

**1 October 2026.
For private viewing only.**



A historical guide to the
1066 Country Walk - Section 6
From Icklesham to Rye via Winchelsea

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Viewpoints along Section 6 of 1066 Country Walk



Preface

This booklet has been prepared to support the celebratory programme of activities planned in and around Winchelsea for October 2026 - The Winchelsea History Festival. This period includes the 960th anniversary on 14th October 2026 of the 1066 Battle.

The Festival marks the display in the British Museum of the Bayeux Tapestry from 10th September 2026 to 11th July 2027. The Tapestry shows events from 1066 - a year of upheaval with three crowned Kings on the Throne of England and inauguration of Norman rule.

The first and main aim of this booklet is to provide walkers with a better understanding of the sites along the last section of the 1066 Country Walk, from Icklesham to Rye via Winchelsea and Saxon Iham. Eighteen interesting sites along this section are included together with some of the extensive history of the area around Winchelsea and in the Brede valley going back to Saxon and Roman times.

The 1066 Country Walk was seen as part of the UK south-coast extension to the E9 European Coastal Path from Spain to Estonia - at 9890 km, it is the longest coastal path in the world. In 2021, the Path was upgraded with funding mainly from the Rural Payments Agency under the European Agricultural Funding For Rural Development (EAFRRD) Tourism Infrastructure grant programme.

The widely accepted view of the 1066 events is that the Normans landed at Pevensey close to

the remains of the Roman Castle, and the Battle took place in the present-day grounds of Battle Abbey, built afterwards.

Only the first three sections of the 1066 Country Walk are from Pevensey to Battle - the remaining half of the walk leads down the Brede valley ending in Rye to join the Saxon Shore Way.

This is fortunate because there is a growing alternative view that the Invasion took place in the Brede valley and that the Battle was at the head of the valley, near Sedlescombe and the Roman Road M13 from Rochester to Winchelsea.

After King William went back to Normandy in 1067, it is recorded that he returned to England via the port of Old Winchelsea.

Recent discoveries in the valley support ideas that the Brede Valley might have been involved in the events of 1066.

So the second aim of the booklet is to supply background information relating to this last section of the 1066 Country Walk, that aids discussion of theories concerning the events of 1066.

Walking the full six sections of the 1066 Country Walk enables one to see the geography of the area in order to appreciate the various sites proposed for the Invasion and Battle.

Andrew Scott - 1 October 2026

Viewpoint 1 - Queens Head Inn - the Brede Valley and site of Roman bloomeries, Roman Road and Roman settlement



This Grade II listed property is perched on a high point overlooking Brede Valley. When first built in 1632 the premises comprised two dwelling houses, referred to on record as farm tenements or messuages, with outbuildings and adjoining hempsland and barkside.

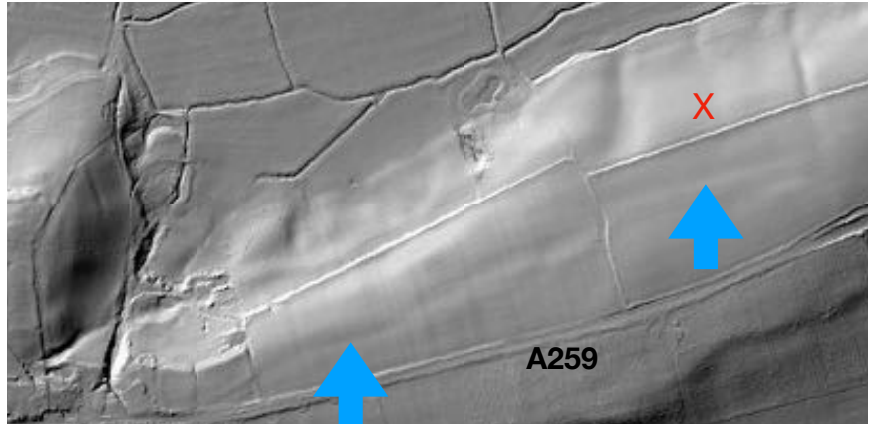
Hempsland is defined in The Parish Chest by W E Tate (1964) as “a small plot for the cultivation of hemp, in accordance with the statutes of 1533 and 1563; by extension any very small plot, especially one going with a dwelling”. Under the 1533 statute, Henry VIII made it mandatory to grow a quarter acre of hemp (*Cannabis sativa*) for every 60 acres under cultivation. This was initiated because of the demand from the navy for ships' sails, rigging, ropes (cordage), sacks (for carrying cargo) and often even the sailors' clothes & uniforms.

Pollen Analysis from Muddymore Pit at Dungeness (from the period c. 1000 to 1250 cal yrs A.D.) was “remarkable for its high values of *Cannabis sativa* pollen - amongst the highest recorded for the taxon in the British Isles.” (Dungeness and Romney Marsh (2007) p 173). The reason must be that the site was used for hemp-retting - allowing the mature hemp stems to rot in a pond or standing water so that the residual fibres could be dried and twisted into rope. This may be associated with the ports of Lydd, Romney or Old Winchelsea. For maritime use, rope was usually tarred - perhaps from birch or alder bark.

A similar retting pit was found at Dunwich - the Suffolk port drowned during at a similar time to Old Winchelsea. *“The period of retting appears to continue from early Saxon to early medieval, before a major marine transgression, perhaps associated with storm action around the 13th-14th century, resulted in a change to salt marsh and mudflat environments at the site.”* Sear et al (2014)

In 1831 William Goodwin, a keeper of swine (pigs or hogs) and the leaseholder, became a beer retailer when he purchased a beer house licence under the terms of the 1830 Beer Act. This enabled any house-holder of good character, providing his name was in the rate book, to obtain a license. By paying the sum of Two Guineas to the Department of Excise he was able to sell beer from a dwelling or tenement of rateable value. This also avoided the need to present an application to local Magistrates, who, unless the house was kept in a disorderly manner, had no control over it. Thus, in 1831, William Goodwin opened the doors of this house and sold ale from it for the first time. At this date it bore no title of registration, other than that of a beer house registered to Goodwin, who continued to run it whilst still keeping swine.
(www.queenshead.com)

Work took place to form the two properties into one and this was complete by 1938.



Look down the Brede valley from the Inn towards Winchelsea. In 1936, evidence was found for six bloomeries in the vicinity of the house gardens north of the A259. In 1981/2, an excavation by the Hastings and Area Archaeological Research Group (HAARG) found a short stretch of trackway running parallel to the A259. Radio-carbon dating confirmed it to be part of a Roman Road.

In 2024, LIDAR observations from several fields adjacent to the A259 (see upper right) showed a potential Roman trackway leading towards Winchelsea. Later that year, David Staveley (see lower right for section close to the left hand blue arrow) demonstrated that ***“The Roman road here is a substantial slag surfaced road of the same form as the Roman road between Bodiam and Beauport Park, via the major iron-working settlements at Footlands and Oaklands Park. For the most part, it seems to stay 30m from the LiDAR feature, turning where the LiDAR feature turns. The exception is at the western end, where the road descends into the LiDAR feature as it heads west.***



A piece of 3rd century prismatic glass from a bottle or jar was found in the ditch of the Roman Road. Oxen shoes were found in the Road's foundations. Photo by Cameron Ross

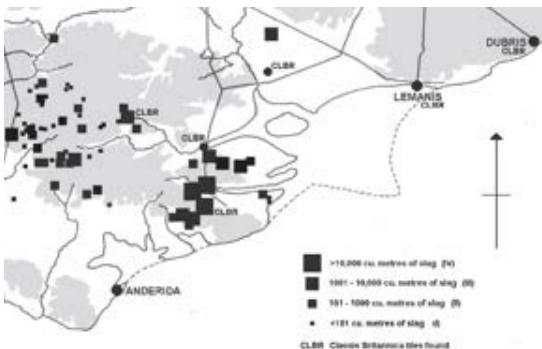
The current thinking is that the LiDAR feature is a worn trackway from the early days of the Roman period settlement at Icklesham, which was replaced by the metalled road, using iron slag from the settlement."

An excavation under the aegis of the Winchelsea and Area Archaeological and Historical Society (WAAHS), and supervised by Cameron Ross, confirmed the presence of a Roman Road.

Glassware (of the type in the photograph above) dating to the 3rd Century was found in one of the road-side ditches.

During 2025, additional geophysics in the vicinity of Icklesham indicated potential sites of Roman settlement. Four additional trial pits were excavated - each one showed evidence of Roman settlement.

Roman Road, M13, leads southwards from Rochester on Watling Street. In Margery's map (beneath), the road divides south of Sedlescombe. One spur has been tracked southwards towards Beaufort Park, thought to be third largest Roman Bloomery in Western Europe. The Bloomery site is about 3.5 km south of Sedlescombe.



The lower left diagram from the Wealden Iron Research Group shows the extent of Romano-British iron-working sites in the Weald. The three largest sites, including Beaufort Park, cluster around the head of the Brede valley.

It is thought that the other spur of the M13 road continued towards Winchelsea partly because part of the Rochester Roman road (Margery M13) is referred to as the 'London to Winchelsea road' in a 1294 writ.

It is postulated that the Roman Road found at Icklesham is part of this spur.

Viewpoint 2 - Icklesham All Saints and St Nicholas Church

The Church belongs to the newly created Benefice of Winchelsea, Icklesham and Pett in the Diocese of Chichester.

The church was originally dedicated to All Saints, which was common in the Norman period, but it was changed by Henry VIII to St Nicolas. Nicolas is associated with protecting mariners, appropriate as Icklesham was still coastal at the time, and of course with Santa Claus. The south chapel is still dedicated to St Nicolas.



Rather crudely engraved crosses can be seen on the large Norman columns in the nave. It is thought they were carved by pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela. Similar crosses are seen in St Thomas

Church, Winchelsea in what used to be St Nicholas' Chapel.

It was not until after the destruction of the old port of Winchelsea and the establishment of the present town that the new parish of Winchelsea was established by Edward I in 1288. Much of the original parish of Icklesham was assigned to the new town. This accounts for the fact that the parish boundary of Icklesham extends around the northern and eastern boundaries of Winchelsea parish.

A place of worship has been recorded on the site of Icklesham church since 772AD. It is 11th century with additions made between the 12th and 14th century. It is not referred to in any historical documents, maybe



because the area was under the control of the Abbey of Fécamp in Normandy before the Norman Conquest and this may explain why the parish does not appear in Domesday Book.

The South Chapel of the church contains a monument to Arnold Nesbitt, He bought the manor of Icklesham in 1760 and became MP for Winchelsea. In 1763, he established the English Linen Company in Winchelsea to weave cambric - a fine linen cloth; the company built the Manufactory in Factory Square - now called Barrack Square.

Linen was originally made from flax but today may be made from cotton.

Currently 70% of global production of high-quality flax fibre is produced in France. In particular, the Normandy region, is famous for its excellence in flax cultivation, thanks to its favourable climatic conditions and nutrient-rich soil.

Viewpoint 3 - Hogg Hill - Sir Paul McCartney's recording studio



This picture of the old mill was taken in 1951; the mill is similar to that at Winchelsea (see p29).



[Left to right] Technical Manager Keith Smith, Sir Paul McCartney, Engineer Steve Orchard (Image credit: McCartney). “Once he’s in the vibe, he doesn’t want to stop”.

In 1981, Sir Paul acquired Hogg Hill Mill, an eighteenth-century windmill, as an extension of his Peasmarsh property. The original name is “Hogg Hill Mill“, while the studio name is “Hog Hill Mill“.

Hogg Hill Mill is a post mill at Icklesham, Sussex, England which has been restored. It was built in Pett in 1781 and moved to Icklesham in 1790. It was working by wind until 1920 when it was stopped owing to a weak weather beam. (This carries the neck bearing for the windshaft, the axle carrying sails and the brake wheel).

Hogg Hill Mill is a post mill on a two-storey roundhouse. It has four spring sails carried on a cast-iron wind shaft and is winded by a roof-mounted fantail, one of only two surviving post mills in England with this feature, and the only one where this can still be seen. The mill drove two pairs of millstones, arranged head and tail. The brake wheel has been removed, but the wooden tail wheel is of clasp arm construction. (Wikipedia)

Today, the recording studios of Sir Paul McCartney are to be found at the mill - photo left. Sir Paul used Hog Hill Mill studio during the pandemic to record his album 'McCartney III' released in late 2020.



Viewpoint 4 - Look out over Rye Bay

This Artillery Observation Post (OP) was constructed in 1940-41 with an excellent view of Rye Bay and Pett Level. *"Documents confirm that it was an OP spotting for a 9.2-inch howitzer belonging to 56 (Heavy) Regiment, Royal Artillery, situated at Peasmarsh. The Regiment was based in Bexhill. ((pillbox.org.uk)*

Concentrations of Romano-British pottery were found by the County Archaeologist, Andrew Woodcock, in the field behind the Artillery OP.

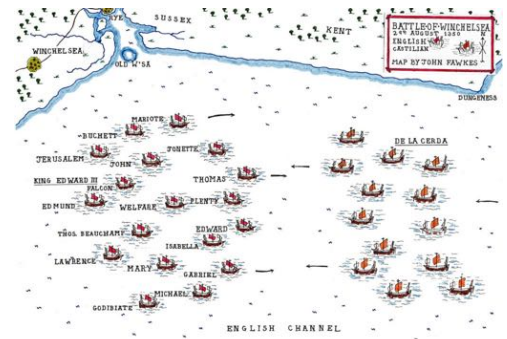
In the early evening of Sunday 29th August 1350, the English fleet, lying off Winchelsea, sighted Castilian ships. The Battle of Winchelsea was a naval battle, part of the Hundred Years' War between England and France.

The English ships weighed anchor, trumpets sounded and wine was served to the knights and nobles as they armed for battle.

It was a victory for an English fleet of 35 ships; it was commanded by King Edward III, over a Castilian fleet of 47 larger vessels - the French hired Castilian ships to blockade English ports. Between 14 and 26 Castilian ships were captured, and several were sunk. Only two English vessels are known to have been sunk, but there was a significant loss of life. Much of this action was visible from the English shore, and the clifftops near Winchelsea were lined with spectators, which gave the battle its name.

The cog Thomas, the King's flagship in the Battle, was from Winchelsea - one of the four ships provided by the town. It was reputed to have been one of the largest cogs ever built.

The Thomas struck the Castilian ship as it was attempting to grapple, so heavily as to spring the English ship's timbers. At the second attempt, it successfully grappled and archers deterred Castilians attempting to drop large rocks from their higher deck. The Castilian ships towered above the diminutive English ones; "like castles to cottages" as a contemporary wrote. Using scaling ladders the English men-at-arms boarded the Castilian ship and cleared its deck. Edward transferred his flag, as Cog Thomas was clearly sinking. (Wikipedia)



Viewpoint 5 - Wickham Manor Farm - a Roman 'vicus'?



Photo by June Grindley

Created by local artist Keith Pettit, the ten wooden sculptures along the Walk are inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry and the heritage of 1066 Country. This sculpture is entitled "The Watcher" - A sentry watching for the arriving Norman fleet.

References to Wickham Manor are found from 1200 onwards. The earliest surviving upstanding remains upon the site date from the mid-late 16th century. William Penn (founder of Pennsylvania) was the owner in 1672. The property remained with the Penn family until sold to Arnold Nesbitt in 1760 (see stop 2). At about the same time, he purchased Icklesham Manor, which together with other sundry land purchases in Winchelsea, created an estate in excess of 1300 acres.

Wickham : English (southeastern): habitation name from any of various places called with Old English wīc 'specialized farm dairy farm' + hām 'homestead' such as Wicham (Kent) Wickham (Berkshire Essex Hampshire) Wickhambreux (Kent) Wickhambrook (Suffolk) Wyckham (Sussex) Wycomb (Leicestershire)

or Wykeham (Lincolnshire North Yorkshire).

In some instances however, wīc-hām is associated with a Romano-British town and wīc is an adaptation of Latin vicus. This is the case for Wickhambrook in Suffolk the Roman association probably being the Roman villa at nearby Lidgate. Similarly Wickham Market also in Suffolk is associated with a large Roman settlement in nearby Hacheston. Wickham near Winchester was a Roman military post and Saxon settlement, mentioned in a Royal Charter of 826.

Can a Roman origin be considered for Wickham Manor Farm?

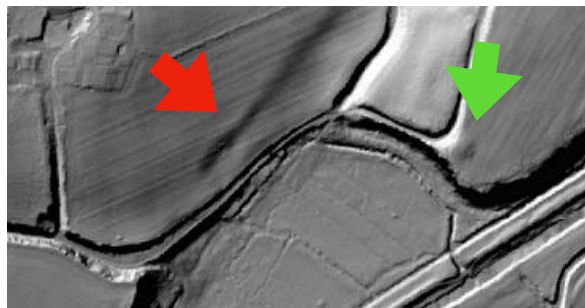
Sampling cores were taken during the Romney Marsh Research Project and reported in 2007. The results from a site that is adjacent to New Gate Cottages and between Wickham Rock Lane and the Royal Military Canal, suggested that a layer of sediment "was as a result of soil erosion promoted by agricultural activity".

The radio-carbon dates of 1 - 240 cal. yrs AD suggest that deposition occurred within the Roman period and that Wickham Manor was farmed at this time. So this and the discovery of the Roman Road and Settlement at Icklesham (See Stop 1) has encouraged a search for further evidence of Roman occupation.

Starkey has suggested (The Battle of Hastings at Sedlescombe 4th edition p84) that the “*most likely location* (of the second kit fort brought over by the Normans) is at New Gate where it overlooked the Norman fleet and blockaded the only land access route to William and his barons”, camped on the Hill of Iham.

Is there any evidence to back up this claim? Perhaps the best answer is that there is a riddle that needs explaining.

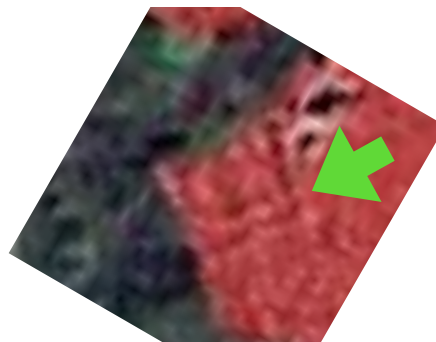
As one walks down the hill from “The Watcher” sculpture, the path drops down and then crosses a flattish platform; this is shown in the LIDAR data (upper right) with a red arrow pointing at the platform.



What is of interest is a World War 11 Luftwaffe photograph (centre right) where the red arrow shows in the same place a straight raised ridge with a ditch (darker line) on each side; a rounded corner links the two parts of this ridge. It resembles a similar feature in Heifer's Field close to St Leonard's Well; this was thought to be the remains of a sea wall (see page 31). It is unlikely that this is the explanation here. It is more reminiscent of the fortifications at a Roman Fort such as Caistor in Norfolk and thus lends support to Starkey's theory.



The only evidence for a Fort in the vicinity is known as Homan's Fort (Green arrows) in the corner of the field above New Gate, where there is a mound about 25m diameter and 1m above the surrounding field. “*The mound enjoys extensive views over the surrounding marsh and coastline.*”(Martin D, 1994). The HAARG magnetometry data shows a rectangular feature that may have been cut off at one end by construction of the road during the building of New Winchelsea. Thus the date of the Fort might be pre-1300.



Further investigations would be welcomed.

Viewpoint 6 - New Gate, The Bleaching Ground the Old Ship Inn and Old Winchelsea.

The Bleaching Ground is probably connected with the English Linen Company, incorporated in 1763. Protestant Huguenot weavers came to Winchelsea to escape religious persecution in France. In 1810 the business was moved to Norwich.

A bleachfield or bleaching green was an open area used for spreading cloth such as linen, on the ground to be purified and whitened by the action of the sunlight. Fresh water was delivered from the spring at New Gate Well.

The cloth may have been stretched over ridges between drainage channels, as at Bunce's Meadow (the National Trust's Morden Hall Park). Less than a km from here was the Merton Abbey Works set up by William Morris in 1881 for tapestry design and weaving. (See Viewpoint 9 for reference to the Sleath tapestry in the Church).

Could the drainage channels have an earlier usage? Could they have been used to ret (or rot) hemp stalks for the extraction of fibre? (see Viewpoint 1 for hemp growing) Other examples of retting ponds are at Dungeness, Dunwich and Ellerton Priory, North Humberside.

From the New Gate Well, a track leads across the Canal and Marsh towards the original site of the Old Ship Inn. This is also reputed to be the pilgrim route to Old Winchelsea.

About 1600 the old Ship Inn and a farm were built on an island, probably by a Welsh cattle drover named Cooke, who brought a herd of Welsh Blacks along the green roads from Wales to be pastured on Romney Marsh. The old Ship Inn and farm were washed away in 1931. (Zoe Vahey). Was Old Winchelsea on this island?



An alternate view is that the Old Ship Inn was built in about 1742. It was originally called The White Hart.

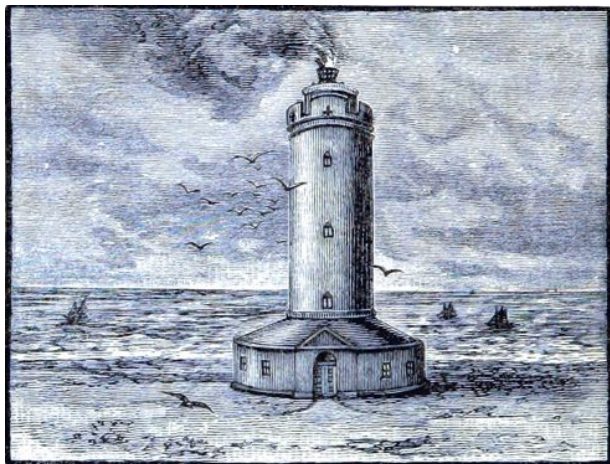
In about 1740 a new Harbour for Rye called Smeaton's Harbour was being built at Winchelsea Beach. The work force would have come mainly from Winchelsea and the shortest way to the work site was the footpath across the marsh to the Ship Inn. The new Harbour was abandoned as a disaster by 1788. (Cliff McCarthy, 2016)

It is thought Old Winchelsea was built on a shingle bank in Rye Bay adjacent to the harbour entrance. After many storm episodes during the 13th century, the town moved to its present position on Iham Hill at the end of the 13th century.

A nautical chart of the east coast of Great Britain was published in 1887 by Charles Wilson (late Norie and Wilson). What is of interest are two features on a sand ridge in Rye Bay near Pett Level, called Tower Knoll and Boulder Bank; the ridge extends towards Hastings.

The ridge and the two features are still present in the 1998 chart. The Knoll is south of Camber Castle and about two km offshore. One wonders if Tower Knoll supported a Fire Tower linked with the port of Old Winchelsea. It would have warned of the cliffs near Cliff End beyond Pett Level.

Authority for private individuals to collect a levy from shipping for a lighthouse dates back to the



Dungeness Fire-Tower.

13th century when Henry III (1216-1272) issued the first Royal Patent in 1261 which allowed the imposition of light duties on shipping to pay for the upkeep of a light. The Patent was given to the Barons of the Cinque Port of Winchelsea who were entitled to collect two pence from every ship that entered their port.

This is the origin of the entire principle by which lighthouses have been operated for centuries right up to the present: a system of taxation known as 'light dues' based on the rule that the user pays. (pharology.eu)

The sand ridge seems to be a tidal sand ridge and is still there on current nautical maps; so one wonders if the Winchelsea Light Tower was at Tower Knoll.

Other lights connected to the harbour entrance were at the Hermitage of St Anthony on the east side of the inlet and at Old Camber Head. These lights may have moved as the geography of the harbour entrance changed.

Rye Bay continued to be at the forefront of lighthouse development. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Dungeness was used as an experimental station by Trinity House; in the 1860s it was the first of their lighthouses to be equipped with a foghorn and the first to be given a permanent (if short-lived) electric lamp.

The Dungeness Fire Tower, known as Lamplough's Tower, was installed in 1635 and remained in service until 1792.

The Winchell Genealogy - 1869 - gives five potential derivations of the name 'Winchelsea'; but all five agree that the name is of saxon origin. Thus it is likely that the port of Winchelsea preceded the Norman Conquest.

Bradley (1917): “In all England there is no medieval city gateway to all appearances so unaccountably situated. To my mind there is nothing in Winchelsea more eloquent of its strange story than this ruinous embattled archway, standing so inconsequently aloof and to all seeming as if it had lost its way amid fields and lanes”.

What are the queries and can they be explained?

Why is the New Gate unlike other Town Gates? No portcullis. No Towers. At the bottom of the hill rather than the top. The New Gate is difficult to understand - why New? Was it built after other Gates? Did it replace an Old Gate? Or did it signify the road to New Winchelsea rather than Old Winchelsea?

Is the New Gate part of the strengthening of the town defences - after King Edward II ordered that Winchelsea's defences be improved by the repair of the walls and the digging of the Town Ditch (dividing the field in two). Perhaps it is just a Postern Gate hidden away, that allows residents to collect water from the New Gate Well?

There are two Hospitals which were thought to be sited near to the New Gate - Holy Cross and St Bartholomew's. At least one was understood to provide hospitality for lepers. Yet these two hospitals appear to be inside the town defences, contrary to an edict from the Pope in 1179 to separate lepers from the rest of society. It is all rather confusing!!

The LIDAR and geophysics data does not show much evidence for the supposed positions of Holy Cross and St Bartholomew's Hospitals near New Gate. But there are



indications in magnetometry data of features of interest; at the north end of Holy Rood Field towards the A259.

This indicates that the Holy Rood (Cross) Hospital moved to be nearer to the Pewis Gate - then the main entry to Winchelsea from Icklesham - where it would have been outside the town walls.

The French Raids

In 1337, in one of the first skirmishes of the Hundred Years War, the new town of Winchelsea was attacked and badly damaged in a French raid.

In 1359 the French returned with a force of some three thousand men, gaining entrance one Sunday morning through the **New Gate**. There was little resistance as the men of the town were away on a similar mission of destruction in France. The women and children sheltered in St. Giles's Church, now lost, where many of them were butchered 'without regard to age, sex, degree or order.'

There was a further French raid in 1360 and, in 1380, a powerful Franco-Castilian fleet arrived to 'fire Winchelsea and the approaches of London'.

Viewpoint 7 - Top of Holy Rood Field - Pilgrimage



The Gough map of about 1360 shows the pilgrim route from Southampton to Canterbury. Upwards is to the East. The British Pilgrimage Trust describes this route as the Old Way.

The route has twelve towns/cities identified along the route - ten of the twelve had leper hospitals. On the map, Winchelsea is shown with three buildings. The hospitals providing hospitality were St John's, St Bartholomew's and the Holy Rood (Cross) - one at least was a leper hospital.

The two main sites for pilgrimage in England were at Canterbury and at Walsingham in Norfolk.

Walsingham became one of England's most prominent pilgrimage sites, thriving throughout the Middle Ages as a centre of Marian devotion. At the English Reformation in 1538, both shrines were dismantled.

The shrine at Canterbury was of Thomas a Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury - further information is at viewpoint nine.

Viewpoint 8 - Monks Walk - Part of The Old Way to Canterbury, Greyfriars

To the lower right is shown the road called Monks Walk into Winchelsea from St John's Hospital. Why is it called Monk's Walk when there was no abbey in Winchelsea?

Perhaps this is a hint that the road was part of the ancient pilgrim road from Southampton to Canterbury.

Standing close to Southampton Water, Netley Abbey is the most complete surviving abbey built by the Cistercian monks in southern England. The Cistercians were formed out of the Benedictine monastic lifestyle and are therefore part of the Benedictine order.

St Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury was a Benedictine abbey founded in 598 and functioned as a monastery until its dissolution in 1538 during the English Reformation.

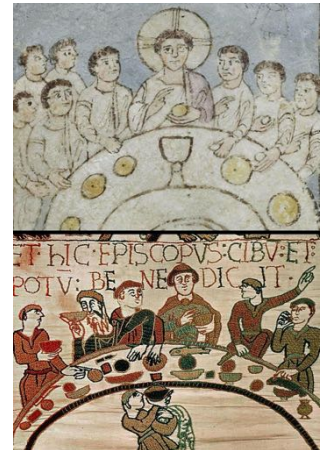
From English Heritage: *St Augustine's Abbey in Canterbury has long been celebrated for its contribution to English Christianity. But the latest research suggests that it may also have been the birthplace of one of the most famous artefacts in history.*

Over the last 20 years the abbey's importance as an early centre of manuscript illumination and Christian scholarship has been re-emphasised. Could St Augustine's Abbey be the location of the Bayeux Tapestry's intellectual creation and design?

St Augustine's was the pre-eminent Benedictine abbey in England at the time of the tapestry's creation. It had a reputation for fine manuscript illumination and a library that rivalled any in the kingdom.

In 1957, the art historian Francis Wormald identified the designer of the tapestry as having drawn inspiration from illuminated manuscripts produced at, or in the hands of, the religious houses in Canterbury in the 11th century. The majority of these were in the ownership of St Augustine's Abbey.

In a 6th-century work known as the St Augustine's Gospels, the figure of Christ at the Last Supper is strikingly similar in his pose to that of Bishop Odo when he is shown in the tapestry blessing the wine during the first meal after the Normans landed in England.





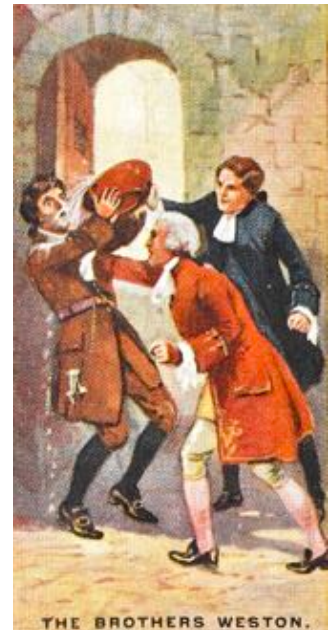
It was sold during the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1538 in a state of disrepair, and was used as a barn for some years afterwards.

It is one of the best surviving instances of Franciscan architecture in England (lower left).

The country house (upper left) was built in 1819 by Richard Stileman in a Gothic style. The mansion was Grade II listed in 1987 and is in front of the friary church. The house is referred to in a never-finished William Makepeace Thackeray novel, *Denis Duval*, as the home of the Weston brothers, a group of highwaymen.



A “Pirates & Highwaymen” cigarette card published by the W.D. & H.O. Wills company in 1925, number 24 of a series of 25, titled “The Brothers Weston. The Escape from Newgate.” The reverse description reads: “George Weston, b. 1753, and Joseph, b. 1759, sons of a Staffordshire farmer, started their extraordinary career of crime with thefts and forgeries in London, Warwickshire, Scotland, Dublin, and Wales. Then for a time they traded as “Gentlemen Smugglers” between England and France.



Greyfriars

Nine Franciscans arrived in Dover on 10 September 1224. They departed from Fecamp in Normandy, whose Abbey possessed the Manor of Rameslie, including Old Winchelsea.

The first Franciscan community was established in Canterbury; other communities followed in London and Oxford. A house for the Order of Friars Minor (Greyfriars) was established in Winchelsea Old Town by 1242. The friary moved to its current location in 1285, after the order purchased 28 acres (11 ha) from John Bone of Wickham, on the site of the new town.

In Jan. 1781, turning highwaymen, they robbed the Bristol Mail near Cranford Bridge, obtaining 10 to 15,000 pounds in notes. To change these for gold they set out on a hurried tour of England pursued in vain by the “Bow St. runners”. Ultimately they were arrested and taken to Newgate. They made a daring escape, but were re-taken and executed at Tyburn, 1782.

Viewpoint 9 - St Thomas's Church - The Graveyard Tower

The square tower in the engraving (below left) used to stand in the south-west side of the churchyard close to the highest point of the hill; it was pulled down in 1790. It is thought that it was part of the town of Iham in Saxon times before the church was built.

It was wondered whether the tower on the town seal (upper left) could be identified with this tower. However it was realised that in the north aisle of the church is delicate stone tracery that might well have been the inspiration for the seal tower (below right).

Similarly, recent research has indicated that in the Bayeux Tapestry “much of the imagery is the product of the art historical tradition of the period, and that little of what is portrayed should be taken literally.” (Rowley 2016). Thus one should not always try to identify features on the tapestry with those on the ground (see page 15 and the link between the Tapestry and the Augustine Gospels).





Positioned fittingly in the centre of Winchelsea is the church dedicated to 'St Thomas the Martyr' – Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury.

The new church was planned with a chancel, side-chapels, transepts and an aisled nave. The completed chancel and chapels (which are in effect aisles in the absence of a nave) are all the same height and thus form a hall-church, a type common in Germany and the Low Counties. A hall-church is lit by the windows of the side walls typically spanning almost the full height of the interior.

The high quality of architecture and some specific detail suggest the church was probably begun about 1290 for the new town under direct royal patronage. It consists of the chancel with side-chapels of equal height and was intended to be cruciform. The ruined transepts were almost certainly never finished and the nave can have been barely started.

The Murder of Archbishop Thomas à Becket

Thomas Becket, also known as Saint Thomas of Canterbury, and later Thomas à Becket, was an English cleric and statesman who served as Lord Chancellor from 1155 to 1162, and then as Archbishop of Canterbury from 1162 until his death in 1170.

After Becket excommunicated several of Henry's supporters in the winter of 1170, King Henry, from his castle at Bur in Bayeux, France, expressed his desire that someone would rid him of his meddlesome opponent, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas à Becket.

Ideally located in the woods, near a stream, Castle Bur was undoubtedly an important royal palace. At Christmas as at Easter, Henry II liked to hunt and party. One chronicler said that the king summoned a large assembly setting up a table for 110 knights in a single room or chamber.

Four of Henry's knights took the king at his word, and, making their way to Canterbury, confronted Becket and murdered him in the cathedral on the night of December 29.

He was canonised by Pope Alexander III two years after his death. He is venerated as a saint and martyr by the Catholic Church and the Anglican Communion.

In Bayeux cathedral, on the south-facing façade above the doorway, there is a sculpture showing Becket's baptism and inside there is a 14th century mural showing his murder, and an altar where he is said to have celebrated mass in 1170.

In Coutances cathedral in Normandy, there is a 13th century stained glass window (see right) in the North Transept depicting scenes from Becket's life.



Sir John Everett Millais was a frequent visitor to the town, staying at the Glebe or the New Inn. This is entitled *L'Enfant du Regiment* 1854-5. With her wounded arm bandaged and the jacket of a French soldier draped over her, a young girl, Marie, sleeps on a monument in the South Aisle.

The eponymous “daughter of the regiment” was the lead character of Gaetano Donizetti’s popular opera La Fille du Régiment (1840). In this story, she is born to an aristocratic Englishwoman and a French officer fighting in the Napoleonic Wars.

After his death, Marie is adopted by the officers of his regiment. This tender scene of the artist’s imagining speaks to the human cost of war and the hope of a resolution to come. (Yale Centre for British Art)

The Benefactor of the Stained Glass memorial windows was Robert Younger, Baron Blanesburgh GBE, PC, QC; he was a Scottish barrister and judge who lived at Greyfriars. Douglas Strachan who designed the memorial windows, is considered the most significant Scottish designer of stained glass windows in the 20th century.

Three windows in the North Aisle represent the elements of earth, air and water; thus, in the context of the War Memorial being a testament to the men whose operations were carried out on the land, sea and in the air. The right-hand window has a theme of the Sea

The Millennium Tapestry was created by over twenty women of the Town to celebrate that occasion and record the face of the town as it is today.

At the west end of the north aisle is a Tapestry, the work of William Sleath, a pupil of William Morris. He did a great deal of tapestry conservation both from Merton Abbey and after he left the firm in the 1920s. The Tapestry is based on a small part of Fra Angelico’s *Predilla* (now in the National Gallery) for the High Altarpiece of the Convent of San Domenico. A *predilla* is the lowest part of an altarpiece.

The whole panel or *Predilla* is entitled “Christ Glorified in the Court of Heaven” (see lowest right).



Winchelsea Cellars

The Winchelsea cellars, or undercrofts, are an important part of the town's medieval history. Visitors can easily identify the tops of cellar entrances at ground level, but the size, scale and beauty of what lies below can only be appreciated by a visit underground.

*Thirty-three accessible medieval cellars still exist and the sites of another 17 are known. They lie mostly in the northern quadrant of the town nearest to the river Brede. Very likely there were others, in the **Winchelsea** that has gone, in the areas to the south and west of the existing town. Cellars in English towns are not unique to Winchelsea, but only Norwich, Southampton and Chester have similar numbers.*

The cellars' locations in Winchelsea are recorded; their shape and size measured and we know at least some of the goods that were stored there, but we have little idea how they were built or who built them. There is no record of their builders.

Although the cellars have been in use for centuries, it's thought that during the 13th and 14th centuries, they were mainly used for storing wine imported from France.

Relatively few historic references have been left of the builders of England's medieval churches and castles and few descriptions of the building methods used. The recorders of history were educated men, not artisans or builders. The records left usually indicate



only the patrons of the buildings, the materials used, their source and costs; sometimes the numbers of different artisans employed and their wages. The name of the architect or master mason may have been recorded. (winchelsea.com)

Viewpoint 10 - Wesley's Tree and the Methodist Churches



The Rector had banned Charles Wesley from using the local Anglican Church, so he preached his very last outdoor sermon here in Winchelsea under an old ash tree outside the churchyard; this became known as Wesley's Tree.

It fell in 1927 but a sapling grown from a cutting of the original tree was planted on the same spot in 1931.

He noted in his journal *"I stood under a large tree and called to most of the inhabitants of the town 'the kingdom of heaven is at hand: repent and believe in the Gospel'. It seemed as if all that heard were, at the present, almost persuaded to be Christians"*.



John Wesley's first visit to Winchelsea in 1771 made a great impression on the townspeople. They formed a Wesleyan Society in 1774 and eventually built their own Preaching House (Evens' Chapel) which opened in 1785 (lowest left).



This Chapel is virtually unchanged from that time. Wesley returned in 1789 and preached in the Chapel. On his further return in 1790, so many people crowded to see him that he could not preach in the Chapel as it was too small.

As attendances expanded, a second Chapel was built in 1867 in Hiham Green (lowest right) - it was demolished in 1969. The original chapel was used as a Sunday School room and thus preserved.

Viewpoint 11 - The Millennium Town Sign and the Court Hall

The Winchelsea town sign was erected to mark the Millennium. The shield is that of the Cinque Ports. In combining the image of ships with the lions of England, it symbolised the 'ship service' provided to the Crown by the Cinque Ports. It also symbolised the royal patronage enjoyed by these towns.

The Insignia of England are said to have had originally only two lions, but that on the marriage of Henry II. with Eleanor of Aquitaine, another lion for that duchy was then added. The three lions appear for the first time on the Great Seal of Richard I in 1198. The lions passant guardant were historically referred to as leopards, but this refers to their pose rather than species.

The model of the ship on the top is similar to that on the Winchelsea seal seen in the second seal of the corporation (early 14th century) at the Royal Museums Greenwich.

It depicts an early fourteenth-century sailing vessel with a quarter-rudder slung on the starboard side. In the bow two men are hauling on the anchor cable which runs aft to a windlass worked by two other men. This is the earliest representation of a windlass on a seal.

Admiral Sir Gervase Alard, Bart. (1270–1340), was an English knight and naval commander who was appointed Admiral of the Cinque Ports Fleet and Admiral of the Western Fleet of the English Navy. He served under King's Edward I, Edward II and Edward III of England from 1296 to 1340. He is known as the first serving naval officer to be granted in 1303 a commission to the rank of Admiral of an English fleet.

Gervase Alard was born in Winchelsea, East Sussex, England in 1270 and came from a seafaring family; he was deemed a master mariner.





The Court Hall is one of the oldest buildings in Winchelsea. The current building was commissioned as a private house for Gervase Alard Junior, probably about 1292. It was designed in the medieval style, built in rubble masonry and was completed around the time that Alard became the first mayor of the town in 1294.

The lower rooms were the Town Gaol in the 18th century, and are now used for meetings and functions.

The Museum is housed on the upper floor; one of the most noteworthy features is the list of Mayors of Winchelsea shown on a series of oak boards. This list, far fuller than that of most towns, is complete from 1430 and is partially complete from 1295 when Mayors first replaced the King's Bailiffs.



The Corporation of Winchelsea

The Mayoring ceremony takes place annually on Easter Monday. Between 1665 and 2019 it was held in the Upper Court Hall. Since 2022 it is split between the Court Hall and the larger and more accessible space of St Thomas's Church. The ceremony recognises the continuing existence of the last surviving unreformed Corporation of England and Wales, and comprises an 'Assembly of the Freemen of Winchelsea' followed by the 'Annual Sitting of the Hundred'.

The Municipal Corporations Act of 1883 sought to rationalise local government throughout Britain. As part of this exercise it abolished the old Corporations, their judicial powers and their special rights, such as the raising of local taxes. A special clause was added to this Act in order to preserve Winchelsea.

The Corporation continues to exercise, through the office of the Mayor, its responsibilities as a Head Port of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports. In addition, the Mayor and Jurats, acting as an executive board and as charity trustees, exercise responsibility for the care and maintenance of properties in their charge and to run the Town Museum for the public benefit; the properties include the Court Hall, the Town Gates and the Town Well.



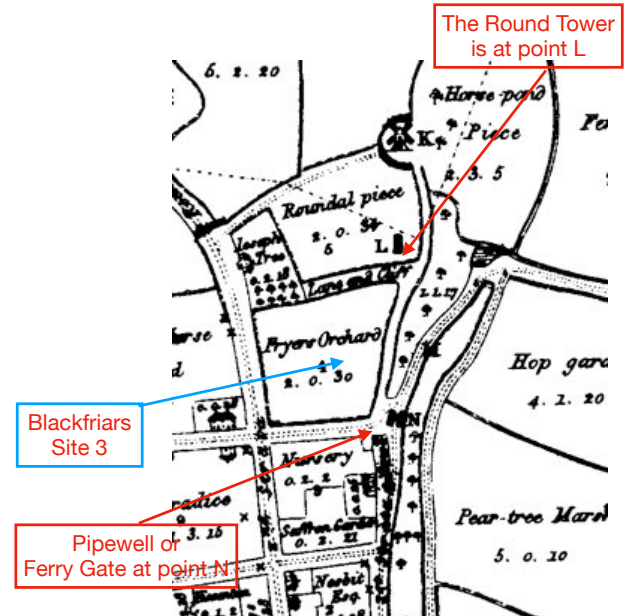
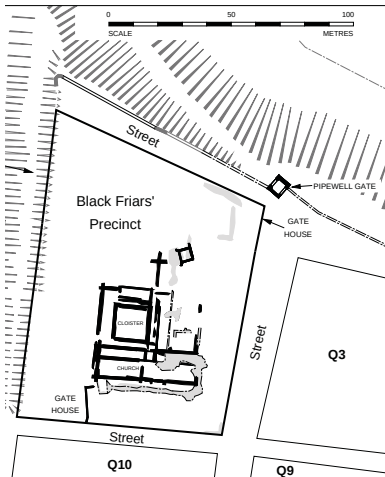
The Corporation of Winchelsea is a Registered Charity – 1192506

Viewpoint 12 - Mill Lane - Blackfriars 3rd Site and the Roundel

The Roundel or Harbour Master's Tower was in the North East corner of Roundel Piece - now part of Castle Field. It overlooked the port. At the Tate Gallery it was wondered whether this Tower was a figment of Turner's imagination. However the map lower right (Charles Stephens 1763) shows the position of the Roundel at Point L. There is other evidence to support its existence.

The Magnetometry data From the Hastings and Area Archaeological Research Group (HAARG) shows a circular feature at the position shown on the map (see page 27).

In the area marked Fryers Orchard on the map and below in the diagram are the remains of the Blackfriars 3rd and last site. In 1357, after the Pope had ordered the Bishop of Chichester to transfer them to a site within the town, they obtained permission to occupy a site close to the Pipewell or Ferry Gate. North is at the top. The site slopes downwards from Mill Road towards the Pipewell Gate. (Diagram from Martin figure 7.27).



Viewpoint 13 - Castle Field - Saxon Iham - The Boundary Stones



Iham was on the hill before the arrival of New Winchelsea. It was a Cinque Port limb of Hastings.

The seven remaining stones out of ten mark the boundary of the Liberty of St Leonard Iham. These were placed by the Corporation of Hastings (CH) in 1748 and are marked on the map as B.S. A is below far right.

Beating the Bounds

Bradley (1917) on p131 notes that, "every seventh year the Mayor and Corporation of Hastings come over to beat the (Iham) parish bounds. Till lately this was quite a little function, associated with time-honoured jokes between native followers and the others and was wound up by a proper and convivial feast at the New Inn."

Beating the bounds in Hastings - Hooe Level 1909 - lower left.



“The large enclosure with its central circular feature are the remains of a castle’s earthworks.

The magnetometer readings suggest that it was constructed of ditches with earthen banks protecting a central wooden tower sited within the circular inner enclosure which would have been a raised mound. Professor Creighton comments that; ‘The accepted end date for the construction of motte and bailey castles in southern England would be c.1150 AD although the feature is not of a traditional motte and bailey construction but potentially as a ringwork (ie: ditched and embanked enclosure) that lies within an outer enclosure. Newly built castle ringworks would similarly be unlikely to be built post-1150 AD, but there are a range of other ringwork-like forms from other periods that this site could be mistaken for.’

He comments that if this feature is a castle, it is the mooted unfinished initiative of Edward I but there are no obvious morphological similarities with other works from this period.

He also does not think that the circular feature could be the foundations of a keep or donjon as it is too big and he refers to Edward I’s castle at Flint having a circular donjon of c.20m across (email-Creighton 2017). However, the Winchelsea feature is 40m in diameter and on close examination of the magnetometer results, the 40m diameter incorporates the ditch and banks which may have been up-cast to form a mound. Within the centre of this, there are faint traces of a square feature, possibly the central building measuring approximately 25m.sq.” HAARG Report 2018



The position of this earthwork overlooking the harbour on the River Brede resembles that of the Motte and Bailey Castle at Southampton which overlooks the medieval harbour. This is thought to have been built by the Normans soon after the Conquest, initially with wooden buildings.

Could Castle Field be the site of the Hestenga ceastra?



In Scene 45 of the Tapestry (left) the workmen seem to be constructing earthworks around a pre-existing fortification next to a Tower.

Rowley (pages 97 and 160) has commented that:

"It has been suggested that this tower represents a pre-Conquest church belonging to a Saxon community"

"The use of the place-name suffix ceastre is invariably associated with Romano-British sites and there is no evidence of any significant Roman or Saxon occupation at Hastings."

So could the earthworks be in Castle Field and the tower be the Church of St Leonard's Church on Beacon Mound (Viewpoint 14)?

How old is this church? The report to the National Trust by C van Gent (December 2021) said, *"This appears to be a church dating from at least the 12th century, if not the the early 11th or even 10th century."* This is based partly on radiocarbon dating of a human bone brought to the surface by rabbits which showed a date as early as 970.

The photograph below was taken from Station Road, Winchelsea; it shows a winter-time view of the cliff at the north end of Castle Field - probably showing the geological layers similar to those at the SSSI by the A259 at the south end of Winchelsea. The red arrow points to the approximate direction of St Leonard's Church, Iham at the left-hand of the hedge.

Edward 1 did not acquire Castle Field for New Winchelsea. He ensured that Iham retained its identity and history. Perhaps that history is more important than we realise.



Now only a few parts of stonework are visible on the west side of the mound, The evidence of the church is visible atop the barrow mound; and rectangular features some 20m in length and in an east-west alignment have been detected (in yellow) using ground-penetrating radar. The remains of the circular windmill are in red and the church underneath in yellow (MOLA report).

“The monks to increase their own store, erected in the chapel a small figure of St Leonard communicating with a vane

Inderwick's source may have been Lambard (written 1570, published 1576) - A perambulation of Kent (the first English county history). It contains the following on p 158 (1826 edition):

“For, within memorie, there were standing in Winchelsey, three parish churches, S. Lennard, S. Giles, and S. Thomas (though now S. Thomas alone serveth the Towne) and in that of S. Lennard there was erected the picture of S. Lennard the patrone of the place, holding a Fane (or Eolus scepter) (a weather vane pointing in the direction from which the wind is blowing) in his hand, which was movable at the pleasure of any that would turne it to such point of the Compasse as best fitted the return of the husband, or other friend, whom they expected : and so, after that done, and offering made (for without offering these Idoles would be idle) they promised to themselves the desired winde, both speedie, and prosperous.”

When William the Conqueror was waiting in St Valery for the winds to change to launch his invasion, he is reputed to have visited the church every day to pray for the wind direction to change from westerly to southerly. The Carmen, translated from Latin by Kathleen Tyson, says "Visiting the church of the saint devoutly, you offer prayers to Him, redoubled by chastity, while you watch by which wind the weathercock of the sanctuary is turned".

St Leonard's Mill soon after ceasing work, c1910 - a note in the HES Simmons Collection in the Science Museum Library states that it is the most interesting post mill in Sussex.

“Thought to have been built c1760 (originally at the north end of Castle Field). It moved to its final site early C19 and ceased work in the early years of the twentieth century after which the sweeps were taken down and it gradually became derelict.

In the 1950s the then Mayor of Winchelsea, Anthony Freeman, managed to get it repaired although the sweeps were not replaced.

In early 1978 a gale blew out most of the tail wall of the mill and left the structure badly damaged.(The photo upper right is from 1982).

Unfortunately the public body which owned it then, rebuilt the buck a different shape and without the machinery, which was left to rot on the ground, although some parts were salvaged and taken to West Blatchington (Sussex) and Stelling Minnis (Kent) mills. The loss of the machinery meant that the structure was unbalanced, resulting in its collapse in the hurricane of 1987.” (Mills Archive Trust).

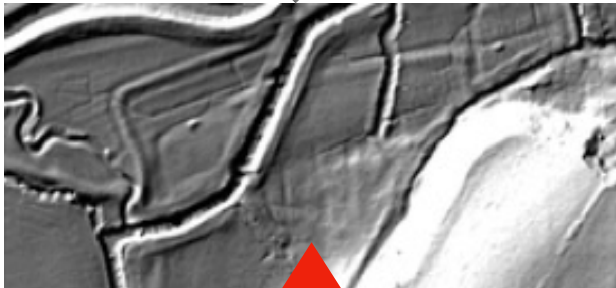
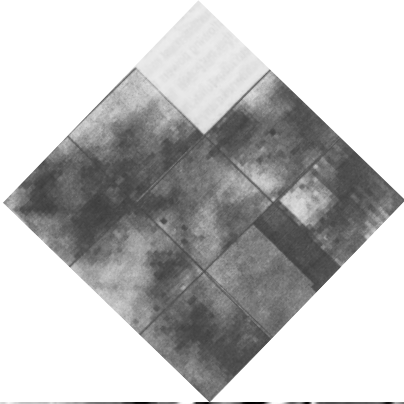
The photograph to the right centre shows the remaining brick supports of the mill (out of four).

The original mill built in 1760 at the North end of Castle Field, was built on a cross-shaped base, as seen in the magnetometry data. Excavation by John Thomas of a Medieval Post-Mill Mound at Manor Farm, near Leicester (lowest right) shows a wooden base of cross-trees. This earlier mill was dated to 12th-13th Century.



Viewpoint 15 - St Leonard's Marsh - Blackfriars

Site 2, Iham Bridge



When Winchelsea moved onto the hill, Edward 1 gave an undertaking that the only friars to be allowed in the new town were to be the Franciscans or Greyfriars. However Edward 2 allowed the Blackfriars to build at a site near the New Gate in land reserved for the monarch. However few people used the New Gate as access was largely via the road from Icklesham. So they moved to a new site close to St Leonard's Well and the track leading to the ferry across the Brede river. It's site was unknown.

In 2007 Winchelsea Archaeological Society (WAS) carried out resistivity measurements on St Leonard's marsh. Their data is shown upper left, LIDAR data is in the middle showing more detail. All three sets of data are oriented in the same way - north follows the direction of the red arrow.

The MOLA magnetic data (2024) from the southern end of St Leonard's Marsh is consistent with a densely occupied archaeological site with a partially rectilinear layout. It is hard to interpret the data in detail, due to its complexity, but its significance becomes clearer when viewed in conjunction with the earth resistance data, (lower left) which unambiguously reveals an extensive set of stone building foundations. It seems highly probable that these are the remains of the medieval 'Blackfriars' Dominican priory.

The St Leonard's Marsh site is believed to comprise the remains of the short-lived Blackfriars priory (1339 to 1357). Although the survey results themselves cannot specifically diagnose a Blackfriars, they unquestionably indicate substantial stone footings with the east- west orientation that would be appropriate for an ecclesiastical building complex. (MOLA Report 2024)

Iham Bridge

“One road which certainly predated the foundation of the town .. was the gently curving north-south highway which skirted the western side of the hill. ... The road appears to be identifiable as “the long street which leads from Iham bridge towards (Old) Winchelsea, mentioned in a deed of c1240 granting to Battle Abbey 1.75 acres on the slopes of the hill of Iham”. Martin p31

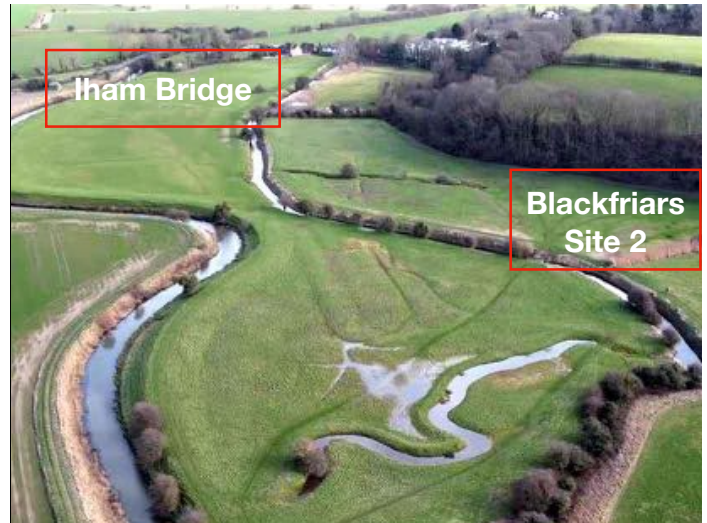
The 1240 date of the charter implies that the long street to (Old) Winchelsea is the track along the slope of the Hill of Iham from St Leonards Well past the Saxon church of St Leonard, continuing across the A259 towards New Gate and joining the track over the marshes to the port of Old Winchelsea.

This indicates the possibility that Iham Bridge may have been at the north end (rather than the south) of this street in the vicinity of Ferry Farm (on the way to the station).

The first bridge across the Brede was built in the field at the end of Ferry Farm garden, at the boundary between Iham and Winchelsea. According to Martin, the bridge probably migrated eastward to its present position.

A document (ESRO HMU 6/1/29) of 1195 confirms this by referring to land *“which lie by the wall which stretches to the bridge of Higham (Iham)) in Ralph de Ykelesham’s marsh of Hope.”* Hope Marsh is shown north of the ferry over the Brede and east of the road to the station in fig 4.1 p26 Martin.

Mark Gardiner on Medieval Farming and Flooding in the Brede Valley (in Romney Marsh



Brede Valley looking towards Iham Bridge. *Phil Mack*

The Debatable Ground p127-137) states that Hope Marsh had been inned by the end of the 12th century. So the wall probably protected a causeway from Iham Bridge across to the north side of the Brede valley.

This document of 1195, before New Winchelsea transferred to Iham Hill, confirms identification of Iham Bridge with the bridge over the River Brede at the point shown near the top end of the drone photograph.



What was thought to be the winding remains of the old course of St Leonard's Creek appears more regular in the Luftwaffe photograph (left) - was it an old harbour?

Viewpoint 16 - Winchelsea Railway Station - The Marshlink line



The Marshlink line was constructed by the South Eastern Railway (SER) in the late 1840s as a priority for military traffic. Deemed to be of strategic military importance, Parliament ordered that it was to be completed before the extension of the Hastings line from Tunbridge Wells to Hastings.

The SER clashed with the rival London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, leading to disputes over the route, planning and operation. After delays, the line opened in February 1851, followed by branch lines to Rye Harbour in 1854, Dungeness in 1881 and New Romney in 1884.



Winchelsea station was opened by the South Eastern Railway (SER) on 13 February 1851 as one of the first stations on the line from Ashford to Hastings. The station, like several others on the line, was built with staggered platforms on the belief that it would be safer for passengers to cross the railway behind a departing train.

On 1 October 1979, the line was reduced to single track to reduce operational costs.

Following the privatization of British Rail under the Railways Act 1993, the Marshlink line transferred to the private sector in November 1996 as part of the Connex South Central franchise, awarded to the French-owned Connex company.

Connex's operation faced criticism for sub-standard performance, leading to the franchise's early termination in October 2000, after which Govia Thameslink Railway took over and rebranded services as Southern.



To the left, a steam train from Winchelsea on the bridge across the river Tillingham. Gibbet Mill is on the right.
Rye News 20th February 2025

Viewpoint 17 - Rameslie Manor

The Brede estuary was a medieval mini-Ruhr Valley, producing prodigious amounts of salt and timber, and probably some iron. Salt was crucial for preserving food, which is why there were herring salting plants at Old Winchelsea. There would have been wharfs and jetties all along the north bank, for shipping salt and timber. If iron was being produced, there would have been wharfs and jetties all along the south bank too.

Jetties, wharfs, barges, warehouses, ferries, paved roads, canals, bridges, and a river crossing do not come cheap. It was a capital-intensive infrastructure business before there was an easy way to raise capital. The only people wealthy enough to operate these services were monasteries. In our opinion, the Abbey of Fécamp provided all these infrastructure services as part of what was effectively an entrepôt, probably paid for by a levy on the value of goods passing through the port. (Starkey)

In 1017 the manor of Rameslie (the lower valley of the River Brede) was given by King Canute to Fecamp Abbey in Normandy. In 1028 two-thirds of the tithes of Old Winchelsea were also given to the Abbey.

Godwin of Wessex (died 15 April 1053) was an Anglo-Saxon nobleman who became one of the most powerful earls in England under the Danish King Canute the Great (King of England from 1016 to 1035) and his successors. Canute made Godwin the first Earl of Wessex (c. 1020). Godwin was the father of King Harold II (r. January – October 1066). In 1052 Earl Godwin took back control of the manor from the Abbey and Iham was laid waste.



From Jonathan Starkey

So the 1066 Battle resulted in Rameslie being restored to Norman control until 1247. When the victorious King William and many of his allied nobles returned to celebrate the conquest at Fecamp Abbey at Easter 1067, they were celebrated for reuniting Britain with Europe in Christianity under the rule of Rome. (Tyson)

Later, Henry 111 considered the port of Old Winchelsea to be so important to the security of England that in 1247 he bought back ownership of the manor of Rameslie from the Abbey of Fécamp; except for a small area some way inland, still known to this day as Rye Foreign. This was not taken back under English control until the Reformation.



“A place named Ala Chocha is recorded in a notification of plea of William the Conqueror in 1086 as a manor of William of Eu. There is no place with this name in any other English or Norman record.

Ala Chocha simply means 'Wing of Salt Cookers' and the ridge from Udimore through Cock Marling leads straight to the then enisled market town of Rye at the tip of the wing (see diagram on previous page).

“Ala Chocha was named as the greatest coastal saltworks in all of Britain: the 100 salt pans attributed to Rye in the Domesday Book and probably the additional untaxed salt pans of Rameslege nearby.

Fecamp Abbey's Rameslege domain is mostly omitted in Domesday records as free of the king's taxes, but the settlements at Rye and Novus Portus are both detailed. 1,195 salt pans - salinae - are mentioned in Domesday Book, but 100 is the most in any one place. The next nearest in production is Maldon with 45 salt pans.” Kathleen Tyson

Salt acts as a preservative by inhibiting microbial growth; it acts by drawing water out of the cells of foods and bacteria through a process known as

osmosis. It was used as a preservative with meat, fish and vegetables.

The via Salaria ran for 150 miles from Porta Salaria, a northern Gate in Rome's Aurelian Walls, to the Adriatic coast. The via Salaria is one of the original Roman roads, older than the city itself, passing the only point where the river Tiber could be crossed in many miles. Some historians consider that the via Salaria and the trade in salt to have been the origin of the settlement of Rome.

The oldest road on the west bank of the Tiber that is known was called Via Campana. It received its name from the Campus Salinarum Romanum (Roman salt pan); this was the area of the ancient salt pans located at the mouth of the Tiber in drained swamp or salt marsh near the ancient ports of Ostia and Portus.

Eu is in the northernmost part of Normandy at the mouth of the Bresle river (see map upper left).

Robert, Count of Eu and Lord of Hastings (died between 1089 and 1093) was a Norman nobleman, son of William I, Count of Eu, and his wife Lesceline. He was a member of the House of Normandy and held the titles Count of Eu and Lord of Hastings.

Robert commanded 60 ships in the fleet supporting the landing of William I of England and the Norman conquest of England in 1066. Wikipedia.

William II, Count of Eu, feudal baron of Hastings (died about 1096) was a first generation Anglo-Norman nobleman, Count of Eu. According to most authorities he was the son and heir of Robert, Count of Eu, (died before 1093).

In 1050, William, Duke of Normandy, the future William the Conqueror and king of England, married Matilda, the daughter of the Count of Flanders, at the chapel of the castle in Eu.

Udimore

Udimore lies on a narrow ridge between the rivers Brede and Tillingham. The church (see upper right) is only 80 yards from the parish boundary (Horsfield I p512), close to the site of Court Lodge (see centre right), the old manor, which in 1912 was removed to Groombridge.

The parish church of St Mary is certainly Norman and probably earlier in origin and the manor site is likely to be contemporary with the church. Though a church is listed in Domesday Book (9, 104), no part of the present one is older than the C12 nave.

Udimore Court Lodge has been described as a probable Fortified Manor House. There are earthwork remains - a moat at the top of the LIDAR (lower photo).

Tyson writes: According to "Rother Country", page 108, written by local historian Bob Chantler:

Court Lodge seems to have been an important residence from an early time. It was visited by both King Edward I, who reigned 1272 until 1307, and by his grandson Edward III, whose queen, Philippa of Hainault, watched the Battle of Les Espagnols sur Mer in the English Channel from the manor estate. (see Viewpoint 4)

The manor of Count d'Eu was located at Udimore near the church built by Fecamp Abbey. Udimore is just west along the ridge and a bit higher than Cock Marling. The name itself can be derived as Eu-de-mer: Eu's manor at the sea.



Viewpoint 18 - River Brede Valley

The river takes its name from the village of Brede. The village is on the north bank of the river, and its name in Old English means breadth, as it overlooks the wide river valley. Prior to the fifteenth century, the river was known as the Ee or Ree, which simply means 'river' in Old English.

A wall, some 1,100 yards (1,000 m) long known as the Damme, crossed the valley from Icklesham in the south to the modern-day Float Farm in the north. A second embankment was constructed further downstream, running northwards from Winchelsea, but the effect of the sea walls was to reduce the volume of sea water that entered the valley with each tide, reducing its scouring action.

A build up of sediment in the valley caused an enormous engineering project to be undertaken. At a date between 1419 and 1442, a new embanked cutting was made for the river to the north of and parallel with the old course of the river. The construction of this artificial ditch was called 'the Channel'.

A new channel was then constructed for much of its course downstream from its junction with Doleham Ditch, slightly to the north of the Ee, and running parallel with it, which was for many years known as the Channel, but subsequently became the Brede.

It measured about 150 m wide and at least 7.5 km long and flanked by walls. Its intention was clear:

- to allow an increased quantity of sea water to ebb and flow in the Brede valley in a new broad course, and so scour the bed of the river;
- enable access to the port at Winchelsea and the free drainage of water from the marshes either side.

(From Mark Gardiner's paper of 1995.) The river then became navigable to Brede Bridge, where a new quay was constructed.

There was a dock or flota, memory of which is preserved in the name of Float Farm nearby. This was a minor quay and the dock served as a point for loading firewood; the woods in the eastern Weald were coppiced for firewood, much of which was shipped to London and the Continent.



Cadborough Cliff

“One Englishman kept hidden under the sea cliffs” (Line 149 Carmen translation by Tyson)
He then reports to King Harold that *“the Duke of Normandy has invaded the land”* (Line 169).

Its only when one reads Lines (127-128) *“Depopulated of its terrorised settlers, the happy land owed to you embraced you and yours in a calm basin.”* , that one starts to consider whether the Carmen might be referring to Cadborough Cliff and the Manor of Rameslie in the Brede Valley.

Gibbet Mill

Gibbet Mill, Tillingham Mill, Barry's Mill or New Mill is a grade II listed, cosmetically reconstructed, smock mill at Rye. Today it serves as bed and breakfast accommodation.

A mill has stood on this site since 1596, and a post mill is known to have been built here in 1758. Gibbet Mill was built in 1824; it was working by wind until 1912, and was used as a bakery until 13 June 1930 when it was burnt down. The new mill was erected in 1932.

The replica mill bears very little resemblance to an actual working windmill. It has a shorter smock, making the mill appear squatter than the original. The cap is exaggerated in height and is not designed to turn into the wind. Replica sails and fantail are carried. The reconstructed stage is wider than the original.



Sculpture no 10 (right) near the end of the walk - “Treow” – of a tree depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry”, (left). It is thought that the tree may be a beech tree with nuts.



Kings of England from 978 to 1087 - simplified

Royal House	Name	Rule
Wessex	Ethelred 11	978 to 1016
Denmark	Cnut	1016 to 1035
Denmark	Harold Harefoot	1035 to 1040
Denmark	Harthacanute	1040 to 1042
Wessex	Edward the Confessor	1042 to 1066
Godwin	Harold Godwinson	1066 to 1066
Normandy	William 1 - the Conqueror	1066 to 1087

The Royal House of Wessex goes back to Alfred the Great in 886. Alfred the Great initially ruled Wessex, one of the seven Anglo-Saxon kingdoms which later made up modern England. The House of Wessex ruled from 886 to 1013. From 1013 to 1016 the Royal House alternated between Wessex and Denmark.

Emma of Normandy was the only woman to be queen of England, twice. First she married the Anglo-Saxon King Ethelred and when he died in 1016, then married the Danish King Cnut (or Canute) in 1017.

Emma signed the grants that Cnut made in 1017 by which the Monastery at Fécamp in Normandy, was given the estate at Rammesleagh with its landing place, 'as promised by Ælthelred'. The area of Rameslie is disputed but centred on the resource-rich Brede valley. See Viewpoint 17 for discussion of Rameslie and the salt pans.

Emma died in 1052, her eldest child was Edward the Confessor. Harold Godwinson was the last Anglo-Saxon king of England. His father was the powerful Anglo-Saxon nobleman Earl Godwin; his mother, Gytha, was related to the Danish kings. The Godwinsons dominated most of England during Edward the Confessor's reign. Harold was Edward's brother-in-law and after Edward's death in early 1066, Harold took over as King Harold II.



The seven main Anglo-Saxon petty kingdoms located in the southeastern two-thirds of the island that were unified to form the Kingdom of England.

Only 14 years after Emma's death in 1066, England's shores were invaded and conquered by her great nephew Duke William of Normandy. In 1067, King William returned to Old Winchelsea rather than Pevensey after visiting Normandy.

Notable Winchelsea personalities

Sir Petipace of Winchelsea, a Knight at King Arthur's Round Table



Frederick Inderwick was an English lawyer who practised in the probate and divorce courts, antiquarian, and Liberal Party politician who sat in the House of Commons from 1880 to 1885 as the Member for Rye. He was married and lived at Mariteau House, Winchelsea. He was Mayor of Winchelsea

twice - in 1892-93 and 1902-03.

Inderwick's 1892 book on "The Story of King Edward and New Winchelsea" was inscribed *"To the Right Hon. Lord Tennyson, Poet Laureate, while reading whose verse, we live again in the time of Arthur and in the hall of Camelot, I dedicate this recital of the evanescent glory of a medieval town."*

Idylls of the King, published between 1859 and 1885, is a cycle of twelve narrative poems by the English poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892; Poet Laureate from 1850) which retells the legend of King Arthur, his knights, his love for Guinevere and her tragic betrayal of him, and the rise and fall of Arthur's kingdom. The whole work recounts Arthur's attempt and failure to lift up mankind and create a perfect kingdom, from his coming to power to his death at the hands of the traitor Mordred (Wikipedia).

Is there a connection between Winchelsea and King Arthur? Surprisingly there is - the rather poorly known Sir Petipace of Winchelsea.

The Arthurian Name Directory by Christopher Bruce (1999) gives the following entry for Sir Petipace: Petipace of Winchelsea [Petipas, Pettypas] - A knight defeated by Sir Tor during his quest to retrieve a white brachet (hunting

dog) stolen from Arthur's court. Tor sent him to Arthur, who eventually appointed him to the Round Table. He later joined Mordred and Agravain in their plot to trap Lancelot and Guinevere in flagrante. He was slain by Lancelot outside Guinevere's chambers.

In the preface, the author writes that: *"I first encountered Sir Petipace in Malory's Le Morte d'Arthur (1469-70) when I first read it in 1988. For some reason, out of all the characters listed in the book, his name stuck in my head like a bad song. About 1993, I began studying the Arthurian legends in earnest, and to facilitate my studies, I set out to buy a dictionary or encyclopaedia that catalogued Arthurian names. I eventually bought four, and for all of them, Petipace was the acid test. As soon as I opened a book, I would flip to the "P" section and try to find Sir Petipace of Winchelsea.*

I never found him. Motivated by the belief that poor old Petipace deserved his own entry, I began cataloguing all the proper names in Le Morte d'Arthur, just so I could keep them straight myself."

Two queries remain - does the name Petipace have a meaning and why was Winchelsea mentioned?

The words "petty pace" were used in the Scottish play by William Shakespeare (published 1623) - V. v. 19-28; Hamlet has just heard news of Lady Macbeth's death:

*Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.
Out, out, brief candle!*



“Besides describing time as something that “creeps”, Macbeth further disparages it by calling it a “petty pace”. The pace could be our daily lives, measured by a sequence of tomorrows, which are characterised as cheap, mean, ungenerous, inconsequential, and insignificant.”
 Joel Deshaye, University of Saskatchewan.

So perhaps the reference to Sir Petipace of Winchelsea in *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1469-70) implies that Winchelsea is by then “inconsequential and insignificant”? Sir Petipace could just be ignored.

There is another link between Macbeth and Winchelsea. Ellen Terry lived at Tower Cottage from 1896 to 1906.

The upper photograph is of Lady Macbeth in an oil painting by John Singer Sargent, now in Tate Britain, in London. Painted in 1889, it depicts Ellen Terry in a famous performance as Lady Macbeth in William Shakespeare's tragedy *Macbeth*, wearing a green dress decorated with iridescent beetle wings.



Miss Ellen Terry's cottage, Tower Cottage adjacent to the Strand Gate

A leading late nineteenth century actress, Dame Ellen Terry's lifestyle directly challenged conventional Victorian morality and social codes: encompassing three marriages, two illegitimate children, and at least two long term love affairs. Despite this, she became one of the most respected performers of the era and achieved international success.

A DIVORCE CASE. 1877. WATTS V. WATTS AND GOODWIN.

In this suit, the husband, Mr. George Frederick Watts, R.A., petitioned for a divorce by reason of his wife's adultery (Ellen Terry) with Mr. Edward William Goodwin, an architect. In a nice coincidence, the lawyer who opened the case for the petitioner was **Mr. F. A. Inderwick, Q.C.** with whom this little story began.

Spike Milligan



Spike came to Winchelsea to stay at weekends with the Producer of the Goon Show (1952 to 1956) Peter Egan and his wife Thea, nicknamed Squirrel. After Peter's death in 1969, she moved to No 3 Barrack Square.

Spike lived with his wife Shelagh near the top of Dumb Woman's Lane from 1988 until his death in 2002 aged 83. He is buried in St Thomas's churchyard in Winchelsea.

Spike Milligan's connection with Bexhill started with his posting on 2 June 1940 to D Battery 56th Heavy Regiment Royal Artillery which was stationed in 'Worthingholm' in Hastings Road, Bexhill. Although the unit was moved around the area in the usual military fashion they did not finally leave until 6 January 1943, on their way to Algeria. Maff Dyke - Home Front History.

Viewpoint 4 discusses the observation post manned by the 56th Regiment, but there is no evidence that Spike was ever based there. (pillbox.org.uk)

Milligan on Mud | Spike Milligan on Archaeology BBC 1989

Spike was interested in archaeology since his childhood in India and in the BBC documentary meets David Martin, author with his wife Barbara, of "New Winchelsea Sussex"; they visit the Blackfriars' Barn cellar in Winchelsea owned by the National Trust.

Vera Atkins

The second Methodist Chapel in Hiham Green was demolished in 1969 and a house built there. It was occupied by Vera Atkins who was the Deputy Director of the France Section (F Section) of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) from 1941 to 1945.



She was a civilian in the SOE until August 1944, when after being naturalised as a British subject, she was commissioned as a Flight Officer in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). At the end of 1945, SOE was wound-up, and in January 1946 Atkins, now funded on the establishment of the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), arrived in Germany as a newly promoted Squadron Officer in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

The plaque was placed at Nell Gwynn House, near Sloane Square, London, where Vera lived during WW2.



In the photo left by Robbie Gooders taken in St Thomas's churchyard, Vera is in the centre.

The National Trust Winchelsea Landscape Revival Project

“With a significant proportion of farmland having come back into the direct care of the National Trust, we now have an exciting opportunity to re-look at how we manage the landscape around Winchelsea.

The area is special. It is home to a diverse range of rare or threatened wildlife including skylarks, water voles and dragonflies, as well as protected archaeological features. With the world in a biodiversity and climate crisis, the National Trust, as the largest conservation charity in Europe, sees Winchelsea as part of the solution.

Our vision is to significantly increase biodiversity within the Winchelsea and Brede Valley landscape by restoring natural processes to our land holding, allowing nature to recover, wildlife to thrive and climate and the environment to become more resilient.

By devising a scheme that combines regenerative farming techniques with natural recovery we will maximise the benefits for people, carbon, and nature.

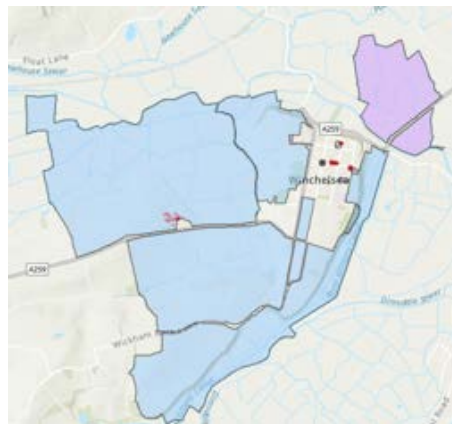
*Harry Bowell
Executive Director of Land and Nature for the National Trust”*

National Highways are mentioned within the National Trust Document titled “Winchelsea Landscape Revival: Site Management Plan 2023” as the National Trust’s project partner for the delivery of improved biodiversity. The cost estimate for the project is £2,764,490 - Freedom of Information Request.



These Sussex Cattle may be seen from the Walk. ‘They are one of the oldest breeds in England; they have been noted for their working abilities and for their hardy constitution. Practically all work on the land and in the woods was carried out by the aid of Sussex oxen.’ Sussex Cattle Society.

‘It’s thought that today’s breed of Sussex cow is descended directly from the red cattle that inhabited the Weald at the time of the Norman Conquest.’ National Trust.



The extent of land owned by the National Trust around Winchelsea - from the National Trust Land Map (January 2026).



Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges multiple helpful conversations particularly with Jonathan Starkey, Kathleen Tyson, the late Jo Kirkham, Philip Merricks, David Staveley, Cameron Ross, Andrew Richardson.

Through these conversations, it has been seen that resolution of the disputes about the Sites of the 1066 Invasion and Battle is most likely to come from a gradual buildup of experimental data from the Brede valley.

Some of the suggestions in this booklet are speculative but are based on interpretation of available data. The problem is whether they are the right interpretations. Only new and more extensive data will clarify the situation.

If there are errors, please contact the author, Andrew Scott, at:

andrewdaltonscott@gmail.com

He will be pleased to make the appropriate corrections. If sufficient interest is shown in the booklet, it may be published later in paper-back format.

General reading

1066 and the Battle of Hastings by Keith Foord and Neil Clephane-Cameron - 2nd edition 2021

An Archaeological Study of the Bayeux Tapestry by Trevor Rowley - 2016

Battle of Hastings at Sedlescombe by Jonathan Starkey - 4th edition 2026. This is supported by the website:

<https://battleofhastings.info>

The Bayeux Tapestry by Sir Frank Stenton et al 1957

Carmen Widonis - The First History of the Norman Conquest by Kathleen Tyson - 2018.

Sources of illustrations and data

Where possible the sources are identified in the text. If photographic sources are not provided, then they were taken by the author.

The 31-mile 1066 Country Walk (from Rye to Pevensey) was originally opened in the 1990s to join the Saxon Shore Way (from Gravesend to Hastings) with the South Downs Way (from Eastbourne to Winchester).

There are extensions to the 1066 Country Walk to create links from Pevensey to Jevington on the South Downs Way and from Hastings to Doleham. Doleham is between Westfield and Icklesham in Section 5 of the 1066 Country Walk; section 6, is then missed out.

Directions for the 1066 Country Walk Section 6

Walkers are advised to use the Ordnance Survey maps which show the 1066 Country Walk;

Explorer Sheet 124 - Hastings and Bexhill;
for the full 1066 walk, or

Explorer Sheet 125 - Romney Marsh, Rye and Winchelsea; for the sections 5 and 6 from Westfield to Rye.

The South Downs Way was opened in 1972.

Initially it ran almost entirely in Sussex, from Buriton, on the Hampshire–Sussex border, to Beachy Head, near Eastbourne. In 1987 it was decided to extend the route westwards through Hampshire to Winchester, capital of Alfred the Great's Anglo-Saxon kingdom.



The 100 miles long South Downs Way National Trail follows the old routes and drove-ways along the chalk escarpment and ridges of the South Downs.

At the east end of the 1066 Country Walk in Rye, a connection may be made with **the Saxon Shore Way**. This is a 153-mile long-distance footpath, from Gravesend to Hastings, which originally opened in 1980.



The path follows the coastline as it was about 1500 years ago, long before the North Kent Marshes or the Romney Marsh came into existence, when the cliff lines to the north and south extended further into the sea and when the Wantsum Channel provided a thoroughfare for boats between the Isle of Thanet and mainland England.

Four of the Roman Forts on the Saxon Shore - at Reculver, Richborough, Dover and Lympne - are included in the Saxon Shore Way; it does not extend to include the Roman Fort at Pevensey.



Winchelsea Beacon was erected to mark the new Millennium.

'By the 18th and 19th centuries the role of beacons expanded beyond military communications and became symbols of celebration and national unity. Beacon lighting events marked significant national occasions, such as royal jubilees, coronations, and military victories.

One notable instance was the lighting of beacons across the UK to celebrate the victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. This tradition continued into the 20th century, with beacons lit for events like the end of World War II and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.'

Most recently, the Winchelsea Millennium Beacon was lit to celebrate the Queen's 90th Birthday in 2016, her Platinum Jubilee in 2022, the 80th anniversary of D-Day in June 2024 and the 80th anniversary of VE-Day in May 2025.

Photo by John Spencer, Rye News 28 April 2016