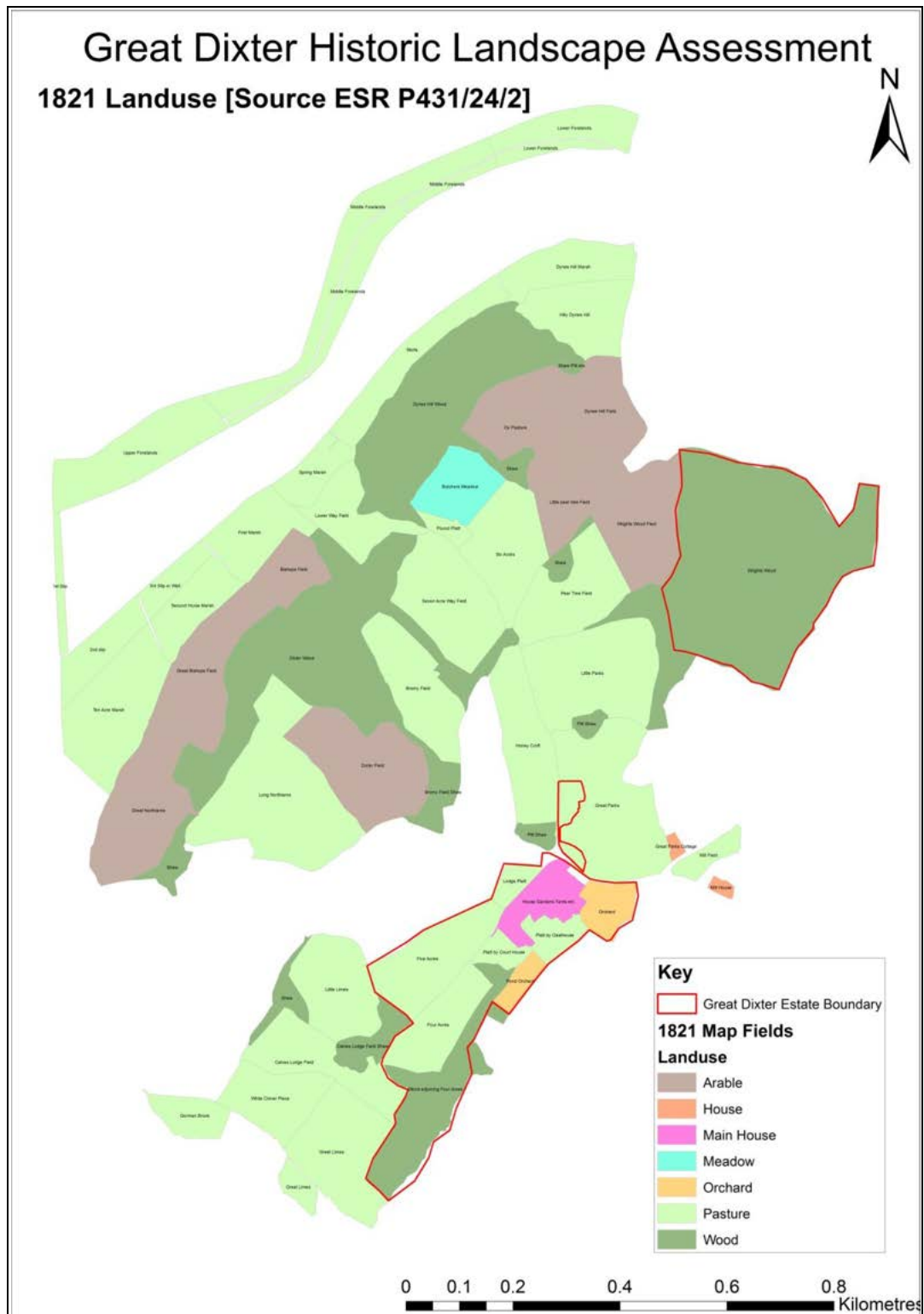


Figure 9: Late 18th to Early 19th century Land use at Dixter

2.11.2. Early Modern farming

A valuable source of information on the farming in the Victorian period, are the valuation books for the land agents of Vidlers. These are held at the ESRO. Valuations were made when there was a change in tenants or for probate. The values were entered in code, on order that the other agents could not immediately work out the value. A rapid search of these shows that Little Dixter changed hands more often than Great Dixter. Both farms were tenanted in partnership with other farms. Great Dixter provided the home and farming centre for the farm bailiff in the latter part of the 19th century when the estate belonged to the Augustus Springett (nee Pout) and then his wife Elizabeth Springett.

2.12. The 20th century

In the First World War, Great Dixter was requisitioned as an auxiliary military hospital. The history of Great Dixter; the conversion of a working farm to a country house and garden by Daisy and Nathaniel Lloyd and how it became a world renowned garden is described in the Conservation Management Plan for Great Dixter House.³⁴

All the landscaping was taking place within the structure of a farmstead with dispersed buildings, all of which provided the framework for the division into smaller gardens and garden rooms set around the house. Some of the closes and yards have become fossilised as part of the garden layout. These in turn have contributed to the back ground soil fertility for the garden. Understanding what the different parts of the farmstead were used for e.g. pig sties, or cattle yards will help to inform soil fertility tests as part of the management of the garden.

³⁴ Donald Insall Associates Architects and Historic Buildings Consultants, The Landscape Agency and Julia Holberry Associates and Bucknall Austin. 2007. *Great Dixter Conservation Management Plan*. 2 vols.

3. RESULTS OF THE FIELD SURVEY

The following section describes the results from the various components of the Field Survey for the Archaeological and Historic Landscape Assessment. It starts with the Fieldsapes Assessment followed by the results from the field walk over – the Archaeological evidence [Section 3.2.], then with the Historic Farmstead Assessment [Section 3.3].

3.1. FIELDSCAPES ASSESSMENT

3.1.1 Introduction

The historic landscape assessment for the Great Dixter Biodiversity Audit provided an opportunity to undertake a Fieldsapes Assessment of the Estate. In 2017 the High Weald together with Historic England developed and piloted a “High Weald Fieldsapes Characterisation and Assessment Methodology”.³⁵ Originally Great Dixter was to be one of the case study sites in this project. However, the opportunity arose with this Biodiversity Audit to use the methodology and assessment as part of the fieldwork.

Today, the area of the current estate is somewhat reduced from its historic extent when George Springett owned the Great Dixter property in 1821, and for which there is a very informative estate map, showing the extent of the fields and land use at that time.³⁶

It would have been very helpful to have examined the field boundaries to the current fields belonging to Little Dixter Farm as a comparison with those at Great Dixter. Several such boundaries, however were viewed whilst walking along the public footpath through the property, which helped to clarify some points.

3.1.2. Method

The method of the assessment follows that for the High Weald Fieldsapes Assessment.³⁷ The details of the approach with examples of recording forms and the metadata for the GIS are given in Appendix IV of this report.

Each field on the Great Dixter Estate was examined in detail, with every boundary walked, and the content and context of each field examined. For each field and boundary a record sheet was completed. As already mentioned, some fields in the wider landscape were examined from the public footpath which runs from Great Dixter, through the fields of Little Dixter to the valley. This route gave an opportunity to examine some of the fields once part of the property and set the current estate in its wider landscape context.

³⁵ The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Historic England 2017 Fieldsapes Assessment and Character Statement. www.Highweald.org.uk

³⁶ ESRO P431/24/2 1821 Mr George Springetts Estate surveyed John Adams

³⁷ The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Historic England 2017 Fieldsapes Assessment and Character Statement. www.Highweald.org.uk

The data from the recording sheets was used to produce the GIS layers for Great Dixter project and also added to an Excel spread sheet generated, for all the data. See Appendix IV.

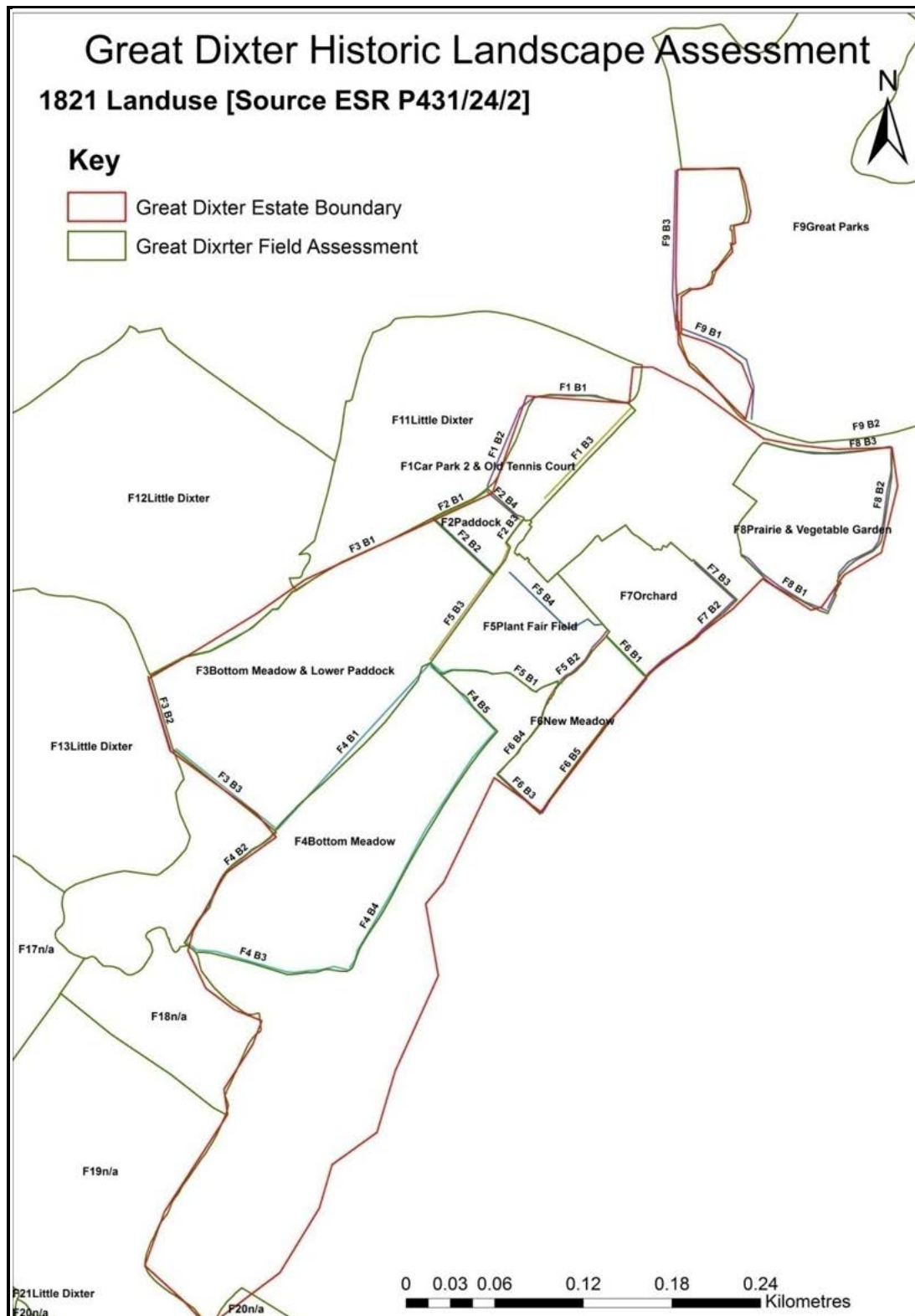


Figure 10: Fieldscapes Assessment Sites

3.1.3. Results of the Field Assessment

Fields, their shape, boundaries, orientation and the features within them shape and define the local character of the rural landscape. Fields of course have an intimate relationship with farmsteads this relationship together with other landscape features such as routeways woods and other forms of settlement define the local character. Essentially, the character of the High Weald and the area of Great Dixter is one dominated by enclosures of various types. Fields would not have existed without the farmsteads and vice-versa. Farmsteads were built to house the family and workers who were farming the land. The land was divided into compartments of fields in order to manage stock and crops efficiently. The enclosures when first created were also influenced by the local topography and soils.

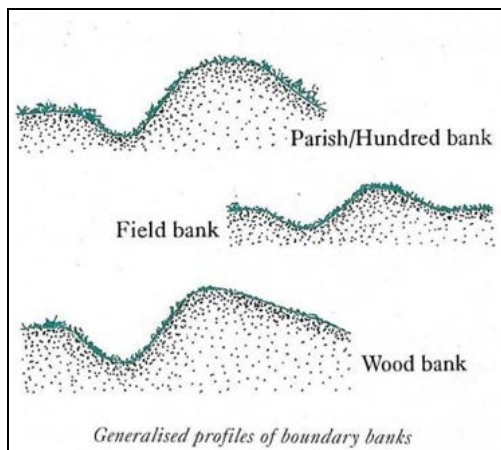
Today, this historic relationship between fields and farmsteads is being eroded as changes in modern farming methods, has resulted in many historic farmsteads becoming unsuitable to meet modern needs and fields being too small to accommodate modern farm machinery.

The strong relationship and links between farmstead and its fields in many instances is now being broken. The fields either managed by a nearby farm or under contract. Today the farmstead at Great Dixter has become separated from most of its historic fields but retains some paddocks and meadows extending due south west from the buildings. The buildings themselves however remain conserved in their post-medieval farming state.

The pattern and arrangement of the fields is strongly defined by the topography, and the orientation to the settlement. The actual farmstead and yard is located on a spur of land which extends west from a larger ridge on which the village of Northiam has evolved. The fields then extend to the north and north-west retaining a pattern of long axis on this orientation, with shorter boundaries subdividing these areas into smaller fields. There is a strong rectangular pattern with wavy or sinuous boundaries, which suggests enclosure from woodland possibly in the early medieval period.

Farm tracks run from the top of the spur down towards the valley providing access to the fields. The track which runs north east past the 19th century outbuildings (now the office and Education Centre) extends into the fields close to the edge of the valley. Such a route may have extended down to the river and a possible wharf for the loading and unloading of goods brought in by boat? Another track ran from Great Dixter north towards Calves Shaw.

All the fields are roughly rectangular with sinuous boundaries and aligned from the farmstead north-east to south-west following the natural slope. The more regular shaped fields are probably the earlier enclosed fields and ones which have been cultivated. The more irregular fields are likely to be later enclosures than the regular ones and probably suited for pasture and hay. Those enclosures closer to the farmstead are also likely to be older than those at a distance from it.



Source: Woodland Archaeology in Surrey. Its recognition and Management. Surrey County

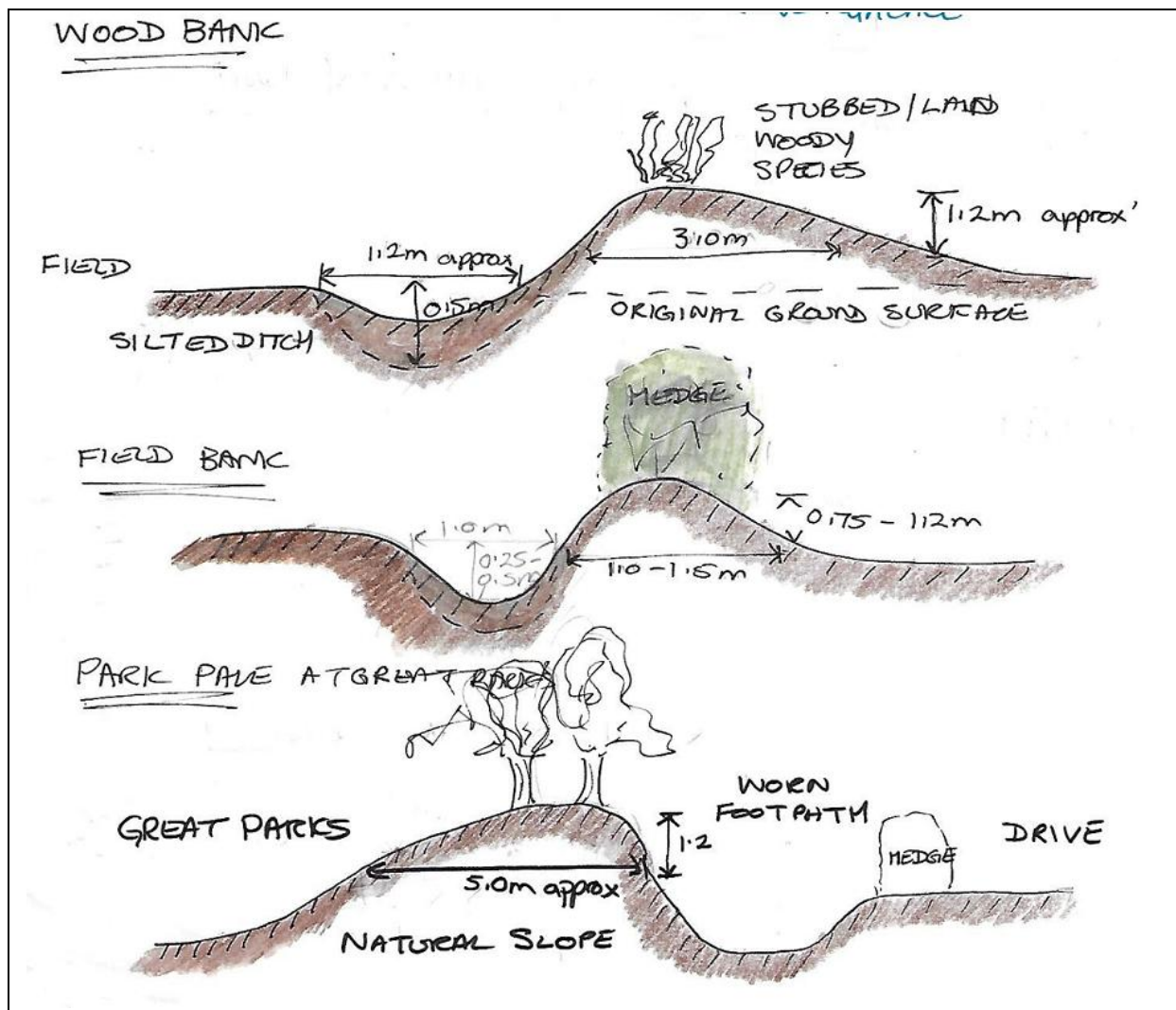


Figure 11: Diagrams (not to scale) to show the different bank profiles

3.1.4. HISTORY AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE INDIVIDUAL FIELDS AT GREAT DIXTER

The following tables are a summary of the ownership and land use of the individual fields on and around the Great Dixter Estate. Where possible information has been taken from the relevant archives and included in the tables. See Appendix II for the list of archives and their sources. Figure 10 shows the fields and their assessment numbers.

F1 CAR PARK 2 & OLD TENNIS COURT (alias Lodge Plot 1840)

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	A 1		1-0-23			
1821	4 Lodge Platt	Pasture	1-0-32	George Springett	George Springett	
TITHE 1830	47 Lodge Plot	n/a	1-0-32	George Springett	George Springett	
OS FIELD	268		1.185			
1910	298 Corn Stack Field or Stack Plat Field	Pasture	1.185 ac	Elizabeth Springett		Title Deed
PRESENT	Car Park	Pasture	1.185 ac	GDCT		Retains original shape



Figure 12:

This field is now sub-divided into compartments by fences and trees to form the main car park together with a picnic site, compost areas. The outer hedges and fences are still present but some are reinforced with additional planting of specimen trees such as Scots Pine. The south-eastern boundary [F1 B4] is defined by the track to Pierce Cottage [B08] and by a potting shed [B09], formerly an animal shed with yard.

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F2 Paddock (alias part of The Five Acres 1840)

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	A 2	n/a	6-0-39			
1821	15 Five Acres	Pasture	5-0-35	George Springett		
TITHE 1830	46 The Five Acres	n/a		George Springett		Part of
OS FIELD	344		6.351			
1910	295 Five Acres	Pasture	6.351 ac	Elizabeth Springett		
PRESENT	Overflow carpark	Pasture		GDCT		Part of



Figure 13

Leading from F1 this grassy field forms part of the overflow car parking to the gardens. Its outer hedges and boundaries are intact, but it has a fence at the southern side to divide it from the Lower Paddock to the southeast [F3]. As with F1 the Car Park 2 some of the boundaries have been modified with additional tree and shrub planting. Within this field are traces of former very shallow banks or lynchets [A008a&b & A002]. Historically, it was part of The Five Acres [See F4 below].

F3 BOTTOM MEADOW & LOWER Paddock (alias The Five Acres 1840)

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	A 2	n/a	6-0-39			Part of
1821	16 Five Acres	Pasture	5-0-35	George Springett	George Springett	Part of
TITHE 1830	46 The Five Acres	n/a		George Springett	George Springett	Part of
OS FIELD	344		6.351			
1910	295, Five Acres 296 Four Acres	Pasture & Pasture	6.351 Ac & 4.301 ac	Elizabeth Springett		Part of
PRESENT	Bottom Meadow & Lower Paddock	Pasture	6.351 Ac & 4.301 ac	GDCT		Part of



Figure 14

Bottom Meadow is the largest field on the Great Dixter Estate and made more so by the removal of the historic boundary [F3 B4] and track between it and F4 (see below). It is bounded in the NW and SW sides by hedges and woodland edges. On its north-east side the hedge has been modified where it bounds the garden. Within this field are traces of shallow lynchet type earthworks [A009 & A010] which suggest some form of earlier subdivision of the field. These earthworks do not extend into the field adjacent to the east [F 12] (See below).

The hedge F3 B1 is a large and mixed species ancient hedge on a substantial and modified asymmetrical profiled bank which in places takes the shape of a lynchet with ditch. This is an important boundary as it forms the division between Great and Little Dixter lands, both in the past and today, [See Appendix I]. Along the southern boundary F3 B2 is a lynchet or possibly a plough headland [A010]. On the south side it drops to a large lynchet formed by the downslope movement of soil during cultivation. A lynchet of this size (over 1.0m height) indicates the field has long been in cultivation and ploughed.

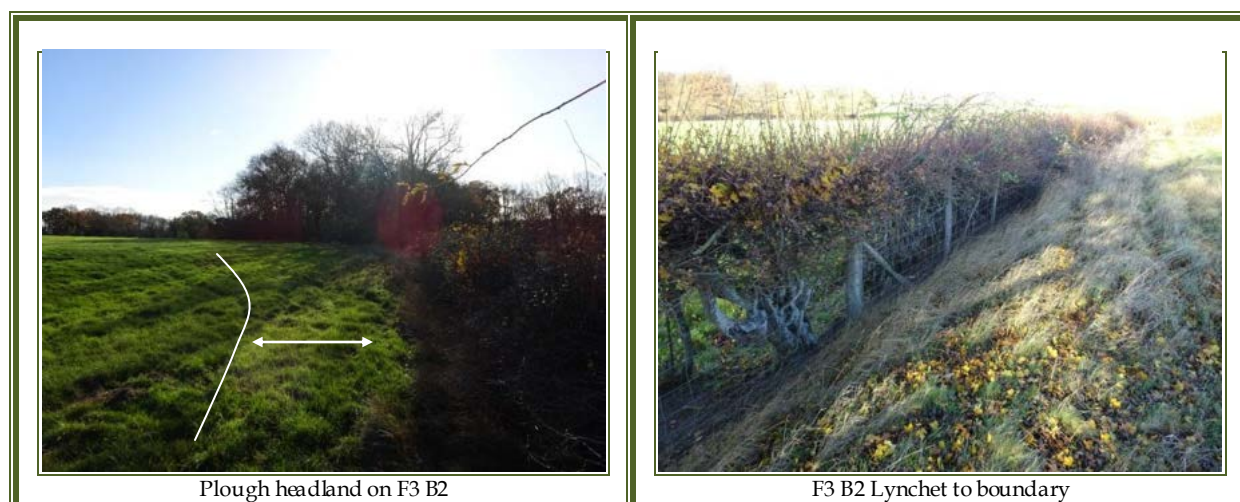


Figure 15

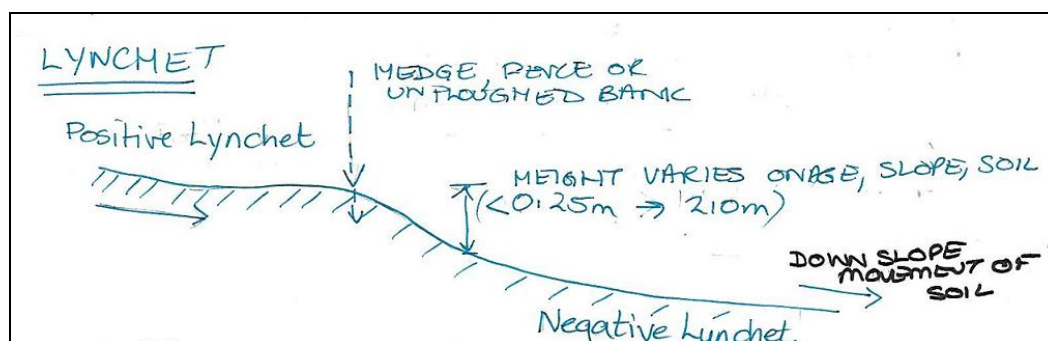


Figure 16: Sketch of a section of a lynchet

F4 BOTTOM MEADOW (alias The Four Acres 1840)

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	A 4	n/a	7-1-10			
1821	7 Four Acres	Pasture	4-0-14	George Springett		
TITHE 1830	38 The Four Acres	n/a	4-0-14	George Springett		
OS FIELD	343		4.501			
1910	295, Five Acres 296 Four Acres	Pasture & Pasture	6.351 Ac & 4.301 ac	Elizabeth Springett		
PRESENT	Bottom Meadow	Pasture		GDCT		Boundary lost on W side

This field now lies together with the previous [F3] one together are the largest field on the Estate at present. The dividing hedge [F3 and F4 B1, A017] and the field track were removed post 1945. The field track ran from the Great Dixter farmstead south-west to a small animal shed and yard at the end of Calveslodge Shaw and then curved round the edge of the woodland to provide access to the fields to the south of the woodland. The track has been ploughed out in these fields. Where the track runs past Calveslodge Shaw in F4 it has formed a slight hollow way lying against the woodland boundary, suggesting that this route was well use.



Figure 17

The boundary F4 B3 bounds a woodland shaw extending from Four Acre Shaw. There is a wood bank along this boundary. However that which bounds Four Acre Shaw [F4 B4] comprises a typical wood bank with ditch on the field side. It is a well defined and undisturbed boundary with stubbed and laid hornbeam surviving on its length. This suggests that this is a medieval or earlier wood bank built to enclose the coppice and timber of the shaw from grazing stock. There is a gate at the south-east corner of this field which leads to a track into the woodland. No evidence of any earthworks survive in this field i.e. lynchets or banks of former sub-divisions.

F5 PLANT FAIR FIELD (alias a Platt by the Cart House 1840)

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	A 3	n/a	2-1-0			
1821	4 Platt by Cart House	Pasture	1-2-26	George Springett		
TITHE 1830	37 Plot by Cart Lodge	n/a	1-2-26	George Springett		
OS FIELD	269		1.510			
1910	299 Lower Oast field	Pasture	1.484 ac	Elizabeth Springett		
PRESENT	Plant Fair Field	Pasture				

This field is a small enclosure of about an acre and historically described as a plot or platt (which means small piece of ground³⁸). It is an irregular field bounded to the west by a hedge [F5 B3] which is a continuation of the one grubbed out in the preceding fields. [F3 and F4]. Its southern boundary is formed of a sinuous bank and silted ditch following the edge of woodland in which there is a relatively large pit or small quarry [A005]. Its eastern boundary comprises a large ditch which discharges into the top of the gill of Four Acre Shaw.



Figure 18

This boundary is important historically as it is the boundary between the Manor of Ewhurst and the Manor of Robertsbridge.³⁹ The northern boundary is a fence dividing this space

³⁸ Field, J. 1989. English Field Names. A dictionary. Alan Sutton

³⁹ ESRO SHE 6-1-8-5 1725 Map of Purfield Borough in Robertsbridge.

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from the gardens of the small cottage built on the site of the former Cart Lodge. Within this field are straight parallel low banks and ditches [A018] which suggest the enclosure was once used as an orchard or small hop garden. On the western side are traces of the field track down to Calveslodge Shaw.

F6 NEW MEADOW (alias Orchard Field 1840)

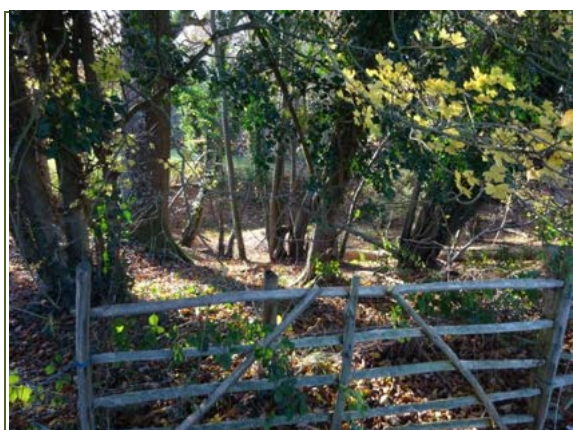
	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	n/a	n/a	n/a	John Earle of Tufton		
1742	1		1-2-19	Mr Samuel Gott		Robertsbridge Manor
1821	6 Pond Orchard	Orchard	1-1-18	George Springett		
TITHE 1830	36 Pond Orchard	Orchard	1-1-18	George Springett		
OS FIELD	270	Orchard	1.190			
1910	300 Lower Orchard	Orchard	1.224 ac	Elizabeth Springett		
PRESENT		Pasture		GDCT		



New Meadow F6 looking east



New Meadow F6 looking north east



F6 B3 looking into pit [A004]



F6 B5 between Dixter and Higham looking north

Figure 19

To the west of the previous field and sharing a boundary [F5 and F6 B2] is a small narrow rectangular field called New Meadow formerly Orchard although there are no fruit trees in it today. Remains of the orchard are indicated by the shallow ridge and furrow earthworks running lengthways and contained within the field [A003]. This field together with F7 lay

within the Purfield Borough of the Manor of Robertsbridge.⁴⁰ The western boundary which today is the boundary between Dixter and Higham comprises a hedge on a substantial lynchet type bank [F6 B5]. The hedge shrubs show evidence of having been laid in the past. This boundary dates to before 1725, and divided the Dixter land from that of Higham. The southern boundary [F6 B3] of this field is a modern stock fence along the edge of the quarry or pit [A004], which was dug prior to the early 18th century.

F7 ORCHARD (alias Platt by Oast 1840)

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625				Other Lands of John Glid		
1742	n/a	n/a	1-2-7	Samuel Gott		Robertsbridge Manor
1821	3 Platt by Oast House	Pasture	1-0-39	George Springett		
TITHE 1830	35 Platt by Oast House	n/a	1-0-39	George Springett		
OS FIELD	266	Orchard	4.2.94			
OS Epoch 3 1910	266	Orchard	4.2.94			
1910	302 Upper Oast Field	Pasture	4.9.88 ac	Elizabeth Springett		
PRESENT	Garden & Orchard	Pasture		GDCT		

Orchard or Platt by Oast House Field is evidence that this was one of the smaller paddocks by the farmstead and was also the site of the first oast house [A098] built at Great Dixter. Traces of the former top fruit land use in evidence by the remains of some fruit trees and also the fairly prominent ridge and furrow orientated north-east south-west with the natural slope. It is an irregularly square shaped enclosure, containing a small quarry or pond [A060] in the south-east corner. This enclosure has undergone significant change with the landscaping as part of the development of the gardens. It is an informal space with specimen trees, but with Christopher Lloyd's famous planting of the herbaceous Long Border along its northern edge. The southern [F6 F7 B1] boundary and the F7 B2 boundary are on their original alignment. The B1 boundary comprises a ditch running west from the small quarry with a hedge of mixed shrub species. A small Arts and Crafts style garden gate leads into F6 the New meadow. In the south west corner is an elongated pond [A059] and depression lying north-west – south-east. It is this pond with a similar depression [A062] lying to the north which has given rise to the theory that Great Dixter was a moated site. However, the two depressions lie at different levels on the slope and there is no evidence of any links between the two. It is likely that they are formerly extraction pits perhaps for clay which were then enlarged to form farmyard ponds or landscaping for the House.

In 1479 Sir John Elrington was granted licence to crenellate Great Dixter, enclose a deer park, and have a fishery and freewarren.⁴¹ It is postulated that these ponds may have been used as 'stews' to keep fish caught from a fishery on the River Rother for use during religious feast days and Lent.

⁴⁰ ibid

⁴¹ Whittick, C. 2018 Archive Research Report for Great Dixter



Figure 20

The boundary F7 B2 on the east side of this field comprises the original field boundary but with a yew hedge having been planted on the Dixter side, making this boundary very wide. The original hedge of Hawthorn, Field Maple and Hornbeam sits on top of a lynchet type bank – a continuation of F6 B5. There are no other older enclosure boundaries remaining to this field.

F8. PRAIRIE & VEGETABLE GARDEN (alias Orchard 1840)

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	n/a					
1742	Orchard	Orchard	2-1-15	Samuel Gott		Robertsbridge Manor
1821	1 Orchard	Orchard	2-1-14	George Springett	George Springett	
TITHE 1830	33 Orchard	Orchard	2-1-14	George Springett	George Springett	
OS FIELD	265		1.945			
1910	305 Orchard	Orchard	1.947 ac	Elizabeth Springett		
PRESENT	Prairie	Pasture & Gardens		GDCT		

This enclosure lies between Great Dixter and Higham. It comprises garden beds, the vegetable beds, a quarry [A063] and the Horse Pond [A064]. The pond and quarry have been landscaped to form part of the gardens. The boundaries F8 B1 & B2 remain on their original alignments but F8 B1 has been modified as part of the gardens. The property boundary F8 B2 is managed as a high hedge between Dixter and Higham lands. It is slightly curved and the native hedge of Hawthorn, Hazel and Ash has been planted with Yew. No boundary earthwork was seen. On the far Higham side is a small path, which is slightly sunken. The northern boundary of this enclosure F8 B3 is formed of a chestnut fence along the edge of the Drive into Great Dixter. It too is curved and bounds the edge of the quarry/pond as well. The historic maps indicated that this boundary was probably once hedged. Also in this field is the Hydraulic ram which provides water for the Estate. This is the only field which lies on the Tunbridge Wells Sandstone and thus the soils are probably much drier than those in the other fields.



Figure 21

F9 GREAT PARKS (alias Great Parks 1840)

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625				Other Lands of John Glid b		Field split boundary gone
1625	A 9	n/a	7-1-03			Field split boundary gone
1742	n/a					E boundary on map
1821	19 Great Parks	Pasture	11-3-15	George Springett	George Springett	
TITHE 1830	48 Great Parks	n/a	11-3-15	George Springett	George Springett	
OS FIELD	262		11.754			
1910	262 Great Park	Pasture	11.754 ac	Elizabeth Springett		
PRESENT	Great Parks	Pasture				

Great Parks is a field of considerable interest. It is included here because it is the link between Great Dixter and Weights Wood. It is still in private hands and so it was examined from the roads, tracks and from Weights Wood, in order to provide as detailed a picture as possible of its role in the wider landscape and its relationship with Great Dixter.



Figure 22

The field is irregular in shape and extends from the top of the ridge and the Drive to Great and Little Dixter farmsteads northwards into the upper reaches of the gill streams which flow through and by Weights Wood on their way to the River Rother. On the south east edge of the field is the Wagon Shed [B04], behind which is the small Car Park 1 for use of volunteers and staff as well as for disabled visitors. The car park is bounded on its north side [F9 B1] by a stock fence. The southern boundary of Great Parks [F9 B2] also forms the edge of the access track to Great and Little Dixter. The public footpath follows this edge as well. The boundary comprises a narrow shaw and on the track/road side it is hawthorn and ivy hedge on a bank with a silted ditch. The hedge is gappy and suffering from the shading caused by the mature ash and oak trees of the shaw. Then there is the footpath and on the field side is a very large curving bank, on which the mature oaks are sited. This bank is postulated to be the remains of the medieval pale of Dixter Park [See Section 2.10].

F10 House Field 1840

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	n/a	n/a	n/a	Other lands of John Glid		
1742	5	n/a	1-8-1	Mr Cox		
1821	n/a	n/a		John Gilbert		
TITHE 1830	105 House Field	n/a	3-0-29	John Gilbert	William Elphick	
OS FIELD						
1910	n/a			Samuel Pix		
PRESENT		Pasture				

Lying adjacent to Great Parks to the east is a smaller rectangular field called House Field. To the south east are two listed cottages facing on to the High Park Lane. Its boundaries could not be observed from public routeways. This field forms part of a small group of roughly square fields with sinuous boundaries in a grid pattern between Weights Wood and the lane to High Park. These appear to be regular type assart fields showing a form of organised enclosure perhaps from woodland. This group of fields lay within the Manor of Robertsbridge and was divided between two tenements that of Copland and Higham [?].

3.1.5. History and Description of Fields in the Wider Landscape

The following fields were walked through along the public footpath from Great Dixter to Strawberry Hole to the south east.

F11 Little Dixter

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	n/a	n/a	n/a	The Lands of Richard Holman		
1742	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1821	n/a	n/a	n/a	John Pix		
TITHE 1830	29 House Field	n/a	5-1-22	John Pix	John Pix	
OS FIELD	258		5.345			
1910	n/a			Samuel Pix		
PRESENT		Pasture		Little Dixter Farm		Pond and footpath

The name House field relates to its relationship with Little Dixter House. This field shares its south-eastern boundary with that of F1 B1 and F3 B1, along which the public footpath follows before heading due west to meet with the head of a small gill. Within this field is a small pit now planted with willow withies. The unenclosed farm track to Little Dixter follows its northern boundary. From the foot path no discernable earthworks were seen in this field. However the Google earth images from 2003 and 2013 have some indications of a sinuous ditch running due south towards the pond at its western end. These also show on the Environment Agency LiDAR image.⁴² The footpath provided an opportunity to examine the F3 B1 boundary from the other side. On the Little Dixter side the boundary bank could be more clearly seen. Along parts of its length this bank had an asymmetrical profile more typical of an ancient woodland wood bank. The 'back-slope' extended in some case up to a

⁴² EA Lidar Source

1m into the field. The ditch lay on the Great Dixter side. This boundary is dominated by woodland species hornbeam, hazel, field maple and also Midland or woodland hawthorn. See Phillip Sansum's report on the historical ecology for more detail.



Figure 23

This is a long sinuous boundary which follows the direction of the natural slope and all its characters suggest a very ancient boundary of woodland origin. If this was formerly a woodland boundary it suggests that the woodland lay in what was to become the Little Dixter lands. A hypothesis is that Little Dixter Farm and fields were created from the clearance of woodland which extended from the valley up to the ridge to at Great Dixter. It might explain the shape of Little Dixter lands as shown in 1625 and 1821 as a tongue extending from the river valley to a point at the ridge top. In order to test this hypothesis further, the field boundaries across Little Dixter Farm would need to be examined in detail.



Figure 24

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F12 Little Dixter

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	n/a	n/a	n/a	The Lands of Richard Holman		
1742	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1821	n/a	n/a	n/a	John Pix		
TITHE 1830	27 Great Meadow	n/a	9-2-01	John Pix	John Pix	
OS FIELD 1910				Samuel Pix		
PRESENT		Pasture				Pond and footpath



Figure 25

The footpath passes through a small latch gate and stile by a pond into this field. It is a large field and has evidence of lynchets (or former boundaries) running approximately NW-SE across the field. There is possible evidence of ridge and furrow as well. F3 B1 forms the SE boundary to the field. The ditch to this boundary becomes more prominent further down the slope. The southern boundary is curved with a substantial ditch which runs into a gill ditch.

F13 Little Dixter (alias Little Limes 1840)

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	A 5	n/a	7-0-12	The Lands of Richard Holman		
1742	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
1821	15 Little Limes	Pasture	6-0-15	George Springett		
TITHE 1830	45 Little limes	n/a	5-3-25	George Springett	George Springett	
OS FIELD 1910						
1910	121 Six Acre Limes	Arable	6.070 ac	Elizabeth Springett		
PRESENT		Pasture				Pond and footpath

This field called Little Limes is irregular but rounded in its shape, bounded to the east and west by shaws (Six Acre and Calveslodge Shaws). This shape is rare within this group of fields, and appears that the other fields were enclosed around it. The boundaries are of woody species overlying substantial banks and ditches as shown on the LiDAR image. These characteristics indicate a possible woodland origin, i.e. this field was possibly once an

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enclosed woodland which has subsequently been cleared to pasture, leaving the shaws as boundaries. Its name 'Limes' may be a relict from a time when Small-leaved lime was to be found in the woodland, or was actively managed through coppicing for animal fodder. The map of the c.1625 Survey of the Manor of Ewhurst shows this as a field with no shaws present, but it does show a possible pit in the area of what is now Calveslodge Shaw.⁴³ The public footpath passes close to the north west edge of this field, where stile accesses the following field.

F 14 Little Dixter (alias Long Neck Field 1840)

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	n/a	n/a	n/a	Richard Holman		
1742						
1821	n/a	n/a	n/a	Mr John Pix		
TITHE 1830	Long neck Field	n/a	4-0-30			
OS FIELD	384		4.187			
1910	n/a/			Samuel Pix		
PRESENT		Arable				

The footpath continues south through this arable field, adjacent to the west edge of Six Acre Shaw; this field and the following one are rectangular with long sinuous north-east to south west boundaries and shorter cross slope fields.

F15 Ewhurst Field in Northiam

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	n/a	n/a	n/a	Richard Holman		
1742	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		
1821	n/a	n/a	n/a	Mr John Pix		
TITHE 1830	25 Ew hurst Field	n/a	5-2-34	Mr John Pix		
	21 (pt)Hilly Field	n/a	8-1-27 (pt)	Mr John Pix		
OS FIELD	386	n/a	8.098			
1910	n/a			Samuel Pix		
PRESENT		Arable				

The public footpath cuts north east to south west across this arable field. The alignment of the west boundary has been altered to include part of the adjacent field to the west. The eastern boundary has been straightened post 1625⁴⁴ and now runs straight to the bottom of the valley. Here modern farming has altered a number of the boundaries. Many of these boundaries have either been removed or straightened.

F 16 German Brook

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	D9	n/a	2-0-17	? John Glid ? Frewen	?	Isolated field from main tenement
1742						
1821	11 German Brook	Pasture	2-0-8	George Springett	himself	
TITHE 1830	43a German Brook	n/a	2-0-8	George Springett	himself	
OS FIELD	387		2.306			
1910	124 German Brook	Hop Garden/Arable	2.306 ac	Elizabeth Springett		
PRESENT		Pasture				

⁴³ ESRO AMS 3500 Uncompleted map showing tenements in Northiam held of the Manor of Ewhurst

⁴⁴ Ibid

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German Brook is on the north side of the public footpath. The term 'brook' is given for enclosures in river valley which sometimes were flooded either on purpose or as part of winter flood water during the winter months. The control of water was a key issue in managing these fields which were enclosed from former marshland by using ditches linked to the main stream and river.

It is a small field lying in the bottom of the valley and bounded by streams and ditches lined with willows. This is an irregular shaped field, one of several that lay along the edge of the stream. In 1625 it is shown as a small field detached from the main tenement belonging to Thomas Frewen.⁴⁵ This may indicate that Thomas Frewen held further land on the opposite side of the stream and valley.

F 17 White Clover Field

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	A6		13-0-34			
1742						
1821	10 White Clover Piece 12 Calves Lodge Field	n/a	4-3-15 5-0-22	George Springett	himself	
TITHE 1830	43 White Clover Field	n/a	8-1-24	George Springett	himself	
OS FIELD	388		8.301			
1910	125 White Clover Field	Pasture	8.301 ac	Elizabeth Springett		
PRESENT		Arable				

The name 'White Clover' suggests the use of clover as a break crop as part of the arable rotation or to improve the pasture. Nitrogen-fixing crops played an important part in maintaining the soil fertility, when fertilisers were rare and expensive.

F 18 Calveslodge Field 1840

	NAME	LANDUSE	AREA	OWNER	OCCUPIER	COMMENTS
1625	A6		13-0-34			
1742						
1821	12 Calves Lodge Field	n/a	5-0-22	George Springett	himself	
TITHE 1830	41 Calves Lodge Field	n/a	1-2-13	George Springett	himself	
OS FIELD	392		1.973			
1910	127 Calves Lodge Plot	Pasture	1.82 ac	Elizabeth Springett		
PRESENT		Arable				

One field now enclosed with F19. Between 1821 and 1840 this field was enclosed from Great Limes. A possible theory is that the Calves Lodge was built in the shaw by George Springett, and the field used for the young stock to graze in.

⁴⁵ ESRO AMS 3500 c.1625 Survey of the tenements held of the manor of Ewhurst in Northiam

3.1.6. Origins and names of Fields

Interestingly all the field names at Great Dixter and in the immediate area are very descriptive of post-medieval land use and relationship to other features. Apart from Great Parks and High Park which suggests a medieval origin,

The 1625 survey of Ewhurst gives the earliest detailed layout of many of the fields at Great Dixter, however it does not name them rather just gives numbers prefixed by a letter for the owner. It is the 1821 survey of George Springett's property that lists the names of the fields together with their acreage.

Some are descriptive as to land use such as Orchard and White Clover Field. Others are indicative of size such as Four Acres, The Five Acres, names which were generally given to fields which were cultivated.

One group of field names - The Limes' is interesting. In the map of the tenements in Northiam belonging to Robertsbridge Manor, the area of Four Acre Shaw is called Limes Wood. The 1625 survey shows the present boundaries around Four Acre Shaw but not the shaws of Calveslodge and Six Acre, which suggests that the shaws are post-medieval and post C17 century. However the fields called Limes link together and with their shapes indicate a possible area of woodland which may have been present in the medieval period; Four Acre Shaw being the last remnant of a much larger area of woodland.

Lodge Plot and Plot by Cart Lodge are small enclosures which are named in relationship to farm buildings. Similar House Field relates to the farmhouse of Little Dixter.

3.1.6. Postulated medieval deer park

Great Parks which lies close to the area in Northiam called High Parks. To the north of Great Parks is another field called Little Parks. There is a suggestion of a possible park boundary indicated by the curved track of the entrance to Great Dixter and the track past the modern farm buildings. A further curve with a wood bank boundary lies on the northern side of Weights Wood.

Sir John Elrynton was granted licence to crenellate his house at Dixter and Udimore in c.1479 and to empark his lands with right of free warren.⁴⁶ A rental of the Manors of Dixter and Gatecourt of 1527 lists the manor of Dixter and the demesne land and other land in the park of Dixter (£1 10s 0d) let to Richard Holman at £14 10s 0d but subject to rents resolute to the manor of Ewhurst.⁴⁷ This suggests that the park was still perceived as an enclosed feature in the landscape if not actually managed as such. There is no further description of a park at Dixter nor is there evidence for any fortification of the manor house (See 3.2.2.2. section for description of the Upper and Lower Moat Ponds).

⁴⁶ Cal. Patent Rolls 1476-85 p162; Sussex VCH Vol 9. 1939 p270, 273

⁴⁷ ESRO RAY 3/9/5-6, 3/11/1

By c. 1630 the park had probably been disemparked as the map of the lands of the Manor of Ewhurst in Northiam does not show any evidence for a park. Much of the hypothesised area lies within the “Lands of John Glyd”.⁴⁸

A hypothetical park boundary doe Dexter is shown on Figure 26 based on the thesis put forward by Dr Oliver Rackham that as pales were costly to make and maintain they were curved enclosing the greatest area for the smallest perimeter/circumference.⁴⁹ When the curving boundaries and tracks are plotted it forms an area very typical of a medieval park, enclosing undulating lands, with Great Dexter at the southern point overlooking it to the north. This encloses an area of about 120 acres. On average a deer park was about 200 acres with a mixture of woodland and pasture. A medieval park was primarily a means of having a ‘larder’ for venison rather with hunting an incidental part of its management. Venison was a highly prized meat, never sold but given as a gift.

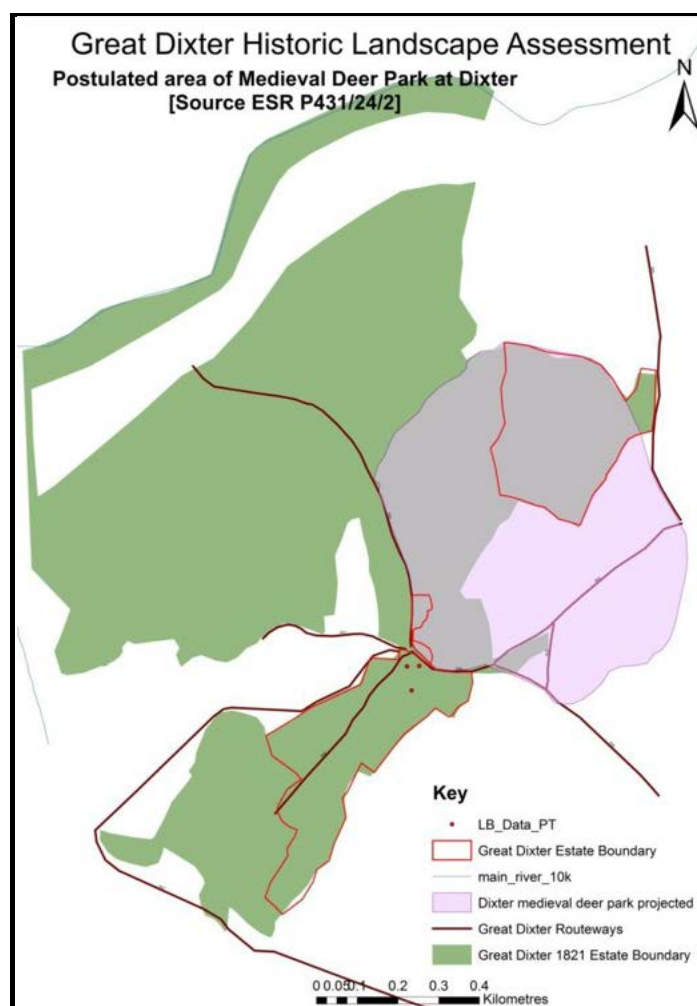


Figure 26: Postulated area of medieval deer park at Dexter

⁴⁸ ESRO AMS 3500 [ACC 645]

⁴⁹ Rackham O, 1986. The History of the Countryside, Dent. p122-129

3.2. GAZETTEER OF HERITAGE FEATURES

The following gazetteer is a record of all the features identified during field walking and desk top assessment. It is divided into sections. Those features found in the fields, those in the woodlands and those in the wider landscape.

Description of the features includes location, physical appearance, short history and past management.

Significance is a short statement based on its archaeological, landscape, and where relevant ecological perspective. In drawing up the statement it broadly follows the guidance set down in Historic England's Conservation Principles.⁵⁰

The Condition of the feature/s as observed at the time of the field survey is described and any past events which may have altered and had an impact on it.

The Management Recommendations are based on 'Best Practice' for heritage features and draw on Darvell (1987).

3.2.1. Heritage Features on the farmland of the Great Dixter Estate and in the wider landscape

Table 1. Summary of Features on Great Dixter Estate

Survey No	Grid Ref	Description	Date	Field REF	Survey
A001	TQ 81844 25985	Quarry pit for clay and or stone	Post 1625 pre 1821	Four Acre Shaw	
A002	TQ 81880 24184	Pond	Unknown	F5	
A003	TQ 81902 24909	Ridge and Furrow	Early Modern	F6	
A005	TQ 81853 24984	Ditch	Early Modern ?	Four Acre Shaw	
A006	TQ 81873 25182	Pond	Unknown	F1	
A007	TQ 81812 25037	Ridge and Furrow	Early Modern	F3	
A008	TQ 81761 25057	Curving banks	Unknown	F3	
A009	TQ 81694 25004	Curving lynchet	Unknown	F3	
A010	TQ 81646 24978	Lynchet	Unknown	F3	
A011	TQ 81681 24934	Former boundary	Medieval ?	F3	
A013	TQ 81647 24824	Holloway	Post-medieval ?	F4	
A016	TQ 81739 24797	Drain sump	Early Modern	F4	
A017	TQ 81742 24938	Ditch, former field boundary	Medieval	F3, F4	
A018	TQ 81882 25019	Ditches	Early Modern	F5	
A059	TQ 81908 25053	Linear pond	Post-medieval	F7	
A060	TQ 81949 25014	Site of pond	Unknown	F7	
A061	TQ 81951 25053	Ridge and Furrow	Early Modern	F7	
A062	TQ 81937 25106	Pond (Upper)	Post-medieval	Garden	
A063	TQ 82062 25122	Quarry	Post-medieval	F8	
A064	TQ 82039 25137	Pond	Post-medieval	F8	
A065	TQ 81979 25267	Pond	Post-medieval	F9	
A066	TQ 81956 25197	Pond, site of	Post-medieval	Farmstead	
A093	TQ 81996 25085	Pond, site of	Post-medieval	Gardens	
A095	TQ 82274 25155	Park Pale ?	Medieval	F9	
A098	TQ 81963 25082	Site of oast	Post-medieval	F7	
A099	TQ 81949 25180	Animal Lodge site of by Great Barn	Early Modern	Farmstead	

⁵⁰ Historic England 2008 Conservation Principles: Policies and Guidance for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment.

3.2.2. Description of different types of features found in the fields at Great Dixter

3.2.2.1. Quarries [A063]

Description

The pit or quarry A063 which lies to the north east corner of the gardens near to the entrance drive was definitely dug for sandstone. It lies on the Tunbridge Wells Formation between the 60 and 65m contour line. This quarry appears to have been an enlargement of a pond [A064] by cutting into the natural slope to the east. The quarry or pit now forms part of the gardens of Great Dixter in an area called Horse Pond Field or the 'Prairie'. The pit A063 post dates 1840 and pre-dates 1860. It may have been dug for stone for the improvements to the Great Dixter farmstead undertaken by George Springett.

Significance

This quarry is of high historical and archaeological significance for its potential relationship with the history of the buildings at Great Dixter, in particular the listed house and barns. The quarry is also of high cultural importance forming one of the key parts of the gardens, and its creation and development part of the legacy of Christopher Lloyd to garden design. It also provides a damper environment which will be of value to invertebrates and the birds that feed on them.

Condition

The quarry is in good condition. The back walls are covered by vegetation. From an archaeological perspective the site has already been disturbed by the later plantings.

Management Recommendations

It is recommended that future planting here, especially of specimens that will grow into sizable trees and with deep roots, is kept to a minimum. Attention should be placed on retaining the existing plants with changes in the bedding and ground layers only. Enlargement or exposure of the quarry sides is to be avoided in order to protect any below ground features.



Pit [A001] at north end of Four Acre Shaw



Quarry [A063] by main drive

Figure 28

3.2.2.2. Ponds & Depressions [A002, A006, A059, A060, A062, A064, A066, A093]

Description of Features

Across the fields and in the gardens at Great Dixter there are a number of the ponds and depressions. The significant lack of rainfall in the past couple of years in the South East has resulted in a number of these ponds being dry at the time of the survey [Winter 2017/18]. The historic mapping does show the location of many of these features as ponds, i.e. with water in them.

At the top of the gill in Four Acre Shaw is a small depression [A002], which lies on the north south ditch of the boundary F5B2. This ditch also drains from the pond A059 [See below]. The depression was once a pond recorded in 1821 and in 1840 it is shown as two ponds. A similar small depression lies at the corner of the Car Park Field [F1] [A006] but does not appear on any of the historic mapping.

Within the farmstead of Great Dixter were a number of ponds, as shown on the Tithe Map of c.1840. Ponds were an important source of water for livestock, and for the domestic fowl (geese, ducks and hens) kept as a source of meat and eggs. Of those that have since disappeared A060 in the south east corner of the garden now remains as a depression from which a ditch is directed into the Boundary F6 B1. This pond is shown on the 1725 map, together with the Long or Lower Moat pond [A059] to the west [See below]. Another pond [A093] has now been incorporated into the bedding layout of the garden. In 1725 it lay at on the boundary between an orchard to the north F8 and the garden to the south.

Another pond also filled in was located at the corner the two barns [A066], on the edge of the farm track. Given its location this was definitely a farmyard pond for fowl, stock and also a place where perhaps wagons were driven through in order to swell the wood of the wheels, in order to keep the metal banding tight. This was especially important in the summer months. This pond was filled in between 1840 and 1860.



Figure 29

Another farmyard pond is A064, which still holds water today called Horse Pond. This pond lies to the west of the quarry A063 and on the edge of the entrance to Great Dixter Gardens. It pre-dates 1821 but post-dates 1725. The Great Dixter CMP states that it was dug for iron but more likely the pond began as a spring which was enlarged to a pond for the stock from earliest times, as it is located on the edge of the Tunbridge Wells Sandstone formation. The pond was used by livestock and also for waterfowl as the image in Figure 30 shows. The worn edge to the pond is evidence of ducks and geese.



Figure 30: Horse Pond circa 1900 showing the fencing and the watering area by the track



Lower Moat [A059] looking west



Upper Pond [A062] looking west

Figure 31

Two elongated ponds lie to the south west of the house [A059 Long or Lower Moat Pond , A062 Upper Moat Pond]. These are clearly shown on the 1821 Estate map for George Springett. Their shape and position initially suggests that they were part of a medieval moat system, but the two ponds are dug at different levels on the slope, and therefore could never have functioned as a moat. However this does not preclude that they may have been ponds for the medieval hall house at Dixter. Ponds were needed as a source of fish and these may

have been 'stew' ponds where fish caught in the river were kept for religious feast days. The Lower Moat pond retains water and has been landscaped as part of orchard gardens. Part of the Upper Pond was filled in by Nathaniel Lloyd in the early 20th century.

A further pond [A093] lay in the gardens close to the site of the oast which was demolished when a new two roundel oast was built attached to the Great Barn. This pond is shown on the 1725 map of Purfield Borough of the Manor of Robertsbridge. A pond in this location would have provided a water supply in case of fire at the oast.

On the northern side of the farmstead by the Estate buildings is another water filled pond, called 'Farm Pond', [A065]. It appears to have been dug before 1821 possibly when the animal barn was built. Both are omitted from the Tithe (1840) map. They do however appear on the historic Ordnance Survey mapping. This pond may have been dug for clay for the bricks and tiles to build the animal barn, and then filled to supply water for the livestock.

Significance

Each pond or pit has a 'story' to tell, just by its location, shape and its past management. Those of high local archaeological significance are the two long ponds [A059 and A062] located to the south west of the house in the garden. Their relationship with below ground features needs to be understood.

Pond A065 by the estate buildings is directly related to the animal shelters and yards, by first perhaps providing material to build them and then as a supply of water for the livestock. As a pond it may have been initially dug for marl and then the buildings sited close to it as a water source.

The other ponds around the farmyard and buildings are or were an integral part of how the farmstead functioned as a centre for the breeding and rearing of livestock, showing the importance of having water close by.

Ponds are also an important source of palaeo-archaeological remains as they gradually silt up. In addition some may have domestic or other artefacts sealed in the silts where people have sought to get rid of rubbish.

All the ponds contribute to the local landscape such features are common to the area and form part of the local character, thus they have high landscape significance. Despite the dry conditions, the ponds have a high ecological significance as wet land habitats, especially those that still retain water.

Condition

At the time of the survey, only A059, A064, and A065 retained water. The others were dry the result of a lower than average rainfall in the South East for the past couple of years. A couple had been filled in, in order to facilitate management of the farmyard as a visitor reception area.

Management Recommendations

As with all archaeological features, these ponds or sites of ponds should receive minimal disturbance. Those that have dried out should not be filled in nor should they be dug out, unless accompanied by an archaeological watching brief. Those that hold water ideally should not be drained or de-silted. If it is absolutely necessary then an archaeological watching brief should be put in place to record cores of the silts and then any artefacts recovered from the silts.

3.2.2.3. Ridge & Furrow [A003, A007, A018, A061]

Description of Features

There are potentially three areas of ridge and furrow surviving in the fields at Great Dixter. Two areas show up on the Environment Agency LiDAR mapping; in New Meadow Field F6 [A003] and in Orchard Field F7 [A061], both were former orchards, for at least 100 years. The ridge and furrow is straight, and narrow approximately 2.0m from ridge to ridge. All is contained within fields and the earthworks are not cut by the adjacent field boundaries. Both fields F6 and F7 are recorded in 1821 as orchards and remained so until post 1930s. The ridge and furrow has been created as part of the long term management of the orchard trees. The trees are site on the ridges with furrows on either side. The ditches may have been created by cultivation the rows between the trees to keep weeds down leaving the area of the tree roots undisturbed which in turn formed mounds. Alternatively the trees were originally planted on ridges in order to facilitate drainage and encourage root growth. The ridge and furrow was created through the action of keeping the lines the fruit trees clear of weeds through cultivation (the furrows). The tree roots themselves would have assisted in creating the ridge.

There is possibly some evidence of ridge and furrow in Southern Meadow F3 [A007]. No archive evidence points to this being an orchard but it may once have been used growing hops the cultivation of which also leaves ridges and furrows. However Southern meadow has probably been ploughed at some point. In Plant Fair Meadow F5 there is evidence of ditches with ridges [A018] which run at right angles to each other [See 3.2.2.4. below].

Figure 32



Significance

These earthworks are of local significance and are survivors from when these fields were managed as orchards for nearly 100 years if not longer. As heritage features they add to the character of the fields and are a record of past management.

Condition

The ridge and furrow is under pasture and in good condition. Where it survives in the fields F6 and F7 it is likely that the pasture was allowed to develop with little cultivation which has resulted in the good state of preservation.

Management Recommendations

The Orchard Field F7 now forms part of Great Dixter Gardens and is unlikely to be cultivated in the future. The pasture in this field is mown. New Meadow Field F6 is currently grazed by sheep and a hay crop taken from it. This is the optimum management regime for these earthworks. Should a new orchard be considered in the future this would be the place to plant it with the trees set out on the ridges.

3.2.2.4. Lynchets and banks at Great Dixter [A008, A009, A010]

Description of Features

Across the fields at Great Dixter is evidence of slight banks and lynchets. None of the features described below appear on the Environment Agency LiDAR Mapping image. A lynchet is a step like boundary found on sloping ground. In particular the Southern Meadow Field [formerly called The Five Acres F3] which has been cultivated in the past, contains two curving lynchets [A009 and A010], as well as curving banks [A008]. [See section 3.1.4.]. The two lynchets lie towards the southern end of the field. The feature A009 is about 0.3m high and about 1.75m wide. It terminates at the field boundary and does not appear to continue into the adjacent field F12 of Little Dixter (which does contain further lynchets). This feature may be geological in origin.

Two parallel lynchets (A010) orientated E-W approx 6-8m apart lie at S end of field by Calves Lodge Shaw. These earthworks may mark the historic edge of cultivation of this field leaving a plough headland. Along this line soil would have accumulated creating the step like feature. Similarly there are curving banks at the top of the field [A008] which are less than 0.25m high and about 1.5m wide.

A very slight bank marks the older boundary of Calveslodge Shaw [A011], which was apparently straightened between 1821 and 1840.

Significance

Lynchets and banks are very difficult to date without map evidence and also to interpret. They might be geological, the result of ploughing such as headlands or former field boundaries. As earthworks they contribute to the historic character of the fields and the

'story' of how the fields were managed in the past. They have a high archaeological significance also for the stratified soil accumulations preserved beneath them.

Condition

All the earthworks lie beneath pasture and are in a good condition. A hay crop is taken from these fields each summer. This is the optimum management for such earthworks.

Management Recommendations

As with all archaeological features, minimal disturbance is the optimum management recommendation for such earthworks. Maintaining a pasture sward will protect the earthworks and any below ground structures associated with them.

3.2.2.5. Ditches at Great Dixter [A018]

Description of Features

In the Plant Fair Field F5 there is evidence of a network of pairs of ditches running at right angles to each other [A018]. This is a field where the plant sales take place and small wooden and corrugated iron stalls have been built around the site. There are two parallel ditches running NW-SE at the northern edge of the field and overly two parallel ditches running NE to SW on the eastern side of the field. These latter ditches appear to run into the ditch which links with the gill in Four Acre Shaw. The ditches are approximately 1.2m wide and <0.25m deep. It appears that these might be to do with surface drainage of the field as they lie parallel to the Lower Moat Pond [A059] in the garden, and may act as catches for the overflow.

Significance

It is difficult to ascertain the significance of these earthworks as their origin and function are unclear. They do contribute to the local archaeological significance of the historic management of this particular field.

Condition

The ditches appear to be in good condition and lie under pasture. A number of the small wooden and corrugated stands have been built over the ditches. The posts of which will have resulted in some disturbance to any below ground structures associated with the ditches, such as the ditch silts, or the profile of the ditch itself.

Management Recommendations

It is recommended that no further posts are put into the ground over these features. Where the stalls need to be replaced then they are moved closer to the middle of the field, and the flow and direction of people if possible, kept away from the ditches.

3.2.3. WOODLAND AND SHAWS - WEIGHTS WOOD

Great Dixter Estate is fortunate to comprise two areas of ancient woodland, Weights Wood and Four Acre Shaw, and also to abut Calveslodge Shaw. These woods are of considerable antiquity and preserve some interesting archaeological features within them. Each wood has been looked at individually, in order to understand how each contributes to the history of the woodland management in and around Great Dixter.

Table 2 Summary of Features

Survey No	Grid Ref	Monument Name	Date	FC WMP Cpt No
A030	TQ 8253925787	Quarry	Post-med	1h
A031	TQ 82528 25782-8249725794	Ditch	Post-med	1h
A032	TQ 8249025824	Mound	Unknown	1b
A033	TQ 8247725816	Saw pit	Post-med	1b
A034	TQ 8242425905	Saw pit	Post-med	1f
A035	TQ 8241225907	Veteran marker tree	Post-med	1f
A036	TQ 8254325931-8247525839	Wood bank	Early medieval	1f
A037	TQ 8229225945	Pit	Unknown	1f
A038	TQ 8223325965	Pits	Unknown	1f
A039	TQ 8222325904	Bell pits	Roman-medieval	1f
A040	TQ 8238325880	Saw pit	Post-medieval	1f
A041	TQ 8241025793	Quarry pit	Unknown	1b
A042	TQ 8224025749	Charcoal hearth	Post-medieval	1e
A043	TQ 8238025893-8226425866	Bank to northern gill	Medieval	1f
A044	TQ 82233725596	Quarry pit	Unknown	1d
A045	TQ 8246525761	Saw pit	Post-medieval	1h
A046	TQ 8245125777-8247025721	Curving lynchet	Unknown	1h
A047	TQ 8254125739-8247125672	Wood bank	Early medieval	1h
A048	TQ 8246925661	Veteran hornbeam marker	Post-medieval	1h
A049	TQ 8244525636	Ash coppice stool	Post-medieval	1c
A050	TQ 8244125618-8242125592	Line of laid hornbeam	Late post-medieval	1c
A051	TQ 8237425534	Saw pit	Post-medieval	1c
A052	TQ 8237525523	Veteran hornbeam	Post-medieval	1c
A053	TQ 8237825509-8228825552	Wood bank	Early medieval	1c
A054	TQ 8231125518	Quarry pit	Unknown	1c
A055	TQ 8239625578-8229125566	Holloway ?	Unknown	1c
A056	TQ 8222725660	Bank ?	Unknown	1d
A057	TQ 8219425677	Track from gill	Post-medieval	1d
A058	TQ 8235225743	Saw pit	Post-medieval	1h
A067	TQ 8237825736	Quarry pit	Unknown	1h
A081	TQ 8241325604-8235825602	Holloway	Unknown	1c
A082	TQ 8240625690-8243425732	Gill head	Holocene	1h
A083	TQ 8222025864-8219725596	Trackway	Unknown	1e
A084	TQ 8219725876-8245925659	Gill (north)	Holocene	1h, b, f
A085	TQ 8240825576-8219325758	Gill (south)	Holocene	1c, a, d
A086	TQ 8256025766-8228525562	Modern trackway	Early modern	1h, b,a,d
A087	TQ 8221025588-8228425570	Modern Trackway	Early Modern	1d
A092	TQ 8228425917-8222625873	Holloway - path	Unknown	1f

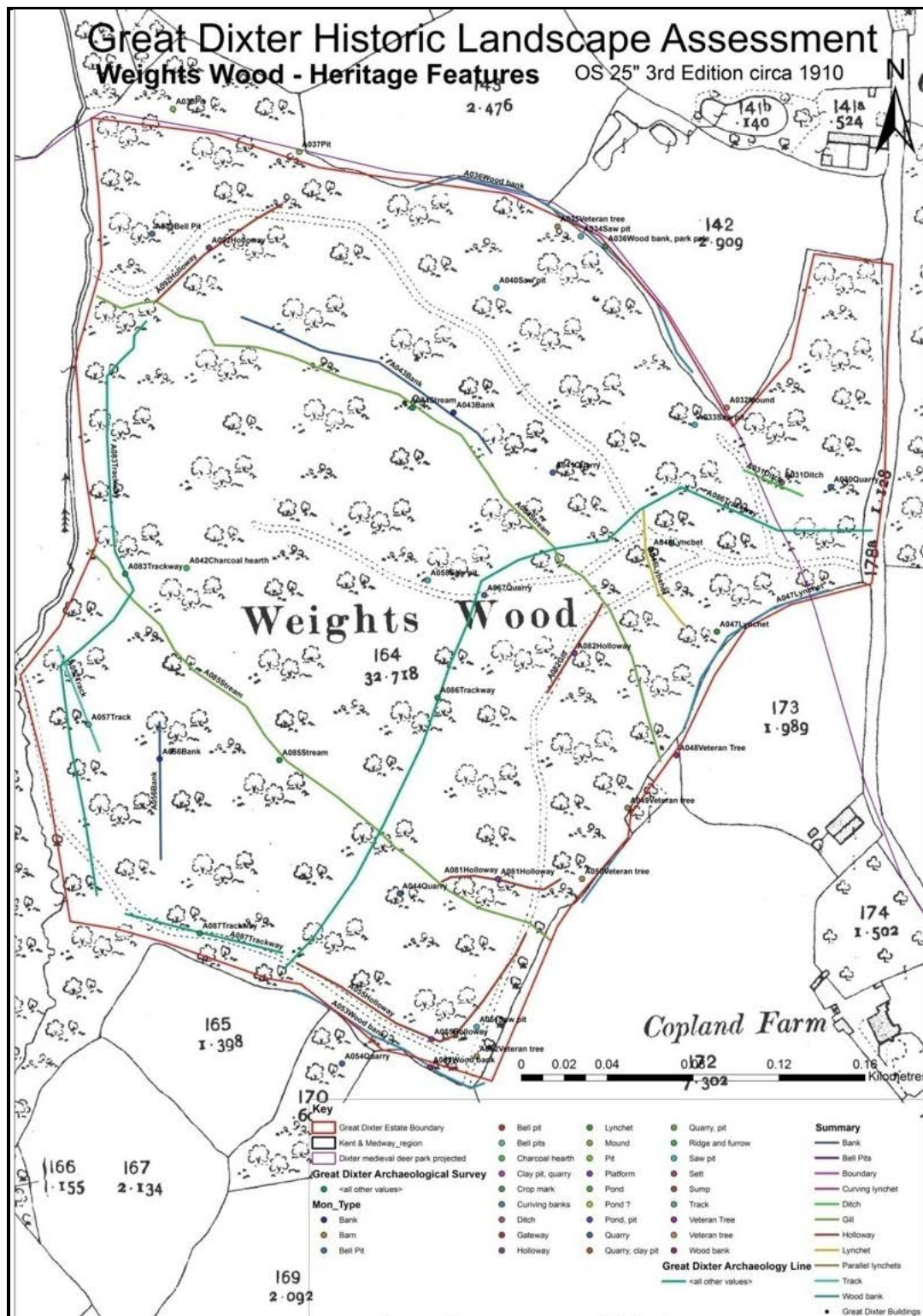


Figure 33: Heritage Features at Weights Wood

Description of Wood

By far the largest area of woodland is Weights Wood, for which there is no pre-19th century historic map which covers this area of Northiam. The wood lies to the north west of

Great Dixter and is accessed via the lane to Crockers Farm, from High Park in Northiam. It is separated from the Great Dixter Estate by the field known as Great Parks.

Weights Wood has already been walked and assessed by Dave Rossney (ESUS Forestry) as part of the Forestry Commission's Woodland Management Plan.⁵¹ A number of archaeological features were identified as part of the management plan. However further features were also identified during this archaeological assessment. This assessment also places the wood in its wider landscape context. Weights Wood is designated as an 'ancient' woodland on the revised Ancient Woodland Inventory for Rother District.⁵² However this Biodiversity Audit and Assessment of its biodiversity and species composition suggests that part of the wood may have been cultivated in the past, perhaps in the late Medieval period. The shape of the wood is roughly rectangular with relatively straight boundaries on the south and eastern sides. These boundaries have a characteristic lynchet type profile which does suggest cultivation in the past. These woodland edges face onto Copland Farm. The western side is formed by a large gill which takes the water from springs rising in the field of Great Parks to the south. The northern boundary near Crockers Farm is irregular but slightly curving. In parts the boundary earthwork has been removed.



Figure 34

There is no mention of the wood in 1625 in the survey of the Manor of Ewhurst,⁵³ nor in the Manor of Robertsbridge in 1725.⁵⁴ So it is not clear in which Manor it lay, and whether it was held directly by the lord, as many such large extents of woodland were. Weights Wood (alias Waightes) is recorded as a boundary to land being sold in 1643.⁵⁵ [See Christopher Whittick's report]. In 1797 the wood is record as Waits or Pim Wood 30 ¼ acres, together with Dixter Wood 13½ acres and Dines Hill (alias Deans Hill or Dineshill Wood) 10¾ acres

⁵¹ Forestry Commission 2017 Woodland Management Plan Weights Wood and Four Acre Shaw Great Dixter Estate. D. Rossney Eusus Woodland Ltd

⁵² Sansum, P. 2010. A revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for Rother District Council, East Sussex. Survey report and Inventory maps. Oct 2010. Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Survey. Partnership Rother District Council, High Weald AONB, Forestry Commission and Natural England.

⁵³ ESRO AMS 3500 Survey of the Manor of Ewhurst in Northiam c.1625

⁵⁴ ESRO SHE 6/1/8/5 Purfield Borough of the Manor of Robertsbridge

⁵⁵ ESRO ACC 645

all part of Great Dixter.⁵⁶ In 1821 Weights Wood was measured at 31 acres 3 rods 28 perches, and formed part of George Springett's property.⁵⁷

Types of Features

Weights Wood contains a number of different types of features ranging from those related to the management of the wood, such as charcoal hearths and saw pits to those relating to exploitation in the form of mineral extraction pits, quarries. Boundaries, tracks and veteran trees make up the cultural heritage diversity. Each type is discussed below; -

3.2.3.1. Saw pits [A034; A040; A033; A045; A058; A051]

Description of Features

At least five saw pits were identified during the survey walk over, and they had already been identified and recorded in the FC Woodland Management Plan.⁵⁸ The pits did not appear on the EA LiDAR mapping image (this may be because of the direction of the artificial light direction). These saw pits were found scattered across the woodland but lay close to old trackways leading out of the woodland. Saw pits were dug in order to process timber on site rather than underwood, in order that waste could be left in the wood, and for ease of extracting planks rather than whole boles or trunks. The saw pits may represent a period of systematic removal of mature standard trees as part of a management decision or may represent ad hoc felling at different times for specified trees.

Generally the pits are orientated across the natural slope of the ground, with a mound on the down slope side of an elliptical shaped pit. The pit may be up to 5m long and 3.5m wide but generally are about 3m long by 2m wide. The silted pit or depression may be up to 0.75m deep and containing a softer fill of material. No evidence of tree stumps appeared close to the pits suggesting that the stump/s of the timber trees had long decayed. The standard trees were felled and then rolled lengthways on to a timber frame work with lengths of cord wood as rollers set over the pit. A boy or small man (under sawyer) stood in the pit beneath the trunk holding one end of a large two handle saw, whilst the top sawyer stood on the trunk and followed a line made perhaps with a chalked string. By this method the trunk was sawn into planks, ready to be taken out of the wood. Wood managed like this possibly suggests that planked and prepared timber was needed locally for building work.

It is not possible to date saw pits by form, and only rarely do they contain datable artefacts preserved within them. Sometimes layers of saw dust and perhaps planks of wood for the under sawyer to stand on are present in the base of the pit. Interestingly there was a sawpit in a shaw close to Great Dixter Farm [A095].

⁵⁶ ESRO ACC 5639

⁵⁷ ESRO P431/24/2 Mr George Springetts Estate

⁵⁸ Rossney, D. 2017 Weights Wood and Four Acre Shaw Woodland Management Plan

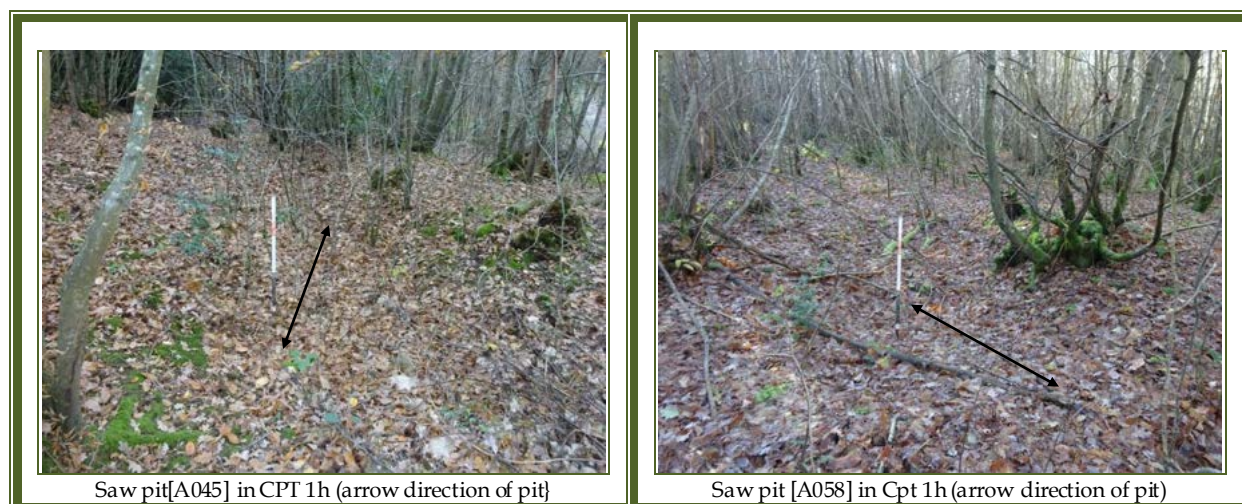


Figure 35

The parish Northiam contains the highest density of 14th and 15th century timber framed buildings in the Rape of Hastings, buildings which all would have needed prepared timber by woodsmen and carpenters. Not only domestic buildings, but also the farm buildings such as the later barns and farm buildings also need quantities of timber for construction and repair. Farm buildings always needed constant repair especially where livestock were kept. A significant amount of building did take place at Great Dixter, in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Condition

All the pits recorded in Weights Wood are in a good condition and lie undisturbed beneath the coppiced underwood. They do however lie close to trackways, but fortunately have not been damaged by modern machinery.

Significance

As a group of pits within the woodland they are of a high local archaeological significance. The pits are evidence of how Weights Wood was managed in the past and they may have a direct link with the buildings either at Great Dixter or in Northiam itself. The pits may preserve stratified deposits in the accumulated silts and backfill, together with potential artefacts relating to those who worked in the woods.

Management Recommendations

As with all archaeological features in woodland, the optimum form of management is to leave the sites undisturbed during periods of active management.⁵⁹ Any extraction routes should be sited away from the pits. If a pit is in the way of an area of active

⁵⁹ Recent guidance drawing on the results of a project on the South Downs has been published. Mills, C., Brown, G and Rocks-Macqueen, D. 2017. Guidelines for the stewardship of heritage assets in forestry management. Landward Research Ltd <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Guidelines-for-the-stewardship-of-the-heritage-assets-in-forestry-management-v2-April-2017.pdf>

See also Forestry Commission UK Forestry Standard Guideline Forest and the Historic Environment. www.forestry.gov.uk/ukfs/historicenvironment

management then layers of brash should be laid over them to avoid damage during active management and removed once the work is completed.

3.2.3.2. Charcoal Hearths [A042]

Description of Features

Only one charcoal hearth was identified during the archaeological assessment of Weights Wood. However this does not mean it is the only one in the woodland. There may be others in the gill woods to the south or in the areas of denser undergrowth. The one identified both in the Woodland Management Plan and in this assessment was located on high ground overlooking a gill. It is not visible on the EA LiDAR mapping image, probably due direction of hillshading on GLS. The hearth is approximately 10m in diameter and is levelled into the slight slope. The back slope is about 0.3m in height with a corresponding down slope, where there is an accumulation of charcoal material, mostly dust which changes the soil to a very dark brown or black with fragments of charcoal. Hearths were generally used more than once and it is likely there would have been others in the locality. Other levelled areas may also survive where the burners built huts to stay in whilst they worked in the woods. These features are very ephemeral and difficult to trace. The preferred tree species for turning into charcoal were hornbeam, oak, ash and alder. Charcoal, as a fuel, had a range of uses; in the iron industry, for domestic use and for the production of gun powder.

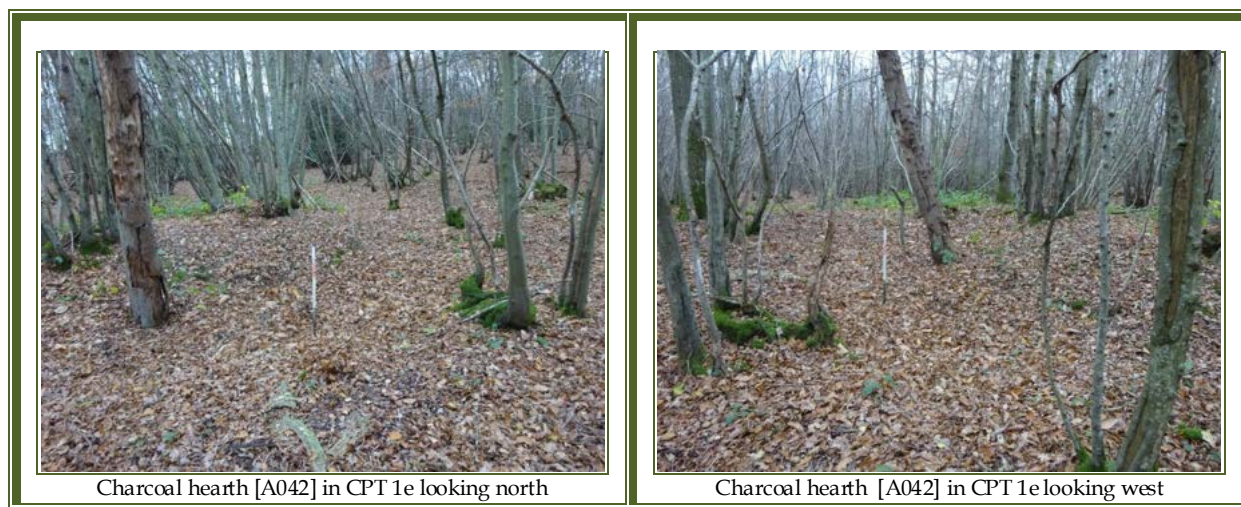


Figure 36

It would be difficult to date this hearth. The hearth maybe contemporary with the saw pits. Further archaeological research both in the nearby woods in Northiam and Ewhurst, and in the wider landscape may provide clues as to what industries were operating in this locality which needed charcoal as a fuel. Likely candidates are the two 16th century furnaces of Northiam and Ewhurst to the south and south west of Dixter lying on tributary streams of the Rother. In addition research of the archives may also provide evidence for charcoal burners in Northiam and for the industries that may have used the 'coals'.

Certainly the Vidler Land Agents - Valuation Books refer to both 'Welsh' coal and charcoal stored at Dixter Farm, which suggests it was used for the drying the hops in the oast. ⁶⁰

Condition

The charcoal hearth is in good condition. It lies in an area which has recently been coppiced and thus the platform can easily be seen. However its recent exposure does make it more vulnerable to accidental damage, if it is not flagged up to those working in the woods.

Significance

The hearth is of local archaeological significance. Although only one was located during this survey, further hearths may lie in the adjacent gill woodland. The hearth forms part of a complex of archaeological features which demonstrate how the wood was being exploited, in the post-medieval period.

Management Recommendations

As with all archaeological features in woodland, the optimum form of management is to leave the site undisturbed during periods of active management. Any extraction routes should be sited away from the hearth. It is too fragile to allow for the passage of vehicles or feet over it. Whilst the hearth lies exposed in an area of recent coppice it is vulnerable to being driven on or things stacked on it, or that machines are not inadvertently driven over it. But it can still be protected by layers of brash laid over it to avoid any accidental damage during active management and removed once the work is completed.

3.2.3.3. Lynchets A047, A046]

Description of Features

Lynchets are boundaries which have a step shape profile to their cross-section. They are found on sloping ground and are the result of down slope movement of soil. The up slope side is termed the 'positive lynchet' and is where soil accumulates against a barrier (fence or hedge). The down slope side is termed the 'negative lynchet' and is where soil is eroded through the processes of soil creep which, is generally the result of cultivation of the adjacent fields.

Weights Wood has two examples of lynchets; firstly parts of the boundary to the wood and secondly discontinuous ones located within the wood itself.

The south eastern boundary comprises a prominent lynchet with the positive slope on the field side and the negative slope on the wood side. This lynchet is topped with examples of outgrown laid veteran hornbeam trees. The lynchet varies from 0.5m to over 1.25m in height, the height increasing further towards the southern end of the boundary. It can be seen on the EA LiDAR mapping image.

⁶⁰ ESRO VID/2/2/117 p126



Figure 37

A shallow lynchet within the wood is A046 which runs for a short length from the eastern boundary northwards in to the wood. It is cut by the main access track. The lynchet also predates the Sweet chestnut coppice which tops it. It is not shown on the LiDAR image.

Dating these features is difficult. The boundary lynchet is likely to be contemporary with the clearance and enclosure of the adjacent fields around Copland Farm, possibly in the late Medieval period. The internal ones could be older reflecting evidence of how the wood was formerly divided up, either for ownership or for management or both.

Condition

The lynchet [A046] inside the wood is in good condition. It is undisturbed and has Sweet Chestnut coppice on top of it. The boundary lynchet [A047] is overall in good condition. However along parts of its length especially at the southern end the neighbouring property has piled garden rubbish up against the boundary. From the depth of the accumulation this has been going on for many years. The stock fence has been erected on the wood side on top of the lynchet bank and with the weight of the rubbish it is now being pushed over. The rubbish as well as being unsightly, will more importantly introduce disease and garden species into the wood. This could in turn compromise the biodiversity audit for Weights Wood.

Significance

The lynchet [A047] is of high local historical significance as it is the edge of the wood and is a boundary which indicates cultivation rather than a boundary which encloses woodland. It might be that this was once a field boundary and that parts of Weights Wood were once cultivated many centuries ago. The species diversity and shape of the wood suggest this possibility. The presence of several large laid veteran hornbeams are of an indication of how the boundary was once managed and these individuals compare with the similar hornbeams in the field boundary F1 B1 and F3 B1.⁶¹ A comparison of this boundary

⁶¹ See Philip Sansum 2018 Report on the Historical Ecology

to Weights Wood with that to the north side of the wood near Crockers Farm, shows the difference between the two types of boundary [A053 Wood bank (See 3.2.3.4. below)].

Lynchets have a high archaeological significance for the potential for buried stratified deposits, laid down as soil accumulates against the boundary edge. Even more rarely some human artefacts such as pot sherds, flints can also become sealed in the soil layers. These when revealed during excavations, can provide valuable dating evidence.

Management Recommendations

The internal lynchets should be managed in accordance with 'Best Practice' for the management of archaeology in woodlands. The lynchet forming the southern and eastern boundary needs some positive management to prevent further damage. Firstly, liaison with the owners of the neighbouring properties to highlight the importance of not putting their garden rubbish against or over the property boundary. Secondly, to remove, (after an assessment of the ecological significance of the rubbish), the accumulated garden material, and to make good the stock fence. In some areas this rubbish has been left against some of the veteran hornbeam and will in time introduce disease and possibly kill them. [See Section 3.2.3.8. below for Veteran Trees].

3.2.3.4. Banks [A043, A056] & Wood banks [A036, A053, A050]

Description of Features

Surprisingly for such a large area of ancient woodland there is not more evidence for well preserved wood banks. The south and eastern boundary has already been described above in the section on lynchets. The northern boundary does have a wood bank for part of its length [A036]. The earthwork is visible on the EA LiDAR image. The bank shows the key characteristics for a woodbank. The ditch (1.0m by 0.25m) is on the non-woodland side of the bank which in turn has an asymmetrical profile (2.5m to 3.5m wide and 0.4m to 0.6m high). There are some veteran laid hornbeam stubs still surviving on the bank. The earthwork is not continuous along this wood edge. Where it reaches more level ground it disappears into a ditch which then joins with the stream/ditch forming the western boundary of the wood. It is possible that this bank may also be part of a medieval park pale for Great Dixter. The curving character of the alignment together with its relationship with adjacent boundaries is put forward as a hypothesis for the location of a deer park at Great Dixter. Further field survey and archive research is needed. See Section 5.

Wood banks are generally medieval or early medieval and date from when the wood was first enclosed in order to protect the coppice and trees from grazing animals. The curved and sinuous character of this boundary all points to it being one of the older boundaries to Weights Wood.

Running through Weights Wood on the west side parallel with the gill is a low wide bank [A056]. Orientated north-south the boundary follows the edge of the gill. This suggests the gill woodland was perhaps once enclosed, bounded from the main area of woodland to the east. The bank is approximately 0.6m high and 3.0m wide. There is no evidence for a ditch,

which suggests it has become silted up. This bank is not visible on the EA LiDAR image. Another much longer bank [A043] runs south east to north west along the northern side of another small gill, (the northern most one in the wood). It is 4.0m wide and < 0.25m high and topped with mature trees. This also appears to be a boundary to the gill but terminates close to a trackway at the north west end. This bank is visible on the LiDAR image.

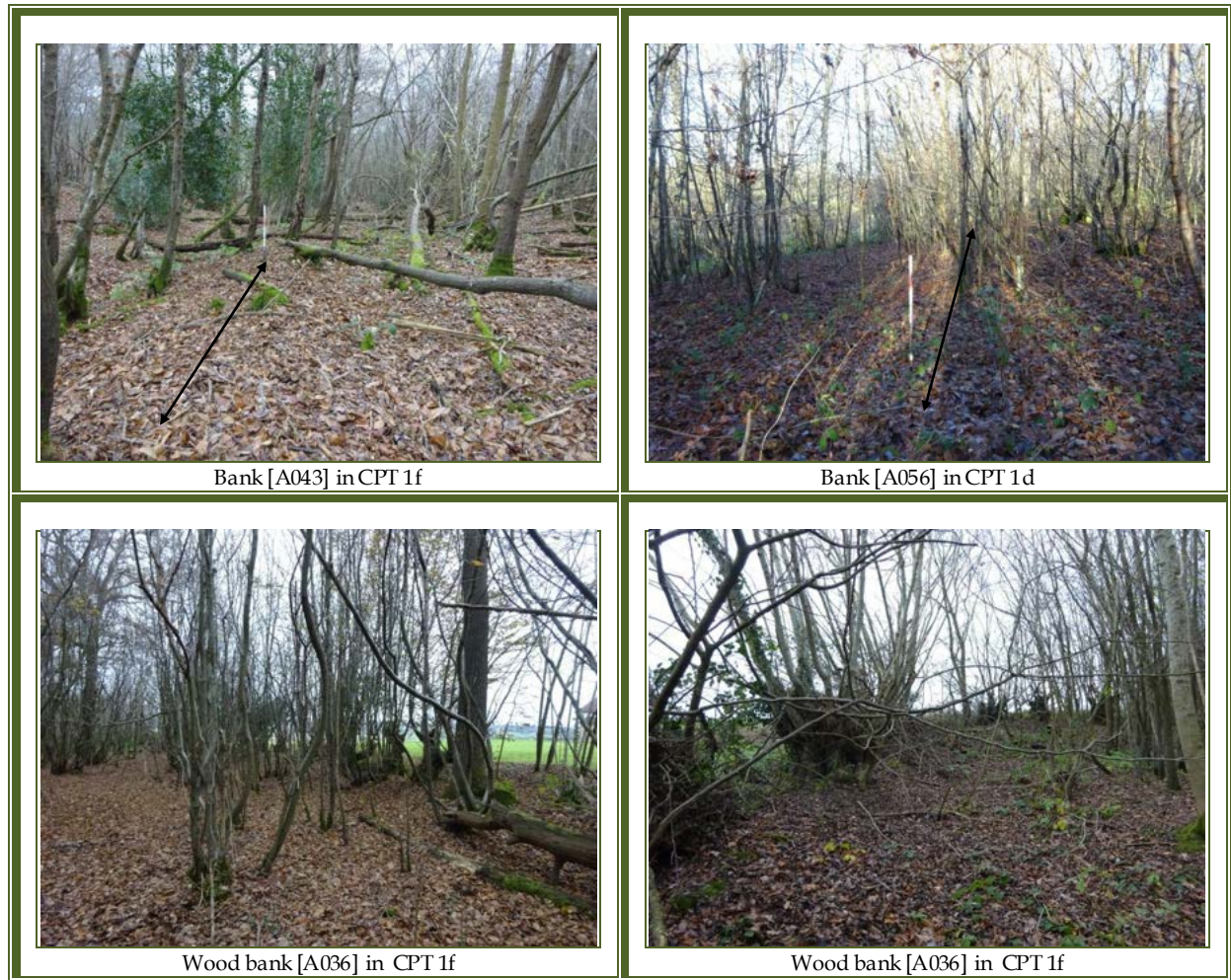


Figure 38

Condition

Overall wood bank [A036] is in good condition. The veteran hornbeams are over tall and if left could be liable to wind throw, the resulting root plate then damaging the historic profile of the bank. [See Section 3.2.3.8. below on Veteran trees]. The bank [A056] within the wood is also undisturbed with coppice on top of it.

Significance

The wood bank forms one of the best examples of a wood bank around Weights Wood. It defines the historic boundary of the wood, possibly from its enclosure in the Early medieval period. The curving nature of the bank appears to encompass an area of bell pits [A039 see below] which can be found in this part of the wood. It may also have functioned as a park pale. The wood bank also provides a date for the enclosure of the fields adjacent to

Crockers Farm. The bank itself may preserve evidence for the former woodland ground surface and even potentially evidence for human activity, sealed beneath the earthwork. Thus it is of high local archaeological and historic significance.

The internal bank [A056] is very subtle as a feature and can be easily missed when walking through the wood. This earthwork may be a remnant of how the wood was managed and divided up, with a boundary to the gill woodland separating it from the main areas of coppice. These ephemeral earthworks are important as part of the heritage diversity of woodland even if they cannot be dated or interpreted. Thus it is of medium local archaeological and historical significance.

Management Recommendations

As with all the archaeological features in Weights Wood the best management is to leave the boundaries undisturbed. Avoid taking any machinery over or adjacent to the banks. The boundary one is easy to see and maintain. The one along the gill is more subtle and those working in the wood would need to have it shown or identified, prior to active management. If extraction routes need to be taken over this feature (though it should be avoided) then cover with brash and extract when the ground conditions are dry or frosty. The brash should be removed once the work is completed. See Section 3.2.3.8. below for management of the Veteran trees.

3.2.3.5. Bell pits [A039]

Description of Features

Much of the underlying geology of this area is the Wadhurst Clay Formation of the Hastings Beds. Within the clay and mudstone layers are layers of ironstone. These beds have become exposed in the gills where the streams have eroded down to the Ashdown Sandstone Formations. Ironstone has been dug and mined since the Late Iron Age as a source of iron ore or 'mine'. The stone was broken up and heated in bloomeries to extract the molten iron.



Figure 39

This was then reheated and worked into weapons and tools. It was the iron which attracted the Romans to this part of Southern England, where the native communities had established a network of iron exportation routes from the High Weald to either the coast or to settlements in north Kent. The ironstone was dug from the exposed layers in the gills, with the layers of bedrock then traced back into the natural slope. In addition shafts were dug into the ground, and then opened out as the layer of ironstone was extracted. These holes are termed 'bell pits' due to their shape. The spoil from one pit was used to back fill a previous pit, thus creating a pock-marked uneven ground surface.⁶²

In the north west of Weights Wood, in an area dominated by Hornbeam coppice is an area of uneven ground with roughly circular depressions up to 0.75m deep and up to 10m in diameter. These depressions have the characteristics of mine or bell pits. The area extends from the northern most point of Weights Wood south along the western boundary gill till the estate boundary is reached. It is probably that further evidence for iron ore extraction may occur in the adjacent shaws which extend up stream to the gill source. The pits appear as 'lumpy' ground on the EA LiDAR image with no discernible pattern and occur between the 15m and 25m contour level. These pits were also identified by Dave Rossney for the FC Woodland Management Plan.

A new recently discovered site of a Roman bloomery has been recorded in Northiam by HAARG and is currently under further investigation.⁶³ The presence of mine fields in the woods here supports the evidence for an important iron industry well established in the Roman period. Bell pits can also date from the medieval and later periods as well. For further discussion on the possible dates of these pit (See section 3.2.3.5. below).

Condition

The pits are in a good condition, and can easily be seen in the areas of hornbeam coppice, where there is little ground flora coverage. They are more difficult to see in the areas of Sweet Chestnut.

Significance

These bell pits together with the ones in Four Acre Shaw have a high archaeological and historical significance given the recent identification of a new local Classis Britannica Roman iron production site in Northiam. They could also be 16th century in date as the two furnaces of Northiam and Ewhurst lie to the south of Four Acre Shaw. A more detailed field walk over to try and locate any dating evidence to link them with this site or even just to date them, is recommended.

Management Recommendations

As features these need to be left undisturbed, by following 'Best Practice' guidance for archaeology in woodland. Avoid siting extraction tracks through the area of the pits and keep to existing tracks. Avoid dragging or stacking wood on the site. Avoid planting any

⁶² Cleere and Crossley 1995. The Iron Industry of the Weald. Chapter 1 & page 263.

⁶³ Lynn and Kevin Cornwell pers.com. HAARG

new trees on the site. Consider undertaking a more detailed and systematic field investigation of the mine pit fields.

3.2.3.6. Quarry pits [A041, A067, A044, A030, A054]

Description of Features

Within Weights Wood are four much larger extraction pits or small quarries. These occur on the eastern side of the wood between the 35m and 45m contour lines. All appear on the EA LiDAR image. Each pit or quarry is located close to an old trackway through the wood, and also close to the head of a natural stream or gill. The extraction routes from the quarries are either to the north west, west or south west. This suggests that the mineral was exposed close to the surface by the small gill stream and then the bedding layer followed into the natural slope with the spoil being removed and piled around the edge of the quarry pit. These pits are much larger and deeper than the bell pits described above.

It is not clear what mineral was being sought. It may have been clay for brick, tile, and pottery manufacture. A medieval kiln has been identified at Crockers Farm to the north of Weights Wood. Alternatively sandstone may have been sought as a building material for the foundations of the timber frame farmhouses and barns in Northiam. It is not unusual for both minerals to have been mined from the same pits. Further examination of the pits by a geologist is needed to answer some of these questions. None of these pits appear on the historic mapping.

Condition

All these pits are in an undisturbed and good condition. Most have wet or boggy floors, with relatively steep back walls, providing damp micro-habitats, not found elsewhere in the woodland. Most have recently been cleared as part of the coppice rotation, making them more accessible.

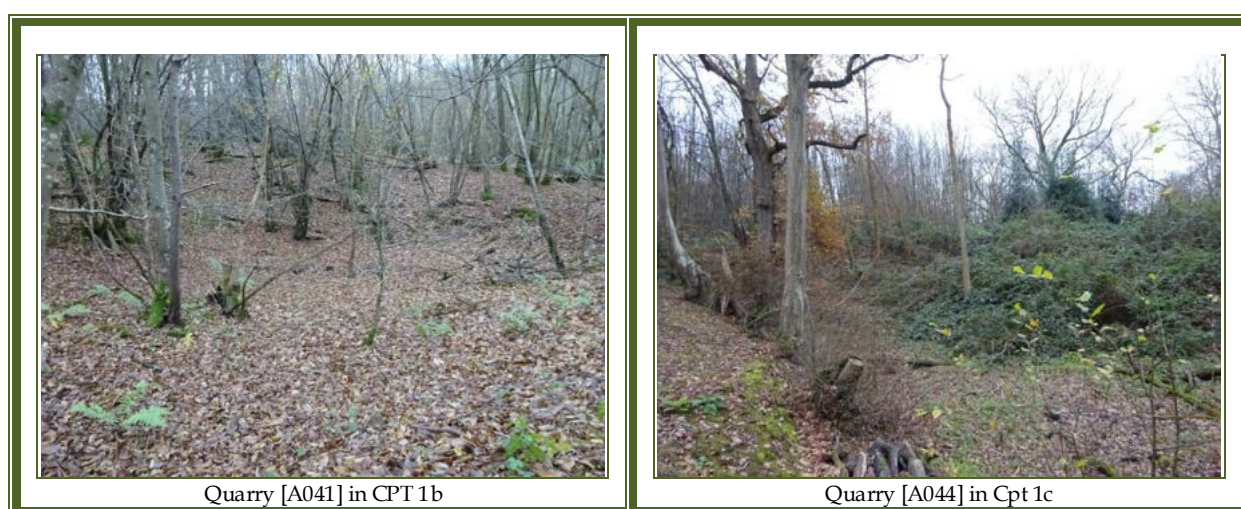


Figure 40

Significance

These quarry pits have a high local archaeological significance, providing evidence of mineral extraction in the locality; they may be linked with the kilns at Crockers Farm. Such

pits are also of important biodiversity value due the presence of sheltered damper micro-climates providing habitats for invertebrates and bryophytes.

Management Recommendations

Where possible these sites should be left undisturbed. In order to retain the damp conditions, management of the trees and coppice around and in them should be undertaken with care perhaps only leaving half the pit covered by vegetation and then cutting this once the other part has reached maturity. This will prevent drying out of the whole pit and enable species to migrate to adjacent habitats. The floor of the pits needs to be kept undisturbed, by following 'Best Practice' guidance for the management of archaeology in woodlands.

3.2.3.7. Tracks & Holloways

Description of Features

As one would expect in a wood of this size, there are several tracks running through Weights Wood. A number have now become abandoned whilst others are still in active use. There is one main track through the wood from the entrance gate on Crockers Lane west and then east to terminate at the southern boundary [A086]. In places it has become sunken by about 0.25m below the ground surface. This is a route which is shown on the OS Epoch maps for the eastern end only. From the quarry [A067] west the route post-dates OS Epoch 4. It is the main drag from which timber and underwood is extracted today. On the south western side is a small gateway into the small enclosures of what was Coplands Farm. A small track runs parallel with the boundary here [A087] but is lost in the undergrowth. Another modern track is that which follows the western boundary of the wood [A083], which also has a slightly sunken character.

The few holloways [A055, A081, A082] are the remains of parts of older access tracks. These are found mostly in the eastern side of the wood. The routes are shown on the OS Epoch maps, and the holloways occur where the ground is sloping at an angle to the direction of the track. There are two winding paths which extend from the entrance into the wood, at the northern end. These survive as just foot paths traceable by their slightly sunken character.



Holloway [A055] in CPT 1c



Holloway [A055] in CPT 1c

Figure 41

Condition

It is at the entrance to the wood that the older routes have been modified by the creation of modern access ways. Elsewhere modern tracks follow new alignments with the older tracks, generally abandoned. Most of the routeways were generally passable. Some had become overgrown. In parts the main track had areas where it crossed the gills which were more water-logged.

Significance

The succession of paths and tracks does reveal how the wood has been exploited, with the only access out on to Crockers Lane. A possible alternative access may have been positioned on the southern boundary, where a sealed gate now survives. The routes are of local significance relating to the history and management of Weights Wood. None appear to extend or link with the wider landscape except for the entrance off Crockers Lane.

Management Recommendations

The main access route which is currently in use should be retained as the one along which extraction of wood and timber in the future should take place. It may need some management especially where it crosses the gills and the track is water-logged. Most importantly extraction should take place during dry or cold frosty conditions, when the ground surface is much harder. Further extraction in the western part of the wood should where possible follow existing tracks.

3.2.3.8. Veteran Trees [A035, 049, 050]

Description of Features

A comprehensive veteran tree survey was not undertaken as part of this historic landscape survey. However the tree points recorded represent significant hornbeam and ash coppice, two of which show evidence of having been laid as part of a hedge. They all lie on the wood edge. A systematic walk of all the boundaries of the wood is likely to reveal many more such specimens.

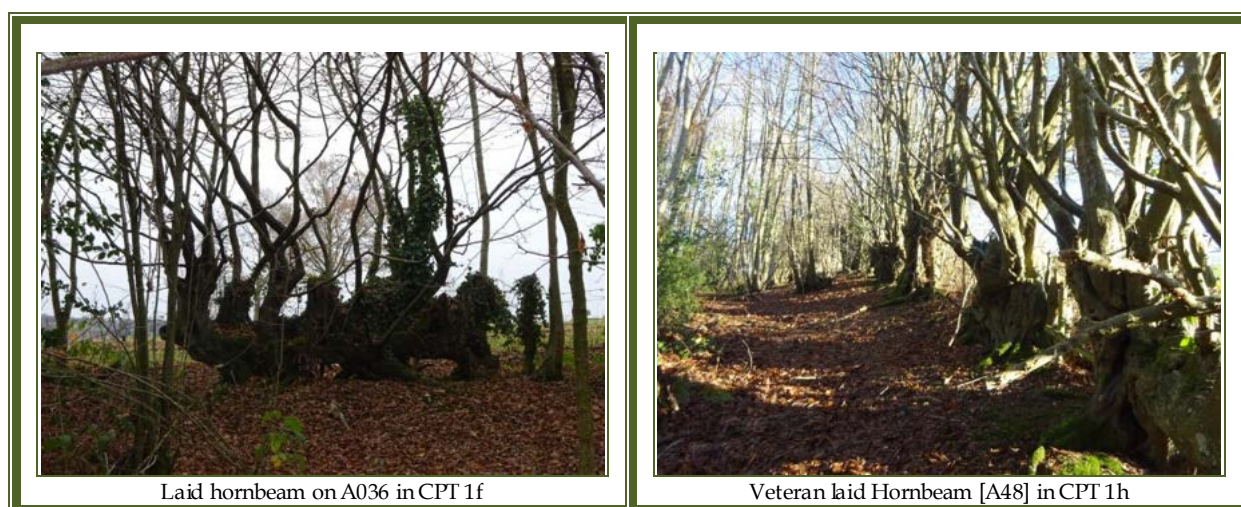


Figure 42

These veterans on the boundaries may have been cut as marker trees. A marker tree is one that was cut in such a way as to identify it from other trees in order to mark a corner, the edge of an area of coppice or perhaps where a footpath might enter a wood. Usually, such individuals were cut at regular intervals at about 1.0m high (stub) to distinguish it from the adjacent coppice.

Condition

All the specimens identified were mature trees or older, with significant amounts of dead wood in the bole. They had not been cut for many decades.

Significance

These trees are significant for the evidence they provide as to how trees were managed along the boundary of the wood. They are also highly significant for their biodiversity value, as habitats for a wide range of species. The veteran hornbeams are large and stocky in contrast with the hornbeam coppice, which is thin and spindly.

Management Recommendations

The management of veteran trees should follow the 'best practice' guidance set out by the Ancient Tree Forum and Woodland Trust.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Lonsdale, D. 2013. *Ancient and other veteran trees: further guidance on management*. Woodland Trust & Ancient Tree Forum.

3.2.4. WOODS AND SHAWS - FOUR ACRE SHAW

Description of wood

Four Acre Shaw is a narrow strip of woodland on the east side of the property. The wood is narrower at the northern end but wider towards the southern and it straddles a deep gill flowing north east to south west. This gill in part forms the property boundary for the estate with the neighbouring property of Highams. The greater part of the woodland lies to the west of the gill and incorporates areas of bell pits or undulating ground, unsuitable for cultivation. The south eastern side is bounded by the gill itself. Between c.1625 and 1821 an area of woodland was extended west to meet with Calves Lodge Shaw. The western boundaries are marked by fine examples of medieval wood banks, however on the eastern side the boundaries comprise ditches or just fence lines which suggest that parts of the wood on the Higham side have been grubbed out. At the northern end there is a short piece of wood extending west in which is a small quarry [A001].

Table 3. Summary of Features

Survey No	Grid Ref	Description	Date	FC WMP Cpt No
A001	TQ 8184425985	Quarry	Pre-1821 post c.1625	2a
A019	TQ 8177424803-8179424829	Area of Bell Pits	Roman to Medieval	2a
A020	TQ 8176324784	Circular platform	Unknown	2b
A021	TQ 8177524762-8175424774	Ditch		2b
A022	TQ 8171824693	Sett	Modern	2b
A023	TQ 8169624607-8167724587	Wood bank	Medieval	2c
A024	TQ 8164824561-8160924598	Lynchet		2c
A025	TQ 8167224710-8165424573	Bank		2c
A026	TQ 8166324713	Gateway		2b
A027	TQ 8166324713-8167124780	Wood bank	Medieval	2b
A028	TQ 8171724776	Bell pits	Roman to Medieval	2b
A029	TQ 8168824765-8175224768	Lynchet	Pre C17	2b
A096	TQ 8174824199-8184724960	Wood bank	Medieval	2b, c
A097	TQ 8165624650-8170824629	Bank	Unknown	2b, c



Ashstool in Four Acre Shaw



Path through Four Acre Shaw

Figure 43

3.2.4.1. Lynchet [A029]

Description of Features

There is a large slightly curving lynchet surviving in Four Acre Shaw. It extends east from the corner towards the gill. The feature is about 3.0m wide and 0.3m high. All the area of bell pits here [A028] lie to the north of it above 30m contour line. This earthwork corresponds to a woodland boundary shown on the uncompleted map of the tenements of Ewhurst.⁶⁵ The map shows the area to the north west of the boundary as being part of Four Acre Field and thus in cultivation. However it conflicts with the evidence of bell pits lying to the north in what appears to have been a cultivated field. At the western end the lynchet disappears into the natural slope of the gill side.



Figure 45

Condition

The earthwork is in a good condition and is undisturbed. It has been cut by the footpath [A088].

Significance

This bank is of high local historical significance due in part to its archive evidence but also due to its relationship with the bell pits. Lynchets also have a significant archaeological importance as the stratified deposits which they are composed of can seal datable artefacts and palaeo-environmental evidence sealed within the layers of accumulated soil.

Management Recommendations

As with all heritage features in woodland the optimum management is to leave the feature undisturbed, especially during periods of active management.

⁶⁵ ESRO AMS 3500 Manor of Ewhurst Survey of tenements uncompleted map c.1625

3.2.4.2. Banks in Four Acre Shaw

Description of Features

There are a couple of slight banks in Four Acre Shaw. They lie in the southern part of the wood. One [A025] lies parallel to the western boundary in a north-south orientation. At the southern end it turns east and becomes more of a lynchet as it crosses the natural lie of the land, before disappearing into the natural slope of the gill. The bank is about 3.5m wide by less than 0.25m high, and where it becomes a lynchet, is 2.5m wide by approximately less than 0.3m high. A further slight bank lies at right angles to this across the wood [A097]. This feature is about 3.5m wide and between 0.3 and 0.4m high. In both cases there is no apparent evidence for a ditch. It appears on the LiDAR image.

These earthwork boundaries are of interest, suggesting earlier wood edges or coppice boundaries. The edges of woodlands were not always fixed by a wood bank topped with a hedge. Evidently woodland was allowed to regenerate into fields when the price of corn was depressed or more underwood or timber was required.⁶⁶ It may be that these were the medieval edges to the shaw or wood which subsequently was allowed to encroach into the field and then the wood edge was ‘fixed’ in the post-medieval period by a wood bank.



Figure 46

Condition

The earthworks are in good condition and lie in an area of coppice and scrub.

Significance

These subtle earthworks are of high local archaeological significance and may be evidence of the ebb and flow of woodland management in the past. Any associated ditches may have become silted up.

Management Recommendations

These earthworks need to be flagged up to all those who work in the wood. They are very subtle and slight. Follow best practice by keeping the banks undisturbed and to be

⁶⁶ Brandon, P. 2003. The Kent and Sussex Weald, Phillimore, Chichester, p67-68

aware that there may be below ground deposits adjacent to the banks in the form of silted ditches. Avoid siting extraction routes over or adjacent to the earthworks. Protect the earthwork with brash if an extraction route needs to traverse them.

3.2.4.3. Wood banks in Four Acre Shaw [A023, A027, A096]

Description of Features

Four Acre Shaw preserves some good example of wood banks around its perimeter edges. They retain the asymmetrical profile to the banks which also have some fine examples of veteran laid and coppiced hornbeam on top. The banks are generally about 2.5-3.5m wide and can reach 0.5m in height. The ditches are silted, except for A023, where the gill stream has eroded the ditch to form a slight gully. The banks probably date from when the wood was first enclosed.



Figure 47

Significance

The wood banks have a high local historical and archaeological significance. The banks may preserve buried stratified soil horizons beneath them. They also are a characteristic feature of ancient woodland.

Condition

The earthworks are in a good condition. A023 is being eroded by the waters of the gill stream, but this is a natural process and reflects the changing nature of this boundary. Much of the veteran hornbeam is mature or over stood.

Management Recommendations

The veteran hornbeam should be managed according to 'best practice' for old trees to prevent wind throw and damage to the earthworks. Minimal disturbance to the earthworks themselves is advised and use existing access gates into wood for extraction.

3.2.4.5. Bell pits in Four Acre Shaw [A019, A028]

Description of Features

There is some debate as to the extent of the bell pits in Four Acre Shaw. The Woodland Management Plan shows pits occurring throughout the main area of the shaw. Certainly the ground surface through the wood is very undulating. There is an active badger sett in the wood and another area of possible burrows in the south west corner. The LiDAR image does show other areas of 'pock marks' which may be bell pits.

In this assessment two areas of bell pits or old iron mines were identified which lie between 30 and 35m contour line, in the northern part of the Shaw. A line of 5 bell pits [A019] orientated NNE - SSW lie on west side of the gill through Four Acre Shaw. The pits are 4-5m diameter by 1.5-2.0m deep surrounded by spoil with other smaller pits adjacent to them. The line which follows the general slope suggests that a bed of iron stone was being followed.

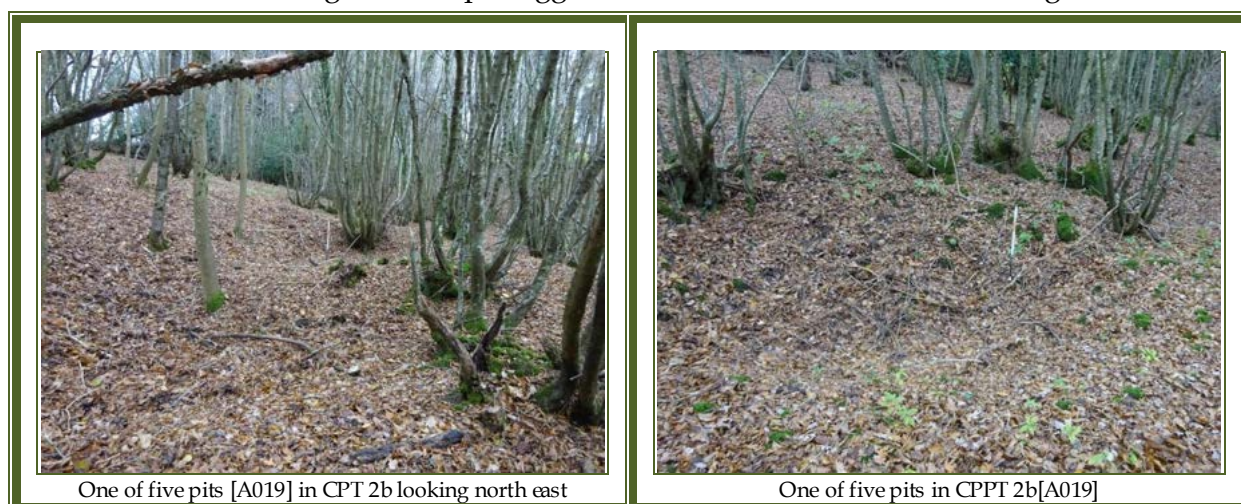


Figure 48

A second linear group of bell pits lies in the north west corner of Four Acre Shaw, close to the present gated entrance. The western end ones have been disturbed by the later digging of ditches, to drain the field and wood. The pits vary in size but are between 1.0 and 2.0m deep and approx 8.0-10.0m in diameter. These pits lie to the north of well defined lynchet [A029, see above], which suggests that they were once enclosed from the main area of woodland. This latter group of pits appear on the LiDAR image but not the former where the mature tree cover is denser. A further area of possible bell pits lies outside the Estate on the eastern side of then gill in the area of Higham.

The nearest furnaces to Dixter, are Northiam which Cleere and Crossley place at TQ 817245 just south west of the end of Four Acre Shaw and Ewhurst TQ 810248.⁶⁷ In the 1580s to 1590s Dixter was purchased by Thomas Glidd of Court Lodge Ewhurst. He was a tenant ironmaster as well as a farmer. In 1590 in his will he stated that 2000 cords of wood be cut on his manor of Dixter, 'or so much there be without spoil of timber'.⁶⁸ Thomas tenanted the furnace at Panningridge in Dallington, from 1584-6. But also had interests in the forges of

⁶⁷ Cleere and Crossley 1991 The Iron Industry of the Weald. Merton Priory Press p p 330 ,347

⁶⁸ Cleere and Crossley 1991 The Iron Industry of the Weald. p 134

Etchingham 1568-1588, Kitchenham 1578 and in the furnaces of Darvell 1568-1588 and Batsford which he built in 1571.⁶⁹ These ironworking sites lie approximately 10km to the west of Northiam, and may be too far to cart iron stone mined from Dixter. However it is recorded during the Thomas Glydd's tenancy of Panningridge furnace that 7 tons of iron could be cast from 30 loads of ore in six days and another 6 tons from 24 loads.⁷⁰ So when a furnace was in production it required large amounts of iron stone and perhaps it was cost effective to haul the raw material distances. He also had an interest in the furnace at Ewhurst.

The archive evidence suggests that the bell pits date from the 16th century and provided the iron stone for these two furnaces, as well as other mine areas such as in Weights Wood. However there is a possibility that these pits could be older.

Significance

These bell pits together with those in Weights Wood are of high local archaeological significance and are evidence of historic iron working in the area of Northiam. The pits are difficult to date but there is a strong probability they maybe Tudor but there is a possibility that some may date from the Roman period. It would be interesting to plot evidence of other potential iron mining sites in other woods, in order to see the distribution in relation to known iron working sites. The pits contribute to the historic character of Four Acre Shaw, and are evidence of how this area of woodland was managed in the past.

Condition

All the pits are in very good condition and lie in areas of hornbeam and sweet chestnut coppice. They are undisturbed apart from the later ditches.



Figure 49

Management Recommendations

The pits lie under coppice. During periods of active management it is important to leave the area undisturbed and to follow 'Best Practice' for the management of

⁶⁹ Ibid p155, 312330, 339-340

⁷⁰ Cleere and Crossley 1991 The Iron Industry of the Weald, Merton Priory Press p153

archaeological feature sin woodland. Avoid extraction tracks through this area and if need be lay brash down to protect the features and remove once the management has been completed.

3.2.4.6. Quarries in Four Acre Shaw [A001, A004, A063]

Description of Features

There are two larger quarries or pits on the edge of Four Acre Shaw. One lies to the west at the northern end in a small area of shaw [A001]. The rectangular pit has a well defined back ball on the west, north and east side but with a possible access point on the southern edge. It is approx 20m by 13m and 2.0m deep at its maximum. At some date another ditch as dug to the west to drain water straight into the head of the gill of Four Acre Shaw. The maps show it as a pond but at the time of the survey it was dry. The pit lies between the 45 and 50m contour line. To the west lie further ponds at around the 50m contour line. This line coincides with a bed of sandstone in the Wadhurst Clay.⁷¹

The pit A004 lies to the western edge of Four Acre Shaw and is not on the Great Dixter property but lies adjacent; its north and west edges forming the property boundary. This pit is also on a similar alignment. This suggests that these quarries were dug in order to exploit the layer of sandstone. Sandstone rock would have been used for foundations and the footing sills on which the timber frames were positioned. [See also the section on quarries for Weights Wood]. Whilst locating the stone, other layers of clay and marl may have been encountered and used elsewhere.



Figure 50

The dating of pits is very difficult. The map of circa 1625 of the tenements of Ewhurst does not show these pits unlike the one in Calveslodge Shaw [See below]. It just shows a straight boundary joining with the north-south wood bank of the wood. So a possible date for the pit is post c.1625 and pre 1821, when it is shown as a pond.

⁷¹ British Geological Survey

Condition

The Pit [A001] is in a good condition. It is surrounded by hornbeam and hazel coppice with some oak standards, suggesting that it may have been dug within an area of woodland. Although always shown as a pond on the maps, the pit was dry at the time of survey December 2017, revealing the profile of the pit and its drainage ditches. The quarry A063 is also in a good condition, but as been planted with specimen shrubs as part of the garden landscaping.

Significance

This pit, together with the one on the eastern boundary, has a high local archaeological significance, in that they were probably dug as a source of stone for the buildings at Great Dixter. A more detailed examination by a geologist of any waste material with that of the stone work of the buildings may reveal if the two are connected. The pit will also have accumulated silts in the pond, plus possible domestic material sealed in context, given the close proximity to the farmstead. The quarry pit [A063] at the entrance to Great Dixter is of high local significance as it appears to date to the Early modern period when the Great Dixter farmstead was undergoing significant changes.

The pit [A001], when filled with water would have been of local ecological significance, providing habitat for amphibians and invertebrates.

Management Recommendations

The drying of out of the pit has resulted in a significant loss of habitat. The drying of the silts may also have a significant effect on any buried palaeo-archaeological material sealed in the layers. The South East in recent years has received a lower than average rainfall count and is experiencing drought conditions at the time of writing this report. This has implications for all the ponds, streams and ditches on the Estate.

The main management recommendation as with all archaeological features is to leave the pit undisturbed. Should scrub develop in the pit then this should be cut back to avoid root penetration and damage to the silts. Avoid digging the pit out to create a larger pond or water feature. Perhaps consider taking soil cores to see the extent (depth) of silting and the form of the accumulated layers.

The quarry pit in the garden [A063] has already to a certain extent been disturbed by the planting of trees and shrubs; further invasive activity should be kept to a minimum in order not to lose the shape and profile of the feature.

3.2.5. Heritage Features at Little Dixter and in the wider landscape

The following heritage features were identified from the LiDAR image and from where they could be seen from the public footpath were recorded in the field. Those which could not be seen are just described in the data base from the LiDAR image.

The excursion into the wider landscape has shown that many features seen at Great Dixter, the ponds, quarries, lost boundaries are repeated across the landscape. This suggests that the landscape was used far more intensively and with greater diversity of land uses than today. Small-scale mining, quarrying together with field cultivations and exploitation of the woodland, have all left their marks to varying degrees.

Table 4 Summary of Features in Little Dixter and Wider Landscape

Survey No	Grid Ref	Description	Date	Field Survey REF
A004	TQ 81855 24904	Quarry	Pre-1725	Higham
A012	TQ 81647 24900	Quarries	Post-medieval	Calveslodge Shaw
A014	TQ 81628 24815	Pit, or pond	Post-medieval	Calveslodge Shaw
A015	TQ 81617 24824	Site of animal shed	Early Modern	Calveslodge Shaw
A068	TQ 81708 25077	Pond or pit	Post-medieval	F12 Little Dixter
A069	TQ 81853 25180	Pit	Unknown	F11 Little Dixter
A070	TQ 81667 25180	Depression, ploughed	Unknown	F12 Little Dixter
A071	TQ 81608 25140	Holloway, ploughed	Unknown	F12 Little Dixter
A072	TQ 8160925081	Curving lynchet, ploughed	Unknown	F12 Little Dixter
A073	TQ 81641 25261	Holloway	Unknown	Little Dixter
A074	TQ 81668 25203	Building platform	Post-medieval	Little Dixter
A075	TQ 81773 25225	Building platform	Post-medieval	Little Dixter
A076	TQ 81618 25231	Pit or pond	Post-medieval	Little Dixter
A077	TQ 81585 24851	Quarry pit	Post-medieval	Little Dixter
A078	TQ 81452 24937	Quarry pit	Post-medieval	Little Dixter
A079	TQ 81567 24823	Quarry pit	Post-medieval	Little Dixter
A080	TQ 81780 25241	Holloway	Post-medieval	Little Dixter
A081	TQ 82386 25603	Holloway	Post-medieval	Little Dixter
A089	TQ 81788 25220	Ditch, field boundary	Medieval	F11 Little Dixter
A090	TQ 81752 25085	Holloway	Post-medieval	F11 Little Dixter
A091	TQ 81621 24842	Path	Early Modern	Calveslodge Shaw
A100	TQ 81700 24500	Northiam Furnace	Early Post-medieval	Northiam Furnace
A101	TQ 81000 24800	Ewhurst Furnace	Early Post-medieval	Ewhurst Furnace

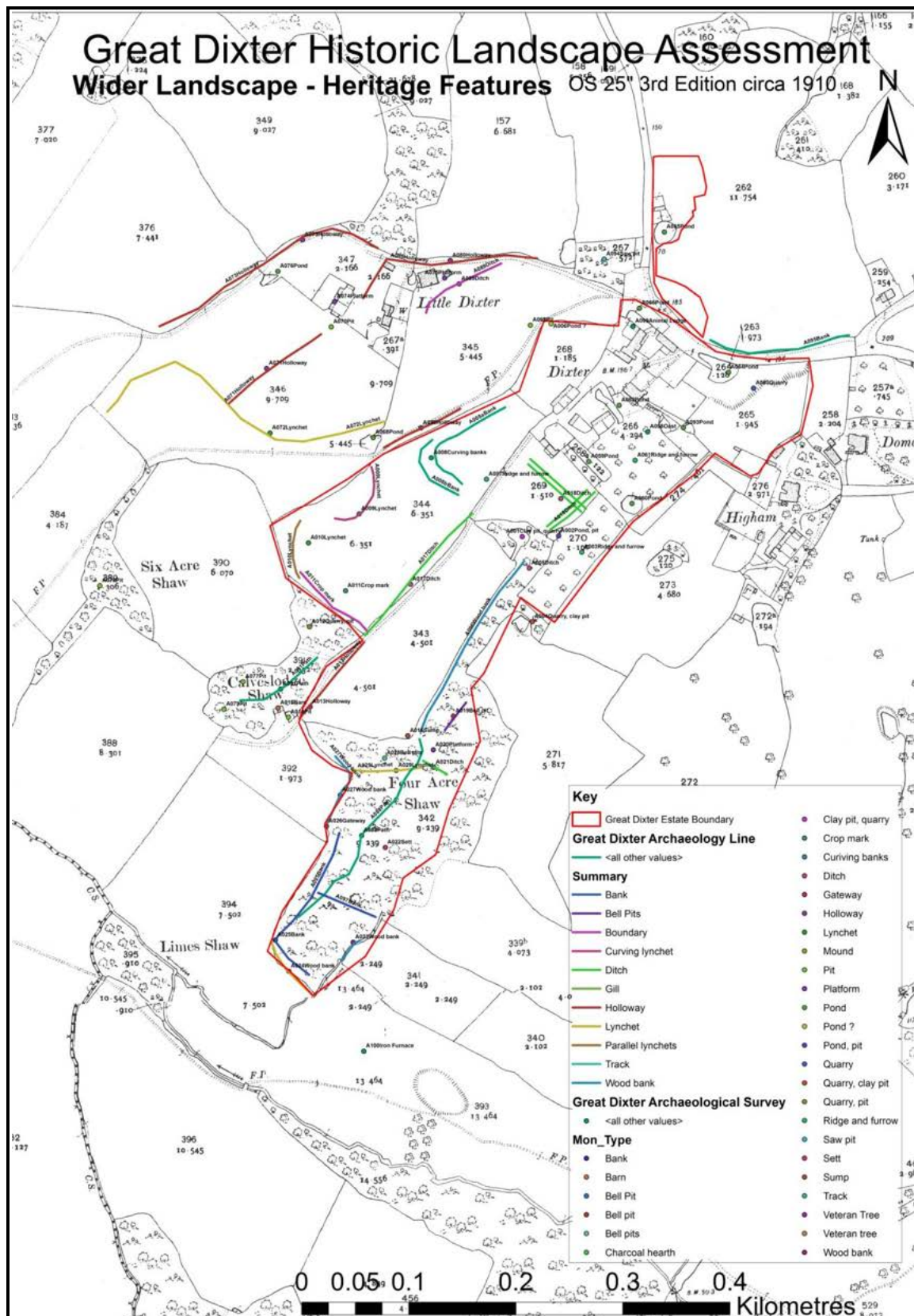


Figure 51: Heritage Features in the wider landscape

3.2.5.1. Lynchets [A072]

Description of Features

A sinuous curving lynchet extends from close to a pond on the east side of F12 Great meadow to the western boundary. From the images it does not appear to continue into the adjacent fields but terminates at or just before the boundaries. This earthwork is recorded on the LiDAR image and on aerial images from Googlearth. It appears to be about 1.0-1.2m high and greater than 3.0m wide. It maybe geological but may also be the line of an internal field division long since removed. A holloway [A071] from Little Dixter Farmstead terminates at this earthwork.



Figure 52

Significance

The lynchet is of high local significance and also forms part of a number of different earthworks surviving in this field. It suggests that the field was sub-divided into smaller enclosures.

Condition

The earthwork is in good condition and lies under improved permanent pasture

Management Recommendations

The present management of grazed pasture is optimum. A more detailed field walk over is recommended should permission be granted from the landowner. In particular in order to examine the field boundaries on the far side of these fields, in order to understand how the field boundaries alter.

3.2.5.2. Tracks and Holloways [A071, A073, A080, A090, A091]

Description of Features

The Lidar image reveals several tracks and holloways in the wider landscape. Around Little Dixter Farmstead are three such tracks or holloways; one leading to the farmstead [A080] from Dixter Lane. This runs into the area of the former farm buildings. It also continued west and then south [A073] around the edge of the farmstead along the field

boundaries and eventually to a quarry or pit. Another holloway [A071] runs south west from the farmstead to terminate at the lynchet A072. The public footpath through F11 House Field and F12 Great meadow also follows a holloway indicating that this path or track is of some antiquity.

Within Calveslodge Shaw is a short length of track [A091], which runs from the northern boundary south towards a quarry pit [A079].

Significance

These earthworks have a high local archaeological significance for Little Dixter Farm. They show how the farm was accessed and how its fields were reached by tracks from the farmstead. The feature A071 may possibly be a dormer boundary of which the ditch is only visible on the images.

Condition

From the aerial photos the features appear to be in good condition and are undisturbed.

Management Recommendations

None - they form part of Little Dixter, but also the features lie in pasture and are undisturbed.

3.2.5.3. Quarries [A012, A077, A079]

Description of Features

In Calveslodge Shaw, the LiDAR shows two possible areas for a quarry pits. A possible pit is shown on the c.1625 Map of the Manor of Ewhurst in the area of the shaw. This suggests that the pits are at least early post-medieval in date.

Condition

The condition of the pits is unknown as this wood lies outside of the Great Dixter Charitable Trust boundary, and could not be viewed in the field.

Significance

The quarries in Calveslodge Shaw have a high local archaeological significance. From the map evidence it suggests that these pits maybe some the older extraction areas in this part of the landscape. They form part of the local landscape character.

Management Recommendations

Permission could be sought to undertake more detailed examination in the field to see if these pits are similar to others at Great Dixter. The features are preserved in woodland.

3.2.5.4. Ponds & Pits [A068, A069]

Description of Features

As with Great Dixter, there are a number of ponds and pits identified in the wider landscape. Two were encountered adjacent to the public footpath. The pond by the corner is dry and has been planted with trees [A069]. The pond by the stile at the time of the field walk was filled with water and it has a diverse and interesting range of habitats. Another pond is located at the western edge of the Little Dixter Farmstead [A076] on the farmstead boundary. A further pond is located adjacent to the farmhouse of Little Dixter, now in the garden.

Condition

The pond and pit on the edge of the public footpath are in good condition. The condition of the other listed sites is unknown, other than they appear undisturbed on the LiDAR and aerial photograph images.



Figure 53

Significance

The ponds and pits are of high local archaeological significance and as with the ponds at Great Dixter, each tell a 'story' of their origin and function by their location in relation to the farmstead and the wider fields.

Management Recommendations

None as they lie outside the Great Dixter Estate boundary.

3.2.5.5. Sites of Buildings [A015, A074, A075]

Description of Features

The historic maps and the LiDAR image reveals the sites of at least three now demolished farm buildings. One was located in Calveslodge Shaw and hence gave it the name. The two others lie within the curtilage of Little Dixter Farmstead. None of the sites was examined in the field as they lie beyond the Estate boundary. They were included as examples of how fluid the sites of farmsteads and their associated buildings are.

The building in the shaw is first recorded on the 1821 map for the estate of Mr George Springett. It is shown a building with a small yard attached and a pond adjacent. The Tithe map and the following OS 25" map editions also show the buildings. In c.1860, it comprises an open fronted building with two yards. By 1890, it is recorded as an enclosed 2 bay structure but with the yards now open to the field. Today the site is located in dense bramble and undergrowth and the adjacent pond is now dry. The lodge was reached by a track from Great Dixter Farm, which is marked on the OS maps but not on the earlier ones. This track as it runs by the edge of the shaw has eroded to form a holloway which is about 1.0m deep by the gateway from The Four Acres [F4] into the adjacent field. The name indicates that this was a building where calves were kept once they had been removed from the cows.

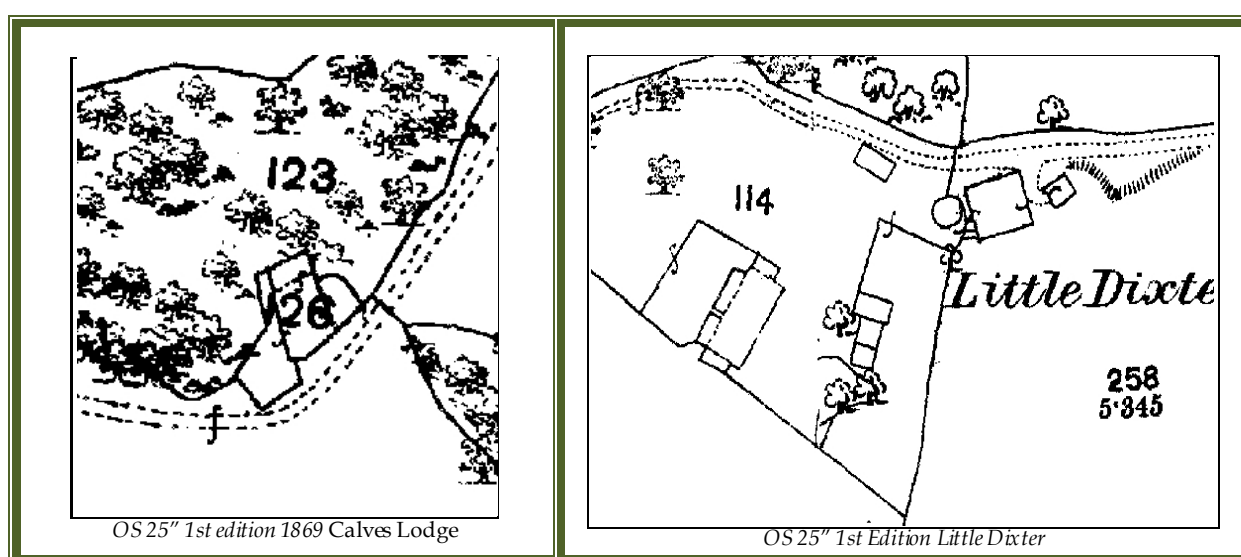


Figure 54

The other two buildings are associated with Little Dixter farmstead. These have now gone, leaving only evidence of a raised platform on the LiDAR image. One lay to the west of the farmstead. It comprised, three single and one double open fronted lodges facing in a 'U' shaped double yard. The lodge on the north side of the 'U' arm was a later structure. This may have replaced a separate lodge which lay to the north. All the other buildings appear on the Tithe map. A further yard lay on the west side and was attached to these buildings.

Another building platform identified on the LiDAR was for a small barn or lodge located on the entrance track into the farmstead. It is not clear when these buildings were removed.

Condition

The condition of these sites is unknown. From the aerial photos and LiDAR images, they appear to lie in areas of pasture and also appear to be undisturbed.

Significance

The sites of these structures are of high local archaeological significance for their relationship with the remains of the built structures at Little Dixter Farmstead. This is a

shrunk medieval farmstead with a loose courtyard character located on a potential drove or driftway into the valley.

Management Recommendations

No recommendations as they lie beyond the Great Dixter boundary.

3.3. HISTORIC FARMSTEAD ASSESSMENT

The following is a summary of how the farmstead at Great Dixter may have developed, through the centuries based on the field survey and historic map evidence. As already mentioned Section 1.5. above the buildings have been the subject of detailed research as part of the Rape of Hastings Historic Building Survey undertaken by Barbara and David Martin.⁷² For ease of reference the Historic Landscape Survey record survey numbers have used the same as those for the Ancillary Building Survey.

3.3.1. The Buildings

Table 5

HLS Survey No	Name	Grid Ref	DATE*	LB Grade	HBR REF (Martin & Martin 2018)
B01	Cart Lodge or Wagon Shed	TQ 581986 125195	Built c. 1800		HBR 1800/1
B02	Animal shed	TQ 581983 125122	Built c. 1810		HBR 1800/2
B03	Potting shed or hovel	TQ 581925 125096	Built C18 extended EC19		HBR 1800/3
B04	Potting shed or animal shed	TQ 581885 125114	Built mid to L18 Extended MC19		HBR 1800/4
B05	Potting shed	TQ 581900 125095	Built mid C18 Extended EC19		HBR 1800/5
B06	Pierce Cottage alias Cart Lodge	TQ 581874 125069	Built LC18? Extended after 1820		HBR 1800/6
B07	Barn	TQ 581977 125297	Built 1821 now rebuilt		HBR 1800/7
B08	Great Dixter House	TQ 581955 125120	E C15	I	ESRO 1986 1/983; 2012 1/983 Rev 2
B09	Barn - main (alias Great)	TQ 581955 125163	LC15	II*	ESRO 1979 1/440; 2012 1/440 Rev 3
B10	Barn - North (alias minor or White)	TQ 581985 125167	EC18	II	ESRO 1979 1/441; 2012 1/441 Rev 2

⁷² ESRO Great Dixter House HBR 1986 1/983; 2012 1/983 Rev 2; ESRO Great Barn HBR 1979 1/440; 2012 1/440 Rev 3; ESRO North Barn HBR 1979 1/441; 2012 1/441 Rev 2; Ancillary Buildings 2018

3.3.2. History of Development of Farmstead

The High Weald Historic Farmstead Characterisation records Great Dixter as a “loose courtyard type farmstead”. These are farmsteads very typical of the High Weald where the development and arrangement of the buildings is located along or at the end of a drove or a driftway, with informal courtyard areas.

Great Dixter is located on the route of a medieval drove (Dixter Lane) from the higher unenclosed downland of the ridge top which then dropped down to the river valley below (farm track pass the Dixter farm buildings).

3.3.2.1. The Medieval Period

Great Dixter is an important site not only for its medieval hall house but also for the Great Barn, which is the largest surviving medieval barn in the Rape of Hastings.⁷³ It comprises seven bays, the eastern most one may have had an upper floor.⁷⁴ The Barn also had a lean-to out shut, a specialised building added to the southern end of the Barn. These were often used to house stock. Few such buildings now survive as they were generally weak structures, and more often demolished when changes were being implemented.⁷⁵ The site today is occupied by a 19th century oast house, built onto the end of the medieval structure.⁷⁶ Wealden Barns were multifunctional structures, used not only for storing crops (hay, corn etc.), for threshing but also as places to overwinter cattle. The medieval barn faced to the east towards the house, with the entrance comprising two pairs of full height doors reflecting its importance and status on one Sir John Etchingham's properties.⁷⁷

Great Dixter is one of the few medieval barns which had a specially built feeding rack. The close set vertical timbers had a passage along one side and on the other the stock, cows and bullocks usually were kept. The fodder was held in place by either angled hurdles or sacking tied to the vertical timbers. The evidence for this at Great Dixter shows that cattle were an important part of the medieval farming enterprise.⁷⁸

Another characteristic of Wealden farms is the position of the farmhouse; they are usually set within the farmstead forming part of the courtyard layout. At Great Dixter the barn is set at right angles and north-east of the hall house close to the medieval parlour.⁷⁹ Often the barn was in close proximity, for both ease of access and also the Barn housed crop and stock of value, which needed to be managed closely, especially during the winter. Milk cows were also probably housed in the barn as well.

⁷³ Martin, D and Martin B. 2006. Farm Buildings of the Weald 1450-1750. Oxbow Books p42

⁷⁴ Ibid p97

⁷⁵ Ibid pp49-50

⁷⁶ Ibid p99

⁷⁷ Martin, D. and Martin, B. 2012b. Revised Archaeological Interpretative Survey of the Great Barn at Great Dixter Archaeology South East p6

⁷⁸ Ibid p55-56

⁷⁹ Ibid p97



Figure 56

The area in front east of the house and south of the barn (now the front meadow garden) was probably the main court yard to the farmstead, and there may have been other structures nearby which have now gone.

The geophysical survey undertaken by HAARG in the area of the Topiary Lawn has revealed below ground structures, which may or may not be the site of a medieval detached kitchen.⁸⁰

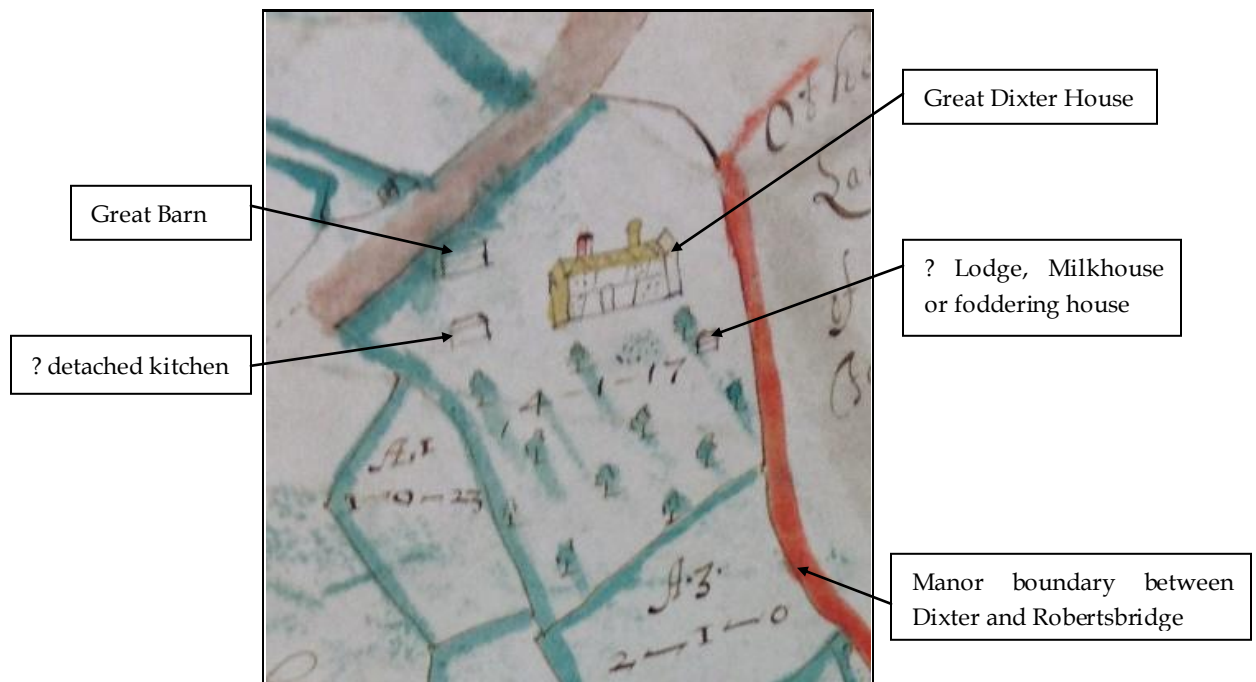


Figure 57: Extract from the c.1630 Map of the Manor of Ewhurst in Northiam [ESRO AMS 3500]

There is no description of the medieval farmstead in the archives. However the Survey of the Manor of Robertsbridge of 1567 records a *milkhouse*, a *foddering house*, *garden* and *five pieces of land* [12 acres] to the east of the Dixter House. The boundary between the Manors of

⁸⁰ HAARG 2017. Topiary Lawn Survey Area R1 centred on NGR TQ 8191825111

Robertsbridge and Dexter (formerly Ewhurst) ran through the garden at Dexter, about 7 metres from the foundations of the medieval building. A milkhouse was where the cheese and butter was made and stored. A foddering house was where fodder was stored, milled grain and where mash was mixed and cooked. This suggests that pigs and hens were also kept as part of the medieval farm. These structures were located close to the domestic building as such jobs were often undertaken by the women of the household.

The Map of the manor of Ewhurst in Northiam c. 1630 shows the House but with two buildings to the north west. The southern one of these two may be the structure that HAARG have identified in the 'Topiary Lawn', possibly the external kitchen? To the south west of the house is a very small building in an area depicted as orchard. There is no depiction of the ponds or 'moat's in this orchard.

Between 1300 and 1500 the farmstead of Little Dexter came into being, possibly in a direct consequence of the move from farming in hand to leasing out; whereby the larger manorial Wealden farms were divided into smaller units.⁸¹

3.3.2.2. The Eighteenth Century

The North Barn is later in date (beginning of the 18th century) and although referred to as a 'barn' is actually a large coach/wagon house with stables and linked to the barn by a thatched cart shed.⁸² On its north east corner was a pond (now filled in). The coach house was built c. 1700. It forms the north east corner of the courtyard, and faces towards the drove way. The size of the North Barn suggests that Great Dexter was a farm of some size and importance, where cart horses and other types of equines were kept, although oxen were probably still used for heavy work and haulage. The upper floor provided storage for hay, which could then be easily fed to stalled animals. There is evidence of some of the roofing timbers having been salvaged from an earlier medieval structure.⁸³ This suggests that timbers may have come from demolished buildings from the farmstead or brought in from elsewhere. The date of this building coincides with the owner Peter Gott and tenanted to the Samuel Petter (younger?).

The 18th century was a time when the farm was further expanded, in a rather ad hoc manner, with further cartsheds and animal sheds or lodges and yards built mainly to the south west of the House. There is no organisation to the layout suggesting that buildings were erected as and when needed by the tenant, with or without the owner's permission, as indicated in a lease of 1749 to John Fairhall by Samuel Gott.⁸⁴ The lease describes one new lodge built at great expense, and the tenant requests a further lodge, together with a place behind the barn to be fenced in for a close. This may be the time when the opening of the Great Barn was moved from the east elevation (facing the house) to the west (facing the

⁸¹ Martin, D and Martin B. 2006. Farm Buildings of the Weald 1450-1750. Oxbow Books p11

⁸² Ibid p140

⁸³ Martin D, and Martin, B. 2012 An Archaeological Interpretative Survey of the Minor or White Barn Great Dexter. Archaeology South East. P6

⁸⁴ ESRO ACC 9658/14/8

track) and the yards enclosed as shown on the 1821 map. Or it may refer to the yard on the west elevation which relates to both the barn and the extension (at right angles). The tenant may already have caused friction by building a lime kiln, *without the knowledge or consent of the landlord*. The whereabouts of this kiln is not known.



Figure 58

Also in this lease the landlord was to repair buildings but not the oast, instead the tenant to have the materials and to build a new one if required; the tenant does ask for two more kilns but the landlord feels there are already too many, (the 1821 map shows only two roundels). Hop production was a high investment and risky crop, with very good returns in good years but could cause bankruptcy in poor years. The 1821 map shows the oast in close proximity to the house but also near to ponds where water was important in case of fire.

The increase in the number of lodges or animal sheds and yards suggest that more stock was being kept and with the increased amounts of manure, this was being used to develop hop production. The Lease of 1749 records a *new lodge to be made in Milking Close*.⁸⁵ A Milk House has already been recorded in the 16th century⁸⁶ and this new lodge may be the north end of B03 which lies close to the boundary with the Manor of Robertsbridge and possibly the Orchard [F07] was 'Milking Close'. An inventory of 1764 records 2 oxen and 4 steers in the new lodge, and a total of 44 cattle, including a bull, 7 cows and four working oxen on the farm.⁸⁷ This suggests a self contained breeding unit, for milk, meat and haulage.

The image shown in Figure 60 shows how cattle were kept in lodges and which probably had not changed for hundreds of years. Here cows with calves at foot have access to a yard via an open bay shelter. The yard would have been "strawed up" and at the end of winter once the cattle were turned out to grass, these were cleaned out and the manure stock piled in fields till needed. The yard was probably enclosed by wooden fencing such as split chestnut post and rail. By the end of the 18th century there were at least three such lodges including the extension to the Great Barn.

⁸⁵ ESRO ACC 9658/14/8

⁸⁶ ESRO Survey of Manor of Robertsbridge REF

⁸⁷ ESRO Land Tax Records

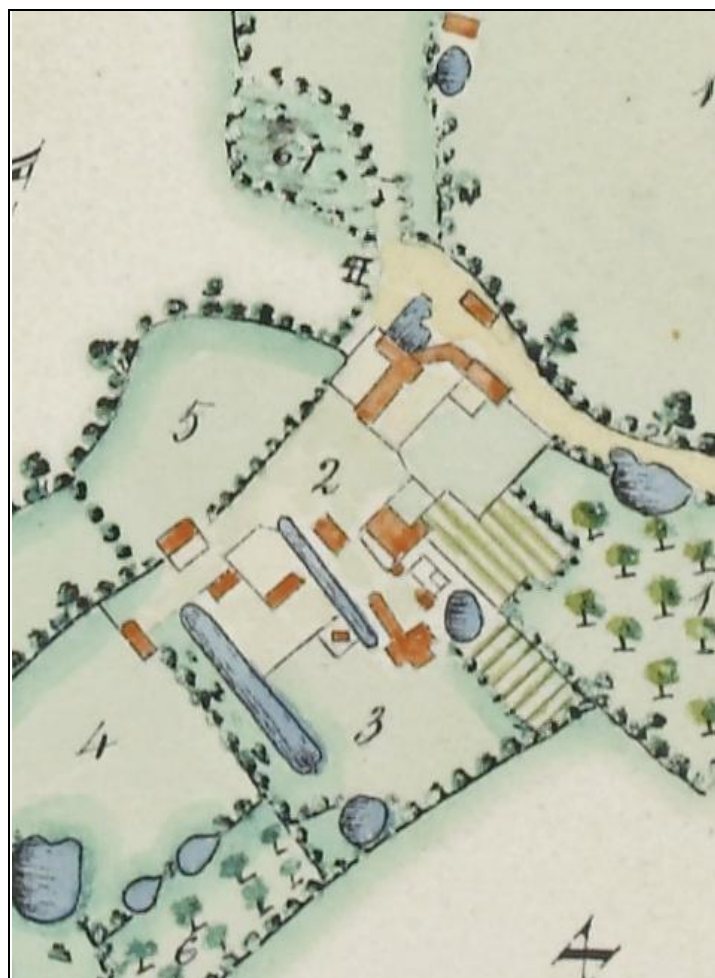


Figure 59: Extract from the Great Dixter Estate 1821 belonging to George Springett [ESRO P431/24/2]
[1= Orchard; 2 = House, Garden Yards etc.; 3 = Platt by oast house; 4 = Platt by Cart House; 5 = Lodge Platt]

The inventory also itemises 12 horses, including 2 blind ones which suggests that they may have been used on the farm for light work. These animals were probably housed in the North Barn [B10]. Interestingly 5 colts are listed. The tenant may have also trained horses to work farm equipment.

So far no evidence has been found for the location of the hop gardens at Dixter in the 18th century, but this farm was also farmed in conjunction with Usbournes to the north and Gatecourt to the north by the road to Newenden across the Rother, and hop gardens may have been located in their fields. Hops are 'hungry' crops and rapidly use up the soil's fertility, thus gardens were moved around fields in rotation with other crops.

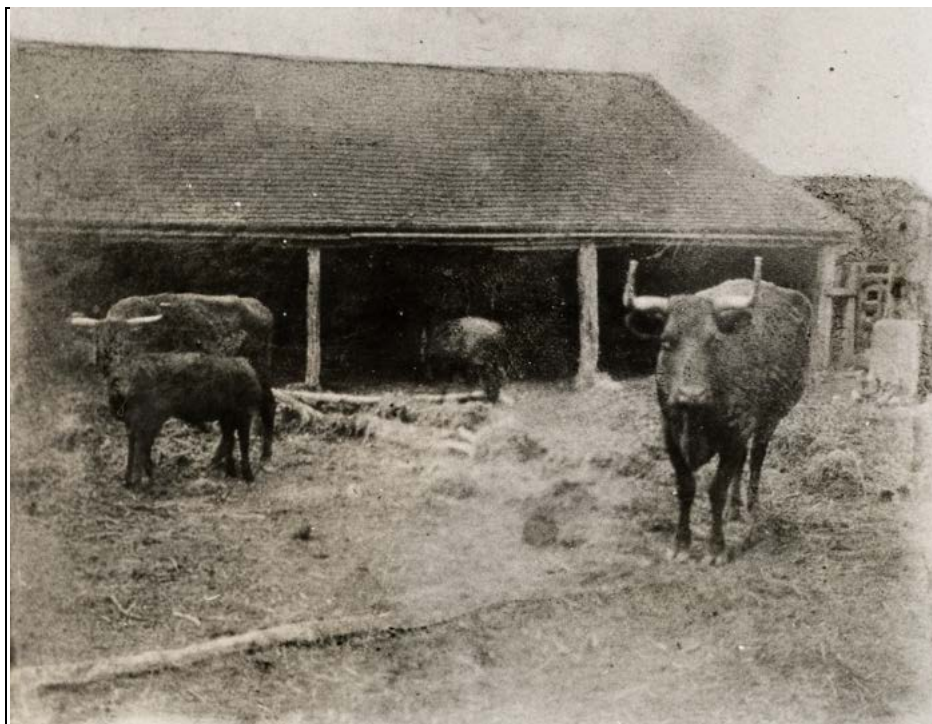


Figure 60: Sussex Cattle in the Lodge by the Rose Garden circa 1900 ? [Source : Great Dixter Charitable Trust]

3.3.2.3. The Early Modern or 19th century

For the majority of the 19th century, Great Dixter with other farms and lands in Northiam was owned by the Springett Family. In the early years it was owned by George Springett and tenanted by his nephew (also called George), [See Christopher Whittick's report]. This is the period when far more map evidence is available, from the Estate map of 1821 [see Figure 60 above] to the Tithe Map (c.1840) [See Figure 61 below] which was based in part on the 1821 and the historic OS mapping for the 25" (1860-1910).

The most significant change in this period was the demolition of the 18th century oast between 1860 and 1890, and the building of the two-kiln oast on to the southern elevation of the medieval or Great Barn together with three lean-tos and the linking thatched corner lodge or cart shed between this barn and the north barn or coach house [B09 & B10]. Other animal lodges and yards were extended [B03, B04], and a cottage was built onto the end of the south westerly most cart shed, [B06]. Three other small buildings were also removed; one at the east end of the Upper Moat, and two from the south corner of the House [compare the 1821 map and Tithe Map with the OS 1st Edition 25"]. By 1860 a group of ? pigsties had been built in this area.

The building of the new oast reflected a significant investment into this crop. The former oast was located close to the house and access must have been difficult thus building one on to the barn enabled hops to be brought and off loaded from the main farm access track and not carted through the various yards.



Figure 61: Extract from the Tithe Map for Northiam [ESRO TDE 96]. This is inaccurate as it omits the wagon lodge and the animal lodge in Great Parks

There appears however to be little or no rationalisation of the animal buildings which were scattered around the farmstead. What must be remembered is that this farm was tenanted with other farms and thus it may not have been self-sufficient as a farm unit. Instead emphasis may have been place on different enterprises depending on how each farmstead 'worked' or operated.⁸⁸

The Vidler Valuation Books provide detailed information on the farms for the latter part of the 19th century. It appears that Little Dixter had more change-over of tenants than Great Dixter if the valuation entries are to go by [See Appendix III - Summary of Valuation Books].

⁸⁸ See section 2.3.1-2.3.3 in the Great Dixter Conservation Management Plan for further details on the buildings



Figure 62: The south elevation of the main house with the edge of the Upper Moat circa 1900. The building to the left is on the site of the 'loggia' but the image shows a two storey weatherboard and hung tile structure, which does not fit with that buildings description. [Source Great Dixter Charitable Trust]



B05 with B04 in background



East elevation of House [B08]

Figure 63

The entries for the farm valuations also record the hop produce, gardens and work needed to maintain them. So for example in the valuation of 1878,⁸⁹ from Augustus Springett to Hugh Boxall (the farm bailiff ?), hop gardens were located at Limes Garden, Park Garden, Ox Pasture and Colgates. In 1895, the hops gardens were located at German Brook and Bitter Field.⁹⁰ The Valuation Books also record hay, manure, 'seasons' or the arable fields, sundries

⁸⁹ ESRO VID/2/2/117 p126

⁹⁰ ESRO VID/2/2/242 p17

in the yards and underwood. Thus under sundries would be coal and charcoal presumably for the oast house. The charcoal was obtained from the woods, such as the charcoal hearth in Weights Wood [A042]. Great Dixter also included Dynes and Dixter Woods and it is highly likely that charcoal hearths are to be found there.



Figure 64: Extract from the map accompanying the title deeds for Great Dixter (Based on the OS 25" 1st edition c. 1870) [Source Great Dixter Charitable Trust]

Stock was not always kept at the farmstead. The early 19th century saw the buildings of the two lodges out in the fields, one near Great Parks [B07] and the other which gave its name to the wood and shaw namely "Calveslodge" [A015]. Both these structures appear from the plans to be one or two bay lodges with accompanying yards.

The one at Great Parks was enlarged and rebuilt by Nathaniel Lloyd as the farm centre moving it away from around the house. Calveslodge [A015] has long disappeared leaving only the depression where the pond was [A014]. Although it meant taking food to the stock on a daily basis from the farmyard, the manure could then be cleaned out and spread on the adjacent fields. However according to the Valuation Books some hay stacks were made out in the fields.

Great Dixter still retains today the dispersed loose courtyard character of the medieval farmstead. This is a consequence of the manor and farm not being the primary residence of the owners, and thus not subject to periods of improvement, which often happened by farmsteads belonging to landed gentry. However within the bounds of the farm yard/s there were changes as the owners and more especially tenants responded to the need to expand and or diversify triggered by market trends. Yards had to be versatile yet robust especially where cattle and pigs were bred and fattened.

The greatest change in the layout of the farm yard in the post-medieval period was the building and then subsequent demolition of the 18th century oast, with a new oast built into the medieval barn.



Figure 65

Apart from yards for stock attached to the shelters and hovels, yards were also used for the stacks of hay and straw. The Car Park 2 field [F1] was once the stack plat. Ricks of hay and straw would be built with thatched tops to keep the rain out. Hay ricks were also built out in the pasture fields but close to the farmstead, possibly in the Four or Five Acre Fields.

4. OVERALL MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Key Management Objective for heritage features is for minimal disturbance to the features. Guidance is given in Darvill 1987.⁹¹ The following objectives are put forward for the cultural heritage.

4.1. Archaeology

Overall management objective

- * *To conserve the sites and features of archaeological significance by appropriate management and avoidance of damaging operations.*

Specific Objectives

- * To avoid ground disturbance over and around all sites so as to preserve all features of archaeological significance.
- * To continue to maintain existing managed grassland over known archaeological sites and features.
- * On areas of extant earthworks in existing grassland to avoid cultivation except for use of unweighted harrows and light rollers at times when the pasture is sufficiently dry not to compact or damage the profiles of the feature.
- * Within woodland, in any areas where trees have been planted on archaeological sites, once the trees have been felled, to avoid replanting, and leave stumps treating them to prevent regrowth.
- * To manage the stocking densities to avoid poaching and erosion of archaeological sites, which will include the careful siting of supplementary feeding facilities.
- * To undertake archaeological assessments and watching briefs of intrusive ground-works across the whole of the Great Dixter Estate with advice from the archaeologists at East Sussex County Council Historic Environment Record.

4.2. Buildings And Structures – Maintenance And Repair Methods

Overall management objective

To maintain and repair the buildings in a manner which conserves their character and features by:

- * *following conservation principles of minimal intervention;*
- * *retaining architectural details when repairs are carried out;*
- * *matching tradition materials so far as possible;*
- * *and redecorating at intervals.*

Specific objectives

- * Prepare Conservation Plan/s, assessment of condition and timetable of works for all the ancillary buildings on the Estate. This could be done as part of the review of the Conservation Management Plan for the House and Barns.

⁹¹ Darvill, T. 1987. *Ancient monuments in the countryside. An archaeological management review*. English Heritage.

- * Wherever possible any repair work to the timbers of the ancillary buildings should use wood harvested from Weights Wood and from Four Acre Shaw, or failing that from locally sourced material.

4.3. Nature Conservation and Wildlife

Overall management objectives

- * *To continue to protect the biodiversity [Natural Capital] on the estate.*
- * *To manage the heritage area in a manner which seeks to conserve and enhance the wildlife quality of the species, habitats and features (which are described and summarised in ?.*
- * *To ensure that due regard is taken of any existing or potential bat roosts within built structures ahead of any repair, maintenance conversion or restoration works.*
- * *To be aware of the potential of habitats for other protected species such as, badgers and Great Crested Newts the latter which can hibernate in cracks in built structures.*

Specific Objectives

- * Hedgerows and hedgerow trees. To manage the hedgerows and hedgerow trees in accordance with the prescription in the DEFRA Cross Compliance Handbook. However look also for opportunities to adopted a more traditional method of management, such as pollarding and shredding hedgerow trees. Reinststate the historic north-south boundary in Bottom Field.
- * Ponds. To retain and manage all farm ponds, seasonally wet areas and old extraction pits, protecting their historic profiles, as wildlife habitats.
- * Unimproved grassland. To maintain the existing areas of unimproved grassland and look for opportunities for extending the areas and creating links or corridors between them.
- * Veteran Trees – To retain and manage all veteran trees to ensure their long term conservation, as set out in the Woodland Management Plan 2018 and following guidance in Lonsdale, D. 2013. ⁹² *Ancient and other veteran trees: further guidance on management.* Ancient Tree Forum.
- * Livestock - It is recommended that the worming regime for the stock, especially cattle uses wormers which do not contain Ivermectin as this has a long term effect as a chemical residue in the dung killing insects such as dung beetles which are the food source for several species of bats.

4.4. Woodland

Overall management objective

- * *To manage the woodlands in manner which conserves their landscape, historic and wildlife significance and, in so far it does not conflict with this primary objective, to maintain commercial viability.*

Specific Objectives

- * To carry out the operations programmed for each year in the England Woodland Grant Scheme as per Woodland Management Plan.

⁹² Lonsdale, D. 2013. ⁹²*Ancient and other veteran trees: further guidance on management.* Woodland trust & Ancient Tree Forum.

- * To manage narrow rides and the central sections of wider rides by annual mowing in the autumn. The edges of wider rides are to be mown on a 2-3 year rotation. Avoid use of chemicals on rides.
- * To manage the woods for a diverse and uneven age structure which fulfils the requirements for sustainable woodland management. At every review of this plan to check that the then current felling, replanting and maintenance programme continues to comply with the long term rotational and other objectives which contribute towards meeting the requirement of sustainable management.
- * To conserve features of interest including historic compartment boundaries and rides, the ground flora and archaeological sites.
- * To improve the quality of the woodland rides and glades for wildlife by the use of zonal cutting and scalloped edges, for example improve the edge structure of Four Acre Shaw.
- * To manage and maintain the historic landscape value of the woods and shaws.
- * To allow more dead wood to remain within the woodlands, in particular upstanding trees as habitats for insects and bats.
- * To take account of the need for timber and underwood for repairs to the buildings at the farmstead, by allowing the selection of both timber trees and coppice to provide that material for the future.

5. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This Archaeology and Historic Landscape Survey has identified several areas where further research is recommended. Some aspects can be undertaken by Great Dixter volunteers, whilst others may need more specialist advice.

5.1. Archive Research

- * Production of a comprehensive catalogue, including description, location and condition of all the archives relevant to Great Dixter.
- * Full transcriptions of relevant documents relating to Great Dixter, - if possible also the medieval material.
- * Undertake a detailed study of the Vidler Archives and Ray Archives held at ESRO.
- * To examine the historic photographs of Great Dixter Farm to identify some of the very small structures, and to establish the history of loggia [B02].
- * To research the history of the farmers and tenants at Great Dixter in more depth.
- * To research the medieval origins of Little Dixter.

5.2. Field Research

- * The consequence of Great Dixter being managed now as a garden means that the top layers of the ground surface, especially around the house have continually been disturbed.

However where new service trenches are dug or other invasive works such as tree planting for larger trees, the work should be accompanied by an archaeological watching brief.

* Consider undertaking selective trial trenching across features identified by HAARG as part of the geophysical survey to establish type, extent and state of preservation of the below ground features.

* Undertake field survey of the wider landscape once permission from adjacent landowners has been granted, following the methods laid out in this assessment. The objectives ;-

- to look for further evidence of the deer park;
- to establish the form of the adjacent field boundaries, including the origins of field boundaries at Little Dixter ;
- to assess the archaeological resource in the adjacent fields;
- to survey the boundary between the brook land and the farmland to see if there is evidence of any wharves, landing areas;
- to explore Dixter and Dines Hill Woods to assess the archaeological resource.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The archaeological and cultural heritage resource at Great Dixter reflects its long history as a working farm, which was once a locally important medieval manorial centre. The medieval hall house and the barns are of national importance. The relationships between these structures and their historic landscape are still very much in evidence, the layout of the post-medieval farmstead now fossilised in the layout of the gardens, their compartments or 'rooms' together with the high degree of preservation of the smaller ancillary buildings of lodges and cart sheds. It is unusual for so many hovels, lodges and animal sheds still be preserved from the Late 18th and 19th century in farmsteads today. The structures can inform repair and also where necessary replacement of buildings. The form of use of timber and wood, together with the structure of foundations is record of how such buildings may have been built from the medieval period. In addition the ground beneath these structures may preserve earlier layers of settlement archaeology.

The present fields of Great Dixter represent only a small part of those that were farmed from this centre. Historically, these fields were either orchards or pasture. Some were used as rick stack plats and closes where house milking cows were kept. The hedges reflect this past management as well as the influence of the later garden designs. The most significant hedge is that which divides Great and Little Dixter. Its species diversity and physical morphology point to a woodland origin rather than an agrarian. This is a hypothesis which would further research and study, especially in dating the age of the formation of Little Dixter Farmstead. The earthworks beneath the surviving boundaries are important for their shape, and the potential for buried old soil horizons. Today most field hedges are cut by flail. There is opportunity to select some hedges (or even replace the one between Four and Five Acres) and manage it in a traditional way, by layering hedge shrubs with pollarded or shredded standards.

The boundaries to the woods show the fluidity of the woodland extent, with the expansion and contraction especially of the shaws. This is a characteristic of Wealden woods. Within the woods themselves, as to be expected in ancient sites, a diverse range of cultural heritage features reflecting the historic management and exploitation of the woodlands. The saw pits, and charcoal hearth have a direct relationship with the farmstead. The presence of bell pits also shows how important these areas were for the iron industries of the Roman, Medieval and Tudor periods surviving in the wider landscape.

An interesting feature to arise from this assessment is the hypothetical site of Great Dixter deer park. This will need further research in the archives and in the field to prove or disprove its siting. Fieldwalking in the wider landscape to try and trace pale type boundary earthworks is needed to establish further evidence.

Already an understanding of the Early modern land use in and around the farmstead is informing the recorded species diversity. [See Philip Sansum's report on the Historical Ecology]. Rare invertebrates with very specific habitat requirements of a traditional farmstead have been identified in the fields and the orchard. These are possibly remnant populations which are managing to survive. Where possible the reintroduction of the traditional farming methods may buffer their habitats.

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