

# The Battle of Hastings at Sedlescombe

By Jonathan and Michael Starkey

Third Edition

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# Acknowledgements

This manuscript doubtless contains more errors than we would like. We can only say that it would have been an awful lot worse without sage advice from Jo Kirkham, Kathleen Tyson and Simon Mansfield, for which we are enormously grateful. We also have to thank Nick Austin, without whom we would be stuck in the dark ages.

# Dedication

With love to our mum, Maggie

## About the authors





Jonathan Starkey is a retired business executive, formally IT Director and Chief Operating Officer for two of the world's biggest Investment Banks. Michael Starkey is a retired Civil Servant who specialised in state benefit entitlement.

Searching for lost medieval battlefields is our lifelong hobby. Indeed, we have been looking for the Hastings battlefield since we were at school. We have also written about our search for the battlefields at Stamford Bridge, Fulford, Assandun and Brunanburh.

When we are not traipsing around muddy fields, we like to investigate the momentous people and events that shaped British history. Jonathan lives in Buckinghamshire. He enjoys puzzles, churches, and building Heath Robinson machines. Michael lives on the Isle of Wight. He was captain of his University Challenge team and currently speaks eight languages. He enjoys Tolkien, quizzes, nature, and languages.

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### Introduction

No one knows for certain where the Battle of Hastings was fought because no one has ever found so much as a battle related button. It was not fought at the traditional location in Battle. At least, that is what we decided after visiting Battle Abbey on a school trip for the 900th anniversary. Even as eight and nine-year-olds, we could tell that the basic events described by our guide did not match the geography and topography of the place.

We have been searching for the real battlefield for most of our adult lives, by and large wasting our time looking at random hills. There was a serious danger of us not living long enough to make any progress at all. Then, in the late-1990s, we saw Nick Austin present "Secrets of the Norman Invasion".

Austin pointed out that the traditional translations and interpretations of the contemporary accounts have been massaged to fit an assumption that the battle happened at Battle. The many passages that contradict the orthodox battlefield have been summarily rejected or have been translated using niche meanings to force a match. He re-interpreted the sources to support his theory that the battle was fought on Telham Hill. We disagree with his conclusion but stole his approach.

A year or so later, we heard Jo Kirkham, a local history expert and Chair of Rye Museum Trust, explain her eminently sensible theory that the Normans landed in the Brede estuary because the invasion was planned by the monks of the Norman Abbey of Fécamps who had expert local knowledge thanks to a cell in the Brede basin.

Using our otherwise useless knowledge of archaic languages, we went back to first principles, making objective re-translations of the contemporary accounts. It gave us dozens of new location clues. We then regressed the local geography using QGIS to match the new clues against the contemporary topography. We found compelling evidence that Jo Kirkham was right, as we explain in 'The Landing' section below. We worked out the likely camp locations from the landing and the likely battlefield from the camps, as we explain in 'The Camps' and 'The Battle' sections below.

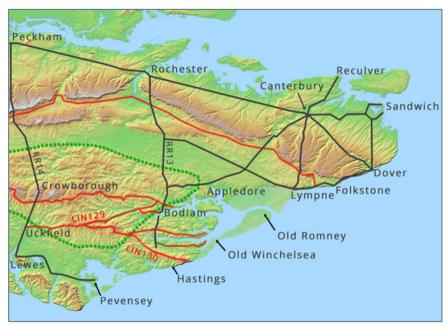


Figure 1: 1066 coastline showing Roman roads (black) and probable trackways (red)

Before embarking on our main text, it is helpful to be familiar with the contemporary geography. Figure 1 shows the southeast of England at the time of the invasion. Note the radically different coastline, especially in the part of East Sussex where the events take place. In those days a 20-milelong shingle spit retained an enormous inland lagoon that eventually became Romney Marshes. A shorter shingle spit retained a lagoon that eventually became Pevensey Levels. All the places named on this diagram were there at the time, except Hastings.

In the first week of October 1066, Harold was in London, the Normans were on the East Sussex coast. Between lay the immense Andredsweald forest, outlined by green dots on Figure 1. It was lozenge shaped, some 120 miles by 60 miles. Hundreds of carts would have carried the English tents, weapons, armour, fortifications, tools, cooking equipment, and food. Most of them would have been pulled by oxen. It would have taken weeks – or, more probably, months - for oxen to cross the Andredsweald on forest tracks, so they must have arrived on a paved Roman road. There were only two paved Roman roads across the Andredsweald: one between Rochester

and Sedlescombe (Margary 13), the other between Peckham and Lewes (Margary 14). The former went direct to the heart of the action, the latter would have required a two-week trek across 15 miles of the Andredsweald. We are convinced the English arrived on Margary 13.

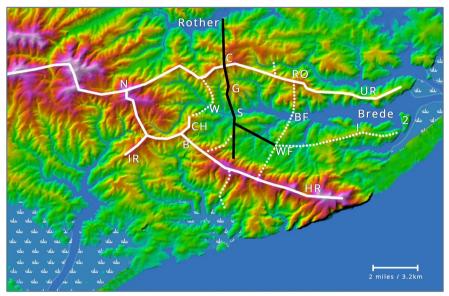


Figure 2: East Sussex geography and topography with roads

Figure 2 shows the East Sussex topography at the time of the invasion, with the Rochester Roman road in black. Some probable unpaved tracks and ridgeways are shown in white, some possible unpaved tracks in dotted white. Note that modern Hastings was on a Monty-Python-foot-shaped peninsula, bordered by the sea to the south, the Brede estuary to the north, and the Ashbourne estuary to the west. We refer to it hereafter as the Hastings Peninsula.

All this is straightforward and as uncontentious as anything we write about below, although even this has detractors. Everything else is complicated and novel. Among our unorthodox proposals are the landing place, camp locations, engagement, combat, and tactics. We are amateur enthusiasts who might seem to be criticising every professional historian that has ever written about the Conquest. It sounds impertinent and disrespectful, but this could hardly be further from the truth.

The orthodox battle narrative that we are taught at school is not the harmonious consensus that we are led to believe. Rather, it is a synthesis of bits from dozens of competing theories. As Charles Oman once rued, Hastings is: "a field which has been fought over by modern critics almost as fiercely as by the armies of Harold and William". They argue about the size of the armies, the camp locations, the direction from which the Normans attacked, the length and shape of the English shield wall, the fortifications, how and when Harold died, where the English fled, and so on. Each theory must have at least one fundamental flaw, or historians would all support the flawless theory. So, a supporter of any one theory acknowledges it has fundamental flaws but believes there are worse flaws in the others. Supporters of the other theories think the reverse. So, on aggregate, historians think that no combination of circumstances is consistent with the orthodox battlefield location. We agree with them.

Our Sedlescombe battlefield theory has no flaws. Indeed, no one has ever found a significant flaw in our entire proposed Conquest narrative covering the landing and camps as well as the battle and battlefield. We list 33 battlefield location clues below. Hurst Lane in Sedlescombe matches 30 of them, and there is a perfectly rational explanation for the only significant exception. This is three times as many matches as the traditional battlefield, and all but one of the clues it matches are among the most general.

Sceptical? Almost everyone is. After all, we might have rigged the clues to match Hurst Lane, perhaps by omitting contra-evidence or by poor quality research or by faulty reasoning. In our experience, most people assume we have done one or the other, without being able to find any errors, for no reason other than that they cannot countenance that the orthodox battlefield could be wrong. Not only is its location supported by every professional historian that has ever written about the battle, but it is marked by 'Battle Abbey' and the town of 'Battle'. It seems inconceivable to most of our readers that these names could not derive from the site of the battle. They don't. Consider these two points.

- 1. Battle Abbey and Battle town only got these names in Middle English. Previously, the town was named 'Bello', the Abbey 'Sancti Martini de Bello'. These are Latin names. Latin 'bello' is a verb meaning 'to wage war'. In other words, the Abbey's name means 'St Martin of the War', as if it commemorated the Conquest rather than the battle. If it was on the battlefield, it would surely be named 'Sancti Martini de Pugnatum', 'St Martin of the Battle'. The names are good evidence that the Abbey was not built on the battlefield rather than that it was.
- 2. No Christian monasteries anywhere in the world purport to have been built on a battlefield, apart from Battle Abbey. It is not a coincidence. They are deliberately located away from places of violence. The main reason is that building a monastery on a battlefield would be widely perceived as the glorification of violence. A secondary reason is that medieval people were terrified of being haunted by the souls of victims of violence. The Abbey's location is therefore good evidence that the battlefield is elsewhere.

If the battle was not fought at Battle, then where? Half a dozen other candidates have been proposed. They are all fundamentally flawed, as we explain on our website.<sup>1</sup> We propose that it was fought at Hurst Lane in Sedlescombe.

The bulk of this book delves around in the weeds. After working on our theory for 30 years, our wargaming siblings told us that it is obvious, just using common sense and our Figure 1 and Figure 2 maps.

- 1. Harold would not have gone to the theatre of war if he knew the strength of the Norman cavalry, so he was the victim of an intelligence failure.
- 2. Harold must have arrived at the theatre of war on the Rochester Roman road because it was logistically the only way that he could have got his carts and their cargo to the English camp in time for the battle.
- 3. It is militarily implausible that Harold would cross the Brede before the far side had been scouted and cleared because the crossing points were horribly ambush prone. It is logistically implausible that he would cross

 $<sup>^1\</sup> https://momentousbritain.co.uk/go/BOH\_Alternative\_Battlefield\_Theories$ 

the Brede before a food chain had been established. It would have taken at least two days, or more probably two weeks. Therefore, he camped beside the Rochester Roman road on the last safe high ground before the Brede. Ignorant of the Norman cavalry (see 1), he would have reasoned that place was the Great Sanders ridge (*G* on Figure 2).

- 4. William would have 'closed the door' behind the English army by occupying the Udimore Ridge as soon as they had passed Cripps Corner (C on Figure 2). The English army was thereby trapped between the Udimore Ridge and the Brede with nowhere better to go.
- 5. The Normans would have attacked the English camp before any reinforcements could arrive.

Hopefully, this will put readers in a suitably open frame of mind. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Our thoughts were originally published as a series of blogs between 2010 and 2015. They got big and messy. We were asked to amalgamate them into a book for reading convenience. Do not expect an academic reference. We are amateurs that write for fun. The second edition tried to clarify dozens of poorly worded thoughts from the first. This third edition tries to make it less 'folksy'. It could still do with some scholarly conversion into something more academic and entertaining. We are open to offers.

This third edition removed the entire section about 'Alternative Battlefield Theories'. It was written when the Bexhill Bypass plans were still being debated. Nick Austin's Crowhurst battlefield theory placed the Norman camp at Upper Wilting on the route of the bypass. His theory was actively promoted by protesters that hoped to get the bypass re-rerouted. It gained a huge and high profile following. We needed to critique it. The other candidates never had much of a following, but to be fair, we assessed them too. Now that the bypass is complete, support for Austin's theory has dwindled to the level of the others. They have become an unnecessary distraction here. The section is still available on our website (link above).

We will try to show that our proposed battlefield makes more sense, best fits medieval military tactics, and best fits the contemporary account battlefield descriptions. These accounts include 33 clues about the battlefield, more than half of which have never previously been considered. Hurst Lane matches 30 of them and there is a credible explanation for why it does not match the other three. None of the other battlefield candidates comes close

Original evidence for the invasion appears in 14 'contemporary' accounts. For the sake of brevity, we will sometimes refer to them using these abbreviations:

ASC = Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (reasonably contemporary with events)

ASC-C, ASC-D, ASC-E = Recensions of ASC that cover the invasion

Carmen = Carmen de Hastingae Proelio; c1067

Jumièges = Gesta Normannorum Ducum; William of Jumièges; c1070

Poitiers = Gesta Guillelmi; William of Poitiers; c1072

Tapestry = Bayeux Tapestry; finished c1077

Domesday = Domesday Book; 1086

Baudri = Adelae Comitissae; Baudri of Bourgueil; c1100

Brevis Relatio = Brevis Relatio de Guillelmo Nobilissimo; c1120

John of Worcester = Chronicon ex Chronicis; John of Worcester; c1125

Orderic = Historia Ecclesiastica; Orderic Vitalis; c1125

Huntingdon = Historia Anglorum; Henry of Huntingdon; c1129

Malmesbury = Gesta Regum Anglorum; William of Malmesbury; c1135

Wace = Roman de Rou; Master Wace; c1160

Benoît = Chronique des Ducs de Normandie; Benoît de St-Maure; c1170

CBA = Chronicle of Battle Abbey; c1170

Warenne Chronicle = Chronicon monasterii de Hida iuxta Winton; c1200

We have a minor issue with referring to these accounts collectively as 'primary sources', because the 12th century manuscripts contain only tiny snippets of original information, and they might not be trustworthy. They are mostly repeating – or corrupting - information from the 11th century accounts. Some historians get around this by referring to them as the 'authorities', but it is not obvious to lay readers what they mean. We are

going to refer to them hereafter as the 'contemporary accounts', even though experts would argue that the 12th century accounts are not contemporary.

Interpreting the contemporary accounts is not easy. Paul de Rapin de Thoyras lamented in the early 18th century: "I find so much confusion in the accounts of the Historians, that I dare not flatter myself with being able to give a clear and distinct notion of the thing." As he says, almost all the clues are equivocal or enigmatic or conflicting. They were written in archaic languages that can have multiple viable translations. Those translations often have multiple viable meanings. None of the placenames survive, apart from Battle. They lacked modern understanding of geographic features. They make widespread use of unqualified adjectives — near, high, steep, narrow, etc - that can have a wide range of meanings. More than half of the clues have been rejected or overlooked by historians because they contradict the core notion that the battle was fought at Battle Abbey.

We had some huge advantages, most notably that we could use all the clues because our theory is not predicated on the battlefield being at Battle. We also had access to the latest LiDAR maps, and we worked from our own objective translations which provided 40 or so new clues to the landing, camps, and battlefield. In general, our translations concur with one or more of the established alternatives, but there were times (always declared) when ours proved to be invaluable.

Despite this, the sources are too equivocal, sycophantic and/or unreliable to be certain about anything. R Allen Brown once quipped that the only certainty about the battle is that the Normans won. He is right. We therefore preface conjectures with "we think" (130 of these), "we guess" (26), "we interpret this to mean", "surely", etc. We know this makes it sound woolly compared to other Battle of Hastings theories because they are always more assertive saying "This proves ..." or "Certainly then, ...", etc. Their authors are deluding themselves. We are only 99% confident in our own theory, and it is far more thorough than any other we have seen. Indeed, none of

the others even answer basic questions, like: "Why did Harold not stay in London?" and "Why did Harold go close enough to the Norman army to have any possibility of losing a battle?".

We should perhaps explain that we trust all and none of the contemporary accounts. Most were written in Normandy to glorify Norman culture and/or their Norman patron. Troop numbers, casualty figures and heroic deeds cannot be trusted in any of them. The two most detailed accounts - Wace and Carmen - are also among the most sycophantic. Baudri and Carmen are romanticised poems. The rest are chronicles, liable to cause confusion through their abridgement. None of the authors were present at the battle. Only the least trustworthy of them could have visited the site. Any part of the accounts might be based on faulty sources. Despite this, there is no obvious reason why any of the authors - bar the monks of Battle Abbey - would invent place names, place descriptions, troop movements or major events. And these statements form a coherent narrative with no major contradictions.

Our investigation was like a detective story, the discovery of each major event leading to the next. Perhaps it was more Clouseau than Poirot. Our conclusions are linked in time, but not in consequence. We might have fingered the right battlefield even though we got the wrong landing place and/or camps. Any or all of them could be wrong. Any or all of them could be right, though not necessarily for the reasons we think. We urge you to finish, even if you vehemently disagree with some of our intermediate conclusions. Remember that every fitted piece of a jigsaw puzzle helps with the rest. You might be able to fill some gaps or correct our errors. You might contribute to one of the most monumental discoveries of the 21st century.

We worked out the most likely major events from common sense, geography, and a small number of clues in the contemporary accounts. Then we meticulously worked through the contemporary accounts, using our own translations when appropriate, to see what other clues we could find and how they might fit. It gave 40 new clues and 100 or so novelties that fundamentally differ from the traditional narrative or the traditional

interpretations of the contemporary accounts. We are not claiming that any of them are definitively correct. Indeed, we are certain that some will be proved wrong. It would not significantly undermine our theory if half of them prove to be wrong. They are not clues that lead to conclusions, but they add flesh to the bones formed by the major events.

Books about the Battle of Hastings routinely include a section about medieval society, the Church, feudal land tenure, Anglo-Saxon England, Normandy, William, Harold, Edward the Confessor's succession, and the events following his death. Not here. We expect readers to have this knowledge. We do not provide it. Others do a better job than we ever could. The Wikipedia entry for the 'Norman Conquest' covers the basics. We like 'Kingship and Government in Pre-Conquest England' by Ann Williams (Palgrave) for the details, but there are dozens of alternatives.

A few words about ethnicity. For convenience, we will refer to the adversaries as Norman and English. They would be mortified. Perhaps half of William's army were Bretons, Franks and others. The defenders were only English insofar as they were defending England. They are often referred to as Saxon but this is not right either. Harold's mother was Danish. His children had Danish names. His father was Saxon but came to power as an ally of Danish King Cnut. Harold thought of himself as ethnic Danish, as did the majority of his barons, his elite guards and the most loyal of his subjects. Wace lists the English army's home counties. There were at least as many ethnic Danish Jutes and Angles as there were ethnic Jastorf Saxons.

# The Landing

# The traditional Norman landing

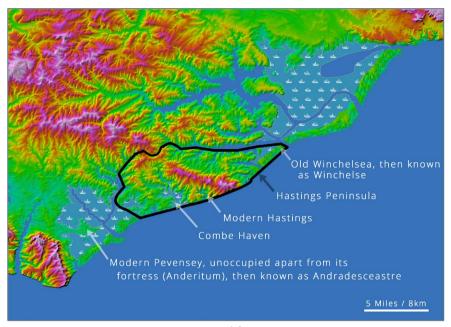


Figure 3: Some Saxon era East Sussex coastal features

Everyone knows the traditional Battle of Hastings landing narrative. The Normans landed near modern Pevensey (see Figure 3) where they made a temporary camp. The knights rode to modern Hastings where there was a Saxon burh fortress named *Hæstingaceastre*. Everyone else sailed to *Hæstingaport* in the Priory Valley below modern Hastings then joined the knights on the clifftop. They constructed a wooden kit fortress and made a camp where they were based for nearly a month.

The only supporting evidence for an initial landing at modern Pevensey is etymological: It is the only surviving place in the region with a name that might derive from *Pefenesea*. It is generally accepted that *Pefenesea* became modern Pevensey, not least because the ASC refers to Pevensey castle as 'castele a Pefenesea'. No less than eight contemporary accounts are thought to be saying that the Normans landed at *Pefenesea*. The Bayeux Tapestry

and ASC-D imply as much directly. Three 12th century accounts – Brevis Relatio, CBA and Benoît – are thought to be saying that the Normans landed at 'Pevenesel', which is probably a Pefenesea cognate. One reason to think so is that some Norman accounts refer to Pevensey Castle as 'Castrum Pevenesel'. Another is that the names Pefenesea and Pevenesel are linked linguistically – see Appendix A. Three more trusted Norman accounts say that the Normans landed at 'Penevesellum', a Latin declension of Penevesel. Gesta Stephani repeatedly refers to Pevensey Castle as 'Penevesel castellum' implying that Penevesel is another cognate for Pefenesea. Eight independent references seem incontrovertible proof that the Normans initially landed at modern Pevensey. They have been misinterpreted.

Several contemporary accounts say that William headed for a port or harbour. Some use this as corroborating evidence for a landing at modern Pevensey because it became an associate member of the Cinque Ports. But the Cinque Ports are a Norman invention. Modern Pevensey was not an important port before the Conquest. A J F Dulley spent four years excavating outside Pevensey fortress in the 1960s without finding any evidence of Saxon era quays, or even of a Saxon era civilian population. It is unsurprising. Modern Pevensey was in a saltmarsh. Domesday lists the manor of *Pevensel*, which encompassed modern Pevensey, with no farmland, no farmers and no salt production. It had nothing to export and too few consumers to draw imports. William's port destination is therefore evidence that the Normans did not land at modern Pevensey rather than that they did.

Moreover, a Norman landing at modern Pevensey is militarily implausible. It held the only major Saxon garrison between Lympne and Portchester. Surely William would not aim to land at the one place on the coast opposite Normandy that was liable to be well defended. It was in a saltmarsh. Surely William would not land where his cavalry would be impotent, and his horses might get injured. It was at the end of a narrow-necked peninsula that had no running fresh water. Surely William would not land where a few hundred determined English defenders could have poisoned the wells

and blockaded the Norman army. It was on the western side of a huge tidal lagoon with no road route to William's destination on the Hastings Peninsula. Surely, William would not aim to land so far from his destination, and over so treacherous a route.

Then there is the traditional transfer from the temporary Norman camp to a more permanent camp at *Hastingas*. All three accounts make it sound trivial as if they are immediately adjacent, but a ride from modern Pevensey to anywhere on the Hastings Peninsula was far from trivial in the 11th century when they were separated by a huge coastal lagoon (Figure 3). The only land route without going via London would have involved an implausible trek through 10 miles of marshland and 15 miles of primeval *Andredsweald* forest. Ramsay was clearly right when he pointed out 100 years ago that if the Norman fleet entered Pevensey Lagoon, by accident or design, they would have avoided all the potential hazards by landing at Hooe on the east coast rather than at modern Pevensey on the west coast.

It is implausible that the Normans would intentionally land at modern Pevensey and William took steps to avoid landing anywhere unintentionally. Poitiers says that the Normans moored on a sandbank off St Valery to avoid any risk of arriving at an unfamiliar or dangerous anchorage in the dark. Poitiers, Carmen and Malmesbury say that they moored again off the English coast to wait for full daylight and the tide, presumably to make sure they avoided cliffs, sand banks and muds flats.

Upon closer inspection, none of the contemporary accounts say or imply that the Normans did land at *Pefenesea* or any of its cognates (*Penevesellum* was not a cognate, as we will explain shortly). The Tapestry says that they: "came to Pevenesæ"; ASC-D that: "Earl William came from Normandy to pefnes ea"; Benoît that the Normans: "Arrived at Pevenesel"; Brevis Relatio that the Normans: "arrived at the fortress of Pevenesel"; CBA that the Normans: "arrived safely near to the fortress named Peuenesel"; John of Worcester that William: "moored his fleet at a place named Pefnesea". No mention of a landing.

Creasey and Ramsey used some of this reasoning more than 100 years ago to work out that the Norman could not have landed at modern Pevensey. They propose Bulverhythe and Hooe, respectively, instead. They just make excuses for why the contemporary accounts say that the Normans landed at modern Pevensey when they actually landed somewhere else.

Turning to modern Hastings, the main supporting evidence for its involvement in the Conquest is also etymological. Some contemporary accounts, including all the most trustworthy, say that the Normans built a fortress and camp at *Hastingas* or equivalent. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle says the fortress was at *Hæstingaport*, implying that *Hastingas* was another name for *Hæstingaport*. Modern Hastings is the only surviving place on or near the Hastings Peninsula with a name that might derive from *Hastingas*, and this name evolution is not uncommon. Kemble lists more than 100 analogous examples, including, for instance, *Readingas* and *Wellingas*, which became modern Reading and Welling.

The only other evidence linking the Norman landing place with modern Hastings is a passage in the Chronicle of Battle Abbey. Lower translates: "Hechelande, situated in the direction of Hastinges". CBA had previously said that Hechelande was adjacent to modern Telham. The context implies the direction is from Battle Abbey. Rearranging the words, Hastinges was on a line from Battle Abbey through modern Telham. That line extrapolates to the coast at modern Hastings and the Priory Valley. Most historians think this is good corroborating evidence that Hastinges referred to modern Hastings and that Hæstingaport was in the Priory Valley below.

Yet *Hæstingaport* could not have been adjacent to modern Hastings. It was the major port in the region – see *Hæstingaport* in Appendix A. A major port needs to service a large local population and/or export prodigious amounts of natural resources. No evidence of Saxon era occupation has ever been found at or near modern Hastings, despite myriad metal detectings and 22 archaeological excavations since 1968 (according to the

Hastings EUS). Nor were there any significant natural resources near to modern Hastings, or any roads to haul natural resources from elsewhere.

There is one counter argument that hints modern Hastings did have a Saxon era population. A J Taylor tentatively suggested at the 1966 Battle Conference that there might have been a pre-Conquest chapel at modern Hastings.<sup>2</sup> This was based on a petition raised by the canons of 'St Mary in the Castle' in the 13th century.<sup>3</sup> It includes the line: "A de primes fets a remembre qe lauantdite chapel estoit al frere le Roi seint Edward el fraunche ...", which implies that St Mary's was a founded as memorial to Edward the Confessor's brother, and was therefore of Saxon origin. It is bogus. The church's founding charter states that it was built by Robert Count de Eu who arrived with the Conquest. The next line of the petition says that St Mary's land claims are recorded in Domesday, but those lands are listed as still held by their eventual donors. The claim has clearly been fabricated, so there was not a chapel at modern Hastings before the Conquest.

William would not have landed in the Priory Valley below modern Hastings even if it had a port. Its strand was too short to land a quarter of his fleet. Its steep cliffs would have left them trapped in the valley bottom if, as William expected, an English garrison was defending the landing area. The narrow entrance to the Priory estuary was amidst four miles of perilous sea cliffs. Those cliffs were perhaps 300m more out to sea in those days, the entrance being along an even more perilous narrow gorge. There would have been a danger of the Norman fleet getting dashed on the cliffs, and if they made it into the Priory estuary, there was a danger of the gorge getting blocked by an accident or by boulders dropped from above.

If *Hæstingaport* was not in the Priory Valley, *Hastingas* was not at modern Hastings because William's second fortress shows they were cognates or adjacent or encompassing, as we explain above. Also, modern Hastings had

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Château Gaillard European Castle Studies: III: conference at Battle, Sussex, 19-24 September 1966

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Public Record Office Ancient Petitions (SC 8), File 328, No E.668

no Saxon era population. If no one lived at modern Hastings at the time of the battle, its clifftop location would mean it had no fresh running water and no well, so an implausible choice for a camp. What's more, a place with no Saxon era population is unlikely to have had an Old English name.

There are accepted excuses. It is supposed that the Saxon population at modern Hastings was at *Hæstingaceastre* burh, which either rotted away or fell into the sea due to cliff erosion. It is supposed that *Hæstingaport* was destroyed by storms and sea erosion. Bluster. The only part of the Priory Valley that could have had quays and docks is still there. And if *Hæstingaceastre* fell into the sea, its only access and egress would have been through modern Hastings. There should be archaeological evidence on West Hill of a Roman road, middens, and vici. Also, important medieval coastal settlements – Old Romney and Old Winchelsea, for instance – relocated inland when they were threatened. The same would have happened to *Hæstingaceastre*, but there is no record or evidence of it.

De Viis Maris, written in the mid-12th century, specifically says that there was no port at *Hastinges*, explaining that the nearest ports were 7 miles to the east at *Winchelse* (Old Winchelsea) and 8 miles to the west at *Penresse* (near modern Pevensey). These distances leave no doubt that De viis Maris is saying that there was no port at modern Hastings. If there was no port at modern Hastings after 100 years of urban development around the new Norman castle, it is implausible that there was one when it was uninhabited in 1066. If *Hæstingaport* was not in the Priory Valley, the main Norman camp was not at modern Hastings because they were cognates or adjacent.

Anyway, the argument that *Hæstingaport* was below modern Hastings gets the cart before the horse by assuming that the port grew up near the settlement. The reverse is far more likely. *Hæstingaport* vied with Dover and Southampton as the biggest port on the south coast. It did not grow to that size servicing a few dozen families at *Hæstingaceastre*. Two hundred years later, after enormous Norman expansion around Hastings Castle, *Hæstingaport* was still exporting more than ten times the volume of its imports. It must have been at the mouth of a river basin chock-full of

natural resources. Not modern Hastings then, which had no salt, no timber, no iron and no roads. If *Hæstingaport* was at the mouth of a resource rich river basin, so was *Hastingas* because they were cognates or adjacent, and they were not at modern Hastings.

We discuss how and why historians have got confused in Appendix A.

## Landing clues

#### Contemporary account landing and camp descriptions

It is time to revert to first principles, objectively reviewing the contemporary accounts. Most were written in Latin. The exceptions are Roman de Rou and Benoît which were written in Old French, and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which was written in Old English. This is what they say in modern English but with untranslated place names (here we do not substitute v for consonantal u):

- 1. Poitiers says that after leaving St Valery the fleet heave-to for fear they arrive in England before dawn at a "dangerous or unknown anchorage". It means their destination was a familiar and safe anchorage.
- 2. Malmesbury says that: "The earl himself first launching from the continent into the deep, awaited the rest, at anchor, nearly in mid-channel. All then assembled round the crimson sail of the admiral's ship; and, having first dined, they arrived, after a favourable passage, at Hastingas".
- 3. Carmen says that: "the looming rocky coast" did not discourage William's invasion.
- 4. Orderic says that, upon hearing of Tostig's invasion, Harold: "withdrew his ships and troops from Hastingas et Peneuesellum, and the other sea ports opposite Normandy".
- 5. Carmen (Kathleen Tyson) says: "On the open sea you moor offshore; You caution to take in the sails, awaiting the morning to come; But after the dawn spreads red over the land, and the sun casts its rays over the horizon; You order the sails set to the wind to make way."

- 6. CBA around parts of damaged manuscript says the Normans: "Arrived safely near castrum Peuenesel ... The Duke did not remain long in that place, but went away with his men to a nearby port named Hastinges".
- 7. CBA (Lower and Searle) says that *Hechelande*, which it describes being northwest of and adjacent to Telham on the ridge, is in the direction of *Hastingarum* from Battle Abbey.
- 8. Poitiers says that William's ship lost contact with the rest of the fleet: "In the morning, a lookout at the top of the mast declared that he could see nothing but sea and sky. They anchored at once.". By the time William had finished breakfast, the rest of the fleet was in sight.
- 9. Warenne Chronicle says: "unopposed between the forts of Hastinges and Penenesullum he entered the land of the English".
- 10. Poitiers says: "Borne by a favourable breeze to Peneuessellum, he disembarked with ease and without having to fight his way ashore".
- 11. Poitiers (Davis) says: "The Normans, rejoicing after they had landed, occupied Peneuessellum with their first fortification, and Hastingas with their second, as a refuge for themselves and a defence for their ships".
- 12. Brevis Relatio (our translation) says that Duke William and his fleet: "arrived in England, by the favour of God, near the fortress of Pevensel. After a short delay he arrived with his whole army at another port not far away named Hastingas".
- 13. Jumièges says that William: "Landed at Peneuessellum where he immediately built a castle with a strong rampart. He left this in charge of some troops and, with others, hurried to Hastingas where he built another".
- 14. Orderic says: "... and reaching the coast of England, where they met no opposition, joyfully came ashore. They took possession of Peneuesellum and Hastingas, the defence of which was entrusted to a chosen body of soldiers to cover a retreat and to guard the fleet".
- 15. Benoît de Sainte-Maure says the Normans: "Arrived at Pevenesel, at a port/harbour beneath a fortress handsome and strong"; and later: "The Count came to Hastinges without staying" (i.e. at Pevenesel).
- 16. Tapestry Panel 38 is captioned: "Duke William in a great ship crossed the sea and came to Pevenesæ".

- 17. Tapestry Panel 40 is captioned: "The knights hurried to Hestinga".
- 18. Chronicon says that William: "Had moored his fleet at a place named Pefnesea".
- 19. ASC-D (Ingram) says: "Meantime Earl William came from Normandy to pefnes ea on the eve of St. Michael's mass; and soon after his landing was effected, they constructed a fortress at Hæstinga port".
- 20. ASC-E says: "Meanwhile Count William landed at Hestingan on Michaelmas Day".
- 21. Baudri says: "Fleeing the harbour, the ships make haste and gain open waters; Gradually the clamour recedes; suddenly all is quiet. The pilot has already turned to observe the stars and the weather; All the men on the ships see to their several tasks. Turning their sails at an angle, they manage to make good speed, Finally reach the shore, never touching the oars."
- 22. Wace says: "The ships steered to one port; all arrived and reached the shore together; together cast anchor, and ran on dry land; and together they discharged themselves. They arrived near Hastingues each ship ranged by the other's side."
- 23. Carmen says: "One Englishman kept hidden under the sea cliff". He watches the Normans disembark, then rides off to tell the King.
- 24. Wace says that an English knight: "posted himself behind a hill" to watch the Normans disembark. "He saw the men- throw the materials for the fort out of the ships. He saw them build up and enclose the fort, and dig the fosse around it." He rides off to tell the King.
- 25. Wace says that a messenger tells Harold: "The Normans are come! They have landed at Hastingues".
- 26. Carmen (Kathleen Tyson translation) says: "the happy land owed to you embraced you and yours in a calm basin".
- 27. Carmen (Kathleen Tyson translation) says about William: "You restore the strongholds that were lately destroyed".
- 28. Chronicon says that Harold: "Gave them battle nine miles from Heastinga, where they had built a fortress".
- 29. Wace says: "They [the knights] formed together on the shore, each armed upon his warhorse. All had their swords girded on, and passed into the plain

with their lances raised ... When they [the carpenters] had reached the spot where the archers stood, and the knights were assembled, they consulted together, and sought for a good spot to place a strong fort upon". They then assembled a kit fortress they had brought with them. It was complete by that evening.

30. Wace says that on their first day after landing the Normans went on a raid: "They held their course along the coast; and on the morrow came to a fortress named Penevesel ... the English were to be seen fleeing before them, driving off their cattle and abandoning their houses. All took shelter in the cemeteries."

#### Summary of landing place name meanings

In these pre-map pre-dictionary days, there were no standard place name spellings. Written place names were transliterated from the way they were spoken. Every author had their own stab at it. Those mentioned in relation to the landing, culled from the extracts above, include:

Pevenesæ, Pefenesea, pefnes ea, Peneuesellum (one 's' or two), Peuenessellum, Peuenesea, Peuenesel, Pevenesel, Peneuesel, Penress; Hæstingas, Hastingas, Heastingan, Hestingan, Hestingan, Hestingae, Hastingum, Hastinges, Hastingues

These are the place names that get translated into modern English as 'Pevensey' and 'Hastings', which almost everyone assumes to mean modern Pevensey and modern Hastings. Nothing, in our opinion, has caused so much confusion about the prelude to the Battle of Hastings. Hopefully, we can do better

The 'P' names can be narrowed down. Latin u could be pronounced as a long vowel or as a consonant sounding somewhere between modern English v and b, so *Peuenesel* and *Pevenesel* are the same. Consonantal u was eventually spelled v to reduce confusion. Some contemporary accounts were written before the transition. We generally pre-empt the change by

substituting v for consonantal u. The Old English letters f and v were allographs, used depending on whether the sound was in the middle or end of a word. Latin u/v was the closest sound to Old English f. Latin long e and Latin short i were pronounced similarly and were interchangeable in transcriptions of place names. Applying these substitutions and removing declensions leaves three root names: *Pefenesea*, *Pevenesel* and *Penevesel*. The latter includes the declension *Penevesellum*. They have enough similarities that they could refer to one place, and enough differences that they could refer to two or three places.

The 'H' names are easier to whittle down. There is a widespread consensus - i.e. Wikipedia says - that the name is Old English, deriving from a Jutish tribe known as the *Hæstingas. -ingas -inga -inge -inges* and *-ingum* are Old English declensions of the same stem. The Latin diphthong 'æ' was pronounced differently to Old English 'æ', and it was dropped in the medieval Latin alphabet. It is substituted e or a in Latin transcriptions and transliterations of Old English proper nouns. As above, Latin long e and Latin short i were interchangeable, and declensions can be removed. Thus, most (or perhaps all) of the place names in the 'H' group might refer to the same place, whose root sounded like Hastings.

If we are right, the orthodox meaning of these place names has been misinterpreted. We explain what we think they mean in Appendix A. You will not miss anything crucial if you skip it. Here is a summary:

- 1. *Hæstinga[s]* was the Old English name for the Hastings Peninsula. This is its meaning in Saxon Charters, the ASC, the Tapestry and some Anglo-Norman accounts.
- 2. *Hæstingaport* was the Old English name for the international port on the Hastings Peninsula. It had three centres:
  - 1. *Hæstingaport's* docks and warehouses were at Old Winchelsea, on a shingle bar at the mouth of the Brede. It was known to Saxons as *Winchelse* and to Normans in England as *Wincenesel*.
  - 2. *Hæstingaport's* dry docks, ship builders, chandlers and artisans were at *Iham* in the northern part of modern Winchelsea.

- 3. *Hæstingaport's* mint, ship owners and businessmen were at *Hæstingaceastre* in the centre of modern Winchelsea.
- 3. Hastinges had three different meanings to Normans:
  - 1. It was the pre-Conquest and early post-Conquest name used by Normans in Normandy for *Hæstingaport*.
  - 2. It was the early post-Conquest name used by Normans in England for *Hæstingaceastre*.
  - 3. It was the 12th century name for the settlement that grew up around the Norman castle at modern Hastings.
- 4. To prevent confusion between the *Hastinges* meanings, the Norman castle at modern Hastings was initially known as *Noue Hastinges*. As it gradually dropped the *Noue* part of its name during the 12th century: *Hæstingaport* was increasingly referred to by its full name *Port de Hastinges* (Latinised to *Hastinges Portus*) by Normans in Normandy; Normans in England referred to *Hæstingaport*'s docks as *Wincenesel*, the balance of the port and *Hæstingaceastre* were absorbed into *Iham*.
- 5. *Hastingas*, the root of much confusion, was the Latin translation of Old English *Hæstingas* and all meanings of Norman *Hastinges*.
- 6. *Hæstingaceastre* was the Old English name for a Roman fortification and Alfredian burh located on the summit of modern Winchelsea. It was known to Normans in England as *Hastinges* until the 12th century.
- 7. Pefenesea was the contraction of 'pefenes ea'.
- 8. 'pefenes ea' was an island harbour some 2km southeast of modern Pevensey. It was destroyed by storms in the early 13th century. Its population moved to modern Pevensey. This is analogous to what happened at Old Winchelsea and Old Romney, so we will refer to the 11th century 'pefenes ea' as 'Old Pevensey'.
- 9. The Norman fleet, after crossing the Channel, moored near Old Pevensey to wait for sunlight and the flood tide, but they did not land.
- 10. *Pevenesel* was the Frankish version of *pefenes ea* (i.e., the contraction of *pevenes îles*) used by Franks and Normans to refer to Old Pevensey, then from the early 13th century to refer to modern Pevensey.
- 11. Modern Pevensey was the otherwise unoccupied location of a Roman

fortress at the time of the Conquest. That fortress survives as Pevensey Castle. It was known to the Saxons as *Andradesceaster* before the Conquest and thereafter as 'castele a Pefenesea'. It was known to the Normans as Castelli Pevenesel. These last two names, and their Latin translations, took their names from pefenes ea (Old Pevensey), the nearest named settlement.

12. Rameslie was a manor that lined both banks of the Brede estuary. It did not, as tradition dictates, extend south of the River Pannel. It belonged to the Norman Abbey of Fécamps before and after the invasion but had been sequestrated at the time of the invasion.

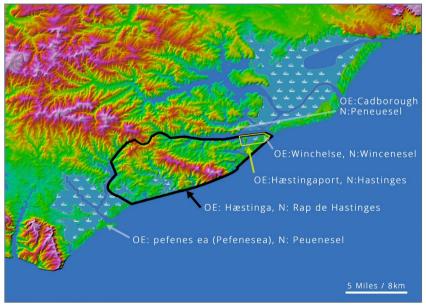


Figure 4: East Sussex post-Conquest place names

This place name schema is depicted on Figure 4. It is consistent with all the contemporary accounts. The crucial point for the landing and camps is that *Hastinges* (or similar) had different meanings to Anglo-Saxons and Normans, neither of which were modern Hastings. Perhaps it sounds contrived, but it is not. *Hæstinga*, *Hæstingaport*, *Hæstingaceastre*, *pefenes ea* and *Andradesceaster* followed the normal Saxon naming convention. Of these, before 1066, most Normans only dealt with *Hæstingaport* and the

refuge harbour at Old Pevensey, for which they had their own names: *Pevenesel* for Old Pevensey and *Portus de Hastinges -* usually abbreviated to *Hastinges* or Latinised to *Hastingas -* for *Hæstingaport*.

Four factors have led to the confusion: 1) Normans in Normandy had their own names for *Hæastingaport* and Old Pevensey; 2) Normans in England assimilated some Old English place names, while Normans in Normandy did not; 3) During the 12th century, the Norman castle at modern Hastings became known as *Hastinges*, a name used beforehand to mean *Hæastingaport* by Normans in Normandy or *Hæstingaceastre* by Normans in England; 4) The coastal geography changed in the 13th century, with Old Winchelsea and Old Pevensey being destroyed by storms, both moving to new locations and both taking their names with them.

So, all the primary source landing accounts are accurate, as far as they go. None are complete. The Normans only moored for a few hours near Old Pevensey and they only occupied *Penevesellum* for a few days. Nothing happened at either place. All the accounts that omit *Penevesellum* were heavily abridged. They would redact these events. It is like Ellis Island. Nearly all the 12 million U.S. immigrants that passed through Ellis Island would naturally have reported that they landed at New York.

#### An inland landing

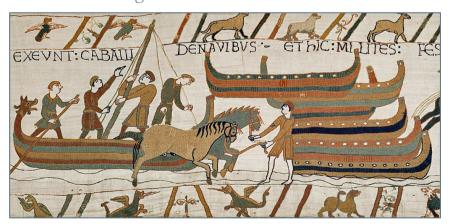


Figure 5: Tapestry Panel 39

By tradition, the Normans landed on the coast. We will explain why we think it is implausible. Start with Tapestry Panel 39 (Figure 5) which shows horses being unloaded as the invaders arrive in England. To the right are a row of empty ships. Their masts are down, they are on the land side of the esquire. They must have been dragged up onto a beach or riverbank ... well, apart from the two that seem to be self-levitating, perhaps.



Figure 6: Tapestry Panel 6 above, 34 lower left, 36 lower right

Tapestry Panels 6 and 34 (Figure 6) show how the Tapestry depicts anchors being used in other shallow waters. Panel 36 (Figure 6, bottom right) depicts empty ships tied to poles in shallow water. All these ships must be on a marine shore where they are exposed to storm and tide. The ships shown in the invasion are not tied or anchored, probably because they are sheltered and above the tide, which means they were in an estuary or inlet.

This is not a new idea. Nick Austin uses exactly this argument in 'Secrets of the Norman Invasion' to support his theory that the Normans landed in Combe Haven. It was pointed out to us on the Reading Museum Tapestry replica while it was on display at Hastings in the summer of 1966. The guide just (wrongly) assumed that they were in Pevensey Bay.

All but one of the contemporary accounts support an inland landing. Carmen says: "Since leaving the sea behind, you seize a sheltered strand". They

left the sea behind, so they moved inland. The strand is sheltered, which means it is in an estuary or inlet. It uses the term 'litora', which usually means an inland strand, rather than 'littus maris' which specifically means seashore. Later, Carmen says that the landing was in a "calm basin", which means in an estuary or inlet. The Warenne Chronicle reports that: "without any resistance between the forts of Hastinges and Penenesullum he entered the land of the English". If he entered the land of the English still aboard ship, he sailed into an estuary or inlet. Baudri of Bourgueil quotes William saying to his men before the battle: "Whither would ye flee? Our fleet is far from the shore: we removed all hope of escape when we moved away from that". If the fleet was far from the shore, it was inland.

The exception is Orderic Vitalis, who specifically says that the Normans landed on the seashore ('littus maris'). We think he is wrong. The entire East Sussex shoreline was sea cliffs or shingle islands in those days, bar a 5km stretch of coastal strand between modern Cooden and Bexhill. It was a peninsula in those days, narrowing to 500m at its isthmus. It looks horribly siege prone. Orderic largely repackaged other accounts. We guess he read the landing was on a 'littus' and got the wrong end of the stick.

Not only would a Bexhill landing invite a disastrous siege, but it would give away the possibility of 'mid-stream anchoring'. The idea is to split the defence. It works in an estuary where the lowest land crossing is a significant distance upstream. If the defenders are on one bank, the invaders land on the other, buying time to establish a bridgehead before the defenders can get upstream to a crossing point and back on the other side. If the defenders are on both banks, the invaders land on the weaker bank. Mid-stream anchoring paralyses at least half the defenders at the time when the invaders are most vulnerable. If the paralysed men on the other bank come around to fight, they are exhausted by the time they arrive.

Wace says that the Norman ships cast anchor, which would be unlikely if they were in an estuary or inlet, but it is a misunderstanding. What he actually says is: "together they cast anchor and ran onto dry land; and together

they discharged themselves". They cast anchor before running aground. We interpret this to mean that they drop anchor to form a line astern while still in the centre of the estuary, then they simultaneously sail, row or pole ashore. It was a mid-stream anchoring ploy, assuming one or both banks would be defended, only both banks were undefended.

Wace makes it sound like they let out their anchor lines as they came ashore, presumably in case they had to quickly haul themselves back into the river after an ambush. Tapestry Panel 39 does not show any anchor lines. This is understandable for the ships that have already been unloaded because they would weigh anchor before being dragged up the bank. Perhaps there should be an anchor line on the ship that is unloading horses. Maybe the artist or embroiderers missed it. But the ship is being held steady by a man with a pole. This would not be necessary if the ship was still anchored. We think it more likely that they weighed anchor before reaching the shoreline.

A landing in some of the smaller estuaries and inlets around the Hastings Peninsula can be eliminated by calculating how much landing space the Normans needed. That depends on the number and size of the ships, which in turn depends partly on how many troops and horses they carried. We explain our calculation below.

#### The size of the Norman army and fleet

Jumièges says that William built a fleet of 3000 ships. It is usually discounted as being unrealistically high because Normandy did not have enough lumberjacks, carpenters and shipwrights to build that many seagoing vessels in the time between William's commitment to an invasion and their departure from Dives. Indeed, being clinker design, it is difficult to believe that Normandy had enough high-quality 200-year-old oak trees or grown timbers for more than a hundred or so new ships.

Lawson makes a case that many of William's mercenaries might have brought their own ships and that they might all have been several times larger than normally believed. This is part of his argument that the armies might have been much larger than usually assumed. It is possible but we think unlikely. If the Normans had a much larger force than usually assumed, so did the English, but Harold did not have enough time to levy or equip such a large army.

Wace says that there were 696 ships in the Norman battle fleet, 400 of which were horse carriers. Brevis Relatio says 782. Both exclude cargo carriers. The 'Ship List' supplement to the Battle Manuscript says that William had at least 1000 ships at his disposal for the invasion. Gillmor has verified that 700 was roughly the upper limit of troop and horse carriers that could have left St Valery on one tide at that time of year. Perhaps the discrepancy between Wace, Brevis Relatio and the Ship List is those lost on the crossing or, as Wace says, perhaps some horses were brought on skiffs. We will assume that the number of troop carriers and horse carriers was close to Wace's figure, comprised of roughly 400 horse carriers and 300 troop carriers.

Trying to assess the size of the Norman army is more subjective. Reputable estimates vary widely: between 3000 and 12000 for the infantry; between 1000 and 3000 for the cavalry. Domesday records some 1200 landholders in 1086. They presumably include all the barons and knights who fought at the Battle of Hastings. Peter Poyntz Wright estimates that Normandy could field 1200 knights on their own. Wace infers that Normans made up more than half the invading army. Even if most of the Norman knights were mobilised, William's cavalry could not have been more than 2000. The horse carriers depicted on the Tapestry have 10, 8, 4 or 3 horses, although it might only be figurative. Gillmor has calculated that most of the Norman fleet was re-purposed from existing cargo vessels. Typical cargo ships of the day would carry no more than four horses. An average of four, equating to 1600 cavalry, does not seem an unreasonable upper limit. We therefore estimate that the Norman cavalry was between 1200 and 1600 strong.

Rupert Furneaux estimates the number of Norman troops from the size of the ships shown on the tapestry. He comes up with 7500, including 2000

knights. Poyntz Wright compared the Norman fleet to other contemporary battle fleets to arrive at 3000 infantry and 800 archers. Carmen comments on the number of invaders singing as they leave St Valery: "Quippe decem decies[,] decies et milia quinque diversis feriunt vocibus astra poli". Thierry, Giles, Barlow, Morton & Muntz and others use a transcription with a comma after the first 'decies', making the translation: "for, indeed, a hundred and fifty thousand conflicting voices struck the firmament". Kathleen Tyson retranscribed the original manuscript without a comma, making the translation: "Surely ten times ten times ten and five thousand men in varied voices strike the pole star"; in other words, 6000 men were singing as they sailed north.

We like the look of Tyson's 6000 men. She confirmed to us that there is no comma in the original manuscript. Her figure is specific and it ties in with the more rational of the other estimates. "Ten times ten times ten plus five thousand" might seem a very odd way to say 6000 but Carmen is a Latin poem. Latin poems are not constructed to rhyme but to flow as 'iambic pentameters'. The unusual wording was presumably for poetic purposes.

We will assume in the rest of this document that the Norman army had 1200 to 1600 knights with war horses, plus 1000 archers and 3000 to 4000 infantry, making roughly 6000 fighting men.

It would be helpful to calculate the amount of shore space needed to land the Norman fleet. Neumann used Froud's hydrodynamics on the Channel crossing speed to estimate that the troop-carrying longships had an average beam of 2.77m. However, he did not allow for how long the Normans moored near St Valery or near the English coast. The average beam was probably greater.

If there were 6000 troops on 300 longships, as we estimate above, each vessel would have carried 20 troops plus attendants and sailors, as most often depicted on the Tapestry. That would put them in the category of 20-oar Snekka style longships, like the Helge Ask at Roskilde (Figure 7). It has a 2.5m beam. Most of the Tapestry horse carriers brought three or four

horses. That puts them in the category of Byrding or Karvi style fishing and cargo boats, with a typical beam of 2.5m and 5m, respectively. There were some larger ships and more horse carriers than troops carriers. We will assume the average beam for the battle fleet was 4m.



Figure 7: Helge Ask Snekka replica at Roskilde (image copyright Roskilde)

Wace says that the Norman fleet lands together. It does make military sense to land simultaneously, thereby stretching the defence to give the best chance of establishing a bridgehead. This was as true for D-Day as it was for William.

The only way to affect a simultaneous mass landing in an estuary or inlet was to anchor line-astern midstream, then to simultaneously sail, row or pole ashore. It makes no odds here, but Tapestry Panel 39 (Figure 5) is traditionally interpreted to be showing Norman boats being poled ashore. We are unconvinced. The ship is already aground. It seems to us that the man in the stern is holding the boat steady with a pole while the horses are unloaded. The ship's oar ports are closed, so it was not rowed ashore, but its mast was up when it ran aground, so it might have sailed ashore. The other boats that are already out of the water have open oar ports. They might have rowed, sailed or poled ashore.

Regardless how they came ashore, the first wave of ships would be separated on shore by at least the difference between their length and width. Perhaps the gaps were filled by cargo vessels. They would need to be separated by at least 3m, in order to make space to unload horses and cargo over the side and/or to deploy oars if they needed to leave in a hurry.

In summary, we think the Norman army had 1200 to 1600 cavalry, 6000 fighting men in all, and that they arrived on 700 longships plus several hundred cargo skiffs and barges. We estimate that the longships had an average 4m beam. So, 700 longships with an average 4m beam separated by a minimum of 3m means that the Norman battle fleet would have needed some 5km of landing space. Cargo vessels might have needed another 2km, but they could have landed elsewhere.

# Landing site candidates and a Brede estuary landing

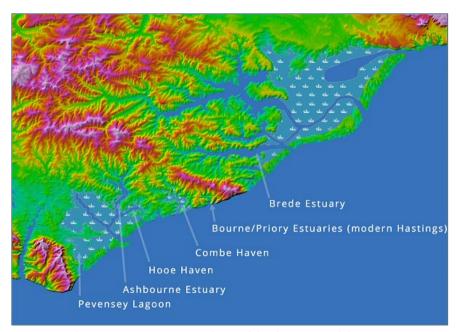


Figure 8: 11th century East Sussex coastline with landing site candidates

Figure 8 shows the 11th century East Sussex coastline. The only estuaries or inlets surrounding the Hastings Peninsula that were anywhere near big

enough to hold the Norman fleet are the Brede, the Ashbourne, Combe Haven and Hooe Haven. We refer to them as the 'landing site candidates'. Note that Pevensey Lagoon (now the Pevensey Levels), Combe Haven and the Brede estuary were open to the sea in those days and that the estuaries were deeper and much wider than they are now. Note also that shingle bars retained Pevensey Lagoon and the Romney Marshes.

We are convinced that the landing must have been in one of these four candidates. The last two would be tight, Combe Haven having less than 4km of contiguous navigable strand, Hooe Haven less than 3km, but perhaps the fleet was a tad smaller than we think. We will give them the benefit of the doubt. Nick Austin favours a Combe Haven landing. We explain why his theory is flawed in Appendix B.

Logistics do not help to narrow down the candidates. They were all close to fresh water. They were all in a "calm basin". None of them has surviving remains of a pre-Conquest fortress. Each had at least one nearby hill/ridge on or near the Hastings Peninsula that would have made a good camp: Hooe Haven and the Ash Bourne had Standard Hill; Combe Haven had Upper Wilting or Green Street; the Brede had Cackle Street and Cock Marling to the north, Winchelsea, Snailham, Starlings and Cottage Lane to the south. William would have seen the "looming rocky coast" of Beachy Head wherever he landed.

All the other clues point to a Brede estuary landing:

- 1. The Brede estuary was crossed by the only paved Roman road in the region, which would have been needed for easy movement, plundering and foraging. The other candidates were close to ancient trackways or metalled mining tracks which might have been adequate if they were well maintained, but there is no reason to believe that they were.
- 2. Carmen and Wace say that the landing site was overlooked by a sea-cliff. The Brede estuary is the only candidate overlooked by sea-cliffs, those at Cadborough.

- 3. Carmen (Barlow) says that William: "repairs the remnants of earlier fortifications", so there were at least two extant forts near the landing site, neither of which were at modern Pevensey. Warenne Chronicle says that the Normans passed safely between fortresses at Hastingas and Penenesellum before entering England. This implies that the fortresses were on the coast. We will return to Penenesellum below. Hæstingaceastre is the only known fortress on the Hastings coast. We think it was at modern Winchelsea, which Normans referred to as Hastingas, so it fits both clues and it was beside the Brede estuary. There is LiDAR evidence of a Roman enclosure at Wilting that might be described as a fortress, but it is not on the coast and the Normans could not have passed it.
- 4. Jo Kirkham proposed 25 years ago that the Norman fleet landed in the Brede estuary because the invasion was planned by the monks of Fécamp Abbey. They had a cell in Rameslie manor which lined the Brede estuary. They were Norman and would therefore have been loyal to their patron William. Wace says that William brought some monks from Fécamp Abbey to act as interpreters. If they had previously lived in Rameslie manor long enough to learn the language, they would have known the local terrain intimately. William would surely have tapped their local knowledge, so we think Jo Kirkham is right.
- 5. Carmen says that the Norman fleet arrived at 'safe landing grounds' at the third hour of the day. It cannot be referring to the actual landing grounds because they expected those to be defended. We interpret Carmen to mean safe from natural hazards, which along the East Sussex coast most likely refers to the sea cliffs between Hastings and Fairlight. These cliffs would not jeopardise a landing in the Ashbourne or Hooe Haven, but they would jeopardise a landing in Combe Haven or the Brede estuary, especially with a southerly breeze. Assuming the overnight mooring was near the Royal Sovereign Shoals, and that the Norman fleet left at dawn, three hours seems improbably long for a tenmile run on a southerly breeze to Bulverhythe, let alone a six-mile run to The Crumbles. It would be about right for the 20-mile reach to Old Winchelsea on a southerly breeze against the tide.

- 6. William waited in Normandy for nearly a month for a south wind. As it happened, this worked in his favour because Harald Hardrada invaded northern England in the meantime. William was not to know. He would have wanted to invade as soon as possible. Most commentators reckon that there was a persistent north wind for the entire month. They are wrong. There has never been more than seven days of constant north wind in September since records began, and Wace says that they sailed from Dives to St Valery on a west wind which would have been good for a Channel crossing. Moreover, the weather was fine and warm at the Battle of Stamford Bridge two days before they sailed, which means the wind was from the south or southwest. It is clear to us that William waited for a south wind because he needed it for the landing rather than for the crossing. There is no reason he would have needed a south wind to land in Combe Haven, Hooe Haven or the Ash Bourne, but he would have needed it to land in the Brede estuary (see below).
- 7. Wace says that the Normans landed on a strand adjacent to a plain. The Brede estuary was the only landing site candidate that was adjacent to a level plain that was also long enough to accommodate the entire Norman fleet. It was firm enough underfoot to support mounted horses and flat enough to assemble a kit-fortress without first digging a motte, as described by Wace. That plain was formed by dried out saltpans, of which there were 100 adjacent to the Brede estuary according to Domesday. Why there? The Camber shingle bar protected the Brede estuary from storms and flooding, and the Brede has an east-west orientation which protected the north bank from shade. Over the centuries, the ground would level by repeated salt evaporation. By the end of September, the last of the brine would have been harvested to leave a plain exactly matching Wace's description of the landing site.
- 8. Poitiers, Jumièges and Orderic say that the Normans initially landed at *Penevesellum*. This is a Latin format name. The only likely reason that the Normans might have had their own Latin format name for somewhere in Sussex is that it was part of the land that belonged to the Frankish Abbey of St Denys or the Norman Abbey of Fécamp. In this

vicinity, this means that it was in Rameslie manor which lined the banks of the Brede estuary.



Figure 9: Tapestry Panel 37

Bayeux Tapestry Panels 40 and 41 (Figure 10) provide another possible clue. Note that the Tapestry mostly has bobbles on the baseline, like the righthand side of Panel 37 (Figure 9). This happens to be the coast of Normandy, but Pontieu, Mont Saint-Michel and the others are depicted likewise. Presumably then the bobbly base represents fields, meadows, dunes and scrub, while the non-bobbly baseline is usually reserved for water, the base of hills, and areas in and around buildings.



Figure 10: Tapestry, right side of Panel 40 & left side of 41

Tapestry Panels 40 and 41 (Figure 10), at the Norman landing site, show characters on a non-bobbly baseline without a foreground building or motte in sight. It is the only riverbank or coast that is depicted on the baseline. Indeed, it is the only outdoor scene on the baseline, apart from

water, hills, buildings and mines. We interpret this to mean that the landing site was as flat and smooth as a road or motte. This is consistent with Wace who says that the landing site was adjacent to a flat plain: "All had their swords girded on, and passed into the plain with their lances raised". Combe Haven and the Ash Bourne estuary had marshy banks, unsuitable for a landing and inconsistent with Wace.



Figure 11: Tapestry Panel 41

The huts in the background of Panel 41 (Figure 11) also corroborate a salt-evaporation plain landing. One has a shingle roof, one a plank roof and one a tile roof. This at a time when nearly all dwellings in England had thatched roofs. They are the only modest buildings on the entire Tapestry - the others are fortresses, churches, and manor houses – so they probably have some significance to the landing geography. We think they were evaporation chambers, where they boiled away water from concentrated brine to crystallise salt. If so, those huts would have been beyond the evaporation ponds, on the lower slopes of the ridge, exactly as depicted.

There are no natural plains beside any estuary in the region, so the Normans must have landed on an artificial plain. The only likely source of such a plain is a string of salt-evaporation ponds. The Brede estuary had the only salt plain long enough to hold the entire Norman fleet. Hooe had 30 saltpans, too short to land even half of the Norman fleet.

A better argument against a Brede estuary landing was the risk. The main

entrance to the Romney Marshes lagoon was at Old Romney. It is known that the Normans did not use it, because Wace reports that several ships landed there by mistake; their crews getting killed by the local inhabitants. Therefore, to land in the Brede the Normans would have had to cross the Camber shingle bar through a channel or canal.

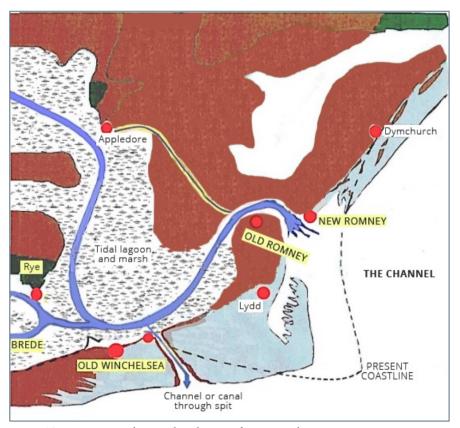


Figure 12: Romney Marsh in medieval times after Bernard Leeman

Andrew Pearson, Bernard Leeman, Andrew Long and others (Figure 66 and Figure 12) show the Camber crossing at Old Winchelsea. It looks perilously narrow. Getting 700 ships through a narrow channel on one flood tide would have needed stringent timing, discipline and a tailwind. A mishap in the channel might have caused an 'Ever Given' style blockage that scuppered the invasion. A landing in any of the other candidates would

have had no such risks or dependences. If William had been prepared to land at any of them, the invasion could have happened several weeks earlier, when his troops were less fractious, daylight longer and the weather perhaps more favourable.

Never-the-less, the eight clues listed above, plus Tapestry Panels 40 and 41 and the locations of *Hæstingaport* and *Penevesellum* (next section), mean that the Normans did land in the Brede estuary. Appendix C gives one more cross check, by working out the approximate timing against the tides. Given the potential dangers, we can only imagine that the cross-spit channel or canal was wider than most experts think, and/or that the Normans were whisked through the crossing on a rising tide, using their oars to fend off the sides and stay in deep water. Figure 13 depicts how we think the Normans got to their landing site, between fortresses at *Hastinges* and *Penevesellum*.



Figure 13: Norman fleet route for Brede landing

#### Penevesellum

We mention above that *Penevesellum's* Latin format name suggests it was coined by Frankish or Norman monks for a place in the Brede estuary. There are other reasons to believe that it was there.

Poitiers says that, upon landing, the Normans "occupied Penevesellum with their first fortification and Hastingas with their second". Jumièges says they landed at *Penevesellum* then hurried to *Hastingas*, building a fortress at both. Orderic says that they "took possession of 'Penevesellum et Hastingas' and gave them into the charge of certain soldiers as a base for the army and shelter for the *fleet*". Orderic had earlier said that Harold withdrew his ships and troops from "Hastingas et Penevesellum". Note the reversal of names, showing that Hastingas and Penevesellum were separate settlements rather than a 'Tyne and Wear' style composite noun. Poitiers and Jumièges imply that Penevesellum and Hastingas were near to each other, Orderic that they were adjacent. In these early Norman accounts, Hastingas referred to Hæstingaport, at Old and modern Winchelsea as we explain in Appendix A. If so, Penevesellum can only have been on the Brede north bank, or upstream on the Brede south bank, or on the Pannel north bank. The Pannel strand was too short to hold even half the Norman fleet, so Penevesellum was in the Brede estuary.4

Warenne Chronicle says: "in Angliam transvehitur, nulloque resistente inter duo castra Hastinges atque Penenesellum, terram Anglorum ingreditur". Van Houts translates that William: "crossed to England; without any resistance, between the forts of Hastinges and Pevenesellum he entered the land of the English". She translates Penenesellum to Pevenesellum, the v+n spelling that implies Pevenesel and that one of the fortresses was Pevensey Castle. The only likely 'fort of Hastinges' is Hæstingaceastre, we think at modern Winchelsea. Thus, she seems to be saying that the Normans entered the land of the English in an estuary or inlet between modern Winchelsea and modern Pevensey, which would mean Combe Haven. We think she has made a transliteration and/or translation error.

Penenesellum is a misspelling in the manuscript, meant to be Pevenesellum

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> For completeness there is one other direct reference to *Penevesellum* in which Poitiers says that William returned to *Penevesellum* six months after the invasion, reiterating that it is where the Normans landed. It is not helpful in locating *Penevesellum*.

or *Penevesellum*. Van Houts picked *Pevenesellum*, without giving her reason. It looks like a valid Latin declension of '*Pevenesel*', the Norman name for Old Pevensey, but *Pevenesel* is never known to take the 'um' declension. We think Warenne Chronicle is trying to say '*Penevesellum*'. Its meaning depends on punctuation. If a comma was wrongly omitted after "nulloque resistente", it might be trying to say that William was unopposed while sailing along the English coast between two far separated coastal fortresses. It seems more likely to us that the punctuation is correct, so William was unopposed as he passed between two fortresses entering England. In other words, there were fortresses at *Hastinges* and *Penevesellum* that were either side of the estuary or inlet that William used to enter England. The fortress at *Hastinges* would have been *Hæstingeeastre* at modern Winchelsea, so William entered England on the Brede estuary.

### A Brede north bank landing and Penevesellum's exact location

We conclude above that the initial Norman landing was at *Penevesellum* in the Brede estuary. Several clues infer that it was on the north bank:

- 1. Wace says that Normans landed on a strand that was adjacent to a firm dry plain, probably a plain of dried out salt-evaporation ponds. Those ponds would have been on the Brede north bank because the south bank was in shade for much of the day, under a steep bank.
- 2. Tapestry Panel 40 is captioned: "here the knights hurry to Hestinga to forage for food". The Tapestry's Hestinga referred to the Hastings Peninsula (see Appendix A). If the knights hurried to Hestinga, they started somewhere that was not on the Hastings Peninsula, which means they did not start on the Brede south bank. The Brede north bank was not on the Hastings Peninsula yet was within easy riding distance of it, consistent with Panel 40.
- 3. The Sowdens pinch point barely 100m across would help protect a Brede north bank landing, buying time to unload the horses and build a bridgehead, whereas the Brede south bank was exposed.
- 4. The Warenne Chronicle says that William entered England between

- fortresses at *Hastinges* and *Penevesellum*. We think the *Hastinges* fortress was *Hæstingaceastre* at modern Winchelsea, so *Penevesellum* fortress must have been on the Brede north bank (see Figure 13).
- 5. Carmen (Barlow) says: "You repair the remnants of earlier fortifications". Carmen is saying that there were existing fortresses at the initial and secondary landing sites. The existing fortress at the secondary landing site would be *Hæastingaceastre*. There would not have been two fortresses near to each other on the same side of the Brede, so the fortress at the primary landing site must have been on the Brede north bank. This is corroborated by Quedam Exceptiones (Tyson) which says that William: "landed at Penevesel, where at once he restored the most strongly entrenched fortification".

So, the Normans landed at Penevesellum on the Brede north bank. It might be possible to narrow down its location. It is a Latin format name, presumably coined by the Latin speaking monks that held Rameslie manor. It looks like a declension of a root name Penevesel, the name used by Quedam Exceptione for the landing. That name has the 'el' suffix that Roberts reckons to be distinctively Frankish in origin. It looks analogous to Pevenesel and Wincenesel, the Frankish versions of Pefenesea and Winchelsea, with 'el' - the Frankish root of the modern French word îles - being a direct translation of Old English 'ea', both meaning 'island'. But the only known island on the north bank of the Brede in Saxon times was Rye. Thus, in the first edition of this book, we suggested that Penevesellum probably referred to Rye. But it has shown no evidence of Saxon era occupation, despite dozens of archaeological excavations. Indeed, unsurprisingly for somewhere with no population, Rye does not seem to have had a Saxon era name. It was probably named after Rai in Normandy. We have had second thoughts.

The last syllable of *Penevesel* is interesting because 'sel' is old (and modern) French for 'salt', the Brede estuary's primary medieval product. 'penn' is Old English for an 'enclosure'. 'fæs' is the first part of 'fæsten', Old English for 'stronghold'. It is possible then that *Penevesel* meant something like 'salt

stronghold', a fortification to defend the salt-pans. Kathleen Tyson interprets the name to mean 'fortress in the wash'. Neither meaning could apply to Rye, which has no evidence of Saxon era occupation, let alone a Saxon era fortress.

So, *Penevesellum's* name is probably related to a fortress or stronghold. It might also have something to do with an enclosure and/or being tidal and/or guarding salt-pans. Quedam Exceptione says that William restored a fortress near where he landed at *Penevesel*. Carmen says that William restored fortresses at each of the landing sites. These restored fortresses were in addition to the kit fortress that Poitiers and Jumièges say that the Normans built near where they landed at *Penevesellum*. Warenne Chronicle implies that there was a fortress at *Penevesellum*, opposite a fortress at *Hastingas*. Orderic gives the impression that there was a garrison at *Penevesellum*, presumably defended by some sort of stronghold.



Figure 14: Yeakell & Gardner Cadborough in 1770

Yeakell & Gardner's map (Figure 14), surveyed around 1770, might help. It labels modern Cadborough as 'Caresborough'. The Brythonic term 'caer' and the later 'cad' often mean 'fortress'. Many 'boroughs' were Saxon lookout or messaging towers, sometimes within fortifications. Y&G's ridgetop road seems to detour around the south of a rectangular enclosure. That enclosure is consistent with all the clues listed above. We therefore believe that *Penevesellum* probably referred to the place that became modern Cadborough. It would have ideally suited Harold's needs, with a wide sea view and in a good location to defend the north bank of the Brede and the rest of the Rother Peninsula.

Kathleen Tyson has a different interpretation. She proposes that *Penevesellum's* fortress was at modern Udimore village, where William later built a grand manor house on the site of modern Court Lodge. She says that it would be an ideal place to build a fortress because it was at "a chokepoint across the Romano-British causeway for taxing trade between Hæstingaport and hinterland in Kent" and a "magnificent place for a signal beacon that could signal other beacons neighbouring the Brede basin, Battle, Cap Gris Nez and St Valery-sur-Somme".

We are sceptical about Kathleen's details. Udimore has shown no archaeological evidence of pre-Conquest occupation, let alone a fort. It has a severely restricted sea view, making it a poor place for a signal beacon, and that view pointed to Boulogne in what was Hauts-de-France rather than to Normandy. Udimore is 114km from St Valery, so it would need a 900m high navigation signal to be visible over the curvature of the earth. It is difficult to believe that the Saxons had the wherewithal or skills to construct a pioneering 2km tidal causeway, especially when there was a low-water ford and a bridge a few miles upstream. And Udimore was 6km from the end of the Udimore peninsula, so it was barely 'in the wash'.

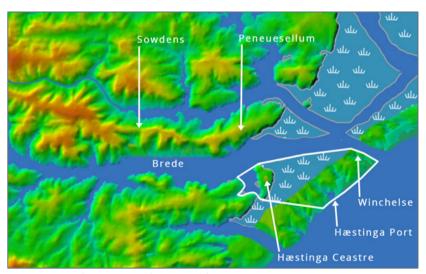


Figure 15: Brede estuary 11th century place names

Penevesellum's fortress seems more likely to have been at Cadborough than

at Court Lodge. It is closer to the sea. It is better protected with a sea cliff to the south and downslope to the east. It has a wider sea view. It better fits the etymology and the contemporary account *Penevesellum* clues.



Figure 16: Salt plain landing upstream of Penevesellum

We are not suggesting that the Normans landed immediately below Cadborough. It had a dangerously narrow strand and a steep cliff. Rather we think that it was the closest place to the landing that had a name, at least one that Normans would recognise. Most likely, they landed upstream of Cadborough, between Float Farm and Brede ford - Figure 16. This would be below Court Lodge, so Kathleen Tyson may well be right that Court Lodge commemorated the place where the Normans landed.

# Some landing puzzles

If we are right about most of the above, it solves two puzzles and perhaps an enigma. The first puzzle is why serial owners of *Hæstingaport* would gift such a valuable asset to monasteries: first to St Denys in the 8th century, then to Eynsham Abbey (S911) and finally to Fécamp. In St Denys' case,

forged charters say that a Saxon baron named Bertoald gave them the port in gratitude for their healing services. Tommyrot. We think the reason was commercial.

The administration of the entrepôt was too complicated and too expensive for normal barons. It needed quays, jetties, wharfs, canals, roads, dredging, ferries, security, warehouses, barges and bridges that were provided as an operational overhead. It was a capital-intensive business before there was an easy way to raise capital. There was no central power to provide these services once the Romans had left. The Church was the nearest substitute. They had the funds and the skills to run major infrastructure projects. Clerics alone could read, write and sum, the essential skills for keeping records and ledgers. We think that the port's owners had to give it to one abbey or another, in exchange for a cut of the tolls, to prevent it decaying into disuse with no revenue.

The second puzzle is Wace's description of the first raid. He says that the Normans follow the coast, then loot a fortress named *Penevesel* while the locals drive off their cattle and hide in cemeteries. This has always been interpreted to be 'castrum Pevenesel' (i.e. the fortress at modern Pevensey). But Pevensey would have been too marshy for cattle and too sparsely populated for loot or cemeteries or even a church. Also, Wace uses the 'n/v' spelling *Penevesel*, as in *Penevesellum*, rather than the 'v/n' spelling of *Pevenesel*. He would not have used the Latin -um suffix, because he was writing in Old French. We think he was referring to *Penevesellum*, at Cadborough. It was just along the coast from where we think they landed, exactly as Wace describes. We think Cadborough had a dilapidated Roman fortress and a church and a Saxon era lookout/messaging tower, so it would have fitted Wace's description of the first day raid.

After our book was published, a Sowdens resident told us of a local lore that St Mary's Church was moved to Udimore in the 12th century from somewhere closer to the sea. The oldest part of St Mary's is indeed 12th century. No older foundations have been found in the vicinity. We guess

that the original St Mary's was at Cadborough. We would love to hear from anyone that knows more.

The enigma concerns the Sedlescombe coin hoard, which was found north of Sedlescombe bridge in 1876. The latest coin in the hoard is dated 1064, which has made some think that it was buried long before the Normans arrived. We guess that the mint had not changed their coin stamp, so these coins might have been minted up to soon before the invasion. Regardless, something traumatic and lasting must have happened to bury such a valuable treasure and not return to collect it. The invasion looks culpable.

The hoard is often said to be Harold's war chest, but it seems unlikely. There was a mint at *Hæstingaceastre*. It produced less than 1% of England's coins, but two-thirds of the coins in what remains of the hoard. We cannot think of a plausible reason why Harold would have brought so many coins minted at *Hæstingaceastre*.

We guess that the mint was melting down foreign coins taken as taxes, tolls, and fees by the port, then stamping and re-issuing them. Presumably, some of those coins were used to pay the port's warehousemen, stevedores, ferrymen, and hauliers. We think the hoard's collector was taking payments, directly or indirectly, from them. An inn or brothel, perhaps, or most likely we think, some sort of toll house.

But if the Normans landed anywhere other than the north bank of the Brede, the hoard's owner had two weeks to move the coins to safety. If, on the other hand, the Normans landed on the north bank of the Brede and immediately rode to the Hastings Peninsula to get food, as we suggest above, they would have ridden across the Brede at Sedlescombe on the same day they landed. The hoard's owner would have been in immediate danger. They might have buried the coins as soon as they saw the Norman knights, then fled.

## Reconciliation with the major landing events

#### 1. Norman fleet moored off the English coast near Old Pevensey

Poitiers: "In the morning, a lookout at the top of the mast declared that he could see nothing but sea and sky. They anchored at once."

Carmen: "On the open sea you moor offshore; You caution to take in the sails, awaiting the morning to come".

Tapestry Panel 38: "Duke William in a great ship crossed the sea and came to Pevenesæ".

ASC-D: "Meantime Earl William came from Normandy to pefnes ea on the eve of St. Michael's mass."

Brevis Relatio says the fleet: "arrived in England, by the favour of God, near the fortress of Pevensel".

Worcester: William "Had moored his fleet at a place named Pefnesea".

Benoît: "Arrived at Pevenesel, at a port/harbour beneath a fortress handsome and strong".

CBA: The Normans "Arrived safely near castrum Pevenesel."

#### 2. Norman fleet sailed to Hæstingaport

Malmesbury: "they arrived, after a favourable passage, at Hastingas".

Brevis Relatio: "After a short delay he arrived with his whole army at another port not far away named Hastingas".

Benoît: William "Arrived at Pevenesel, at a port/harbour beneath a fortress handsome and strong ... The Count came to Hastinges without staying".

## 3. Normans passed through Hæstingaport to land at Penevesellum

Poitiers: "Borne by a favourable breeze to Penevesellum, he disembarked with ease and without having to fight his way ashore".

Poitiers: "The rejoicing Normans, once they had landed, occupied Penevesellum, where they built their first camp".

Jumièges: "Landed at Penevesellum where he immediately built a castle".

Warenne Chronicle: "unopposed between the forts of Hastinges and Penenesellum he entered the land of the English".

Orderic: "They took possession of Penevesellum".

## 4. The Normans moved to Hæstingaport

Poitiers: "The rejoicing Normans, having landed, occupied Penevessellum, where they built their first camp, and built another at Hastingas".

Jumièges: "Landed at Penevessellum where he immediately built a castle with a strong rampart. He left this in charge of some troops and, with others, hurried to Hastingas where he built another".

Tapestry Panel 40: "The knights hurried to Hestinga".

ASC-E: "Meanwhile Count William landed at Hestingan on Michaelmas Day".

Orderic: "They took possession of Penevesellum and Hastingas".

Wace: "The Normans are come! They have landed at Hastingues".

CBA: "The Duke did not remain long in that place, but went away with his men to a port not far distant named Hastinges".

#### Reconciliation with the contemporary landing accounts

- 1. Poitiers: William wanted to avoid a "arriving at a dangerous or unknown anchorage in the dark". The Norman fleet moored outside St Valery then ran downwind on a southerly breeze heading for the well-known harbour of Old Pevensey (aka pefenes ea). To muster the fleet back together, and perhaps to obfuscate their intended destination, they moored in the shallows several miles off the English coast.
- 2. Malmesbury says of William that: "The earl himself first launching from the continent into the deep, awaited the rest, at anchor, nearly in midchannel. All then assembled round the crimson sail of the admiral's ship; and, having first dined, they arrived, after a favourable passage, at Hastingas". The Norman fleet waited mid-channel off St Valery, crossed the Channel, ate breakfast, then eventually arrived at Hæstingaport, which Malmesbury referred to as Hastingas.
- 3. Carmen: "the looming rocky coast" did not discourage the invasion. The Normans would have seen the sea cliff at Beachy Head as soon as it started to get light.
- 4. Orderic says that, upon hearing of Tostig's invasion, Harold: "withdrew

- his ships and troops from Hastingas et Penevesellum, and the other seaports opposite Normandy". Harold withdrew his ships from Hæstingaport and withdrew his troops from Hæstingaport, which Orderic refers to as Hastingas, and Cadborough, which Orderic refers to as Penevesellum.
- 5. Carmen: "On the open sea you moor offshore; You caution to take in the sails, awaiting the morning to come; But after the dawn spreads red over the land, and the sun casts its rays over the horizon; You order the sails set to the wind to make way". The Norman fleet moored off the English coast, then beam reached on a cross wind to Old Winchelsea.
- 6. CBA: The Normans "Arrived safely near castrum Pevenesel. The Duke did not remain long in that place, but went away with his men to a port not far distant named Hastinges". The Norman fleet arrived near the island harbour of Old Pevensey, within sight of Anderitum, which CBA refers to as Castrum Pevenesel. They moored for a few hours, then sailed to Old Winchelsea, which CBA referred to as Hastinges in this folio.
- 7. CBA says that *Hastinges* is in line from the Abbey to through *Hechelande* near modern Telham. It was written after the Norman castle at modern Hastings took the name *Hastinges*, and that is its meaning in this folio.
- 8. Poitiers describes the scene on William's ship: "In the morning, a lookout at the top of the mast declared that he could see nothing but sea and sky. They anchored at once." William was on a drakka, the biggest and fastest style of longship, and it carried no horses. His ship would be much faster than the rest. He moored off the English coast and had breakfast while waiting for the fleet to catch up. By the time he had finished, the rest of the ships were in sight.
- 9. Warenne Chronicle: "unopposed between the forts of Hastinges and Penenesullum he entered the land of the English". We think Penenesullum is a misspelling of Penevesellum, the Norman name for Cadborough. The Norman fleet therefore sailed unopposed between fortresses at modern Winchelsea and Cadborough on the Brede.
- 10. Poitiers says: "Borne by a favourable breeze to Penevesellum, he disembarked with ease and without having to fight his way ashore". The Normans landed unopposed on the north bank of the Brede, which

- Poitiers refers to as Penevesellum.
- 11. Brevis Relatio says that Duke William and his fleet: "arrived in England, by the favour of God, near the fortress of Pevensel. After a short delay he arrived with his whole army at another port not far away named Hastingas". The Norman fleet arrived near the island harbour of Old Pevensey, some 2km southeast of the fortress of Pevenesel, then sailed to Hæstingaport, which Brevis Relatio refers to as Hastingas.
- 12. Poitiers says: "The rejoicing Normans, once they had landed, occupied Penevesellum, where they built their first camp, and built another at Hastingas to provide a refuge for themselves and a shelter for their boats". The Normans landed on the north bank of the Brede, which Normans referred to as Penevesellum, then moved to Hæstingaport, which Normans referred to as Hastingas.
- 13. Jumièges says that William: "Landed at Penevesellum where he immediately built a castle with a strong rampart. He left this in charge of some troops and, with others, hurried to Hastingas where he built another". William landed on the north bank of the Brede, which Jumièges refers to as Penevesellum, where the Normans assembled a fortress. He then hurried to Hæstingaport, where he assembled another.
- 14. Orderic: "They took possession of Penevesellum and Hastingas, the defence of which was entrusted to a chosen body of soldiers to cover a retreat and to guard the fleet". The Normans occupied the north bank of the Brede and modern Winchelsea, which Orderic referred to as Penevesellum and Hastingas respectively. After destroying most of his fleet (see below), the remainder moored in the harbours around modern Winchelsea. Men were stationed at modern Winchelsea to guard the fleet and to cover a retreat.
- 15. Benoît: "[The Normans] arrived at Pevenesel, at a port/harbour beneath a fortress handsome and strong" and "The Count came to Hastinges without staying". The Normans arrived off the island harbour of Old Pevensey, which Benoît refers to as Pevenesel. It was within sight of Anderitum. They sailed to Hæstingaport, which Benoît referred to as Hastinges.
- 16. Tapestry Panel 38: "Duke William in a great ship crossed the sea and came

- *to Pevenesæ*". The Normans arrived off the island of Old Pevensey, which the Tapestry referred to as *Pevenesæ*.
- 17. Tapestry Panel 40: "The knights hurried to Hestinga". The Normans disembarked on the north bank of the Brede, then the knights rode around the Brede to forage for food on the Hastings Peninsula, which the Tapestry refers to as Hestinga.
- 18. John of Worcester: "[William] Had moored his fleet at a place named *Pefnesea*". The Normans moored off the island harbour of Old Pevensey, which Chronicon refers to as *Pefnesea*.
- 19. ASC-D: "Meantime Earl William came from Normandy to pefnes ea on the eve of St. Michael's mass; and soon after his landing was effected, they constructed a fortress at the Hæstingaport". The Normans moored off the island harbour of Old Pevensey on Michaelmas Eve, then effected a landing on the north bank of the Brede. Within a few days they moved to modern Winchelsea, part of Hæstingaport, where they constructed a fortress.
- 20. ASC-E: "Meanwhile Count William landed at Hestingan on Michaelmas Day". Several accounts say that most of the Normans soon moved from their initial camp to Hastingas, meaning Hæstingaport. It was on the Hastings Peninsula, which is what ASC-E meant by Hestingan. It is quite plausible that some Normans moved to Hæstingaport on Michaelmas Day, although most of them moved the following day.
- 21. Wace: "The ships steered to one port/harbour; all arrived and reached the shore together; together cast anchor, and ran on dry land; and together they discharged themselves. They arrived near Hastingues each ship ranged by the other's side." The Norman fleet steered towards the port of Hæstingaport, arrived together in the Brede estuary, cast anchor together midstream, then landed and discharged together on the north bank, near Hæstingaport, which Wace refers to as Hastingues.
- 22. Baudri: "Turning their sails at an angle, they manage to make good speed. Finally reach the shore, never touching the oars". The Normans crossed the channel running a southerly breeze. After mooring off Old Pevensey, they turned their sails to reach northeast, arriving solely by

- wind power at the shore at Old Winchelsea.
- 23. Wace: A messenger tells Harold "The Normans are come! They have landed at Hastingues". The Normans occupied modern Winchelsea, part of Hæstingaport which Wace refers to as Hastingues.
- 24. Carmen (Kathleen Tyson's translation) says that the Normans landed in: "the happy land owed to you embraced you and yours in a calm basin". The Normans landed on the north bank of the Brede, which was in a calm basin and which William might have thought had been illegally stripped from the Norman Abbey of Fécamp by Harold.
- 25. Carmen: "One Englishman kept hidden under the sea cliff". The spy was at the base of Cadborough Cliff on the north bank of the Brede.
- 26. Wace: An English knight "posted himself behind a hill" to watch the Normans disembark. The spy posted himself behind the spur at Float Farm on the north bank of the Brede to watch the Normans disembark.
- 27. Carmen: "You restore the strongholds that were lately destroyed". The Normans patched up the Roman/burh fortresses at Cadborough and modern Winchelsea that had been destroyed by Tostig and/or Harold, as well as constructing their own kit fortresses.
- 28. Wace says the knights: "Formed together on the shore, each armed up on his warhorse. All had their swords girded on, and passed into the plain with their lances raised ... When they [the carpenters] had reached the spot where the archers stood, and the knights were assembled, they consulted together, and sought for a good spot to place a strong fort upon". The Normans assembled a motte-less kit fortress on a plain which was adjacent to the strand. This was the salt-plains on the north bank of the Brede estuary.
- 29. Wace says that on their first day after landing they went on a raid. "They held their course along the coast; and on the morrow came to a fortress named Penevesel", which they plundered. The Norman raiding party followed the north bank of the Brede to its eastern tip, then marched west along the ridgeway to raid Cadborough, which Wace referred to as Penevesel.

# The Camps

ASC-D mentions only one Norman camp, at *Hæstingaport*. Huntingdon mentions only one camp, at *Hastingas*. Wace mentions only one camp, near where they landed at *Hastingues*. Poitiers and Jumièges mention camps near where they landed at *Penevesellum*, and at *Hastingas*. Carmen mentions a Norman 'sea camp' at *Hastinges portus* and a camp near the landing site, perhaps one and the same. The Tapestry depicts two camps, the second of which is captioned "AT HESTINGA [CEASTRA]". CBA mentions a camp at a "port named Hastinges" and a battle camp at "Hechelande". They all seem credible to us, so there was a bridgehead camp at *Penevesellum*, a sea camp at *Hæstingaport*, and a battle camp, perhaps at *Hechelande*.

# The Norman bridgehead camp at Penevesellum

We conclude in 'The Landing' section above that the Normans landed on the north bank of the Brede near *Penevesellum* and initially camped nearby. This raises several interesting points about some other things the contemporary accounts have to say about the first camp. Poitiers and Jumièges say that the Normans built a fortress there. Wace says that it was a kit brought from Normandy. Where was it? Those same accounts, as well as the Tapestry and CBA, say that the Normans soon moved to another camp. Why did they move? CBA and Wace say that William destroyed most of his ships before moving to the second camp. Is it plausible?



Figure 17: Tapestry Panel 42

First, the fortress. Tapestry Panel 42 (Figure 17) shows cooks working in front of a towered structure at the first Norman camp. This is invariably assumed to be the first Norman fortress. It does not look like a kit fortress to us. The Tapestry building has foundations, cupolas, stone towers, windows and a roof, whereas a kit fortress would be made of wood with no foundations, no adornments, and no roof. Carmen says the fortress was surrounded by palisades. The Tapestry building has open sides. It is depicted on a bobbly base whereas a motte-less kit fortress would have needed to be on a smooth level base. We reckon the Tapestry building was already there when they arrived, and the kit fortress is out of shot.

The structure in Panel 42 looks like a simplified version of William's palace from Panel 35, with the roof being held up by an arch and cross beam. We are drawn by the bobbles. It is one of only two buildings on the entire Tapestry that are depicted on bobbles. The other is the Saxon house being burned in Panel 47. The bobbles could be a mistake, but we suspect that they indicate both buildings are far distant, beyond bobbly fields. If so, the building in Panel 42 (Figure 17) might be a burh lookout tower on the Udimore ridge (probably at Cadborough, as we say in The Landing, above). Otherwise, perhaps it is a Saxon salt warehouse or fishing net dryer.

Whatever the building in Panel 42, the Normans did build a kit fortress at their first camp. Jumièges says that it had a strong rampart. Wace says they brought the pieces from Normandy and pegged it together near the landing site. He had previously said that the knights and carpenters join the archers on a plain at the edge of the landing strand where they: "consulted about where would be a good place to build a strong fortress". It might be possible to work out where it was.

Tapestry Panel 41 (Figure 10) depicts the first Norman camp. It is on a treeless plain. The lack of baseline bobbles indicates that it was a level surface, and a motte-less kit fortress could only be assembled on firm level ground. It would be most useful on a treeless plain where there would be no natural defence. We think it was on a plain of salt evaporation ponds.

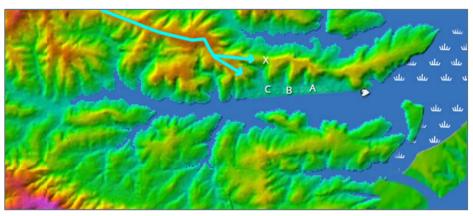


Figure 18: Bridgehead fortress location

Wace says that an English spy watches the fortress being constructed from behind a hill. Carmen says that he watched the landing from the base of a sea cliff. If the landing was in the Brede estuary, this has to be Cadborough Cliff. The spy would not have got too close for fear of being captured. The obvious observation place was Float Farm, south of Cock Marling, where a spur came close to the water's edge (eye in Figure 18). We guess that the fortress was at A, B or C, where spurs came close to the estuary and where it would protect the part of the camp to its east.

The English garrisons in the vicinity - Lympne and Pevensey - were empty on the day of the invasion, but William was not to know. He planned to defend his landing against a garrison counterattack, thereby buying time to unload his ships and build his fortifications to establish a strong bridgehead. He would have expected the English troops to have marched east along the Udimore ridgeway, shown as a cyan line on Figure 18.

In the first edition of this book, we speculated that the kit fortress was most likely to have been at A, where it would protect an evacuation if the English army turned up before the horses had been unloaded. We overlooked Sowdens. We now think that was probably at C, below modern Brede Place, where it would have worked with a blockade of the Sowdens pinch point (x) to protect the entire landing site. It would have been positioned

midway across the salt-plain and east of a stream descending from Sowdens. Even if the fortress was only 30m square, it would have been difficult to get past with only 50m either side for the Normans to defend.

How long did the Normans stay at their first camp? Freeman reckons just one day, based on two recensions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: The D says that the Normans arrived at 'Pefnesea' on Michaelmas Eve, the E says that they landed at 'Hestingan' on Michaelmas Day. Freeman assumes the D means that they landed at Pefnesea, so they only stayed one day. The other accounts say that they landed, whether at Penevesellum or at Hastingas, on Michaelmas Day. Freeman could be right, although for the wrong reason. They might have arrived at Pefnesea on Michaelmas Eve, then landed at Penevesellum later that day, then moved to Hastingas on Michaelmas Day. Poitiers, Jumièges, ASC-D, CBA and the Tapestry give the impression that William left for his second camp at Hæstingaport as soon as the first was established. Orderic says that they occupied both, giving the impression that they did so simultaneously. The others do not mention an initial landing or bridgehead camp, perhaps because it was short and uneventful.

We doubt the main Norman army stayed only one day at the first camp. On their first whole day in England, Poitiers says that William and his senior barons went out scouting the surrounding land, Wace says that a raiding party went up the coast. It seems likely to us that they probably had a powwow that evening and it was there that they decided to move to modern Winchelsea, probably the day after Michaelmas Day. Even so, some Norman scouts would have crossed the Brede to land at *Hestingan* on the Hastings Peninsula on Michaelmas Day, so ASC-E is right.

It sounds like the first camp might have been a mistake. We think not because William brought two kit fortresses. In our opinion, the initial *Penevesellum* landing was a necessity. The most likely reason is that it was the only strand in the region that could accommodate the entire Norman fleet. It was therefore the only strand in the region that would allow the Normans to overwhelm the expected defenders by a D-Day style

simultaneous mass landing. It was also the only riverbank in the region that was firm enough to support mounted horses and flat enough to build a kit fortress without first digging a motte. And it was overlooked by the Sowdens pinch point, ideal to block a garrison counterattack.

Presumably, then, the initial landing place had some compelling drawbacks that made it unsuitable for a long stay. We think it was rejected because it lacked ambush opportunities. William needed to lure Harold to the vicinity then, ideally, ambush or trap him. If the Normans were at the eastern end of the Udimore Peninsula, their best chance would be if Harold passed through Sowdens, where the door could be shut behind him, but the chances of him doing so were minuscule. Worse, the eastern end of the Udimore Peninsula was small, barren and siege prone. The Sowdens pinch point would have been ideal for the English to trap the Normans on the eastern end of the Udimore Peninsular and starve them to death. William could not take the risk. He had to move before the main English army arrived, and probably did so two or three days after the landing.

Finally, there is CBA's claim that William "burned the greatest part of his ships" at the first camp, allegedly to show his more lily-livered troops that they could not flee so they had to fight. Wace agrees: "[William] commanded the sailors that the ships should be dismantled, and drawn ashore and pierced, that the cowards might not have the ships to flee to". Both statements are usually dismissed as poetic license. After all, Poitiers says that an English messenger finds William inspecting his fleet, which would be pretty pointless if it was a pile of charcoal. But, if we are right about the landing sequence, William would have burned the greatest part of his fleet at Penevesellum. The Normans moved to the Brede south bank. Its strand was barely long enough to hold half the Norman fleet, but ships could not be left behind in case Harold found them useful in a blockade. The horse carriers and most of the cargo ships, which comprised more than half the fleet, were no longer needed because William had no intention of ever returning the horses, fortifications or provisions to his ships, so he burned them.

It also makes sense that William ordered the bungs to be removed from the ships that went to the second camp, to discourage deserters. However, we think the bungs could be reapplied at short notice if William ordered the ships to leave quickly.

# The Norman sea camp

CBA says that William went away with his men to a port named Hastinges where, "having secured an appropriate place ... he built a fortress of wood". Jumièges says the Normans assemble a second fortress at Hastingas. Chronicon says the fortress was at Heastingam, then that after the battle "William, however, returned to Heastingam". Carmen says that, after the battle, William "returned to his castra marina" ('sea camp'), hence we refer to it as the 'sea camp'. ASC-D says that: "soon after his landing was effected, they built a fortress at Hæstingaport". Carmen goes onto say he then spent fourteen days in his "camp at Hastinges portus". We interpret this to mean that Hastinges, Hastingas and Heastingam are cognates of Hæstingaport and that it was where William built his second fortress.



Figure 19: Tapestry Panel 45

We explain in Appendix A why *Hæstingaport* comprised Old Winchelsea (*Winchelse*) on the Camber shingle bar and modern Winchelsea. Tapestry Panel 45 (Figure 19) depicts the second camp. It shows a fortress on top of a hill. There are no significant hills on shingle bars and the Normans were

hardly likely to make their camp on a flat, flood prone, siege prone shingle bar with only rain for drinking water, and a few hens and goats to eat. If the Norman sea camp was at *Hæstingaport*, it was at modern Winchelsea.

Modern Winchelsea was very different in the 11th century. In those days it was a steep-sided narrow-necked peninsula, sitting in a tidal lagoon. It was as good a defensive location as there is in the region with sea cliffs to the north and east, a steep west slope down to the sea, and a narrow causeway entrance to the south. Pinch points are double edged, good for defence but siege prone. In this case, we suspect that is exactly what William wanted. He needed to lure Harold to the Hastings Peninsula in person. Placing himself somewhere distant, passive and siege prone might have given Harold the confidence to come in person. We will return to this when discussing William's plan, below.

Carmen says that William restored "dilapidated strongholds" at the landing sites. Quedam Exceptiones (Tyson), an epitome of Jumièges written in the early 12th century, says that William: "restored the most strongly entrenched fortification" at Penevesellum. We think the dilapidated strongholds were Hæstingaceastre at modern Winchelsea and Penevesellum at Cadborough. Both fortresses could have been damaged when Harold raided the area 1052 or when Tostig raided it earlier in 1066. Indeed, they might have been prime targets since at least one of them had a mint that would have held gold. None of this would contradict any primary sources if, as we think, the Norman kit fortresses were in addition to dilapidated fortresses that already existed at Winchelsea and Cadborough.

#### The exact location of the Norman sea camp fortress

Tapestry Panel 45 (Figure 19) is captioned: "ISTE JUSSIT UT FODERETUR CASTELLUM AT HESTENGA (CEASTRA)", with 'CEASTRA' embroidered inside the palisade. It is very odd. 'at' is a valid Latin word, but not in this context. It gives every impression of being Old English 'at'. 'ceastre' is Old English for 'fortress', typically a former Roman fortress. They are the only

Old English words on the entire Tapestry. It was intended to be displayed in Normandy to a Norman audience, so why would it have Old English words in the caption? And what is it trying to say?

Most historians - Bridgeford, Belloc, Rede, Bruce, Wikipedia and others - reckon that *CEASTRA* is a misspelling of 'castra', Latin for 'camp', there to indicate the location of the Norman camp and separate from the main caption. Rex and others translate the main caption: "He ordered that a castle be dug at Hastings". But fortresses are assembled or constructed, not dug. Rex reckons that the men are digging a motte, but a motte is the level ground upon which a fortress is built, and the men are still digging. If they are digging a motte, the Norman kit fortress has not yet been started, yet there is a fortress on the top of the hill. Rede translates *castellum* as 'rampart', implying that the diggers are making a ramp up to the fortress. It is an implausible translation and not what is depicted. Bridgeford assumes that the entire caption is faulty, so replaces it with what he sees: "This man has ordered a fortification to be thrown up at Hastings".

We have no definitive answer, but it is interesting that the 'A' in 'HESTENGA' is so squashed. We suspect that the original text was supposed to say "ISTE JUSSIT UT FODERETUR MOTTE CASTELLUM AT HESTENGA (CEASTRA)", 'he ordered that a fortress motte be dug at Hestenga', but they ran out of space, being forced to redact the word 'MOTTE' and squash the 'A'. Wikipedia, without explaining their reasoning, seems to have reached the same conclusion. Their translation starts: "He ordered that a motte be dug ...", even though the Latin word for motte is not in the caption.

A kit fortress would have to be assembled on flat level ground. The first stage of the assembly would be to raise and level a motte, which seems to be what the men on Panel 45 are doing. The important point here is that the men are still digging. Whatever the main caption is trying to say, the kit fortress assembly has not started, yet there is already a fortress on the hilltop. It must have been there when the Normans arrived. It has the Old English word 'CEASTRA' embroidered inside. We think it uses

'HESTENGA CEASTRA' as the Latin transliteration of the Old English place name *Hæstingaceastre* and shows it with the Old English preposition 'AT'.

William's men are digging at the bottom of the fortress hill. If Alfred's *Hæstingaceastre* burh fortress was on the hilltop at modern Winchelsea, why would William need a kit fortress lower down the hill? Carmen and QE say that pre-invasion fortresses at the landing sites were damaged. Perhaps the *Hæstingaceastre* burh was too dilapidated to offer a good defence, although Carmen goes on to say that William had it restored. Even if it was too damaged to be fully restored, why did William not build his kit fortress at the top of the hill inside the burh wall? The answer, we think, is that the kit fortress served another purpose, to guard the south slope, the only weak point of Winchelsea's defence.

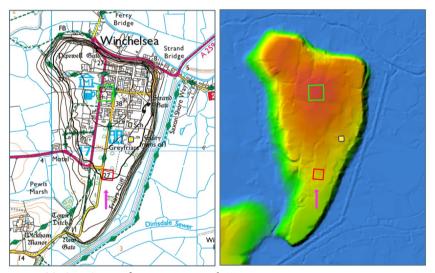


Figure 20: Artist's view for Tapestry Panel 45

Figure 20 depicts what we have tried to explain. Alfred's burh fortress is shown as a green square. It would have been surrounded by a rectangular wall roughly 780m long according to the Burghal Hidage. The south slope was shallow and relatively vulnerable but just 150m wide. William's fortress, shown as a red square, would have shored up this defensive weakness. The Tapestry's viewpoint looks north from the magenta arrow.

## The Tapestry's tower

What about the tall thin tower to the fortress's right? The Normans did not build it because it is timber framed, so it was also already there when they arrived. It is square. It has a tetrahedral roof and a small window either side of the middle beam. It has no windows at the top, at least on the visible side. Apart from the first Tapestry Panel, which is usually thought to represent Westminster, all the other towers in the Tapestry are stone. This makes sense, because Westminster and the Panel 45 tower would be Saxon whereas the others were Norman or Carolingian.

Towers were rare in pre-Conquest England. There were probably only a hundred or so in the entire country. Most of them were belltowers attached to monasteries. The only surviving record of what Saxon timber towers might have looked like is Greensted Church in Essex. It is a broad-based boxlike affair. There were some Saxon stone belltowers, a dozen or so of which survive, but they are broad based too. Moreover, a belltower should have big windows evenly spaced around the bell stage, to let out the sound, whereas the highest window on the Tapestry tower is not much above the middle, and it is not obviously associated with a monastery. Not a belltower then. Four other types of pre-Conquest towers are worth considering: watch towers, message relay towers, lighthouses and stair turrets.

Stair turrets were rare in Saxon times, but they do exist. Two examples survive at Brigstock and Hough-on-the-Hill. They are both stone, which makes sense because they gave access to the roof or bell stage of Romanesque churches. Saxon era timber stair turrets, if any, would not have survived, but the Tapestry tower is unlikely have been one because it is not adjacent to a belltower or monastery.

There are no known Saxon lighthouses, but modern Winchelsea would have been an obvious place to build a lighthouse cum navigation beacon. Old Winchelsea was a busier port than Dover in Roman times and the Romans built two pharos there. One survives. There was a lighthouse at

modern Winchelsea that was already dishevelled in the 13th century, because Nicolas reports that a tax was levied on ships using the port to pay for its renovation. By 1300 a snazzy new stone lighthouse tower featured on Winchelsea's seal (Figure 21), standing between its two churches. It is possible that the seal lighthouse replaced a 12th century stone lighthouse that had replaced the Tapestry's timber lighthouse that might have replaced a Roman Pharos, but the Tapestry tower has a cupola roof, entirely inappropriate for a lighthouse.



Figure 21: 1300 Winchelsea seal showing two churches and a lighthouse tower

Saxon watchtowers were rare too, but each of Alfred's burhs would have had one. They were too far apart to have had line of sight, so they were augmented by a network of message relay beacons or message relay towers, some of which take the legacy name 'borough'. We think one was at Cadborough. In principle, the Tapestry tower could have been a watchtower or relay tower, but there is no obvious reason that would be located so far down the slope: note that the top of the Tapestry tower is lower than the base of the fortress. If the hilltop fortress was, as we think, *Hæstingaceastre*, the watchtower would have been inside the palisades, perhaps cropped out by the Tapestry's top banner, and it would not have needed an adjacent message relay tower.



Figure 22: Monastery from Panel 48 (L); Sea Camp from Panel 45 (R)

We note that the top of the Panel 45 tower (Figure 22, right) is a wall of crosses, unique on the Tapestry. There are too many for them to be structural or to be holding up bells. They would be too high to have had a defensive purpose. When we first saw the Tapestry, we guessed they were wall anchors, but it is difficult to imagine why a timber tower would need so many, and only on one part of one side. One possibility is that top left nearside wall has fallen off, leaving wattle fixings visible on the inside of the far wall. Another possibility is that they were simply for artistic effect. We think it is something else.

We guess that the Tapestry tower crosses are some sort of messaging system. Hardly anyone could read in those days. We think the crosses might be pictorial representations of coloured symbols that carried some sort of coded message, like naval flags. The window would be where the operator views responses and new messages from other towers. Its main purpose would have been to exchange messages with the docks, perhaps warning them of incoming ships or inclement weather. As for why it is down the slope and not inside the palisades, we can only guess that the *ceastre* was reserved for military use whereas this tower was part of the civilian port administration.

It is interesting that the monastery on Panel 48 also has tower (Figure 22, left), this one cigarette shaped. It too lacks bell stage windows at the top. It is higher than the church roof, so not a stair turret either. Perhaps it too was a messaging tower, for exchanging information between senior management at the monastery and operational staff at the port. It is too far for clear line of sight to the Panel 45 tower, but there could have been an intervening relay tower. We would love to hear from anyone that knows more about this.

Modern Winchelsea had an unusual enthusiasm for towers. In addition to the 13th century lighthouse tower on the seal, it had a 13th century roundel lookout tower in northern Winchelsea, a 14th century square tower adjacent to St Thomas', and a 14th century stair turret tower survives at Greyfriars monastery (Figure 23, 50.921802, 0.710274).

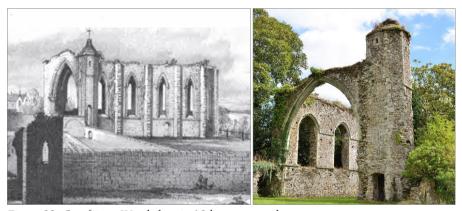


Figure 23: Greyfriars, Winchelsea in 18th century and now

Places that are suitable for a tower were probably suitable for previous towers, either because of their line or sight, their proximity to other buildings, their reusable foundations, or their firm ground rock. We suspect this might have happened with the location of the Greyfriars tower which would exactly fit the location of the Tapestry tower on Panel 45, shown with a yellow square on Figure 20.

## The commanders' plans

### Harold's plan

One of the most baffling aspects of the Conquest is why Harold jeopardised his life, his dynasty and his race by venturing within striking range of his enemy, especially when accompanied by an understrength army.

By tradition, Harold was driven by a red haze to attack the heavily fortified Norman camp in a surprise attack, supported only by the men that were immediately available to him. Then, having arrived at the battle theatre with a poorly armed understrength army, he is supposed to have realized his folly and decided instead to defend the miserably inadequate cross ridge upon which Battle Abbey now stands. Rather than retreat to safety or deploy his troops in a relatively secure enclosed loop, he is supposed to have deployed them in a line across one side of the hill, gambling that William was so inept that he would not ride around the open flanks, or smash through the puny ends of his line. It is ludicrous nonsense.

The tradition is based upon some Norman accounts that describe Harold's frame of mind. Jumièges, for instance, says that Harold does not like brother Gyrth's advice to stay in London: "After these words Harold flew into a violent rage. He despised the counsel that seemed wise to his friends, taunted his brother who loyally gave him advice, and when his mother anxiously tried to hold him back, he insolently kicked her. Then for six days he gathered innumerable English forces. Hastening to take the duke by surprise, he rode through the night and arrived at the battlefield at dawn." Poitiers also says that Harold was driven by rage: "trusted soldiers, sent out as scouts on the Duke's orders, announced the imminent arrival of the enemy, because the king in his fury had hastened his march." But Normans were not privy to Harold's frame of mind or to private conversations in the English court. They are guessing based on his actions and have guessed wrong.

Harold's sister Queen Edith talks about his character in 'Vita Ædwardi

Regis', saying that he was: "endowed with mildness of temper and a more ready understanding. He could bear contradiction well, not readily revealing or retaliating ever, I think, on a fellow citizen or compatriot. With anyone he thought loyal he would sometimes share the plan of his project, sometimes defer this so long, some would judge - if one ought to say this - as to be hardly to his advantage. Indeed, the fault of rashness or levity is not one that anybody could charge against him." Not someone who would kick his mother, or jeopardise his life, his dynasty or his race in a fit of impetuosity.

Harold was a patient man and time was on his side. The longer he waited, the stronger and better equipped his army, and the more the attrition to the Normans army. If Harold stayed out of reach, William would have been forced to return home eventually, albeit having caused a lot of humiliating damage first. Of course, Harold's instinct as a medieval warrior king would have been to lead his men to a glorious victory on the battlefield. His barons would expect him to lead the defence of his realm. He was the best person to lead the campaign: the most experienced English commander, the only Englishman that knew William's mind, the only baron with local knowledge because it was his ancestral land. But none of this would justify a suicidal attack with an understrength army.

Harold's obvious strategic options were: 1) To hide somewhere safe and far distant; 2) To implement a Fabian defence; 3) To blockade the Normans on the Hastings Peninsula; 4) To attack with overwhelming force; 5) To negotiate terms for William's withdrawal. None of these options required Harold to go to East Sussex in person. He could have delegated Gyrth to do any of the last four. So, what was Harold thinking?

The only rational explanation for Harold going to East Sussex in person is that William offered to negotiate terms for his withdrawal back to Normandy, but only if the negotiations were face-to-face with Harold.

This is corroborated by ASC-D which says: "com him togenes æt þære haran apuldran". 'togenes', the root of the modern word 'together', nearly always

means 'to meet', so it is saying: 'Harold went to meet him [William] at haran apuldran'. Older translations, by Ingram, Thorpe, and Swanton agree. Unfortunately, more recent translations have muddied the waters. Garmonsway translates this phrase as 'came to oppose him', Whitelock has 'came against him', both implying that Harold went to attack William. They are almost certainly wrong. The Old English word for 'against' and 'oppose' is 'ongean'. The very next sentence says "Wyllelm him com ongean", 'William came against him', using 'ongean'. If Harold went to attack William, it too would surely have used the word 'ongean'. We suspect that modern translators have been duped into a weird translation of togenes to match the orthodox engagement narrative.

Harold did go to East Sussex. He left a large part of his army behind, so he did not intend to attack William in the short term. He went with no archers and very few horsemen, so he presumably thought they were unnecessary for his initial needs. The only rational explanation is that he planned to blockade the Normans on the Hastings Peninsula. If we are right that he went to negotiate William's return to Normandy, a blockade would give him the upper hand. It would help his other options too. If a blockade was applied for long enough, the Normans could be starved into submission or weakened before an overwhelming attack. There were only three egress points from the Hastings Peninsula, all narrow. Harold took enough men to blockade those three places and to guard against guerilla attacks.

Logistics must have governed Harold's initial thinking. The Andredsweald forest was sparsely populated, home only to skittish wild animals. The nearest rich farmland north of the Rother was up near Maidstone, 25km away. The only rich farmland south of the Rother was on the Hastings Peninsula, already impounded to feed William's army. The remainder of the Rother Peninsula, according to Domesday, had only 35 acres of meadowland, barely enough livestock to sustain 10000 men for a week. If it was not secured quickly, William would have taken that too.

If Harold did not secure local food, he would be faced with a severe

logistical challenge. An overwhelming force might need 20000 men, but they would still be vulnerable at the Hastings Peninsula access points, all of which were ambush prone. If the English were repulsed or delayed, they would quickly run out of food and would be forced back to Maidstone. It would be better to gradually infiltrate the Hastings Peninsula, perhaps landing some men by ship, but 20000 men would need a hundred cattle and a hundred carts of bread and cheese every day, all delivered across the Andredsweald. A prolonged blockade would need less men, perhaps five thousand, but they would have to stay for several months. In practice, if Harold did not secure enough local food quickly, he would probably have had to let the Normans stew and hope they went home when they realised that he was not coming. It would have been humiliating for a warrior king like Harold, especially as he had been elected king specifically because he was the best person to lead the English army against invaders.

Even if Harold sequestered all the available grain and livestock south of the Andredsweald, his active options would still have been limited. It might sustain the full army for a week, or a smaller blockading army for a month. The Normans could outlast them. They would have gathered a similar duration of food, and they could eat their horses if they got hungry.

Whatever Harold's medium-term plan, he only had one plausible initial course of action: To blockade the Hastings Peninsula, secure whatever local food was available, and send scouts onto the Hastings Peninsula. If weaknesses could be found in the enemy position within a week or two, Harold could summon the rest of his army for an attack on the enemy camp. If not, he would have time to establish supply routes to maintain the blockade until the Normans' food ran out. If the blockade was unsuccessful, he could withdraw his men and revert to a Fabian strategy.

Harold would not have gone to the theatre of war unless he felt safe. Poitiers, Jumièges, Wace, Carmen and others report what while he was still in London he took the only sensible course of action, dispatching messengers and spies to scout the enemy position, strength, deployment,

and fortifications. They must have reported that it was safe to venture beyond the Andredsweald or he would not have crossed the Rother. His intelligence was faulty, probably because his scouts were tricked by William. We will return to this momentarily, in the section about William's plan.

So, as the ASC-D is trying to say, Harold went to the theatre of war expecting to negotiate with William face-to-face. The authors of the Norman contemporary accounts reckon that Harold was trying a surprise attack because he was a hot-headed idiot. Perhaps, they wanted to denigrate him. Perhaps, they did not want to report William's un-heroic tactics. Most likely, we think, they saw Harold put himself in dire jeopardy for no obvious reason, so they deduced, wrongly, that he rushed to the battle theatre motivated by blind rage to try a surprise attack.

### Harold's route to Hastings

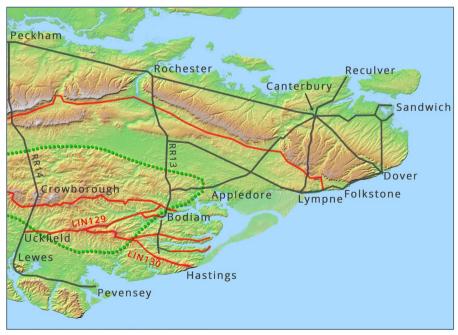


Figure 1: Roman roads in medieval southeast England; Andredsweald outlined by green dots

Harold led the English army from London to Sussex. They had to cross the immense lozenge-shaped Andredsweald forest (outlined by green dots on Figure 1). His obvious route would have been on one of the two north-south Roman roads, labelled RR13 and RR14 on Figure 1. It is not obvious to everyone. Reputable historians seem to avoid writing about the route the English might have taken through the Andredsweald, but they hint at their alternative thinking on their troop deployment diagrams.

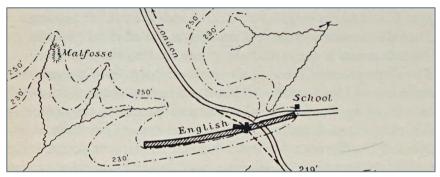


Figure 24: A H Burne's troop deployment diagram

A H Burne's diagram (Figure 24) is typical of dozens depicted on our website<sup>5</sup>. Two more are shown on Figure 53 and Figure 54. They imply that the English arrived on the route of the modern A21 by labelling the A2100 north 'To London' or 'To Tonbridge' or similar. It seems implausible because the route of the A21 was only cleared for the construction of the Hastings to Flimwell turnpike in the 18th century, yet they presumably reason that it is still more likely than that the English arrived on the RR13 or RR14.

RR13 went to the wrong place for the battle to have happened at the orthodox battlefield. It crossed the Brede at modern Sedlescombe then forked to Baldslow on the Hastings Ridge, and Westfield (Figure 25). The risk of Harold getting ambushed at the Brede crossing or on the steep slope up to the Hastings Ridge were huge. Realistically, there is virtually no probability that Harold took this risk, but if we imagine for a moment that

 $<sup>^{5}\</sup> https://momentousbritain.co.uk/go/BOH_Evolution$ 

he did, his only feasible motivations are: 1) To try a surprise attack; or 2) To blockade the Hastings Ridge thereby trapping the Norman army in the relatively barren south-eastern part of the Hastings Peninsula. Both possibilities are inconsistent with a 5km march from Baldslow to the traditional battlefield: 1) Harold would not have marched away from the Norman camp if he was trying a surprise attack; 2) Harold would not have abandoned the main egress route if he was trying a blockade.

RR14 went to the wrong region for the battle to have happened at the orthodox battlefield. The section from Peckham to Uckfield would have been good, but forest tracks like the LIN-129 and LIN-130 from Uckfield to Netherfield were notoriously gloopy and rutted. Daniel Defoe, the 17th century novelist, reported that it took six oxen to pull an old lady's carriage to a Wealden church, and that hauling freight through the Andredsweald to Kent could take a year or more. The problem here is that the English would have had a huge baggage train carrying weapons, shields, armour, tools, cooking equipment, food and the like. If the forest tracks were well maintained, it would have taken a week or so to cross the Andredsweald from Uckfield to Netherfield. But there is no reason to think that the tracks were being maintained in the 11th century. They do not appear in any early medieval court or Church travel records. There are no Saxon Charters charging anyone to fix the ruts. There were no wealthy manors and no active bloomeries which might have incentivised someone to maintain the tracks. There were no settlements where broken carts could be fixed, so a paucity of freight. Wolves and bears lived in the forest, so a paucity of travellers too. Unless LIN-129 and LIN-130 had some unknown military purpose, they would have become overgrown by the 11th century. Hardly any Saxon archaeology has been found nearby, so this seems likely. If so, it would have taken a month for the English army to get from Uckfield to anywhere near the orthodox battlefield.

Even if the Andredsweald forest paths were brilliantly maintained, there are several good reasons why Harold would not have used them. They offered myriad opportunities for snipers, blockades and ambushes. Having

emerged from the Andredsweald at Netherfield, the isthmus at Sprays Wood was even more prone to blockades and ambushes. The Kentish troops would arrive on the RR13 Roman road. Huscarls would arrive by ship at Bodiam where the Rother met the RR13. Both cohorts would be vulnerable and liable to get lost as they tried to muster with the main army in the Andredsweald. The alternative was to muster at Bodiam or Cripps Corner, but if that was the plan, Harold would have brought the main English army down RR13 in the first place.

Jumièges says that Harold rode through the night to meet his troops at the English camp. He would not even have considered riding through the Andredsweald at night, the tree canopy cutting out any moonlight. Poitiers says: "If any author of antiquity had been writing of Harold's line of march [from London to the battlefield] he would have recorded that in his passage rivers were dried up and forests laid flat." Perhaps this is just a figure of speech, to mean they moved quickly, but if it has any normal meaning, it cannot be referring to RR14 or the forest tracks because they do not cross any significant rivers.

In our opinion, the English army arrived at the battle theatre on RR13 from Rochester. It was the shortest Andredsweald crossing. It was the only route that could carry carts all the way, and the only route quick enough to be consistent with contemporary accounts. It passed through rich farmland for food and significant settlements for shelter, equipment, repairs and extra troops. It was easy for the main army to muster with Harold's huscarls and Kentishmen. It is consistent with Jumièges because Harold might conceivably have ridden on a paved Roman road in moonlight. It is consistent with Poitiers too because RR13 crossed two major rivers, the Medway and the Rother. We guess he was trying to say that the English army arrived earlier than the Normans expected because they somehow jury bridge the Medway and/or Rother.

Two reasons have been suggested why Harold would not have used RR13: 1) It would remove the element of surprise because William's scouts were bound to see the English coming; 2) Harold would be delayed crossing the Rother. Both points are valid, but incidental. Harold would probably have liked to execute a surprise attack, his signature tactic, but he had been exchanging messages with William on his journey from London. William knew where he was and had prepared his defences. There was no chance of him being taken by surprise and Harold would have known it. The English army would have been delayed at the Rother, but probably by no more than a day, whereas they would have been delayed by a week or more, as we explain above, trying to cross the Andredsweald on forest tracks.

## Haran Apuldran

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, arguably, has more specific evidence that Harold arrived at the battle theatre on RR13. It is in the ASC-D passage: "he gaderade ha mycelne here, com him togenes æt hære haran apuldran", meaning: 'he [Harold] assembled a large army and came to meet him [William] at haran apuldran'. So, where or what was haran apuldran?

'apuldre' is Old English for 'apple tree'. Thorpe, Whitelock and Swanton translate haran apuldran as 'hoary apple tree', Garmonsway as 'grey apple tree', Savage as 'ancient apple tree', Welchman as 'grey pollard tree'. Any sort of tree seems implausible to us. More than a dozen apple trees are mentioned in Saxon charters as boundary markers, but they are aimed at locals, who would know local reference trees. The ASC had nationwide readership. Its locational references for major events are well known national landmarks, so not trees.

Stenton notes that 'haran' is used in the names of geographic features like pools and rivers, which are not hoary or grey or ancient. He reckons that haran usually means 'boundary' in place names. Jepson agrees. Appledore on the River Rother was then known as 'apuldre', taking its name from apple trees. It is mentioned by the ASC in 893 and 894, so it was a familiar national landmark. If Stenton and Jepson are right, haran apuldran meant 'boundary of Appledore'. Ingram proposes 'estuary of Appledore'. Kathleen Tyson reckons 'anchorage of Appledore'. They are all credible.

If haran apuldran had anything to do with the Appledore and/or the Rother, Harold can only have arrived on RR13. It makes sense because RR13 had all the practical advantages too.

#### William's Plan

William needed to kill Harold quickly. He would have hoped and prayed that Harold would arrive with a powderpuff army and attack a place of his choosing. He cannot have expected it. His 'Plan A' was surely to lure Harold towards the Hastings Peninsula then ambush or trap him.

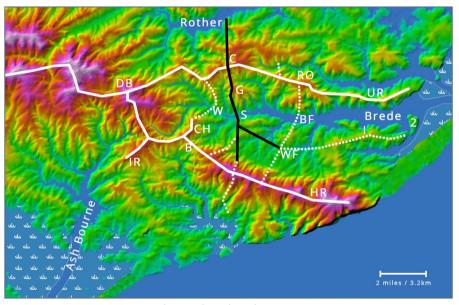


Figure 25: East Sussex topography, roads and trackways

Why the Hastings Peninsula? Because the geography of southeast Sussex is utterly extraordinary, a narrow-necked peninsula crossed by a steep watershed within a narrow-necked peninsula. These are the Hastings peninsula, the Brede basin, and the Rother peninsula respectively. The isthmuses are barely 1km and 500m. The Brede basin is bounded by the Udimore Ridge to north, the Hastings Ridge to the south and the isthmus ridge to the west, shown as white ridgeway lines on Figure 25. William

knew what he was doing. He could have landed almost anywhere on the south coast but chose the Hastings Peninsula. He had two weeks to move but stayed at his sea camp, presumably because he knew that nowhere had better military opportunities. He must have been advised by some smart people with expert local knowledge, presumably monks of Fécamps, as local historian Jo Kirkham proposed 25 years ago.

William's most crucial challenge was to lure Harold beyond Cripps Corner (C on Figure 25), where he could be trapped. William only had one bait, but it was a good one: To pretend that he could be bought off, but only in face-to-face negotiations between himself and Harold. Wace, Carmen, Poitiers and Jumièges report some of the negotiations between William and Harold. None of them mention that William pretended to be open to a bribe, but doing so would cast William in an un-heroic light. Instead, the Norman accounts claim that William goaded Harold down to the theatre of war by destroying Harold's ancestral lands on the Hastings Peninsula. They are trying to portray Harold as a hot-headed idiot. The Normans certainly did destroy some manor houses, one is depicted on Tapestry Panel 47, but it was too late for Harold to prevent it and even if he could, he would surely not jeopardise his life his kingdom and his race to prevent what was a relatively minor embarrassment.

Harold, of course, would have been suspicious that he was being lured into a trap. William needed to mollify his fears. We are convinced that he sandbagged, pretending that his army was small and impotent. William's deceit was twofold. Firstly, he dispatched his knights and much of his infantry to forage for food every day, thereby dispersing them thinly over the Hastings Peninsula. This is why, as Poitiers says, William's knights were away from the sea camp when Harold arrived in the theatre of war. Harold's scouts might have encountered small bands of Norman knights out foraging, but it was only to be expected. They would have been more suspicious if they did not. Secondly, William placed himself and his barons at modern Winchelsea, as far as possible from the oncoming English army. Just in case Harold's scouts were inept, William escorted two of them

around the Norman camp then sent them back to Harold. He would only have done this if he was sandbagging. The scouts would have reported that the invaders were remote, toothless and mostly footbound, with perhaps 2000 to 3000 men. Harold had twice that number of men and he could easily blockade the three main Hastings Peninsula egress points against a Norman infantry attack. He would have felt totally secure to cross the Brede basin watershed at Cripps Corner and make camp at Great Sanders.

Again, the geography played into William's hands. As soon as the English army passed Cripps Corner, William would have secreted horsemen along the Udimore Ridge to trap Harold in the 7 square mile area between the Udimore Ridge and the Brede estuary.

Wace says that Harold only discovers the enormous size of the Norman cavalry on the morning of the day of battle, having discovered only the previous day that the Normans had a significant number of horses. Wace (Taylor) goes on to say that Harold blames the Count of Flanders: "The Count of Flanders has betrayed me; I acted foolishly in trusting him. For in his letters he sent me word, and assured me through his messenger, that William could not have so many knights". Dodgy provenance, as always with Wace's reports from the English camp, although perhaps Wace's sources knew that the Count had been feeding Harold with disinformation. More likely, they guessed Harold ignorance of the Norman cavalry from his actions. If so, they have guessed right, because Harold would surely have not crossed the Rother if his messengers and scouts had given him any hint of the strength of the Norman cavalry.

William would have hoped that Harold so underestimated the strength of his army that he would cross the Brede and try an immediate attack on the Norman camp. It seems incredibly unlikely, but William would have had a plan if he did. Both sides of the Hastings Ridge were covered in woodland. It stretched out into the Andredsweald. If Harold advanced more than a few hundred metres from the Brede and was then spooked into flight, he might have melted away to safety through the woodland, thereby

scuppering the Conquest. Instead, if Harold tried to cross the Brede, William would surely have attacked immediately in the boggy valley bottom, where he would have backed onto the bottleneck Sedlescombe bridge.

Harold probably had no intention of crossing the Brede, but even if he did, he would not have done so before the other side had been thoroughly scouted, and a camp and food supply had been secured on the other side. That would have taken at least a day, or more probably a week. Therefore, whatever Harold's short-term intention, the English had to camp somewhere north of the Brede – we explain where in 'The English camp' section below. William attacked that camp.

# The Norman battle camp

#### Hechelande

The Chronicle of Battle Abbey (Lower) says that William had a battle camp at Hechelande: "The Duke came to meet him [Harold], surrounded by units of cavalry. Arriving at the hill named Hechelande, which lies towards Hastingarum, while donning their armour ...". In other words, William and some of his knights came from their sea camp to a battle camp on a hill named Hechelande where they dressed for battle. Other locational clues in CBA (see page 260) place Hechelande a few hundred metres northwest of modern Telham on the Hastings Ridge. This crucial statement is the only evidence that the Normans landed in the Priory Valley, the only evidence that they camped at modern Hastings, and the only evidence that supports the orthodox engagement scenario. It is not as straightforward as it might seem.

The monks of Battle Abbey published two narratives to support their claim that the Abbey was built on the battlefield, namely Brevis Relatio and CBA. They were part of a hundred-year campaign to formally establish its status as a Royal Peculiar, permanently independent of diocesan control. Both accounts seem to be doctored versions of genuine invasion narratives with

'Abbey on the battlefield' evidence insertions. It is tricky to work out which bits were genuine, and which bits were fabricated. Still, one point worth noting here is that if the original genuine narrative had any evidence that the Abbey is not on the battlefield, it would have been redacted.

What to make of *Hechelande* and the Norman battle camp? There are four possibilities: 1) There was no Norman battle camp; 2) There was a Norman battle camp, but it was not at *Hechelande*; 3) There was a Norman battle camp and it was at *Hechelande* at the location described in CBA near modern Telham; or 4) There was a Norman battle camp at *Hechelande*, but *Hechelande* was somewhere other than the place described in CBA.



Figure 26: Leuga around Battle Abbey

In the next section we explain why we believe that there was a Norman battle camp, so we discount (1). (2) is no more likely. If the Norman battle camp not at *Hechelande*, CBA's author had huge incentive to redact any mention of it. If they wanted to give the false impression that the Norman battle camp was consistent with Battle Abbey having been built on the battlefield, they could simply have said the camp was at Telham. What then

of (3), the orthodox narrative that the Norman battle camp was at *Hechelande*, at the location described in CBA near modern Telham?

CBA describes the Abbey's 'Leuga', a circle of land within 1½ miles of Battle Abbey that William gave to the Abbey. It lists the manors around the outside of the Leuga in a clockwise direction from *Bodeherste*. This is depicted on Figure 26, confirming that *Hechelande* (spelled *Hecilande* in this part of the manuscript) was just northwest of *Telleham* (modern Telham).

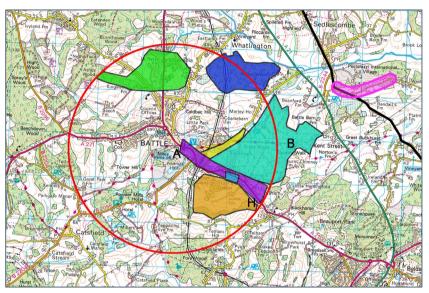


Figure 27: CBA land holdings in its Leuga

CBA describes some other features inside its Leuga. It says that there were four woods: *Bodeherste*, *Hechelande*, Petley and Duniford. Petley Wood survives. It says that *Bodeherste* was due east of Battle Abbey. A place named Bothurst Wood - a *Bodeherste* cognate according to Lower - is shown on the 1770 Y&G map to be coterminous with modern Great Wood. Chevalier reckons that Duniford Wood was north of Caldbec Hill. It must have been west of the Whatlington Road because CBA says that *Uccheham* was to the east of the Whatlington Road and south of Petley Wood. Presumably, Duniford Wood spanned the River Line in order to get the 'ford' part of its name. It was therefore northeast of Caldbec Hill. CBA says that Battle Abbey

held a wist and 37 acres between *Bodeherste Wood* and *Hechilande Wood* and between the infirmary and Chapenore. We interpret this to mean that it was either side of the ridgeway from Telham to Battle Abbey. Finally, CBA says that Battle Abbey held a huge uncultivated plain between *Bodeherstegate* and the road adjacent to *Hechelande*. The only 'road' known to be in that vicinity was the Hastings Ridge ridgeway.

Figure 27 shows Duniford Wood in green; Petley Wood in blue; *Bodeherste* Wood in teal; *Hechelande* Wood in orange; the 37 acres in purple; the wist between *Bodeherste* Wood in cyan; the huge uncultivated plain in yellow; Battle Abbey, Bodeherste manor house and *Hechelande* manor house are labelled A, B and H respectively.

One issue is that Carmen, Brevis Relatio and Wace all describe in some detail how the English camp and the battlefield are visible from the Norman battle camp, but neither the orthodox battlefield nor the orthodox English camp were visible from anywhere within 500m of CBA's location for *Hechelande*. Nowhere in the vicinity of CBA's *Hechelande* had an elevation higher than 110m. The peak of Battle Ridge is at 81m. Starr's Green, roughly midway, is at 98m. So, even if no trees lined the ridgeway, which seems incredibly unlikely, the view from CBA's *Hechelande* would be 10m over the peak of Battle Ridge, and the orthodox shield wall was 10m below that. We describe in 'The Traditional Battlefield' Clue 16 and show in Figure 60 that there is a view of the highest part of modern Battle Abbey from out near the railway line on Telham Hill, but that is over 1km from CBA's *Hechelande*, and the orthodox shield wall would have been below that line of sight. Moreover, the orthodox English camp at Caldbec Hill is 1km further away, obscured by Battle Ridge. We discount (3).

By a process of elimination, we think that the Norman battle camp was at a place named *Hechelande*, and that it was not at the location described in CBA (4). Nick Austin explained to us long ago his theory on this. He reckons that the monks of Battle Abbey probably invented a place named *Hechelande* near to the Abbey because the Norman battle camp was at

somewhere named *Hechelande*, and it was inconsistent with Battle Abbey having been built on the battlefield. So, if another contemporary battle account stated that the Norman battle camp was at *Hechelande*, it would scupper Battle Abbey's claim to have been on the battlefield. By renaming somewhere within their Leuga as *Hechelande*, if there were external references to a Norman battle camp at *Hechelande* they would endorse the monks' claim that the Abbey was built on the battlefield rather than contradict it. His theory sounds good to us.

CBA's Leuga boundary description hints this is what happened. It lists ten places around the boundary. All were outside the Leuga apart from *Hechelande* which it says was inside. It would have been more consistent to have named *Telleham* instead of *Hechelande* because it was nearby and outside the Leuga, like all the others. It seems to us that they were trying to draw attention to their *Hechelande*, perhaps to draw attention away from the real *Hechelande* battle camp which was elsewhere.

#### The Norman battle camp at Cottage Lane

CBA and Brevis Relatio specifically describe a Norman battle camp. There are more clues, albeit less specific, in other contemporary accounts:

- Carmen says that William returns to his 'castra marina' (sea camp) after the battle. The 'marina' adjective implies that the Normans had another camp that was not near the sea.
- Carmen says that the English camp and a Norman camp are visible to each other and joined by an 'iter', a road, usually a major road. The only Saxon era 'road' that reached close to the sea on the Hastings Peninsula was a track between Westfield and modern Winchelsea. It was too minor to be a normal *iter*. Moreover, the only hill close to that track and (just about) visible from close to the sea was the raised part of Icklesham near the school. It was far too small for an English camp and would not have left anywhere near enough space for the Norman camp. Therefore, Carmen is referring to a different road and not to the Norman sea camp.

- Orderic says that William took possession of *Penevesellum* and *Hastingas* on landing, then that William left a body of men to cover a retreat and to guard to the fleet. It sounds as if they were at the sea camp. If they were at the sea camp and got left, the rest of William's army went to another camp elsewhere.
- Poitiers says that the place where the Normans build the second fortress was a refuge and shelter for their boats. It sounds like the sea camp. A refuge is a safe place to retreat. Orderic says the men at the sea camp were there to cover a retreat. It suggests that most of the Norman army moved onto a less safe camp from which they might have to retreat.
- Wace says that Harold and Gyrth go to scout a Norman camp on the day before battle. They see huts, tents, pavilions and gonfanons. If they had been scouting the Norman sea camp, they would surely have noted the sea and the Norman fleet.

William needed to be prepared for all contingencies: a blockade, an immediate attack on the Norman camp, a camp on the Hastings Peninsula, an English camp before the Hastings Peninsula, saboteurs to nobble the Norman supplies and/or horses, a scorched earth, an organised retreat of the English army, or personal flight by Harold. A sea camp would be no use for any of these eventualities, too far distant and too unresponsive. Moreover, English spies on the Udimore Ridge would see them leave, giving Harold ample time to respond.

In our opinion, as soon as Harold entered the battle theatre, William's army coalesced at a battle camp close to the action. Carmen says that William's monk emissary leaves the Norman battle camp on an 'iter'. According to the RRRA, an iter usually refers to the narrowest of the three widths of paved agger road, although it can mean any metalled road. The Roman road that forked south of Sedlescombe to Beauport and Westfield (black line on Figure 28) was the only metalled road on the Hastings Peninsula, and therefore the most likely road for the emissary to have used. The battle camp would have been on this road close to the Brede. Carmen says that the English standards are visible from the Norman battle camp. This is only

possible at Cottage Lane (O) in modern Sedlescombe.

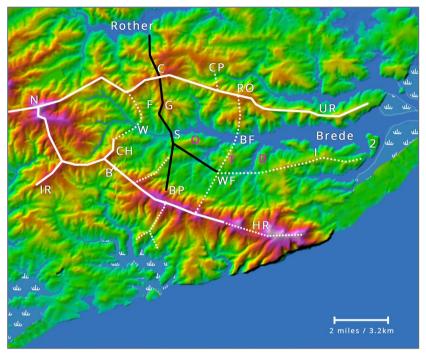


Figure 28: Battle theatre showing topography and roads

CBA and Brevis Relatio are consistent with a Cottage Lane battle camp. They describe it being on a hill 'a parte Hastingarum'. Lower and Searle translate to mean 'in the direction of Hastings' or 'towards Hastings', respectively. These translations are viable, but 'to the side of Hastingarum' is more natural. Hastingarum either referred to Hæstingaport at modern Winchelsea or to the Hastings Peninsula (see Appendix A). In the latter case, it would mean somewhere on the south bank of the Brede. In the former case, it would mean somewhere west of modern Winchelsea, which also means somewhere on the south bank of the Brede. CBA says that the battle camp was at Hechelande. Its name means 'heathland'. CBA says it was a hill. Cottage Lane was a hill and it might well have been heathland.

Once again, we think the battle camp at Cottage Lane was meticulously planned by William with expert local advice from the monks of Fécamp.

#### Here are some of its merits:

- Line of sight: It overlooked the Rochester Roman road along which Harold and his troops would arrive. It overlooked the Roman road Brede crossing, the most likely way that Harold would try to enter the Hastings Peninsula. It overlooked Great Sanders ridge, where we think the English camped. It overlooked Brede ford and Whatlington ford, two of the other three Hastings Peninsula crossing points. It overlooked the Brede/Line likely incursion points for spies and saboteurs.
- Military responsiveness: It was close enough to the three Brede crossing
  points to ambush Harold on unfavourable boggy ground if he tried to
  enter the Hastings Peninsula at any of them. It was close enough to
  prevent Harold blockading any of them.
- Road access: It had a metalled track to the sea camp at modern Winchelsea. It had the only metalled track to the Hastings Ridge, via Beauport Park to Baldslow, giving access to the rest of the Hastings Peninsula. It had tracks to all four Hastings Peninsula access points.
- Natural resources: It was adjacent to Oaklands iron bloomery, with everything needed to make and repair weapons, armour and saddlery.
   It had the only metalled track to the Hastings Ridge, giving access to all the rich farmland on the Hastings Peninsula.
- Defence. It was a steep-sided ridge, especially to the north. If Harold tried to attack Cottage Lane, the Normans would have been on hugely advantageous terrain.
- Offence. It was the closest place on the Hastings Peninsula to the English camp and was connected to it by the only paved Roman road.

The sequence of events is straightforward. Most of William's infantrymen and cavalry were loosely dispersed over the northern part of the Hastings Peninsula while he and his barons and his fleet guard were at the sea camp. As soon the English crossed the Rother, William and his barons left their sea camp to muster with the rest of his army at the Cottage Lane battle camp (O). It is a 4½ mile march for the English to Sedlescombe, an 8-mile ride for William to Cottage Lane. William would have arrived in plenty of

time to dress for battle and give a pep talk, anticipating that they might ambush Harold at the Brede crossing. In practice, Harold camped north of the river, the Normans stood down, and William returned to his sea camp.

There are four points to clear up. First, CBA and Brevis Relatio are the only accounts that specifically mention a battle camp. They only do so to provide evidence that the Abbey was built on the battlefield. The others would not mention it. They are written from William's point of view, and he only got dressed at the battle camp. They only reported events, not contingencies. The battle camp played no direct role in the battle, and nothing happened there. Thus, direct references to the Norman battle camp were redacted from the other contemporary accounts.

Second, why did William not attack as soon as the English crossed the Rother? The Norman cavalry could get to the south bank of the Rother in 30 minutes at a trot. The English army would have been demolished if they chose to fight cavalry on flat dry open ground. We guess that William was swayed by two potential issues. One is that the ground would have been boggy near the riverbank. The English army might have scattered where horses could not chase. The other is that Harold might have got back into a ferry and rowed to safety over the Rother. William might have won the battle, but it was no use if Harold escaped. He was better off waiting until the English were far enough south for the door to be closed behind them.

Third, some people think the English could not have come down the Rochester road, because the manors between Cripps Corner and the Rother are flagged as 'wasted' in Domesday. They presume that the Normans had been foraging there before the battle. If this was so, they reason, the battle would have happened somewhere north of the Brede. It makes no difference to our theory because we think the battle did happen north of the Brede. Anyway, we think it was the English army that wasted those manors to feed themselves at their camp.

Fourth, why did William not attack the English camp at dawn on Friday

the 13th? Wace says that the Norman barons urge William to attack as soon as possible because English reinforcements were arriving constantly. William delays by a day. We think the English were trapped and that no large contingent of reinforcements was imminent. William therefore spent a day trying to scare Harold into fleeing, having set a trap along the route away from the English camp. It was worth a try. If Harold had been killed fleeing, the Godwinsons might have lost support through his apparent cowardice and William might have taken the crown without a fight.

# The English camp

#### A Battle of Hastings not on the Hastings Peninsula?

It is natural to assume that the Battle of Hastings must have been fought on the Hastings Peninsula because of its name. But if William had a battle camp at Cottage Lane, as we propose above, it would be virtually impossible. Either Harold tried to get onto the Hastings Peninsula, in which case William would have ambushed him at the crossing point, or he did not try to get onto the Hastings Peninsula, in which case William would have attacked the English camp. In either case, the battle would not have happened on the Hastings Peninsula. This is a major departure from orthodoxy that needs some explanation.

The battle's modern name is misleading. The term 'Battle of Hastings' derives from 'bello de Hastinges', first mentioned in Domesday which says that Ælfwig, Ælfric and Breme died there. 'Hastinges' was the Norman name for Hæstingaport at the time of the invasion and when Domesday was collated, but the battle was not fought there. Indeed, John of Worcester specifically says that the battle was fought nine (Roman) miles from Hæstingaport. This is why the eminent Conquest historian Augustus Freeman campaigned to get the name changed to the 'Battle of Senlac'. 'Bello de Hastinges' is more appropriate than he makes out.

For one thing, Normans in Normandy, the core audience for the Norman

battle accounts, were only familiar with ports on the south coast. The only places they would recognise were Dover, *Hastinges*, *Pefenesea* and Southampton. Given the choice, *Hastinges* is by far the most appropriate. Heimskringla does much the same for its Norse audience by saying that the battle was fought 'near Helstingaport'. For another, Latin 'bello' means 'war', not 'battle'. The theatre of war, in addition to the battlefield, would encompass the landing places, the camps, the mooring places, the flight routes, the roads, the horse pastures, the farms and settlements that were raided, and so on. The battle could have happened pretty much anywhere south of the Rother and still be consistent with the name 'Bello de Hastinges'.

The only other evidence that the battlefield was on the Hastings Peninsula is the seven contemporary accounts that say or imply Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield. We explain in 'The Traditional Battlefield' section below why we think they are all flawed.

The other locational clues suggest that the battlefield was near to the Hastings Peninsula but not on it:

- John of Worcester is the most straightforward. It says that Harold: "Gave them battle nine miles from Heastinga, where they had built a fort". We assume his Heastinga meant Hæstingaport, and that he was using Roman miles, which equates to about 8 modern miles. We think Hæstingaport and the Norman sea camp were at modern Winchelsea. No battlefield candidates on the Hastings Peninsula were less than 11 Roman miles away, so the battlefield was not on the Hastings Peninsula. The other Hæstingaport candidates are modern Hastings and Combe Haven. Nowhere on the Hastings peninsula was more than seven miles from either of them, meaning that neither of them was Hæstingaport and/or that the battle was not on the Hastings Peninsula.
- Brevis Relatio (Dawson translation) says: "Accordingly, coming to a hill which was on the side of Hastingas, opposite that hill upon which Harold with his army was, there under arms, they halted for a short time, surveying the army of the English." This might be a key passage in locating the

battlefield, if only it could be understood. It was written by a monk at Battle Abbey. Depending on his ethnicity, this *Hastingas* could refer to the Hastings Peninsula or to *Hæstingaport*. Luckily, we think it makes little practical difference. If he was saying that the hill is on the side of the Hastings Peninsula, it would be on the south bank of the Brede estuary. The south bank of the Brede might also be 'on the side of *Hæstingaport*' at modern Winchelsea. The term 'opposite' hints mirror image, which sounds like there was a body of water between. If William and his barons were looking at the English army on a 'hill opposite' from a hill on the south bank of the Brede, the English army was not on the Hastings Peninsula.

- Baudri of Bourgueil says of the English troop disposition: "The enemy, discarding their horses, form themselves into a close wedge". As we explain later, the obvious reason for a wedge-shaped shield wall is that it was deployed following the contours on a spur. The only place it would appear wedge-shaped is where the spur points, and at roughly the same height or higher. In this vicinity, it is only possible looking across the Brede estuary with the spur pointing south towards the Brede and the Normans looking north from the Hastings Peninsula.
- ASC-D says that Harold: "assembled a large army and came to meet [or towards or against] him at haran apuldran", where we think that haran apuldran referred to the Rother estuary (see page 80). We interpret it to mean that the Rother was the closest named place to the battlefield with which ASC readers would be familiar. The only other place in the region with which they would have been familiar was Hæstingaport, which is mentioned in ASC. It was clearly on the coast at least 12km from Great Sanders whereas the Rother was just 6km away. If the battle had happened south of the Brede, we think it would have said that "Harold came to meet him at Hæstingaport", or similar. It implies that the battle happened north of the Brede and therefore not on the Hastings Peninsula.
- Tapestry Panel 48 (Figure 29) is captioned: "Here the knights have left Hestenga and have come to the battle against King Harold". Panel 40 also

mentions *Hestenga*, albeit spelled with an i rather than an e. It says that the Norman knights go foraging for food at *Hestinga*. They would not have gone chasing a few hens and goats around *Hæstingaport*. They would have gone to the richest farmland in the vicinity, which was south of the ridge on the Hastings Peninsula. For this and other reasons, we think the Tapestry's *Hest[i]enga* meant the Hastings Peninsula. If it is being consistent, Panel 48 is saying that the knights left the Hastings Peninsula to attack Harold.



Figure 29: Tapestry Panel 48

Our argument could be corroborated (or debunked) by working out the likely location of the building on Panel 48. It looks like a stone church or abbey with a rounded apse, clerestory, single storey lateral aisles and a thin stone tower. It could be an invention of the artist, but it is difficult to imagine why they would invent somewhere so elaborate. Perhaps they just copied an abbey that was familiar to them. If it is even an approximation of the church that was there, it is not Saxon and it is not modest.

The 'door' next to William is interesting. If it is a door attached to the church, why is it so big? On the other hand, if it is part of the next panel, why is it so small? Is it even a door? Note that it seems to have foundations, which suggests a building, and it is behind the tower's foundations. We guess it is a dormitory and/or refectory, stepped back from the church which makes it look small. It so, the church is a monastery. It looks foreign, which in this area can only mean that it was built by the monks of St Denys or Fécamp. It is reminiscent of the late 8th century Benedictine Abbey of

St John in Val Müstair, which was contemporary with the Romanesque Carolingian architecture of Frankish St Denys, but early Norman monasteries were of similar design. Fécamp Abbey only held Rameslie for around 30 years. We think it is a monastery built by the monks of St Denys Abbey, then occupied by the monks of Fécamp.

There are three likely locations for a monastery in Rameslie manor: modern Winchelsea, to oversee the port and fish salting; somewhere between Cadborough and Brede village, to oversee salt production; or modern Sedlescombe, to oversee Brede basin land traffic, forestry production and, perhaps, iron production. Wherever the monastery was, there were probably administrative buildings at the other two.

Kathleen Tyson, who agrees that this building is the main Fécamp monastery, thinks it is on the site subsequently occupied by St Leonard's at modern Winchelsea, thereby substantiating her theory that the Normans were leaving their sea camp at Icklesham. Her evidence is that Fécamp Abbey once held this land in modern Winchelsea. They still held it at the 'Dissolution of Alien Priories' during the reign of Henry V.

We doubt that the building on Panel 48 is at modern Winchelsea. If it were, it should also show the hill and/or the sea. The over-excited horse is on the baseline rather than on bobbles, suggesting it is on a road between the building and a woodland, which would not apply to modern Winchelsea.

If the building in Panel 48 is the main monastery in Rameslie manor, we think it was in modern Sedlescombe. If it was built by the monks of St Denys, perhaps they chose Sedlescombe because it is 10 miles closer to their other properties at Rotherfield, *Pevenesel* and London. The monks of Fécamps would have been equally happy that it was ten miles closer to their other properties at Horse Eye, Eastbourne and Steyning. Overseas cells of medieval abbeys were primarily revenue generating businesses. They were operated by businessmen rather than religious zealots. Businessmen, unless they have changed a lot in the meantime, would want

to live somewhere sheltered, comfortable, well connected, safe from Viking raids and close to lots of peasant girls. Sedlescombe would be by far the best bet in this vicinity. We suspect that the tower was used to send messages to other administrative buildings.

We are reminded of two interesting details. One is Frank Johnson's discovery of huge timber foundations at Old Orchard, south of Sedlescombe bridge. He thought they were from a wharf, but they were 50m from the river. They might have been associated with the monastery. The other is Sedlescombe Parish Church, which Beryl Lucey says was built by Normans on the site of an earlier Saxon era church. Battle Abbey's Leuga makes it clear that Saxon Sedlescombe was south of the Brede and upstream of the tidal limit, so there was no Saxon era settlement within 1km of the current church location. It is also on an unusual west-southwest to east-northeast orientation, common with early Carolingian abbeys. We suspect that the current Norman church was built on the foundations of the Carolingian monastery, and that it is the monastery depicted on Panel 48.

The point of all this is that if the building behind William on Panel 48 was at modern Sedlescombe, the knights were leaving the Hastings Peninsula.

#### The English Camp on Great Sanders Ridge

By tradition, the English camped on Caldbec Hill (CH on Figure 30). English Heritage have a plaque at the park entrance that provides some details. The tradition is based on some translations of ASC-D (Dorothy Whitelock, here) that say that Harold: "assembled a large force and came against him [William] at the hoary apple tree". Historians think this tree was a hundred junction marker on Caldbec Hill. We dispute the translation see page 80 - and we do not think the English could have camped at Caldbec Hill anyway. As we explain in Clue 7 below, the only route the English could have taken to the theatre of war was the Rochester Roman road which did not pass within three miles of Caldbec Hill.

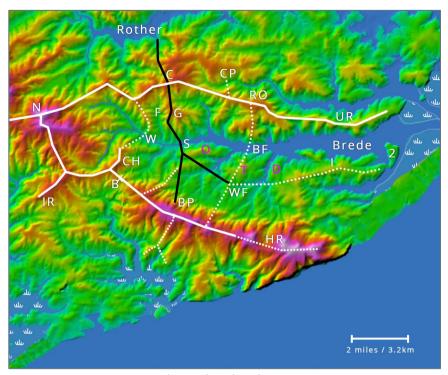


Figure 30: East Sussex topography, roads and trackways

Jumièges gives the impression that the Normans did not give the English an opportunity to make camp: "Hastening to take the Duke by surprise, Harold rode through the night and arrived at the battlefield at dawn. But the Duke had taken precautions against a night attack. He had ordered his men to stand by until dawn. At first light, having disposed his troops into three lines of battle, William advanced undaunted against the terrible enemy". Poitiers too: "[Norman scouts] announced the imminent arrival of the enemy, because the King in his fury had hastened his march ... He intended to crush them in a surprise or nocturnal attack ... The Duke put on his hauberk reversed to the left". CKE, Chronicon, Orderic, Benoît and CBA slide directly from the English march to the battle, also giving the impression that they did not have time to make camp.

Wace and Carmen, on the other hand, say that the English arrived at the battle theatre on Thursday and camped there for two nights. Both describe

negotiations between William and Harold on Friday. Wace describes the English camp, some scouting activities and some Norman tactical planning.

Wace and Carmen seem to contradict the other accounts, but Jumièges is not saying what everyone thinks. He says that Harold arrived at dawn, then that William had set a night guard to be ready for a nocturnal attack, then that William deployed his troops to attack at first light. The narrative sounds like the events were contiguous, but they were not. Harold arrived at dawn. The night was over. The night guard must have been set for a subsequent night. The Norman attack 'at first light' was at dawn on a day after that.

We guess that Poitiers and Jumièges use the term 'battlefield' to mean what we would now refer to as the 'battle theatre'. They are trying to say that the Normans prepared for battle as Harold approached the battle theatre in case he kept marching onto the Hastings Peninsula. Only he did not. He camped somewhere north of the Brede, so the Normans stood down. William set a night guard on Thursday night, but it too passed peacefully. The Normans prepared for Harold to attack on Friday. He did not, so they spent the day trying to scare Harold into flight. The Normans set another night guard on Friday night. Again, Harold did not attack. They prepared yet again for battle on Saturday and attacked at first light. If this is right, Poitiers and Jumièges are consistent with Wace and Carmen. The other accounts are not inconsistent. They just redact events between the march and battle because nothing happened.

By tradition, the English were on the march when they were attacked. Carmen says that as the Normans approached, the English emerged from woodland: "Suddenly the forest poured forth troops of men, and from the hiding places of the woods a host dashed forward ... there was a hill near to the forest ... they seized possession of this place for the battle." But Poitiers and Wace give the impression that the English were attacked in their camp. Poitiers says that when the Normans attacked: "... the English were camped on higher ground, on a hill close to the forest through which they had come". Wace says

that Harold marched from Westminster to: "where the abbey of the battle is now built. There he said he would defend himself".

Wace confuses matters with his reference to Battle Abbey. We explain why the Abbey is not on the battlefield in 'The Traditional Battlefield' section below. It suggests how Wace might have been misled. A synopsis. His work is based on earlier sources and on first-hand accounts recorded by his father. His father's correspondents could not have reported anything about the Abbey because it was not started until seven years after they left, so Wace based this statement on a similar sounding passage in Orderic, but Orderic had been deceived by the monks of Battle Abbey.

We originally concluded that Carmen was either mistaken about the English emerging from woodland as the Normans approached – albeit an oddly detailed mistake – or it was trying to say that reinforcements were arriving from woodland when the Normans attacked the English camp. Wace does say that English reinforcements were arriving all the time, so perhaps some of them poured forth from woodland to augment those that were already in their camp. We therefore searched for somewhere that matches the English camp clues and the battlefield clues. The only place that came close was the hill northeast of Cripps Corner, but it is too big and too flat topped. We abandoned our search for a combined camp and battlefield. Instead, we searched for the English camp using these clues:

- Carmen says that William's monk messenger goes to the English camp on a road, Latin 'iter' which usually means a major paved road. The only paved road in the region was the Rochester Roman road. It is difficult to believe that Harold would stray far from this road. His supply carts would be troublesome off the road. It was whence his reinforcements would arrive. It was his only route to safety. It was the only easy or dry way to get on or off the Hastings Peninsula, so it was the most likely Norman egress route from the Hastings Peninsula and the best place to blockade them on the Hastings Peninsula.
- Carmen reports a conversation between William and his returning

- messenger. William asks: "Where is the King?" The messenger replies: "Not far, you can see his standards". The Norman and English camps cannot have been more than two miles apart, probably less, with treeless slopes down to a valley in between.
- Wace says that Harold and Gyrth reconnoitre the Norman battle camp at dawn on the day before battle. Leofwine wakes early, spots they are missing, and goes to find them. He meets them on their way back to camp. It is still early. Harold and Gyrth cannot have ridden more than a few kilometres.
- Wace says that Harold and Gyrth can see the Norman huts, tents, gonfanon and armour from their scouting location. They can hear the Norman horses. They were alone and could not have been much more than a kilometre from the Norman camp. The geography must have given them some sort of protection to feel safe that close to the Norman camp, presumably an intervening river or bog.
- Wace says that Harold had the English camp "surrounded by a good fosse, leaving a well-guarded entrance on three sides". The English were at their camp for no more than two days. They must have had help from some sort of ditch that was already there.
- Jumièges, Orderic and John of Worcester say that the battle started at the third hour of the day. Given an hour to armour horses and knights, 15 minutes for William's pep talk, 15 minutes to assemble into line and 15 minutes to disassemble into divisions, the camps could not be more than an hour's march apart, probably a lot less if Brevis Relatio is right that William first came from his sea camp and that he stopped to study the English deployment.
- Wace describes the Norman advance from Harold's view: "The Normans appeared, advancing over the ridge of a rising ground; and the first division of their troops moved onwards along the hill and across a valley ... another division, still larger, came in sight, close following upon the first; and they wheeled towards another side of the field, forming together as the first body had done."
- The English leave their camp and move to the battlefield when they

see the Normans leave their battle camp. As we explain in 'The Battle' section below, the battlefield cannot have been more than a few hundred metres from the English camp. Therefore, Brevis Relatio's clues about the battlefield also apply to the English camp. It talks about the initial encounter (Dawson translation). "Accordingly, coming to a hill which was on the side of Hastingas, opposite that hill upon which Harold with his army was, there under arms, they halted for a short time, surveying the army of the English." William asks a nearby soldier where he thinks the King might be. He replies that he thinks the King: "was in the midst of that dense array, which was before them on the top of the hill, for as he was thinking, he saw Harold's standard there". We explain above why we think the Norman battle camp was on a hill on the south bank of the Brede, probably at Cottage Lane. It faced the battlefield over the river, probably no more than a mile away. The English camp would have been beyond that.

To summarise, the English camp and the Norman battle camp were both on hills, visible to each other, probably no more than 2km apart. There was a valley in between, probably a river valley or boggy stream valley. The camps were joined by a road, probably the Rochester Roman road.

There are only three English camp candidates that fit the bill (Figure 31): Woodmans Green (H), Great Sanders ridge (D) and Cackle Street (F). Each of them faced a potential Norman camp across the Brede: Canadia (I), Cottage Lane (E) and Doleham Hill (G) respectively. The pairs were each joined by a road: the Whatlington ford trackway, the Rochester Roman road, and the Brede low-tide ford trackway respectively.

Woodmans Green and Cackle Street are unlikely English camps: 1) Harold is unlikely to have moved that far from the Rochester Roman road; 2) If the English abandoned the Roman road, William would have sent horsemen up to Cripps Corner (B on Figure 31), then out along the Udimore ridgeway to trap the English in their camp. That leaves Great Sanders ridge (D on Figure 31) as the most viable English camp and it matches all the

clues. It is the only camp candidate that is visible from Cottage Lane, where we think the Normans had their battle camp. It uniquely matches Wace's description of the Norman advance (see Clue 6 in The Battle). It is the only candidate from where Harold and Gyrth could have gone scouting the Norman camp safely. It was uniquely protected to the south by huge preexisting pits that would have had three entrances. It is roughly an hour's march from Cottage Lane. It is beside a major Roman road (an 'iter').

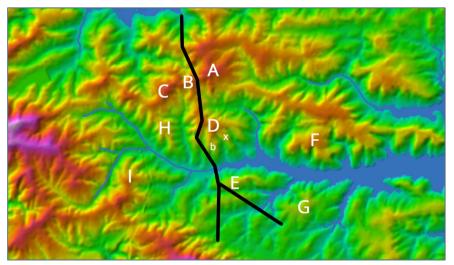


Figure 31: English camp candidates

Harold did not know about the Norman cavalry when he chose the English camp. Given what he did know, Great Sanders ridge would have seemed an ideal place for the English operations base and camp (Figure 32). It is a good defensive location, protected by immense ditches to the south and by steep slopes on the other three sides. It was adjacent to the Roman road, whence reinforcements would arrive. Its eastern side overlooks two Hastings Peninsula egress points, its western side overlooks the other two. It is close enough to blockade those egress points or to ambush the Normans if they tried an infantry sortie through an egress point. It was well placed for an English attack over any of them. It was within striking distance of where Harold's messenger had found William at his sea camp. We are convinced it is where the English camped.

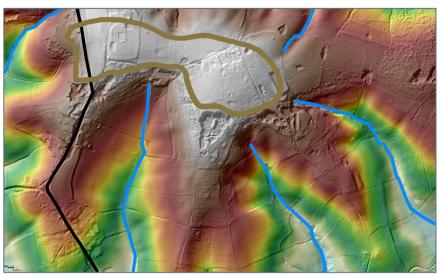


Figure 32: English camp on Great Sanders ridge, with camp outlined in brown

An English camp on the Great Sanders ridge solves two other vexing puzzles. One is that Wace says that Harold had the English camp "surrounded by a good fosse, leaving a well-guarded entrance on three sides". It seems unlikely. Harold was only at the English camp for a day. Spades were tiny in those days, like lawn edge-cutting tools. Even if they brought five hundred of them, which seems improbable, how could they dig a useful 2km long fosse in a day, especially among tree roots? But our proposed English camp was lined to the south by immense Roman era mining pits interspersed with broken ground spoil tips, and by steep slopes on the other three sides (Figure 32). There is no reason Wace's informer would have known the pits were there before the English arrived, so he would naturally assume they had been recently dug. Presumably, the three entrances were the Roman road through the Combe Wood pit, and the access ramps that once went through the centre of the Killingan Wood and Hurst Lane pits.

The other puzzle is that, according to Wace, Harold and Gyrth went alone to reconnoitre the Norman camp on the day before battle. He says they: "rode on, viewing and examining the ground, till from a hill where they stood they could see those of Normans, who were near. They saw a great many huts made

of tree branches, well equipped tents, pavilions and gonfanons; and they heard the horses neighing". The route from the camp to the viewing hill must have been secure underfoot, along a ridge perhaps. The view to the Norman camp must have been unimpeded by trees. They could not have been much more than 1km from the Norman camp to hear the horses and to see the armour. So, how could Harold and Gyrth have felt safe to be out in plain sight on their own and that close to the Norman camp? The answer at Great Sanders is that the estuarine River Brede was in between. We guess they rode along the mid-west spur-crest to Balcombe Green (B on Figure 31).

In summary, we are convinced that Harold's plan was to camp at a safe distance from the Brede where he could orchestrate a blockade of the Hastings Peninsula and negotiate William's return to Normandy from a position of strength. If so, wrongly assuming that the Normans were mainly footbound, he would have camped at Great Sanders ridge.

## William's trap

This brings us to a puzzle that baffled us for thirty years. Harold could not have known about the Norman cavalry when he was at Bodiam, or he would not have crossed the Rother. He could not have known when the English camp was chosen, or he would have returned to Bodiam. But he must have known by the time of the battle, even if he only found out that morning, or he would not have fought a defensive battle with no chance of victory. So, why did he not immediately leave to summon reinforcements or lead the English army back to safety at Bodiam as soon as he finds out?

According to Wace, Harold and Gyrth get an idea of the strength of the Norman army when they scout the Norman camp at dawn on the day before the battle. Harold suggests to Gyrth that he, Harold, should return to London for reinforcements. They have an argument. Gyrth says that abandoning his troops would be viewed as cowardly; that he would permanently lose their respect. Harold decides to stay.

We are sceptical about Wace's provenance. He says that Harold and Gyrth

went scouting alone. Both died in battle so no one would have been able to report their conversation. Like all Wace's reports of private conversations between English nobles, this one was probably invented to fit something that the Normans perceived. In this case, we guess that they saw Harold and Gyrth scouting alone across the river and invented this narrative to match their actions and the circumstances

It is possible that Harold feared that he would lose the respect of his troops if he were to leave alone, but we doubt it. Harold just had to explain to his troops that William would not attack if he [Harold] was not there, so he was leaving to keep them safe. His troops would also be happy if he returned with overwhelming force because they would be much more likely to survive the battle. But even if Harold felt he could not leave alone, he could have organised withdrawal to somewhere safe. It took the Normans around an hour between leaving their camp and assembling into three divisions below the English shield wall. That was plenty of time to withdraw the entire English army to safety at Udiam just 4 miles away. Indeed, even when the Normans were assembling below the English shield wall, it was still not too late to withdraw to relative safety at Cripps Corner.

We are convinced that Harold did not withdraw or leave because he and his army were trapped. This would also explain why William did not attack on the Friday, because he was better off trying to intimidate Harold into flight, having laid a trap for him. In the worst case, William could spend Friday scouting the English camp and then devise a plan of attack in the evening.

The possibility that Harold and/or his brothers might flee to safety presented William with a huge risk to the success of the invasion. He had it covered. On the day of battle, Baudri of Bourgueil explains: "Backing up the enemy line, at a distance, were horsemen waiting to intercept anyone trying to flee". We think that William had riders waiting to intercept anyone trying to flee from the moment Harold entered the battle theatre. If William could get some horsemen behind the English line, he could get a lot of horsemen

behind to the English line and probably did so, to prevent the English withdrawing and to prevent Harold fleeing.

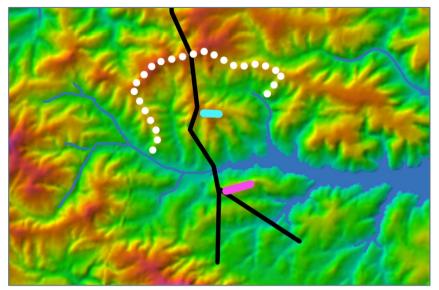


Figure 33: William's trap, English camp in cyan, Norman battle camp in magenta

Figure 33 shows Harold's predicament. Great Sanders ridge (cyan line), with the English camp is surrounded by the Udimore and isthmus ridges, (shown in white dots). Orderic reckons that William left men to guard the *Penevesellum* camp, we think at Cadborough. They could have ridden west to occupy the Udimore and isthmus ridges. Alternatively, William could have sent some knights across Whatlington ford to occupy the ridges from the other end. Their main job would be to catch Harold or his brothers if they tried to flee. A few hundred riders on the Udimore Ridge could not hold the entire English army if Harold decided to retreat. But the main cavalry at William's battle camp (magenta line), could canter to Cripps Corner before the English could run there. If the English army tried to retreat, they would get caught on open ground and would have been annihilated

As soon as Harold got a hint of the strength of the Norman cavalry, even if he found out the day before, battle was inevitable on the 14th. William needed to slay Harold before English reinforcements arrived. Harold could not retreat in person or lead the English army to safety. He could not attack because the English would get ambushed as they crossed onto the Hastings Peninsula. He could not blockade the Hastings Peninsula egress points, because the Normans were already guarding them. He just had to prepare his defences and wait for the Normans to attack.

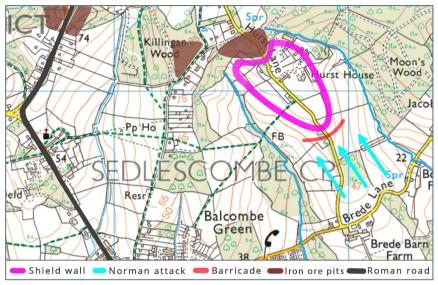


Figure 34: Sedlescombe battlefield at Hurst Lane

Here we explain why we are so confident that the Battle of Hastings was fought on the spur at Hurst Lane in Sedlescombe (Figure 34). It is a tough sell. Our proposed battlefield seems to contradict every professional historian and military expert that has ever written about the Battle of Hastings. It contradicts what most of us have accepted as irrefutable fact since we were at school. Getting anyone to accept our theory, especially academics, is more difficult than finding the battlefield. We can but try.

Perceptions can be deceiving. R Allen Brown, military historian and editor of the 'Proceedings of the Battle Conference', once lamented that the only certainty about the battle is who won. The only other aspect of the battle about which historians agree is that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield. The entire orthodox battle narrative is based on this one notion and its consequences. It is mired in confusion.

Compare and contrast the one aspect of the battle about which historians agree to the long list of those they do not: the size and composition of the armies; the location of the camps; the length and shape of the shield wall;

the type and location of Harold's defensive fortifications; Harold's tactics; William's tactics; the direction from which the Normans attacked; the reasons William failed to outflank the English line; the way the shield wall was breached; how and when Harold died; the location of ditches that participated in the battle; how and where the English fled.

The following paragraph needs some thought. There are many battle variables - the size of the armies, the shape of the shield wall, etc. Each has some or many possibilities, leading to thousands of potential permutations. Scores of them have been proposed as battle theories. If any of them were without fundamental flaws, everyone would agree on which is most likely, so they all have fundamental flaws. Each historian favours the permutation that they believe to have the least fundamental flaws. It is highly subjective. Supporters of each of the other theories disagree. So, every battle theory that has ever been proposed at the orthodox battlefield is disputed by the vast majority of historians.

We are about to argue that the reason for the flaws in the orthodox battle theories is that there is a flaw in the notion upon which they are all based, that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield. It is supported by statements in some of the contemporary accounts. At least four of these statements are not ambiguous or mistranslated or misinterpreted. We can explain why they are unreliable, but the only refutation is to show that the traditional battlefield is implausible and/or that somewhere else is compelling. We aim to achieve both in this section and the next.

Many readers abandon our book at this point because they have an unshakable conviction that that Battle Abbey must have been built on the battlefield. Its name might seem to confirm this beyond doubt (A below). Please bear with us, at least until you have thought about one simple reason to doubt that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield (B) and another to doubt that the battlefield is at the orthodox location (C).

A. Battle Abbey's original name was 'Sancti Martini de Bello'. The surrounding settlement was known as 'Bello'. Both became 'Battle', so

everyone assumes that 'bello' means 'battle'. It does not. Latin 'bello' is a verb usually meaning 'to wage war'. It suggests that Battle Abbey was in what we might refer to these days as the 'theatre of war'. This is still entirely consistent with the Abbey's location, even if the battlefield was five miles away.

B. Battle Abbey is the only medieval Christian place of worship anywhere that purports to have been built on a battlefield. It is no coincidence. Building a church on a battlefield would be widely perceived as the glorification of violence, and medieval people were terrified of being haunted by the souls of victims of violence. Some churches were built near battlefields - at Shrewsbury, for instance<sup>6</sup> - and we think this is the case with Battle Abbey, but if it is not on the battlefield, the entire orthodox battle narrative collapses.

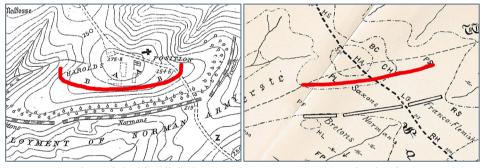


Figure 35: Traditional shield wall deployments by Major James (L) and Colonel Lemmon (R)

C. Every shield wall that has ever been proposed at the orthodox battlefield is straight or straightish. Figure 35 shows two typical examples, these by Major E R James and Colonel C H Lemmon (our red highlights over their shield walls). Some more are shown on Figure 56 in Clue 11. Dozens of others are depicted on our website<sup>7</sup>. They are all implausible. Harold commanded his troops from behind the middle of the English line, shown by a flag of St George on James's diagram and labelled HA on Lemmon's. If

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> It is often said that St Mary Magdalene was built on the battlefield, but extensive archaeological excavations by Pollard and others have showed that it is not.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> https://momentousbritain.com/go/BOH\_Evolution

William was faced by a straight or straightish English shield wall, he would clearly have sent his cavalry around the open ends of the English line to lop off Harold's head before a blow had been struck in anger.

Sceptical yet? If not, think about some other well-known aspects of the orthodox battle narrative. Is it credible that Harold left half his army behind because he was in such a rush to try a surprise attack on the Norman camp? Is it credible that Harold persisted with a 'surprise' attack when William knew where he was and could not be taken by surprise? Is it credible that Harold persisted with a 'surprise' attack when he was told that the Norman army was much stronger than his and that they were ready to ambush him? Is it credible that he then chose to fight a battle he would quite probably lose and that he could not possibly win rather than withdraw to safety and wait for the rest of his troops? In our opinion, none of this is remotely credible. The evidence we provide below explains Harold's actions and how they match a Hurst Lane battlefield.

We think our argument is irrefutable. We are not the first. Others have said the same when commending their argument that the battle was fought at the traditional location or at one of the other battlefield candidates. Their authors (subconsciously, we like to think) rig the data by excluding contraevidence, by biased interpretation of the source material, faulty reasoning, and/or poor research. We have tried to be scrupulously objective, thorough, and fair. No one has ever found an error in our research or our reasoning, but we are thrilled when people try because we want our theory to be bulletproof. If you can find any errors or omissions in our evidence or reasoning, please contact us by email. Our email address is momentousbritain@outlook.com.

After much consideration, we have decided that the most approachable way to present our Hurst Lane battlefield theory is by a revised battle narrative. We will then list and explain the 33 battlefield location clues from the contemporary accounts upon which our confidence is based.

#### A revised battle narrative

Forearmed with the camp locations and the geography around north Sedlescombe, the events of 14th October 1066 can be worked out in exquisite detail from the contemporary accounts.

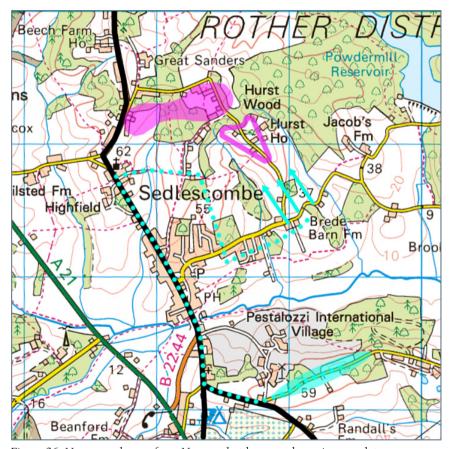


Figure 36: Norman advance from Norman battle camp shown in cyan dots

The day of battle starts with the armies at their camps. The English camp spanned Hurst Wood, Killingan Wood and Combe Wood (magenta drumstick on Figure 36). Each of these woods – and therefore the English camp - was protected to the south by an immense iron ore pit (see Clue 5 for more). William and his barons were at their Winchelsea sea camp. The

bulk of the Norman army was at their Cottage Lane battle camp (cyan oval on Figure 36). William also had men on the Udimore Ridge whose job was to block English reinforcements and to catch anyone trying to flee.

Harold ordered his troops to occupy the battlefield as soon as they had taken breakfast. They crossed the Hurst Wood and Killingan Wood iron ore pits on narrow ramps that were once used by miners and their carts. A road now runs on the former, but vestigial ramps are still present on the latter. Using these ramps meant that the English arrived at the battlefield in narrow military columns. Some Normans must have been at their battle camp to witness this scene because it is described in Carmen (Barlow): "Suddenly the forest spewed out its cohorts; and columns of men stormed out of their hiding-places in the woods. Near the forest was a hill and a valley and land too rough to be tilled. The English, as was their custom, advanced in mass formation and seized this position on which to fight." Poitiers (Chibnall) says much the same: "they [the English] took their stand on higher ground, on a hill near to the wood through which they had come."

Harold deployed his troops to follow the contours on Hurst Lane spur, so the shield wall was an enclosed wedge-shape see (Clue 9). Baudri says exactly this (Dawson): "The enemy, discarding their horses, form themselves into a close wedge". It is depicted in magenta on Figure 36. The shield wall was enclosed and hollow (Clue 10). Harold commanded his troops from inside, as Wace (Taylor) explains: "When Harold had made all ready, and given his orders, he came into the midst of the English, and dismounted by the side of the standard". Carmen (Tyson) too: "The king ascended the summit that he might wage war in the midst of his army". Draco Normannicus (Dawson): "The legion of the English surrounds the King". CBA (Searle): "the English were in an impenetrable formation around their king".

Harold ordered the tip of the shield wall to be protected by a hastily constructed barricade. It is described by Wace (Taylor): "They had built up a fence before them with their shields, and with ash and other wood". It is also depicted on Tapestry Panel 53 (Figure 37) in front of a water-filled ditch.



Figure 37: Extract from Tapestry Panel 53 showing the English barricade

The Norman horses do not seem to have suffered any injury. It looks like they slipped and fell after jumping the barricade. If so, we guess that the ditch was made by running horses up and down the English side of the barricade until the ground glooped into a slippery mud bath.

The base of the shield wall, at the high end of the wedge, was protected by the Hurst Lane iron ore pit. This pit is described in CBA (Searle): "just where the fighting was going on, and stretching for a considerable distance, an immense ditch yawned." The troop deployment and the ditch are also described by Wace (Taylor): "The English stood in close ranks, ready and eager for the fight; and they had moreover made a fosse, which went across the field, guarding one side of their army." Wace says the English 'made' the ditch, but he is guessing. They were only at the battlefield for two hours before fighting began. If it was immense and deep enough to prevent a Norman attack, it must have been in the landscape before the English arrived, which in this region means it was an iron ore mine, uniquely matching Hurst Lane.

William and his barons left their sea camp after taking Mass and eating breakfast. It was a seven-mile ride to the Norman battle camp, which would have taken an hour at a gentle trot, so they would have arrived around 07:30. CBA (Searle) describes their arrival at the battle camp: "the duke came to meet him [Harold], surrounded by units of cavalry. Arriving at the hill called Hechelande which lies to towards Hastingas, while they were hurriedly getting

one another into armour ...". William finds that the English are already deployed on the battlefield hill. The scene is described in Brevis Relatio (Dawson): "Accordingly, coming to a hill which was on the side of Hastingas, opposite that hill upon which Harold with his army was there under arms, they halted for a short time, surveying the army of the English."

William devised his battle strategy while looking at the English shield wall deployment from the Norman battle camp. His messengers and scouts had previously ridden through the English position. They would have warned William that the Normans could not attack across the impregnable Hurst Lane iron ore pit. He could see for himself that the battlefield side slopes were horribly steep at around 15%. The only place that the English line could potentially be breached by force, even though it was protected by a barricade, was at the front tip where the slope was a relatively benign 6%. It was midway between the battlefield's lateral boundary streams. Wace (Taylor) explains that William, therefore, decides to place himself and his elite troops: "in the middle throng where the battle shall be hottest".

William and his barons dressed for battle at their battle camp. William famously put on his hauberk back to front. CBA (Searle) explains: "while they were hurriedly getting one another into armour, a hauberk was held up for the duke to get into, and unaccountably it was offered the wrong way round." William gave his pep talk and the Normans headed off to the battlefield. Their route is described by Wace (Clue 6). It uniquely matches north Sedlescombe and it is depicted in cyan dots on Figure 36. The route ends near modern Brede Barn Farm below the Hurst Lane battlefield. It is some  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles, so they would have arrived at roughly 09:00, the time when five contemporary accounts say the battle started (Clue 14).

The battlefield was narrow (Clue 28). Wace (Taylor) explains that William deployed his troops in three divisions: "Harold saw William come, and beheld the field covered with arms, and how the Normans divided into three companies, in order to attack at three places." Carmen (Barlow) provides the composition of the divisions: "The French attacked the left and the Bretons the right, while

the duke with his Normans right in the centre." Poitiers (Chibnall) has the flanks reversed with the Bretons on the left: "So, terrified by this ferocity, both the footsoldiers and the Breton knights and other auxiliaries on the left wing turned tail". This would be right because the context suggests that he was talking from Harold's point of view. William's three divisions advanced up the battlefield hill towards the shield wall (Clue 3).

The engagement is described by Poitiers (Chibnall): "The harsh bray of trumpets gave the signal for battle on both sides ... So the Norman foot-soldiers closed to attack the English, killing and maiming many with their missiles. The English for their part resisted bravely each one by any means he could devise. They threw javelins and missiles of various kinds, murderous axes and stones tied to sticks. You might imagine that our men would have been crushed at once by them, as by a death-dealing mass. The knights came to their rescue, and those who had been in the rear advanced to the fore. Disdaining to fight from a distance, they attacked boldly with their swords." Carmen too (Morton & Muntz): "First the bands of archers attacked and from a distance transfixed bodies with their shafts and the crossbow-men destroyed the shields as if by a hail-storm, shattered them by countless blows. Now the French attacked to the left, the Bretons the right; the duke with the Normans fought in the centre."

So, the Normans started with a ranged attack. Wace (Taylor) explains that it was ineffectual: "but they [the English] covered themselves with their shields, so that the arrows could not reach their bodies, nor do any mischief". This is corroborated by the Tapestry which depicts arrows protruding from the English shields. The English could not return ammunition because they had no crossbowmen and hardly any archers – just one English archer is depicted on the Tapestry, on Panel 52 (Figure 44). Draco Normannicus (Dawson) says: "Only when the quivers were emptied did the discharge of arrows cease". So, the Norman archers and crossbowmen exhausted their ammunition and retired.

The Norman heavy infantry continued the attack, hand-to-hand. They were no more successful. Poitiers (Chibnall) again: "The English were greatly

helped by the advantage of the higher ground, which they held in serried ranks without sallying forward, and also by their great numbers and densely-packed mass, and moreover by their weapons of war, which easily penetrated shields and other protections. So, they strongly held or drove back those who dared to attack them with drawn swords."

Wace (Taylor) says that the English then shield-charged one of the flanks: "the English charged and drove the Normans before them, till they made them fall back upon this fosse, overthrowing into it horses and men. Many were to be seen falling therein, rolling one over the other, with their faces to the earth, and unable to rise. ... At no time during the day's battle did so many Normans die, as perished in that fosse." Seeing their colleagues get crushed to death or drowned, the Norman heavy infantry flees. Thereafter, William seems to have ceased ordering his men to be axe fodder. Contrary to received wisdom, the real fighting at the battlefield was over in an hour or two.

William realised that the adverse terrain and the English troop formation made it impossible for the Normans to break the line by force. Poitiers (Chibnall): "the Normans and the troops allied to them saw that they could not conquer such a solidly massed enemy force without heavy loss". Baudri (Otter): "The enemy form a wedge shape together, which, while it stays in place, frustrates any attack for the Norman soldiers dared not attack them united", then that: "The Normans were unable to pry anyone loose from the wedge". Wace (Taylor & Burgess): "The Normans saw that the English defended themselves well and were so strong in their position that they could do little against them ... If they [the English] had held firm, they would not have been beaten that day; no Norman would ever have broken through". Huntingdon (Greenway): "Harold had placed all his people very closely in a single line, constructing a sort of castle with them, so that they were impregnable to the Normans." Carmen (Barlow): "None can penetrate the dense English shield wall, unless the strength of men gives way to cunning."

William switches strategies trying to trick English troops out of the shield wall where they could be easily slaughtered. Wace (Taylor): "So they [the

Normans] consulted together privily, and arranged to draw off, and pretend to flee, till the English should pursue and scatter themselves over the field". Carmen (Barlow): "The French, versed in stratagems, skilled in the arts of war, cunningly pretend to flee as though they had been defeated." CBA (Searle): "at length, by a cunning and secretly planned manoeuvre the duke simulated flight with the army". Malmesbury (Giles): "They [the English] fought with ardour, neither giving ground, for great part of the day. Finding this, William gave a signal to his party, that, by a feigned flight, they should retreat." Huntingdon (Greenway): "So Duke William instructed his people to simulate flight".

By tradition, so many English troops chased a feigned retreat that they left a gap through which the Norman cavalry entered the shield wall and killed Harold. None of the contemporary accounts say this explicitly. Wace and Carmen take a fanciful sycophantic line on Harold's demise: Wace says that William led the Norman knights to press the shield wall back until they got to the English standard and killed Harold; Carmen says that William and three barons got behind the English line to attack and kill Harold. CBA (Searle) just says: "their king was laid low by a chance blow"; Orderic (Forester): "King Harold was slain in the first onset"; Baudri (Otter): "Harold is killed at last; he is pierced by a lethal arrow"; Huntingdon (Greenway): "Meanwhile the whole shower sent by the archers fell around King Harold, and he himself sank to the ground, struck in the eye. A host of knights broke through and killed the wounded king." No overlap to form a consensus.

Four of the most trustworthy accounts – Jumièges, Poitiers, Malmesbury and John of Worcester - do not comment on how Harold died, other than to say that it was late in the day. Our interpretation is that no one knows how Harold died, but it probably was late in the day. If he had died early, we guess that the English troops would have melted away into nearby woodland. Orderic is not necessarily wrong. The Norman knights kept out of harm's way through most of the battle, cajoling the infantrymen to take all the risks. Harold may well have been killed in the first mounted attack. In our opinion, despite the lack of evidence, the traditional theory is probably right that the Norman cavalry entered the shield wall through a

gap left when English troops chased out of the shield wall. There are no other ways that the Normans could have breached an enclosed shield wall.

More is written about the English flight than about the battle and Harold's death combined. There is good reason. Wace reckons that no Norman barons died at the battlefield. His list of heroic deeds is dominated by Norman barons saving knights that fell off their horses. Hardly any of them involve fighting at the battlefield, apart from slaughtering Englishmen that foolishly ran out of the shield wall. The relative detail about the English flight is because the Norman barons 'heroically' mowed down hundreds of unarmed English troops as they fled.

It is a bit unfair to conclude that the Norman knights and barons were cowardly. They each stood to gain at least 1/700th of the GDP of the richest country in Europe, in perpetuity, but only if they survived. The contact zone was a dangerous place where they were likely to die fruitlessly. Better to stay out of harm's reach until they could make a positive contribution.

Wace says that more Normans died in the shield charge than in the rest of the battle combined. CBA (Searle) says: "After innumerable men had been cut down on the field, or rather in flight", as if relatively few died at the battlefield. We guess that the total number of fatalities at the battlefield was several hundred, fewer than a hundred of which were Norman. Some Norman infantrymen clearly died in their initial assault. Perhaps fifty or so died in the shield charge. Poitiers says: "Fit deinde insoliti generis pugna, quam altera pars incursibus et diuersis motibus agit, altera uelut humo affixa tolerat", (Starkey): "So a combat of an unusual kind began, in which one side attacks with diverse manoeuvres and the other endures as if pinned to the ground". It sounds like there followed four hours of goading, taunting, probing and feigned retreats, but virtually no fighting and probably only a handful more Norman casualties. English casualties would have been higher, but nothing like what tradition suggests. A few dozen English noblemen were killed, and everyone that ran out of the shield wall. Some accounts say there were three feigned retreats, so perhaps three hundred fatalities among the troops.

The English flight is really a tale about iron ore pits. There are twenty or so statements in the contemporary accounts about deadly ditches encountered during the flight. The only deadly ditches in the region were the north Sedlescombe iron ore mines. There are dozens of mining pits on the 750m route between the battlefield and the Rochester Roman road, but only three of them are deep enough and steep enough to have been deadly. They exactly match the contemporary account descriptions, and they are still there for anyone to see. We discuss this in Clue 5 below. A summary should suffice here.

The English fell back over the ramps across the Hurst Lane iron ore pit and made a stand on the other side. Many Normans crossed that pit but found themselves on the pit rim and were pushed back into it, getting crushed by those falling on top. Some Norman knights tried to attack the English on the north side of the Hurst Lane and Killingan Wood pits by taking a shortcut between the pits. Unfortunately for them, there was an overgrown deep trench between the two, into which many Norman horses and riders fell to their death. This was the famous Malfosse. It too is still there.

Eventually, the Norman knights found a way around the eastern side of the Hurst Lane pit, so the English dropped their weapons and armour and fled west, heading for the Rochester Roman road and safety. The Norman knights caught up with them in Killingan Wood and slaughtered everyone in their path. Perhaps a thousand men or more died in this wood, which is presumably how Killingan Wood got its name. The English made a final stand on the Roman road between the two halves of the Combe Wood iron ore pit. The Normans tried an assault but found themselves on the rim of yet another precipitous-sided 8m deep mining pit and got pushed in. By this time darkness was falling, so William called off his men and returned to the battlefield to bury his dead.

# Battlefield location clues

<pre>✓✓✓ = Unique match; ✓✓ = Match; ✓ = Consistent</pre> ✗ = Inconsistent; ✗✗ = Contradictory		Hurst Lane	Battle Abbey
Orthodox battlefield clues			
1.	Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield	xx	<b>///</b>
2.	The battlefield was in the vicinity of Battle Abbey	<b>√</b> √	<b>√</b> ✓
3.	The Normans advanced up a steep slope	<b>√</b> √	<b>✓</b> ✓
4.	The battlefield was at or near the top of a hill	<b>√</b> √	<b>√</b> √
Battlefield fingerprint clues			
5.	Non-fluvial ditches near the battlefield	<b>///</b>	xx
6.	Wace's description of the Norman advance	<b>///</b>	×
Battle enigmas			
7.	Why Harold went to Sussex	<b>√</b> √	xx
8.	Logistics & Harold's route to the battle theatre	<b>√</b> √	xx
9.	The shield wall was wedge-shaped	<b>///</b>	xx
10.	The shield wall was enclosed	<b>/</b> /	xx
11.	William's military tactics	<b>√</b> √	xx
12.	Harold did not withdraw or flee before the battle	<b>√</b> √	xx
13.	Contemporary Archaeology	<b>√</b> √	xx
Proximity to English and Norman camps			
14.	The battlefield was roughly an hour's march from the Norman battle camp	<b>//</b>	<b>√</b> √
15.	The battlefield was nine Roman miles from 'Heastinga'	<b>√</b> √	×

<pre> ✓✓ = Unique match; ✓✓ = Match; ✓ = Consistent  ✓ = Inconsistent; ✓✓ = Contradictory</pre>		Hurst Lane	Battle Abbey
camp and	efield was visible from the Norman battle I close enough that the English troop ent and English Standards could be seen	<b>√</b> √	×
17. The battle	efield was adjacent to the English camp	<b>√</b> √	✓
Placename clues			
18. The battle	efield was at or near <i>'Senlac'</i>	<b>/</b> /	✓
19. The battle	efield was at or near 'Herste'	<b>///</b>	xx
20. The battle	efield was near a 'spinam'	✓	xx
21. The battle	efield was at or near 'haran apuldran'	✓	×
22. The battle	efield was on 'planis Hastinges'	×	×
Geographic clues			
23. A lateral o	ditch adjoined the battlefield	<b>√</b> √	xx
24. There was	s a plain below the contact zone	<b>√</b> √	✓
25. The battle	efield was overlooked by another hill	<b>√</b> √	✓
26. The battle	efield was a small hill	<b>√</b> √	xx
27. The battle	efield was narrow	<b>√</b> √	xx
28. The fighti	ng was more intense in the middle	<b>√</b> √	xx
29. The battle	efield was steeper than the approach	<b>√</b> √	✓
30. The battle	efield was on a north-south ridge/spur	<b>/</b> /	×
31. The Englis	sh army was difficult to encircle tightly	<b>/</b> /	xx
	efield was adjacent to roads, woodland, n wastes, and land too rough to be tilled	<b>√</b> √	×
33. The battle	efield was not on the Hastings Peninsula	<b>√</b> √	xx

## Clue 1 - Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield

The only significant evidence that the Battle of Hastings was fought at Battle Abbey, and the only evidence it was not fought at Hurst Lane, are some contemporary accounts that specifically say Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield. We refer to them as the 'Abbey on the battlefield' references and discuss them in 'The Traditional Battlefield' section below. Translations of the relevant statements from these accounts are listed there. A precis should suffice here.

Six contemporary accounts say or imply that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield. In chronological order, they are Brevis Relatio, Orderic's recension of Jumièges' Gesta Normanorum Ducum, William of Malmesbury, John of Worcester, Wace, and the Chronicle of Battle Abbey. All but Brevis Relatio and Orderic are more specific, saying that the Abbey was built where Harold died.

It sounds compelling, but there are a couple of hints that these statements are not what they seem. Orderic's reference is scribbled in a margin on the earliest manuscript, clearly added at a later date. Malmesbury qualifies his 'Abbey on the battlefield' statement with the words 'fuisse memoratur', 'it is said that'. This is a Latin way of saying something is unreliable hearsay. Greenway translates as 'by tradition', Giles translates 'as they report', 'they' being the monks of Battle Abbey. This is the only occasion in his entire chronicle that he uses this phrase, even though most of it derives from third party chronicles. It implies to us that he was convinced that the monks of Battle Abbey had fabricated the notion that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield and then tried to propagate it through third party annals, presumably by sending copies of Brevis Relatio to monasteries in England and Normandy.

Brevis Relatio and the Chronicle of Battle Abbey were written by the monks of Battle Abbey. Brevis Relatio is the earliest of the contemporary accounts to suggest that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield – see Clue 2 for the

earlier Anglo-Saxon Chronicle statement. Orderic, Malmesbury and Wace are all known to have used Brevis Relatio as a source. If, as we think, the monks invented the notion that the Abbey was built on the battlefield and diffused it through Brevis Relatio, all these references would be wrong.

The monks of Battle Abbey balked at nothing to defend their independence from diocesan control. According to Nicholas Vincent, the Chronicle of Battle Abbey is a pack of lies invented to support their independence. They are known to have forged charters to shore up their argument when there was a danger of them losing. There can be little doubt that they fabricated all the evidence that the Abbey was built on the battlefield.

This does not necessarily mean that the Abbey was not built on the battlefield. The monks might have fabricated the evidence to support what they believed to be the de-facto truth that the Abbey was built on the battlefield. We cannot prove this was not so, but it seems incredibly unlikely for reasons we explain in The Traditional Battlefield section below. There is at least enough room for doubt that 'Abbey on the battlefield' evidence should not be used to reject non-orthodox battlefield candidates.

## Clue 2 - The battlefield was in the vicinity of Battle Abbey

Three contemporary accounts say or imply that Battle Abbey was built in the vicinity of the battlefield. In chronological order they are the E recension of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Orderic's Historia Ecclesiastica, and Henry of Huntingdon. Again, translations of the relevant statements from these accounts are listed in 'The Traditional Battlefield'.

The best known of these statements is in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. It is crucial insofar as it is the earliest and most trustworthy of all the accounts, the only one to predate Brevis Relatio, the only one to have been written within comfortable living memory of the battle, and the only one to have been written by someone from the losing side. Moreover, many historians use Garmonsway's ASC translation which is sounds emphatic: "On the very

spot where God granted him the conquest of England, he caused a great abbey to be built; and settled monks in it and richly endowed it".

Historians are influenced by centuries of received wisdom to read into these statements more than they say, not least by some egregious translation. Garmonsway's translation above is one example. Another is more general, that Latin passages about the Battle of Hastings nearly always translate 'bellum' as 'battle' when it means 'war'. Orderic says 'ubi bellum factura est', Huntingdon 'Commissum est autem bellum'. Orderic and Huntingdon are saying that the Abbey was built where the war took place. It matches all the serious battlefield candidates.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle uses the Old English phrase 'on ðam ilcan steode', Huntingdon the Latin phrase 'Quo in loco'. They both mean 'in the [same] place'. So, Dorothy Whitelock accurately translates the ASC passage above as: "In the same place where God permitted him to conquer England, he set up a famous monastery and appointed monks for it". Orderic does not explain what he meant by the term 'Senlac', but his many other references to it clearly encompass both camps and the battlefield, so it must have been large. We discuss what it probably meant in Clue 18. For our purposes here, it is sufficient to say that it is also an unqualified 'place'.

An unqualified 'place' is not an 'exact spot', which is why we reject Garmonsway's translation. Indeed, it can be pretty vague in remote and sparsely populated regions like 11th century sub-Andredsweald Sussex. The 'place' where William Rufus died, for instance, was the New Forest. Hurst Lane spur is three miles from Battle Abbey. Three miles would be negligible when seen from Peterborough, Saint-Evroul-sur-Ouche or Little Stukeley, where these passages were recorded.

Indeed, anywhere within five miles of Battle Abbey would probably be considered as being 'in the same place' as the Abbey by these three authors, so these passages match Hurst Lane as well as Battle Abbey. Indeed, they also match Telham Hill and Caldbec Hill, the other two serious battlefield candidates that we will mention from time to time.

## Clue 3 - The Normans advanced up a steep slope

One of the two widely known topographic clues about the Battle of Hastings is that it was fought on a steep slope. There is no specific evidence about the steepness of the combat zone, although some accounts do say that the English had the advantage of higher ground. This is discussed in Clue 29. Two contemporary accounts do refer to steepness but referring to the Norman advance rather than to the battlefield.

Poitiers (Chibnall): "Undeterred by the roughness of the ground, the duke with his men climbed slowly up the steep slope".

Carmen (Barlow): "The duke, humble and God-fearing, had his men under better control as he led them fearlessly to mount the steep hill".

Steepness unqualified is vague. The Crecy battlefield is always described as steep, but it is less than 5%. An advance up Hurst Lane spur and Battle Abbey would be close to 6%. An advance up Caldbec Hill or Telham Hill would be nearer 10%. Using our scoring system, it is probably best to say that Hurst Lane and the orthodox battlefield are consistent with this clue while Caldbec Hill and Telham Hill match it. Note that Kathleen Tyson translates Carmen to be saying that William "boldly approaches the steep slope", as if the approach steepens as it nears the battlefield. Both translations look valid to us. Tyson's translation would match Hurst Lane and the orthodox battlefield.

# Clue 4 - The battlefield was at or near the top of a hill

The second well-known topographic clue about the Battle of Hastings is that the battlefield was on the top of a hill.

Poitiers (Chibnall): "However, not daring to fight with William on equal terms, for they thought him more formidable than the king of the Norwegians, they took their stand on higher ground, on a hill near to the wood through which they had come", then: "The English are helped greatly by the advantage of the higher ground".

Brevis Relatio (Dawson) explains that William arrives at the Norman battle camp on the morning of battle, saying it was: "opposite that hill upon which Harold with his army was", then that a soldier at the Norman battle camp thinks Harold is: "in the midst of the dense array, which was before them on the top of the hill".

Carmen (Barlow) describes the English occupying the battlefield hill: "Near the forest was a hill and a valley and land too rough to be tilled. The English, as was their custom, advanced in mass formation and seized this position on which to fight", and (Tyson): "The king ascended the summit that he might wage war in the midst of his army", then (Tyson): "At the summit of the hill a streaming banner was planted."

By tradition, these statements mean that the shield wall was on the absolute top of a hill, which would match the traditional battlefield, Telham Hill and Caldbec Hill. But none of the contemporary accounts say or imply any such thing. This is pertinent because our proposed Hurst Lane battlefield is not on the absolute top of its hill. Its highest point is 400m from the summit of Great Sanders ridge in Killingan Wood, and it is only two-thirds of the way up the slope.

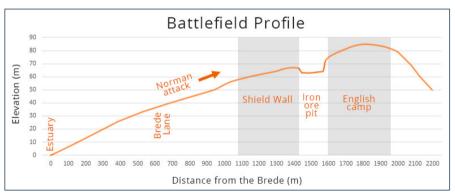


Figure 38: Hurst Lane spur hill profile

Hurst Lane is on the top of a hill for battlefield purposes. There is an immense iron ore pit - 100m by 50m and 8m deep - part way up the Hurst Lane slope to Great Sanders ridge. In effect, it creates an artificial summit at what is now Hurst House Cottage beside modern Hurst Lane. This is

depicted on Figure 38, the hill profile diagram. Hurst Lane's artificial summit matches all the contemporary account descriptions of the battlefield hill. Moreover, a Hurst Lane battlefield explains three hill inconsistencies, all of which contradict the orthodox battlefield.

First, there is Carmen's statement about Harold's Standards being visible at the English camp from the Norman battle camp. The battlefield must have been between the English camp and the Norman battle camp. If it was near the absolute summit of a hill, that hill would have obscured the Norman's view of the English camp beyond. The only way Carmen can be accurate is if the English camp was beyond the battlefield on the same hill. This exactly describes Hurst Lane while contradicting all the other battlefield candidates.

Second, the Latin original of the last phrase of Carmen's spewing statement says: "In summo montis vexillum vertice fixit". 'summo' means 'top', 'highest point' or 'summit'. 'vertice' means 'crown', 'top' or 'summit'. It is a tautology. Some translators ignore one of them, assuming it is an error. There is a plausible explanation at Hurst Lane spur. The crest of a spur slopes down from its parent ridge. If Carmen's statement is applied to Hurst Lane spur, it would be trying to say: "He planted his banner at the highest point of the crest of the hill", exactly where it would be expected to be.

Third, Wace (Taylor) describes the English falling back from the battlefield at the end of the day: "The English fell back upon a rising ground, and the Normans followed them across the valley, attacking them on foot and horseback." So, the English fell back across a valley to rising ground. At the traditional battlefield, or Telham Hill or Caldbec Hill, this would have been an implausible 500m or more. But a valley in the form of the iron ore pit on Hurst Lane was immediately adjacent to the battlefield and in the only direction the English could have fallen back (1 on Figure 39). The ground on the north side of the pit is 5m higher than that on the south. If the English fell back from a Hurst Lane battlefield, exactly as Wace describes, they would have crossed a valley to rising ground just 50m away.

#### Clue 5 - Non-fluvial ditches near the battlefield

Non-fluvial ditches provide the most compelling evidence that the Battle of Hastings was fought at Hurst Lane. They are mentioned twelve times, so this is a long explanation. It is too important to skimp. Not only do the ditches at Hurst Lane exactly match the specific descriptions in the contemporary accounts, but we programmatically analysed the LiDAR data to discover that they are unique. Hurst Lane is the only place that matches any of these ditch descriptions, and it matches all of them.

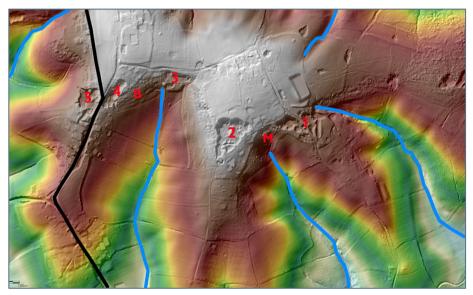


Figure 39: Iron ore pits near Hurst Lane

The contemporary accounts provide detailed descriptions of at least three different non-fluvial ditches that were involved in three different phases of the battle, all at or near the battlefield. Non-fluvial ditches are absent within 4km of Battle Abbey, so historians generally conflate them into one fluvial ditch that they refer to as the 'Malfosse'. Dr Emily Winkler describes it as "a composite of earlier episodes". Most historians believe this Malfosse ditch refers to modern Oakwood Ghyll. Nick Austin thinks it was Hunter's Ghyll, adjacent to his proposed Telham Hill battlefield. These are both fluvial ditches, and are therefore inconsistent with all the ditches we are about to

discuss. Oakwood Ghyll is doubly inconsistent being 1500m from Battle Abbey whereas CBA says the Malfosse is adjacent to the battlefield.

Historians excuse the Malfosse conflation, and the absence of ditches near Battle Abbey, by saying that there is a lot of confusion in the contemporary accounts. They seem unequivocal to us, and ditches that exactly fit these descriptions are still present at Hurst Lane (Figure 39).

North Sedlescombe is riddled with iron ore pits. We counted more than a hundred on a recent stroll through Moon's Wood. It is a veritable "labyrinth of ditches" to use a common translation of Poitiers' term, and the only concentration of such pits in the region. We will focus on the three biggest of them, each covering over 2000m². One spans Hurst Lane 300m above Hurst House, the second is on the eastern side of Killingan Wood, the third is in Combe Wood. They are labelled 1, 2 and 4/5, respectively, on Figure 39. Each is at the head of a spur pointing south from the Great Sanders ridge (the elevated area coloured white on Figure 39).

The first non-fluvial ditch was encountered as the English fell back in fading light towards the end of the day. It is described in the Chronicle of Battle Abbey.

CBA (Searle): "When their king was laid low by a chance blow, the army broke up and fled in different directions to find hiding-places. After innumerable men had been cut down on the field, or rather in flight, a final disaster was revealed to the eyes of all. Lamentably, just where the fighting was going on, and stretching for a considerable distance, an immense ditch yawned. It may have been a natural cleft in the earth, or perhaps it had been hollowed out by storms."

Searle's translation of the third sentence is a little quirky. The Latin original says that the ditch was "inter hostiles gladius", 'between the hostile armies', and that it was "precipitium", 'precipitous'. It seems that she emasculated her translation to prevent it contradicting the orthodox battlefield. Lower's

translation is more accurate: "There lay between the hostile armies a certain dreadful precipice". It is still a little odd. We translate: "There was an immense precipitous pit between the two armies".

Two points are worth making here. 1) The ditch was between the two armies because the English had fallen back over it. It was therefore on the opposite side of the battlefield to the Norman attack. 2) It was a 'hollow' – Latin 'concauatione' - so it was a pit rather than a fluvial valley. CBA's speculations about it being caused by geological activity or storms are plausible, but south of the Weald the most likely origin for any precipitous non-fluvial pit is Roman era iron ore mining.

The Hurst Lane iron ore pit (1 on Figure 39) is roughly triangular, some 100m wide, 50m across and 5m to 8m deep. It exactly matches CBA's description. The only similarly immense precipitous pits in the entire region are next door in Killingan Wood and Combe Wood, but they are on spurs that are too wide to have been the battlefield. Thus, the Hurst Lane pit is a unique match for CBA's first non-fluvial ditch.

The second non-fluvial ditch is the famous 'Malfosse'.

CBA (Searle): "in this waste ground it was overgrown with brambles and thistles, and could scarcely be seen in time; and it engulfed great numbers, especially of Normans in pursuit of the English. For, when, all unknowing, they came galloping on, their terrific impetus carried them headlong down into it, and they died tragically, pounded to pieces. This deep pit has been named for the accident, and today it is called Malfosse."

Orderic Vitalis (Van Houts): "For by chance long grasses concealed an ancient rampart, and as the Normans came galloping up they fell, one on top of the other, in a struggling mass of horses and arms."

Medieval war horses seldom galloped, especially after carrying an armoured rider for nine hours, and neither CBA nor Orderic say they did. They use

the Latin words 'impetu' and 'ruebant', respectively. Both words mean 'rushed', so the translations are faulty. This is important because a trotting horse can stop almost instantly whereas a galloping horse cannot.

CBA's 'waste ground', by context in the narrative, is the Hurst Lane pit. Brambles and other shrubs can grow to 3m, but they would still be 5m or more below the lip of the Hurst Lane pit. A trotting horse would have seen the drop and would have had plenty of time to stop, so CBA's Malfosse is probably not describing the main Hurst Lane iron ore pit.

However, the Hurst Lane pit has a 30m trench extending west from its northwest corner (M on Figure 39), parallel to Churchlands Lane. Brambles and other shrubs grow out of the sides up to ground level, concealing the trench beneath. There is no reason it would have been any different in the 11th century, and it is exactly where the Normans would have tried to ride between the Hurst Lane and Killingan Wood pits to attack the English on the far side. A horse would fall through the covering shrubs and crash to the bottom. This is the only trench of its type in the entire region, so it must be CBA's Malfosse. If we could get permission to excavate, we are convinced that it still has Norman horse bones at the bottom.

The third non-fluvial ditch is where the English made a stand during their flight and where, according to Poitiers (Chibnall), Count Eustace died after being "struck a resounding blow between the shoulders" by a missile thrown from the other side.

Poitiers (Chibnall) explains the events that led up to Eustace's demise: "However confidence returned to the fugitives when they found a good chance to renew battle, thanks to a broken rampart and labyrinth of ditches." He continues: "In that encounter some of the noblest Normans fell, for their valour was of no avail on such unfavourable ground".

Orderic Vitalis (Van Houts): "Seeing that they could be sheltered by the broken rampart and labyrinth of ditches, they re-formed their ranks and unexpectedly

made a stand, inflicting heavy slaughter among the Normans." This same narrative is told by Orderic Vitalis in his redaction of Gesta Normannorum Ducum. It is clearly a former iron ore mine because Orderic later refers to it as an "abyss of destruction".

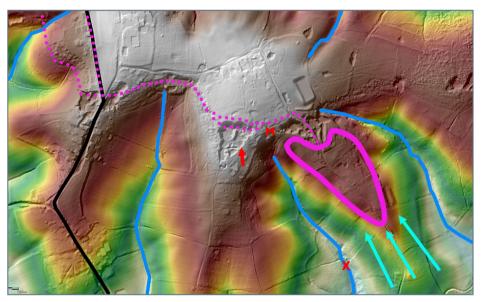


Figure 40: English flight path shown in magenta dots

There is only one place in the entire region that matches these descriptions: It is the Roman road that bisected the Combe Wood iron ore pit (between 4 and 5 on Figure 39). The English flight path is shown as magenta dots on Figure 40, heading towards this road. It is in the midst of a labyrinth of ditches, exactly as Poitiers and Orderic describe, and the ground would have been horribly unfavourable to the Normans, with precipitous pits on either side. There is broken ground on the slope up to the Combe Wood pit which might have been Poitier's 'broken rampart', but we suspect he was referring to the aggers on either side of the Roman road. The Eustace story might be allegorical – punishment for recommending a retreat when William wanted to advance – but the pit to the east of the Roman road is just about narrow enough, some 25m, that someone could have been hit by a missile thrown from the other side.

Not only do these three non-fluvial ditches provide incontrovertible evidence that the **B**attle of Hastings was fought at Hurst Lane, but they make sense of other references to ditches in the contemporary accounts.

Wace (Taylor) describes a protective ditch at the battlefield: "The English stood in close ranks, ready and eager for the fight; and they had moreover made a fosse, which went across the field, guarding one side of their army."

Wace says that the English 'made' the ditch. They were at the battlefield for no more than two hours before the battle began. A ditch dug in two hours would not have been of much use, too narrow and shallow to offer much protection, and too easy to jury span. Wace presumably could not think of any other way a ditch might have got there, but there is no reason he would know about mining. We assume he is referring to a Roman iron ore mine.

Wace's protective ditch is usually assumed to have been on the downslope between the English and Normans, but he later says that the downslope was protected by a barricade (Taylor): "The English peasants carried hatchets, and keen edged bills. They had built up a fence before them with their shields, and with ash and other wood; and had well joined and wattled in the whole work, so as not to leave even a crevice; and thus they had a barricade in their front, through which any Norman who would attack them must first pass." This barricade was so effective that: "every Norman who made his way in, lost his life in dishonour". There would have been no point in having a protective ditch on the downslope too.

This means that Wace's protective ditch was on a side of the English line that did not face downslope. It contradicts the orthodox battlefield, Caldbec Hill and Telham Hill because all the shield walls that have been proposed at these battlefield candidates were straight or straightish, facing entirely downslope. They only had a front side facing the enemy. In principle, Wace's 'one side of their army' might refer to the left flank or right flank, but that would contradict Wace's earlier statement that the protective ditch went across the field.

Hurst Lane matches Wace's protective ditch because the shield wall we propose is an enclosed loop on a spur. It would have had a section facing downslope, two sections facing laterally, and a section facing upslope. Wace's barricade protected the section facing downslope. Streams protected the lateral sides. The Hurst Lane iron ore pits protected the upslope, impregnable and too wide to jury span. Thus, Wace's protective ditch is probably another description of CBA's first non-fluvial ditch.

Wace (Taylor) describes a ditch that the English crossed as they fell back: "The English fell back upon a rising ground, and the Normans followed them across the valley, attacking them on foot and horseback." The English fell back to rising ground on the far side of a valley!? It sounds wrong. An ordinary hill defendable by an army of 6000 would be a substantial landscape feature. The nearest rising ground beyond an adjacent valley would be at least 500m away. The leaderless English fyrds could not have made an organised retreat over such a huge distance without getting cut down by the Norman cavalry, which makes this ditch inconsistent with the orthodox battlefield and with Telham Hill and Caldbec Hill. No such problem at Hurst Lane. With Normans to the south, the English can only have fallen back to the north. They would have had to cross the Hurst Lane iron ore pit. It has rising ground on the far side and the Normans would have had to chase them across the pit - a 'valley' of sorts - exactly as Wace describes. Thus, Wace's fallback ditch is yet another description of CBA's first nonfluvial ditch

Malmesbury (Mynors) also describes a ditch encountered as the English fell back: "Again, making their way around a precipitous ditch by a shortcut known only to themselves, they trampled down so many of their foes that they filled it level to the brim with a pile of bodies." Normans are unlikely to have been trampled because they were behind the fleeing English. It seems totally implausible that they got trampled in a stack high enough to fill a deep ditch. But there is a credible explanation at Hurst Lane. If, as we think, the English crossed the Hurst Lane or Killingan Wood iron ore pit and Norman infantrymen followed, the English could have made a stand within, say,

10m of the pit and then pushed them back into it. Anyone falling in would have been crushed by those falling on top. They would have been trampled in a way, and it would only have needed a few dozen bodies to fill a short section of the Hurst Lane pit to ground level.

Wace (Taylor) describes yet another ditch, this one at the English camp (brown loop on Figure 32), saying that Harold: "surrounded it by a good fosse, leaving an entrance on each of three sides, which were ordered to be all well-guarded". The English had only been at their camp for a day when the Norman messenger sees this ditch. They could not have dug a significant protective ditch in that time. Most of Wace's camp ditch must have been in the landscape before the English arrived. It is consistent with our proposed English camp on Great Sanders ridge because that was protected by the northern edge of the Hurst Lane, Killingan Wood and Combe Wood iron ore pits. The Roman road ran across the Combe Wood pit. There seems to be the remains of access ramps across the Killingan Wood pit, and Hurst Lane runs on what might have been access ramps across the Hurst Lane pit. Perhaps the Roman road and those two access ramps formed Wace's three well-guarded entrances.

Carmen (Barlow) says: "Suddenly the forest spewed out its cohorts; and columns of men stormed out of their hiding-places in the woods. Near the forest was a hill and a valley and land too rough to be tilled. The English, as was their custom, advanced in mass formation and seized this position on which to fight." This is an odd description. As we say in Clue 4, if there was a hill in front of the English camp, the Normans could not see the Standards at the English camp, let alone see the English 'spew out' of their woodland camp. And nearly all hills are adjacent to valleys, so what is the point of mentioning the valley? Carmen's description makes no sense at any of the other battlefield candidates, but it matches Hurst Lane.

The Hurst Lane battlefield hill was halfway down the slope from the English camp on Great Sanders ridge. That camp was in *Herste* manor. *Herste* is Old English for 'wood', so the English camp was in woodland. The

Normans would indeed have been able to see the English leave their woodland camp to occupy the battlefield hill. The Latin original says: "Mons silvae vicinus erat, vicinaque vallis". This 'vallis' usually means 'valley' in Latin prose, but often means 'pit' in Latin poetry. Carmen is a Latin poem. It is probably saying that a pit adjoined the battlefield, which can only have been the Hurst Lane iron ore pit.

Quedam Exceptiones (Tyson): "Therefore, the enemy taking flight through the steeps of the mountains and the hollows of the valleys, an immense massacre of the English was accomplished by the Normans pursuing the fugitives until almost the middle of the night." We disagree with two details in Kathleen's translation: There are no mountains within fleeing distance of the Hastings Peninsula, and 'hollows of the valleys' makes no obvious sense. The original Latin first phrase is: "Hostibus ergo terga uertentibus et per abrupta montium et concaua vallium", which we translate: "Accordingly, the enemy taking flight through the steep hills and hollow valleys, ...". A 'hollow valley' is one way to describe a 'pit'. Regardless, the English fled through hollows, which can only refer to iron ore pits in this region. It matches Hurst Lane and contradicts all the other battlefield candidates



Figure 41: Tapestry Panel 58

The non-fluvial ditches near Hurst Lane also make sense of the final Tapestry scene, Panel 58 (Figure 41). Experts have pondered its double-decker meaning for centuries. It makes no sense at the other battlefield candidates, but it exactly matches the Killingan Wood pit. Most of the English would have fled towards the Rochester Roman road, as shown by

the magenta dotted lines on Figure 40. The route was through Killingan Wood. Wace and Malmesbury say that the English fell back across the first fingerprint ditch, so they were north of the Hurst Lane and Killingan Wood pits, the Normans to the south. The Tapestry is therefore depicting the English fleeing along the top and base of the Killingan Wood pit, as viewed from the red arrow in Figure 40.

# Clue 6 - Wace's description of the Norman advance

Wace describes the Norman advance from Harold's perspective.

Wace (Taylor) "The Normans appeared, advancing over the ridge of a rising ground; and the first division of their troops moved onwards along the hill and across a valley ... another division, still larger, came in sight, close following upon the first; and they wheeled towards another side of the field, forming together as the first body had done."

This placed the Normans below the English shield wall, ready to advance up Poitier's steep slope. Wheeling is a military manoeuvre to rotate a body of men to a new orientation. It means that the Normans arrived at the battlefield slope from the side. Why then did they not march directly from their battle camp to the battlefield? The most likely explanations are that there was a river or bog in between, or that a Roman road provided an expressway to the side of the battlefield. Or both because Roman roads often crossed rivers at their head of tide. If there was a river between the battlefield and the Norman battle camp, and a Roman road nearby, it would cross at the head of tide. This exactly describes the scene at Hurst Lane.

There are dozens of spurs and ridges on or near the Hastings Peninsula, but only five roads or tracks that crossed low ground (check on Figure 2). They are 1) A probable track that crossed the Brede on a ford at Whatlington; 2) A probable track that crossed the Brede on a low-tide ford below Brede village; 3) A probable track that crossed Dolham Ditch on a ford near Ashenden; 4) A metalled Roman road between Sedlescombe and Westfield that crossed Forge Stream near Spraysbridge; and 5) The

Rochester Roman road which crossed the Brede at Sedlescombe. Only the last of these matches Wace's route description.

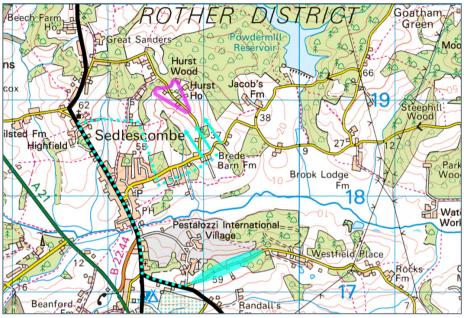


Figure 42: Norman advance shown by cyan dots

Wace's route is easy to track on the ground. The Normans left their Cottage Lane battle camp on the Rochester Roman road and crossed the Brede on Sedlescombe bridge. They continued on the Roman road until turning east at what is now St John the Baptist Church. Up to this point, they were hidden from the battlefield by the Killingan Wood spur. They re-appeared to the English on the crest of that spur at 50.9407, 0.5365. They marched down the crest towards Balcombe Green and turned east along what is now Brede Lane. They crossed a stream at 50.93669, 0.54345, then wheeled left at what is now Brede Barn Farm to face the English. The route is depicted on Figure 42. It uniquely fixes the battlefield at Hurst Lane spur.

The route described by Wace is odd in one respect: It would have saved 30 minutes to turn off the Roman road at modern Brede Lane. Considering how close the Normans came to losing, those 30 minutes might have been

crucial to the outcome of the battle. We have three possible explanations: 1) William thought it would be more intimidating if his troops appeared over rising ground; 2) William wanted his troops to be blessed before the battle at a Saxon era church on the site where St John the Baptist was later built; 3) There was a mining track from the location of Sedlescombe Church to Churchlands Lane spur. Any or all of these are credible.

# Clue 7 - Logistics & Harold's route to the battle theatre

Harold's initial thinking would have been dominated by logistics, the need to get tents, armour, weapons, shields, fortifications, tools, food and men to the battle theatre. Everything apart from the men would have been hauled on carts. Hundreds of them. Robert Evans, logistics expert and Head of the Army Historical Branch, told us that he estimates they would have needed 100 carts just to carry tents. Those carts would have been mostly drawn by oxen, which were slow, hungry and, er, messy.

The immense lozenge shaped Andredsweald forest lay between London and the battlefield. It was logistically challenging, 60 miles north-south by 120 miles east-west with no settlements, no east-west paved roads, no cartwrights, no fodder and no food stores. The English army had few, if any, archers. Their chances of catching 200 skittish deer/boar a day in the Andredsweald to feed the army were negligible. Instead, they needed to bring food and fodder with them and aim for a fast transit.

The Andredsweald was crossed north-south by two Roman roads, the Peckham to Lewes (RR14) and the Rochester to Sedescombe (RR13). In Roman times, it was also crossed by some east-west forest tracks that were used for hauling iron ore from the High Weald to the Brede estuary for export. Iron ore mining stopped when the Romans left. There is no reason to believe these forest tracks had been maintained during the subsequent 600 years, in which case they would have become overgrown by the 11th century.

Even if the forest tracks had been maintained, it is unlikely that Harold

could have used them. The shortest north to south crossing would have been 20 miles. The shortest west to east crossing from the Lewes Roman road would have been 16 miles. To put this into perspective, Daniel Defoe, the novelist, wrote about the Andredsweald in the 17th century. He explains that it took 6 oxen to pull a carriage that took one old lady to church, 22 oxen to pull a cart carrying one log, and that progress was so difficult that it sometimes took two years to haul a log the 33 miles to Chatham. It would have been more difficult still in the 11th century when very little woodland had been cleared.

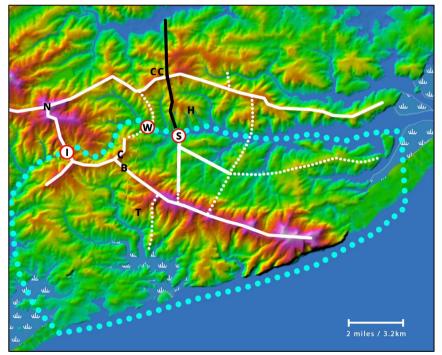


Figure 43: Harold's route to the orthodox battlefield; Roman road in black; trackways in white

On this basis, it would have taken weeks, or more likely months, for Harold's baggage train to cross the Andredsweald on well-maintained forest tracks. But Harold's army arrived in the theatre of war in a few days. The only route they could possibly have used, as Robert Evans confirmed to us, was Margary 13, the Rochester Roman road (black line on Figure 43).

The Hastings Peninsula was physically isolated those days, with the sea to the south, the Brede estuary to the north and the Ash Bourne estuary to the west – outlined with cyan dots on Figure 43. Its isthmus (I) was a narrow ridge at modern Spray's Wood. That isthmus was one of three ways that Harold could have crossed onto the Hastings Peninsula. The other two were a bridge over the fluvial Brede at Sedlescombe (S) and a ford over the fluvial Brede at Whatlington (W). All three places were horribly ambush prone.

Harold would not have crossed onto the Hastings Peninsula until the far side of at least one of these crossing points had been thoroughly scouted and cleared. It would have taken at least a couple of days, during which the English would have had to camp near the Rochester Roman road. William could not afford to wait, because the balance of Harold's army would arrive within days. William would have been forced to attack the English camp, which contradicts all the battlefield candidates apart from Hurst Lane (H on Figure 43).

## Clue 8 - Harold's strategy and why he ventured so close to the Norman army

By tradition, Harold raced down from London to Sussex hoping to make a surprise attack on the Norman camp, in such haste that he left half his army behind

Jumièges (Van Houts) explains that Harold does not like brother Gyrth's advice that he [Harold] should stay safely in London: "After these words Harold flew into a violent rage. He despised the counsel that seemed wise to his friends, taunted his brother who loyally gave him advice, and when his mother anxiously tried to hold him back, he insolently kicked her. Then for six days he gathered innumerable English forces. Hastening to take the duke by surprise, he rode through the night and arrived at the battlefield at dawn."

Poitiers (Chibnall): "He thought that in a night or surprise attack he might defeat them unawares, and, in case they should try to escape, he laid a naval

ambush for them with an armed fleet of up to 700 ships", then "the trusted soldiers, sent out as scouts on the Duke's orders, announced the imminent arrival of the enemy, because the king in his fury had hastened his march."

Brevis Relatio (Van Houts): "He [Harold] ordered all his men to prepare themselves very quickly, so that he could find the Normans with their leader William before they could flee England. For, puffed up with madness, he thought the Normans would not dare wait for him or engage with him in battle."

Orderic (Van Houts): "His plan was to catch them unawares and overwhelm them by an unexpected night attack; and to prevent them escaping in flight he kept seventy heavily armed ships at sea."

None of these authors were privy to conversations in the English court. They are guessing Harold's motivation based on the Norman perception of events. They knew that Harold only had to keep at a safe distance to win the war. They saw him arrive at the battle theatre with an understrength army and then camp within striking distance. They reasoned that he must be stupid, mad, or reckless through anger.

But Harold was not stupid, mad or reckless. His sister describes his character in Asser's The Life of Alfred. She says that he was: "endowed with mildness of temper", and that: "the fault of rashness or levity is not one that anybody could charge against him". He was the polar opposite of someone who might be driven to suicidal idiocy by a tantrum. Moreover, William and Harold had been exchanging messages while Harold made his way to Sussex. William knew his exact location and he stationed guards at the Hastings Peninsula crossing points. According to Wace, these guards captured Harold's exploratory scouts and sent them back to Harold. If two scouts could not take the Normans by surprise, there is zero chance that the entire English army could. And if the English army tried to attack the Norman camp, they would have been caught in the open by the Norman cavalry and would have been wiped out.

The only credible reason for Harold to have gone anywhere near the Normans with an understrength army was to orchestrate a blockade, either to negotiate from a position of strength, or as a precursor to a siege or to prepare an attack on the Norman camp when the balance of his troops arrived. This would be consistent with the Hastings Peninsula geography which lent itself to a blockade having just three narrow access/egress points. They are labelled on Figure 43: S, the Sedlescombe bridge over the Brede; W, Whatlington ford over the Brede; and I, the isthmus. Harold brought enough men for such a blockade.

Apart from common sense, the only evidence that Harold planned to implement a blockade is an objective interpretation of ASC-D's engagement description: "com him togenes æt þære haran apuldran". It is normally translated as something like Harold: "came against him at haran apuldran", giving the impression that Harold went to attack William. 'him togenes' can mean 'against him' or to 'oppose him', but it usually means to 'meet him' or 'towards him'. ASC-D continues: "Wyllelm him com ongean", 'William came against him', using 'ongean', the normal Old English word for 'against'. If the first phrase meant 'against', it would surely also use 'ongean' to eliminate ambiguity. Ingram, Thorpe, and Swanton (in his Wikipedia translation) therefore translate 'togenes' as 'to meet' or 'towards'. In other words, Harold went to East Sussex expecting to meet William, presumably to negotiate his surrender or withdrawal. He would have wanted to do this from a position of strength, which means that he would first blockade the peninsula.

If Harold's strategy was to orchestrate a blockade, he just needed to camp at a safe distance from the Normans and wait for them to starve, surrender, or return to Normandy. Something must have gone wrong with his calculation of where was safe.

Wace has probably guessed right. When Harold first sees the Norman battle camp, Wace (Taylor) reports him saying to Gyrth: "The count of Flanders hath betrayed me: I trusted to him, and was a fool for so doing; when he sent me word by letter, and assured me by messages that William could never collect so

great a chivalry." In other words, Harold assumed that the Normans had brought an inconsequential number of war horses and knights, but he was wildly wrong. Wace was not privy to the King's conversations, but perhaps he knew that the Count of Flanders had been feeding Harold with false intelligence. If not, he presumably worked out that the only plausible reason Harold would have ventured within striking range with an understrength army was that he did not realise it was unsafe because he did not know about the huge Norman cavalry. This is consistent with events as we propose: From their camp on Great Sanders ridge the English could blockade the Norman infantry but not the Norman cavalry.

If Harold went to Sussex intending to orchestrate a blockade, he would need the barricades on the landward side of the three access/egress points. He therefore never crossed any of these access/egress points. It makes military sense anyway because, as we say in Clue 7 above, they were all ambush prone. He would not have crossed any of them before the far side had been scouted and cleared but he was not at the battle theatre for long enough for that to happen. William needed to trap the English army and/or attack as soon as possible and did so. Therefore, the battle was on the landward side of the Hastings Peninsula crossing points, consistent with Hurst Lane but contradicting the other battlefield candidates.

#### Clue 9 – The shield wall was wedge-shaped

Baudri (Dawson) says: "The enemy, discarding their horses, form themselves into a close wedge", then that the Normans were: "unable to pry anyone loose from the wedge."

Wace (Taylor) says that Harold: "ordered the men of Kent to go where the Normans were likely to make the attack; for they say that the men of Kent are entitled to strike first; and that whenever the king goes to battle, the first blow belongs to them".

Carmen (Starkey): "Harold planted his standard on the highest point of the crest of the hill."

Every historian that has ever written about the battle proposes that the English shield wall was straight or straightish. It is not supported by a single contemporary account. Instead, it was inferred from the geography at the orthodox battlefield in Victorian times. It is contradicted by the only account that describes the shape of the shield wall: Baudri unequivocally says it was wedge-shaped. The only credible reason for Harold to deploy a wedge-shaped shield wall is that it followed the contours of a spur, which matches Hurst Lane but contradicts all the other battlefield candidates.

Some hints in other accounts corroborate Baudri. Wace implies that the shield wall had a pointy front, insofar as the only reason that the 'men of Kent' were likely to strike the first blow in a defensive formation is that they were further forward than the rest. Carmen says: "In summo montis vexillum vertice fixit". Morton & Muntz translate the tautology: "On the highest point of the summit he planted his banner"; Kathleen Tyson strips it out: "At the summit of the hill a streaming banner was planted." Our translation above feels more accurate than either of them. It implies that the battlefield was on a spur.

There are dozens of spurs on and near the Hastings Peninsula, so why are we confident that Baudri is referring to Hurst Lane spur? One factor is that most of them are too big or too small for the probable number of troops. Another is that Hurst Lane is the only spur in the region that had impregnable upslope protection (see Clue 5), thereby preventing the Normans from looping around behind the English to attack downhill. A third is that a wedge-shaped shield wall on a spur would only look wedge-shaped from the direction in which it points. Baudri reports that it looked wedge-shaped from the Norman battle camp. We explain in 'The Camps' section above that the Norman battle camp was at Cottage Lane. In other words, the battlefield spur pointed to Cottage Lane. Hurst Lane and Churchlands Lane are the only spurs in the region that point to Cottage Lane. Churchlands Lane spur is too wide to have been the battlefield. Therefore, Hurst Lane uniquely matches the contemporary account statements that say or imply that the shield wall was wedge-shaped.

While the direct evidence corroborating a wedge-shaped shield wall is scant, there is good indirect evidence that the English flanks were tightly refused and/or that the English were fighting back-to-back, which means much the same.

Wace (Taylor) says that Harold issues orders that: "all should be ranged with their faces towards the enemy".

Wace (Taylor) says that William chooses to: "fight in the middle throng where the battle shall be hottest".

Wace (Taylor): "The English stood in close ranks, ready and eager for the fight; and they had moreover made a fosse, which went across the field, guarding one side of their army".

Wace (Taylor): "In the front of the battle where the Normans thronged most, he [a mounted English knight] came bounding on swifter than the stag, many Normans falling before him and his company."

Tapestry Panel 51 (Figure 44) and Panel 54 (Figure 46) show the English fighting back-to-back.



Figure 44: Tapestry Panel 51

The Tapestry panels are self-explanatory. Wace is less so. His statement that Harold ordered his troops to face towards the enemy is usually thought to be a mistake. Nobody would face away from someone trying to kill them if they were in a straight or straightish shield wall, but they might if they were fighting back-to-back, curious about what was going on behind.

Wace's statement that William chooses to fight in the middle throng is inconsistent with the orthodox battlefield, and more generally with anywhere that proposes a straight or straightish shield wall. The English were completely passive. The fighting would be wherever William chose to attack. At the orthodox battlefield, the only adverse terrain was in the middle, in front of what is now the Abbey's terrace where the slope was steepest. It would have seen the least intense fighting. Conversely, Wace's statement matches Hurst Lane, where the only significant fighting would have been in the middle because the flanks were dangerously narrow and three times as steep as the middle.

We mention Wace's ditch across the battlefield in Clue 5. It contradicts all the battlefield candidates apart from Hurst Lane because they all supposedly had straight or straightish shield walls. Their downslope was protected by a barricade that Wace claims to have been almost impregnable. Their downslope had no need for a protective ditch as well and none of the accounts mention the downslope being protected by a ditch. It matches Hurst Lane where Wace's ditch across the battlefield would be the Hurst Lane iron ore pit which protected the top side of a wedge-shaped shield wall.

Wace's statement about the English knight says that the Normans thronged in front of the battle. It makes no sense at the orthodox battlefield because the Normans could only have been in front of a straight or straightish shield wall. At Hurst Lane, the Norman flank divisions would have been up the sides of the battlefield, albeit without engaging in much fighting. All the action was in the middle. The Norman knights and barons, as described, would have thronged in front of the tip of the shield wall at Hurst Lane.

The geography at the orthodox battlefield, and that at Telham Hill and Caldbec Hill, is inconsistent with a wedge-shaped shield wall, which is why all the shield walls that have ever been proposed are straight or straightish. On the contrary, the geography at Hurst Lane enforces a wedge-shaped shield wall.

#### Clue 10 - The shield wall was enclosed

Clue 9 is that the English shield wall was wedge-shaped, but none of its nine source references say or imply whether it was open like a chevron or enclosed like the outline of a slice of cake. There is copious other evidence that it was the latter, enclosed.

Wace (Taylor): "When Harold had made all ready, and given his orders, he came into the midst of the English, and dismounted by the side of the standard".

Carmen (Tyson): "The king ascended the summit that he might wage war in the midst of his army".

Draco Normannicus (Dawson): "The legion of the English surrounds the King".

Brevis Relatio (Van Houts) says that a Norman soldier thinks Harold is: "in the midst of the dense array, which was before them on the top of the hill, for he thinks he can see Harold's Standard there".

CBA (Searle) says that the English were: "in an impenetrable formation around their king".

Wace (Taylor): "The English had enclosed a field where Harold stood with his friends", then that Harold knew the Normans would attack hand to hand: "so he had early enclosed the field in which he placed his men".

Poitiers (Chibnall): "... up to now the enemy line had been bristling with weapons and most difficult to encircle."

Baudri (Otter): "Backing up the enemy line, at a distance, were horsemen, waiting to intercept anyone trying to flee".

Henry of Huntingdon (Greenway) says: "Harold had placed all his people very closely in a single line, constructing a sort of castle with them, so that they were impregnable to the Normans."

The first four statements say that Harold was surrounded by his troops, implying that the shield wall was enclosed but not specifically saying so. The next two mean that it was enclosed because that is the only way it could be 'impenetrable' and the only way it could 'enclose a field'. The last three statements need more explanation.

Poitiers says that the English line was difficult to encircle. It makes no sense against an open shield wall because encirclement would not be a useful objective. If the Normans could get men behind an open English line, they would not have wasted time trying to encircle them but would instead have immediately attacked and killed Harold. Huntingdon says that the shield wall looked like a castle. Presumably, he was trying to say that the shields looked like a row of wooden stakes. He says that it looked like a castle, not like a palisade, so he is implying the shield wall was enclosed. Baudri says that William stationed horsemen on the far side of the English line to catch anyone trying to flee. This would make no sense at any battlefield candidate apart from Hurst Lane because: 1) All the battlefield candidates apart from Hurst Lane are predicated on the Normans being unable or unwilling to get men behind the English line; 2) If the shield wall was open, the Norman horsemen behind the English line would have ridden up behind Harold and lopped off his head before the battle started.

This clue matches Hurst Lane where the geography enforces an enclosed shield wall but contradicts all the other battlefield candidates because their geographies enforce an open shield wall.

## Clue 11 - William's military tactics

Jumièges (Van Houts): "Early in the morning of Saturday, he arranged his legions of warriors into three divisions and without any fear advanced against the dreadful enemy."

Carmen (Tyson) says: "The French cavalry attacked to the left, the Bretons to the right, the duke with the Norman cavalry fights the middle."

Wace (Taylor): "the Normans divided into three companies, in order to attack at three places. They set out in three companies, and in three companies did they fight.", then that William chooses to: "fight in the middle throng where the battle shall be hottest".

Poitiers (Chibnall): "Now this is the well-planned order in which he advanced behind the banner which the pope had sent him. He placed foot-soldiers in front, armed with arrows and cross-bows; likewise foot-soldiers in the second rank, but more powerful and wearing hauberks; finally the squadrons of mounted knights, in the middle of which he himself rode with the strongest force, so that he could direct operations on all sides with hand and voice."

Orderic (Van Houts): "The Duke of Normandy placed foot-soldiers armed with arrows and cross-bows in the front rank, foot-soldiers with hauberks in the second, and finally squadrons of mounted knights; he himself, surrounded by the best fighting men, took his place in the centre, so that he could be heard and seen by all as he directed operations."

The contemporary accounts say that William split his army into three divisions, that they attacked from the same direction, that the flanks were within sight and hearing of William, and that they fought in this order throughout the day. This makes no sense at the orthodox battlefield here William's only rational tactic would have been to send his cavalry around the open ends of the English line to lop off Harold's head. All the contemporary accounts agree that he did not do this, or even attempt it.

Imagine for a moment that William was unable or unwilling to outflank the orthodox shield wall. His next best tactic at the orthodox battlefield would have been to engage as much of the shield wall as possible, thereby thinning the line, then try to breach the weakest flank in an oblique order attack. The Normans did not do this either, choosing instead to have a narrow front, with the flanks close enough to see and hear William's commands.

It is not only that William failed to implement the only tactics that make sense at the orthodox battlefield, but that he implemented the only tactics

that might allow the English to survive the day by concentrating his best troops on the only adverse terrain against Harold's only well-armed troops.

On the contrary, William's tactics would have been Hobson's Choice at Hurst Lane, where the flanks were too narrow (100m or so) and too steep (15%) for any serious fighting.

#### Clue 12 - Harold did not withdraw or flee before the battle

Harold fought and died in the Battle of Hastings. The safety of Bodiam was just four miles from the Hastings Peninsula, no more than a 90-minute march or a 30-minute horse trot from anywhere the English might have camped. Harold could have pulled his troops back to safety or he could have left to recruit more men but did neither. It was not through lack of time because Wace and Carmen say that Harold arrived at the English camp two days before the battle.

Wace gives one reason that Harold might have stayed in the danger zone. It appears in a conversation with Gyrth while they were scouting the Norman battle camp on the day before the battle.

Wace (Taylor) says that they: "rode on, viewing and examining the ground, till from a hill where they stood they could see those of Normans, who were near. They saw a great many huts made of tree branches, well equipped tents, pavilions and gonfanons; and they heard the horses neighing." Harold says to Gyrth: "With so great a host against us, I dare not do otherwise than fall back upon London: I will return thither and assemble a larger army." Gyrth replies: "If you should turn back now, everyone would say that you ran away. If men see you flee, who is to keep your people together, and if they once disperse, they will never be brought to assemble together again."

Dodgy provenance. Harold and Gyrth were out alone scouting the Norman camp. They would not have reported this conversation to anyone, and they both died in the battle. Wace is presumably inferring the conversation from events as they transpired, insofar as Harold did not flee or withdraw his army to safety, despite having had plenty of time to do so.

Even though Wace's conversation probably never happened, perhaps he is right that Harold feared his men would think him cowardly if he were to withdraw or leave. We think it incredibly unlikely. Consider Harold Hardrada's obituary in Heimskringla. Having said that he "never fled out of battle", it goes on to say that one of his greatest strengths was that he "often sought some way out when fighting against great odds". Harold's men would have been just as aware that it was not in their interest to fight a battle they could not win and would probably lose. They would have known that any tactics were good if they led to victory, and also that William would not have attacked if Harold was not there. Therefore, they would have realised that their best chance of victory and of personal survival was if they withdrew to safety or if Harold left to recruit more men.

A passive shield wall has no hope of victory. Its best outcome is to survive. If Harold's objective was to survive and he was at the orthodox battlefield, he could have ordered his army to fall back on the route they arrived. He could have done this at any time on the day before battle. He had at least two hours on the morning of the battle, plenty of time to get four miles to safety at Bodiam. Even when the Normans were amassing at the bottom of the battlefield hill, Harold could have ordered his men to melt away into nearby woodland and make their way to safety through Lordship Wood. Instead, according to Wace, the English watched the Normans appear over rising ground, getting ever more depressed about their chances of survival. It makes no sense at the orthodox battlefield.

The more likely explanation for Harold's inaction is that he was unable to flee or withdraw. This would not be so at the orthodox battlefield, but it is so at Hurst Lane where, as soon as the English army passed Cripps Corner, William would have closed the door behind them by posting men along the Udimore Ridge.

## Clue 13 – Contemporary archaeology

No Saxon era or Norman era archaeology has been found at Battle Abbey, Caldbec Hill or Telham Hill, despite 100 years of excavations and loads of metal detecting. There is a generally accepted excuse: small ferrous items – like arrowheads - would have corroded away to nothing in the acid soil while larger ferrous items and all non-ferrous items would have been scavenged soon after the battle. While both are true to some extent, neither excuse seems credible to us.

Roman era iron nails are not uncommon metal detecting finds. It is often said that they only survive in neutral or alkaline soil, but that only applies to small nails. Metal detectorists have told us that they have found medium and large Roman nails in acid soil. There is no reason that similar-sized battle-related ferrous items, like arrowheads, would not have survived, albeit probably disfigured through corrosion. Bigger ferrous items, like mail, weapons and horseshoes, would have been scavenged if they were lying on the surface, but it is surely inconceivable that some were not trodden into the mud.

In addition, each of the Englishmen would have had at least two copper alloy strap ends, a copper alloy shoulder brooch, and a copper alloy buckle. Hundreds of these would surely have come loose during the battle and flight. Some must have been trodden into the ground, and the strap ends are small enough to have been overlooked by scavengers even if they were lying on the surface. It is almost inconceivable that some non-ferrous personal items have not survived at the battlefield and on the flight route.

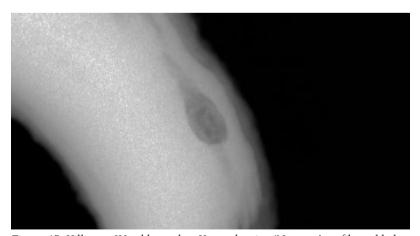


Figure 45: Killingan Wood horseshoe X-ray showing 'Norman' profile and hole

IHRG, the metal detectorists used by Time Team to survey Battle Abbey and Caldbec Hill, and who subsequently surveyed Nick Austin's proposed battlefield at Telham Hill, found nothing at any of these places. They spent a few days detecting in Killingan Wood in an area that encompasses a section of the route through which the English fled. They found two Saxon copper alloy strap ends, a Norman Type calkined horseshoe (Figure 45) and a probable medieval arrowhead.

These items are rare. Only one Norman Type horseshoe is listed on the PAS database outside of London. The probable arrowhead is unique, tanged and barbed but with a flat back, as if made in a hurry or made for a single shot. Saxon strap ends are less rare, but they are usually found in association with burial sites because Saxons were buried fully clothed. Only a dozen or so have been found in East Sussex that are not associated with burials, and none in woodland.

While these items are rare, they fall short of proof that the English camp was in Killingan Wood or that it was on the English flight path. The strap ends might be up to 100 years earlier than the battle, tanged barbed arrowheads were in use for 100 years before the battle, the Normans brought blacksmiths with them, and they made Norman style horseshoes in England for 100 years after the battle.

Nevertheless, IHRG's finds are exactly the sort of items that should be found on the flight path. Killingan Wood was in *Herste* manor which is listed in Domesday with no population in 1066 or in 1086. The Romans mined out all the iron ore, so there were no miners there in Saxon or Normans times. It is 700m from the nearest Roman road and not on the way to anywhere. There are no normal reasons why any Saxon or Norman items would be there. So, what are the odds of finding these items in Killingan Wood if they did not come from battle participants? A thousand to one? More probably. If this is right, the probability that Killingan Wood was on the flight path from the battlefield is at least 99.9%, and the Old English root of its name - 'quillen', to kill - makes it more likely still.

# Clue 14 - The battlefield was roughly an hour's march from the Norman battle camp

Wace (Burgess): "From the hour of tierce [third hour of the day], when the battle commenced, until past nones [the ninth hour of the day], the battle went this way and that, so that no one knew who was going to win the day".

Jumièges (Van Houts): "Battle was joined at the third hour".

Orderic (Forester): "The battle commenced at the third hour of the ides [14th] of October".

Draco Normannicus (Dawson): "When he [William] had drawn up all his legions, it was the third hour of the day".

All these accounts say that the battle started at the third hour of the day. On 14th October, first light was around 06:00. Everyone assumes the third hour meant 09:00. It is not as straightforward as it seems. Firstly, the day was split into 12 equal parts in medieval times, each known in Latin as an 'hora'. As it happened, the battle was not long after the Autumn equinox, so these hora were roughly an hour. Also, if dawn was at 06:00, the first hour was between 06:00 and 07:00, the second between 07:00 and 08:00, the third between 08:00 and 09:00. The battle could have started any time between 08:00 and 09:00. Luckily, Wace specifically says that it started at tierce, which meant the end of the third hour, roughly 09:00.

The Normans had already taken Mass, eaten breakfast and listened to William's pep talk before they left their battle camp. They had to organise into a column, march to the battlefield, and reorganise into three divisions upon their arrival. With all these delays, the march to the battlefield from the Norman battle camp cannot have been significantly more than an hour. This matches a Hurst Lane battlefield,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from our proposed Norman battle camp at Cottage Lane on the very specific route that Wace describes (see Clue 6). It contradicts the other battlefield candidates: the

route is too long in the case of the orthodox battlefield and Caldbec Hill, and too boggy in the case of Telham Hill.

## Clue 15 - The battlefield was nine Roman miles from 'Heastinga'

John of Worcester (Searle): "nine miles from Heastinga, where they [the Normans] had earlier built a fortress for themselves, before a third of his army had been drawn up, on Saturday 22nd October, he joined battle with the Normans".

John of Worcester would have used Roman miles, so the distance is about eight imperial miles. It sounds like he means crow flying miles, but they did not have the wherewithal to calculate inland crow flying miles in the 12th century, unless the end points were joined by a straight road or river, or were visible to each other, or both visible from somewhere in between. None of this would apply to the orthodox battlefield, Caldbec Hill or Telham Hill. If the battlefield were at any of these three candidates, John of Worcester would probably have been referring to marching miles. This would contradict the orthodox battlefield and Telham Hill, 6 miles and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from their respective proposed Norman camps. It is more consistent with Caldbec Hill, which is 7 miles from modern Hastings.

We think that John of Worcester's *Heastinga* referred to *Hæstingaport* at modern Winchelsea – see Appendix A. It is seven miles straight up the Brede valley to Sedlescombe, and another mile from Sedlescombe to the Hurst Lane battlefield, exactly matching John of Worcester's statement. Modern Winchelsea and Hurst Lane are both visible from Lower Snailham, albeit only for those with perfect eyesight on a clear day. It is possible that John of Worcester was referring to line of sight at around 7½ miles, still close enough to be a good match.

Clue 16 - The battlefield was visible from the Norman battle camp and close enough that the English troop deployment and English Standards could be seen

Brevis Relatio (Dawson): "Accordingly, coming to a hill which was on the side of Hastings, opposite that hill upon which Harold with his army was there under arms, they {William and his commanders] halted for a short time surveying the army of the English", then: "he [William] began to enquire of a certain soldier who was near him, where he thought Harold was. The soldier answered that he thought he was in the midst of that dense array, which was before them on the top of the hill, for as he was thinking, he saw Harold's standard there."

Hurst Lane spur is one line of sight mile from our proposed Norman battle camp on Cottage Lane, looking across the Brede estuary with nothing to impede the view. It is close enough that the English deployment would have been clearly visible, and the English standards would have been identifiable to anyone with average eyesight. Brevis Relatio's statement, therefore, matches Hurst Lane. It contradicts all the other battlefield candidates – see Clue 16 in the section about The Traditional Battlefield.

## Clue 17 - The battlefield was adjacent to the English camp

Carmen (Barlow) describes the Norman view towards the battlefield on the morning of battle: "Suddenly the forest spewed out its cohorts; and columns of men stormed out of their hiding-places in the woods. Near the forest was a hill and a valley and land too rough to be tilled. The English, as was their custom, advanced in mass formation and seized this position on which to fight."

Brevis Relatio (Dawson) describes William's arrival at the Norman battle camp on the morning of battle: "coming to a hill which was on the side of Hastings, opposite that hill upon which Harold with his army was there under arms, they halted for a short time surveying the army of the English".

Carmen (Barlow) describes a scene at the Norman battle camp on the day before battle when William's envoy returns from negotiations with Harold. William asks: "Where is the king? 'Not far off, the envoy replied', and whispered in his ear, 'You can see his standards'".

Carmen and Brevis Relatio say that the English camp and the battlefield were both visible from the Norman battle camp, which implies they were close. The Normans see the English leave their woodland camp and arrive at the battlefield, so the camp was beyond or to the side of the battlefield.

Our proposed battlefield at Hurst Lane is 1.6km from our proposed Norman battle camp at Cottage Lane, while our proposed English camp at Great Sanders was 400m beyond that. The camp was 10m higher than the battlefield, so both would have been clearly visible from the Norman battle camp, matching this clue. It contradicts the orthodox battlefield where the battlefield hill obscured the associated English camp.

#### Clue 18 - The battlefield was at or near 'Senlac'

Orderic Vitalis (Forester): "the English troops, assembled from all parts of the neighbourhood, took post at a place which was anciently called Senlac, many of them personally devoted to the cause of Harold, and all to that of their country, which they were resolved to defend against the foreigners. Dismounting from their horses, on which it was determined not to rely, they formed a solid column of infantry, and thus stood firm in the position they had taken." Then, "William founded at Senlac, where the decisive battle was fought, the abbey of the Holy Trinity."

We mention *Senlac* in the introduction to this section. Orderic has ten references to it altogether, mostly in conjunction with *'bellum'*, as in *'Senlacio bellum'* or *'Senlacium bellum'*. It is always translated as 'the battle of Senlac' or the 'Senlac battlefield'. Both are wrong. *'bellum'* means 'war'. So, Orderic is saying that Battle Abbey was built where the 'Senlac war' took place. It was a large area, and therefore not a Saxon name for the place that became Battle.

Etymologists have analysed the probable meaning of *Senlac*. Freeman and others suggest that it might derive from '*Sanguelac*', Old French for 'blood lake', implying that a lake near the battlefield was stained red with blood from the battle casualties. They are mistaken. There are no lakes within blood-seeping distance of any battlefield candidate, and Orderic says that *Senlac* is an ancient name, so it predates the Conquest and is therefore Old English.

Most etymologists reckon that *Senlac* was Old English for 'sandy loch' or 'sandy lake'. This matches the Brede estuary because it had a low-tide ford below Brede village. A 'loch' in England sometimes meant 'a body of water cut off at low tide'. Thus, the upper Brede estuary became a 'sandy lake' and a 'sandy loch' at low tide. That body of water was between our proposed locations for the battlefield and the Norman battle camp.

The orthodox battlefield, Telham Hill and Caldbec Hill are all on ridgeways. If *Senlac* referred to the Brede basin or the Brede estuary or the upper Brede estuary, the only battlefield candidate it could encompass is Hurst Lane.

#### Clue 19 - The battlefield was at or near 'Herste'

CBA Folio 12 (Searle): "The monk went quickly to Marmoutier and brought with him into England four monks from there: Theobald, nicknamed 'the old', William Coche, Robert of Boulogne, and Robert Blancard, men of outstanding in character and piety. They studied the battlefield and decided that it seemed hardly suitable for so outstanding a building. They therefore chose a fit place for settling, a site located not far off, but somewhat lower down, towards the western slope of the ridge. There, lest they seem to be doing nothing, they built themselves some little huts. This place, still called Herste, has a low wall as a mark of this."

Searle's translation looks ambiguous: *Herste* could be the name of the battlefield, or it could be the name of the place where the monks of Martmoutier built some little huts. For our purposes here, CBA says that

the little huts and the low stone wall were 'not far' from the battlefield, so it is reasonable to assume they were both in *Herste*. We will explain why we think that CBA is saying that the battlefield was at *Herste* in the Clue 19 section of The Traditional Battlefield.

CBA does not say what it means by *Herste*, but it does capitalise the first letter, so it is a proper noun rather than the Latin transliteration of the Old English word for a generic wood. The only inland places that regularly had names in those days were manors, woods, rivers, and lakes. Old English *Herste* meant wood, so the names are typically compound with an adjective: Hawkherste, wood frequented by hawks; Penherste, Pena's Wood, etc. Uncompounded *Herste* was therefore probably a manor. Three are listed in Domesday, one of which was at or near Hurst Lane.

The Sussex *Herste* manor was in Staple hundred. It is listed in Domesday with the manors of *Selescome* (Sedlescombe) and *Fodilant* (Footlands), implying that it is in the south of that hundred. See Figure 69 for a graphical description. Sedlescombe was south of the Brede and upstream of the crossing point in those days – see Leuga diagram Figure 26. Footlands was where it is today, north of the fluvial Brede and west of the Rochester Roman road. *Herste* presumably faced it, north of the estuarine Brede and east of the Rochester Roman road. In other words, unsurprisingly, it would have encompassed Hurst Wood, Hurst House and Hurst Lane.

A battlefield in *Herste* manor might explain a Domesday anomaly. *Herste* manor was held by a Saxon tenant by the name of Ednoth. Anglo-Saxons only held 5% of post-Conquest manors in Domesday, and only one in sub-Andredsweald East Sussex, that being *Herste*. We guess that Normans did not want to go near the battlefield manor, for fear they would be haunted by the souls of English battle victims.

In summary, the evidence supporting this clue is ambiguous, but we are confident that CBA is saying that the battlefield and the little huts were at *Herste*, referring to Domesday's *Herste* manor, which uniquely matches a Hurst Lane battlefield.

## Clue 20 - The battlefield was at or near a 'spinam'

The only reference to a 'spinam' is in CBA, at the end of the section about *Herste* in Clue 19 above. *spinam* usually means 'thorn bush', but a thorn bush would not be a useful marker in a land covered with thorn bushes. *spinam* has a niche meaning for the dividing wall between the turning posts at a Roman circus. It was low enough that the charioteers could see across to the other side, and it was usually made of stone. Obviously, there was not a Roman circus at a Norman building site in East Sussex, but Professor Searle presumably knew that it had a general meaning 'low stone wall'. It would certainly be a more useful battlefield marker than a thorn bush.

CBA says that the little huts are "not far off, but somewhat lower down, towards the western slope of the ridge". The orthodox battlefield and Telham Hill are east-west ridges. Caldbec Hill is on a southwest to northeast ridge. None of them have a western slope, and none of them were near somewhere named *Herste* at the time of the battle (see Clue 19), so they all contradict this clue.

Hurst Lane spur has a plateau that exactly fits CBA's description, not far off (250m) and somewhat lower down (15m) from our proposed battlefield. If the little huts were towards the western slope, they would have been somewhere around 50.9390, 0.5456. We looked for a medieval low stone wall around that area but could not find one.

#### Clue 21 - The battlefield was at or near 'haran apuldran'

ASC-D (Ingram): "[Harold] gathered a large force and came to meet him [William] at the estuary of Appledore".

There are other translations of this sentence with a wildly different meaning. We talk about this on page 80. The contentious term is 'haran apuldran' which Ingram translates as 'estuary of Appledore'. Kathleen Tyson thinks 'anchorage of Appledore'. We think 'boundary of Appledore'. Most historians think it has something to do with 'hoary' or 'grey' apple trees. These are all valid translations but not in this context.

ASC-D's author was trying to provide useful information to his readers about where Harold went to meet William. There is no reason why his readers would know about the location of an apple tree in sub-Andredsweald Sussex, whether it was hoary, grey or polka dot, especially as it would have died by the time he was writing. Apple trees are mentioned in Saxon charters as boundary markers, as John Grehan explains, but in a local context. They are never mentioned as markers in Bede, or in Asser's Life of Alfred the Great, or in any recension of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, with this one alleged exception. It seems totally implausible to us that this apuldran referred to an apple tree.

Appledore was then known as 'apuldre', Old English for 'apple tree'. It was on the Rother estuary, then known as the Limen. We think ASC-D is trying to say that Harold went to meet William at the Rother estuary, not because it was the battlefield but because it was the closest named place to the battlefield that normal ASC readers would recognise. They would recognise Appledore because the ASC reports that the entire Viking army wintered there in the 9th century. Hurst Lane is just three miles from the Rother and it is the closest named place to Hurst Lane that normal medieval readers would recognise. All the other battlefield candidates are on the Hastings Peninsula. It was referred to as 'hæstingas' in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's 1012 annal. Hæstinga was also the root of Hæstingaport and Hæstingaceastre, which are mentioned in numerous ASC annals. If the battle has been fought on the Hastings Peninsula, the ASC would surely have said that Harold went to Hæstingas.

Therefore, Hurst Lane is the only battlefield candidate that is consistent with this clue. All the others contradict it.

## Clue 22 - The battlefield was on 'planis Hastinges'

There is one reference to 'planis Hastinges' by Henry of Huntingdon. It is very odd. Here are two translations.

Huntingdon (Forester): "William, duke of Normandy, had landed on the south coast and had built a fort at Hastings. The king hastened southwards to draw up his army on the flat land in that neighbourhood."

Huntingdon (Greenway): "William has invaded on the south coast, and has built a castle at Hastings. So the king, hastening down without delay, drew up his lines on the flat land at Hastings".

Neither of them is quite right. The Latin original says: "Willelmus dux Normannim littora australia occupavit, et castellum construxit. Rex igitur non segnis advolans, aciem suam construxit in planis Hastinges", which we translate: "William, Duke of Normandy, occupied the southern coast and built a fortress there. The king rushed to form his line on the plains of Hastinges".

Professor Lower comments that this is: "written in total ignorance of the geographical features of the locality". He is thinking that Huntingdon's Hastinges referred to modern Hastings, which is about as 'unflat' as anywhere in the region. It is not quite as bad as that. Hastinges can refer to the Hastings Peninsula depending on the author and the context (Appendix A). There is some flattish land on the Hastings Peninsula, to the southwest of the Ridge. This said, it is all low lying, so not where Harold drew up his lines.

There are three possibilities: 1) Huntingdon, as Lower says, was confused about the local geography; 2) It is some sort of spelling mistake; or 3) It is a term used at the time to differentiate the Hastings Ridge from everywhere else on and around the Hastings Peninsula. We think Lower is wrong. Even if Huntingdon was unfamiliar with the local geography, none of the sources from which he devised his narrative could have said or hinted that Harold defended flat land, especially low-lying flat land. A spelling mistake is possible, but it is not obvious to us what it might have been. Thus, the least unlikely possibility is that *planis Hastinges* referred to the parts of the Hastings Peninsula that were not on the ridge. If so, this clue only matches Hurst Lane. We have no proof, so we mark all of the battlefield candidates as inconsistent.

## Clue 23 - A lateral ditch adjoined the battlefield

Wace (Taylor): "In the plain was a fosse which the Normans had now behind them, having passed it in the fight without regarding it ...", then: "... but the English charged and drove the Normans before them, till they made them fall back upon this fosse. Many were seen falling therein."

Huntingdon (Greenway): "So Duke William instructed his people to simulate flight, but as they fled they came to a large ditch, cunningly hidden. A great number of them fell and were trampled. While the English were continuing in pursuit, the principal line of Normans broke through the central company of the English. When those who were pursuing saw this, they were obliged to return over the said ditch, and the greater part of them perished there."

Wace says that the Normans were shield charged into a ditch that they had during their advance without noticing it. They could not have crossed that ditch without noticing it, so it must have been lateral to the side of the battlefield. One man's shield charge is another man's feigned retreat. We guess that Huntingdon was describing the same event as Wace, only he took a more positive view of the Norman's bravery. So, this ditch must have been close to the battlefield, roughly parallel with it, and not separated from it by woodland. If it ran parallel to the battlefield, which was on a slope, the ditch was presumably fluvial.

The further the English pushed the Normans back, the more the shield wall would be stretched, and the more liable it would have been to disastrous gapping. We doubt that they would have shield charged more than 50m. If the Norman lines were, say, 100m deep, the ditch must have been within 150m of the shield wall for those at the back to have been forced in.

These descriptions contradict the orthodox battlefield, Caldbec Hill and Telham Hill. The orthodox battlefield has no lateral ditches within shield charge range. Likewise, Caldbec Hill. Telham Hill's lateral ditch is in woodland. Moreover, all the battlefield candidates apart from Hurst Lane are supposed to have had straight or straightish shield walls. If the English

shield charged at any of them, the Normans would have been pushed predominantly down the battlefield slope, not sideways.

At Hurst Lane, the western fluvial ditch one was no more than 125m from the shield wall, the eastern one was no more than 150m. The further the Norman flank divisions ventured up the sides of the shield wall, the shorter the distance to the lateral ditches. This lateral ditch is therefore a perfect match with Hurst Lane but contradicts all the other battlefield candidates.

#### Clue 24 - There was a plain below the contact zone

Wace (Taylor): "In the plain was a fosse which the Normans had now behind them, having passed it in the fight without regarding it".

Wace (Taylor) later describes the feigned retreat: "The Normans were to be seen following up their stratagem, retreating slowly so as to draw the English further on. As they still flee, the English pursue; they push out their lances and stretch forth their hatchets: following the Normans, as they go rejoicing in the success of their scheme, and scattering themselves over the plain".

Wace says and then repeats that there was a plain below the shield wall onto which the English were dragged when chasing the feigned retreat. The Norman knights surrounded and slaughtered anyone running out of the shield wall, so it is unlikely to have been more than 100m below the shield wall.

Wace's description is a perfect match for Hurst Lane spur where there is an area 100m below the front of our proposed Hurst shield wall (level with the modern metal gate) where the slope is shallow enough to refer to it as a plain. There is a similarly level area below the orthodox shield wall, but 300m from the orthodox shield wall which is too far for the Normans to have been shield charged. There are no level areas below Austin's shield wall at Telham Hill or Grehan's at Caldbec Hill. Hurst Lane is therefore the only battlefield candidate that is consistent with this clue.

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## Clue 25 - The battlefield was overlooked by another hill

Wace (Taylor): "The youths and common herd of the camp, whose business was not to join in the battle, but to take care of the harness and stores, moved off towards a rising ground. The priests and the clerks also ascended a hill, there to offer up prayers to God, and watch the event of the battle."

Wace is saying that spectators watched events from a nearby hill with an uninterrupted view. This matches Hurst Lane, which is overlooked from Killingan Wood spur, with an ideal viewing point at 50.941,0.539. It might be consistent with the orthodox battlefield which might have had some sort of view through the trees from the conical hill between modern Glengorse and modern Brede Abbey Farm (at 50.9049, 0.4915). It contradicts Caldbec Hill which has the highest elevation in the area. It contradicts Telham Hill too. Although Telham Hill is overlooked from Telham on the Ridge, Nick Austin's engagement scenario requires Hastings Ridge to be covered in impenetrable woodland. If so, spectators would not have been able to get to Telham. If not, the battle could not have been on Telham Hill.

#### Clue 26 - The battlefield was a small hill

Pseudo-Ingulf (Stephenson): "At last, towards twilight, he [Harold] fell, on a small hill where he had collected his forces".

Tapestry Panel 54 (Figure 46) depicts the battlefield hill as small, low, flat topped, and rugged especially on one side.



Figure 46: Tapestry Panel 54

Malmesbury (Giles): "They fought with ardour, neither giving ground, for the great part of the day. Finding this, William gave a signal to his party, that, by a feigned flight, they should retreat. Through this device, the close body of the English, opening for the purpose of cutting down the straggling enemy, brought upon itself swift destruction; for the Normans, facing about, attacked them thus disordered, and compelled them to fly. In this manner, deceived by a stratagem, they met an honourable death in avenging their country; nor indeed were they at all wanting to their own revenge, as, by frequently making a stand, they slaughtered their pursuers in heaps: for, getting possession of an eminence, they drove down the Normans, when roused with indignation and anxiously striving to gain the higher ground, into the valley beneath, where, easily hurling their javelins and rolling down stones on them as they stood below, they destroyed them to a man. Besides, by a short passage, with which they were acquainted, avoiding a deep ditch, they trod under foot such a multitude of their enemies in that place, that they made the hollow level with the plain, by the heaps of carcasses. This vicissitude of first one party conquering, and then the other, prevailed as long as the life of Harold continued; but when he fell, from having his brain pierced with an arrow, the flight of the English ceased not until night."

Wace (Taylor) says: "But the English charged and drove the Normans before them, till they made them fall back upon this fosse."

Pseudo-Ingulf's statement is self-explanatory. So too is Tapestry Panel 54. Wace's shield charge ditch was lateral, to the side of the battlefield. How far could the Normans be driven back? 30m? 50m? If the Normans could be shield charged into a fluvial ditch, the battlefield was a lot smaller than tradition suggests.

Malmesbury's passage requires some explanation because his sequencing is confusing. In sentence order, he says: 1) That the battle lasted most of the day; 2) William ordered the feigned retreat; 3) The English were 'undone' and fled; 4) The English made a stand on a knoll and another by a precipitous ditch, at which many Normans died; 5) This alternating fortune

lasted until Harold died, then the English fled. None of the other accounts suggest that they fled while Harold was still alive, and it seems unlikely. We interpret Malmesbury's last two sentences to be adding detail to the first three, so they are out of sequence in the timeline. Thus, the English only fled once, after Harold died. This creates a dichotomy about whether either or both of the English stands referred to the main battlefield, or whether both were during their flight. We think it likely that the knoll referred to the main battlefield, for reasons we explain in the next paragraph. A 'knoll' is a 'small hill' by definition. The 'deep ditch' would have been the Hurst Lane iron ore pit. This would also explain how the English were able to kill Normans in the valley by throwing missiles and rolling boulders: It is because the valley bottoms to the side of our proposed Hurst Lane battlefield were only 100m or so from the shield wall.

Historians take the opposite interpretation of Malmesbury's account, that the English occupied the knoll during their flight, so the knoll was Pseudo-Ingulf's 'small hill' where Harold died and was the small hill depicted on Tapestry Panel 54. Our interpretation is more likely because: 1) Harold is unlikely to have ordered a retreat when his defence had been successful hitherto, and none of the contemporary accounts say that he did; 2) Pseudo-Ingulf says that the small hill is where Harold died and all the other contemporary accounts agree that he died at the main battlefield; 3) Harold does not die until Tapestry Panel 57 but the small hill is depicted on Panel 54.

This clue matches Hurst Lane, which is a small hill, while contradicting all the other battlefield candidates. Indeed, Panel 54 is such a good rendition of the Hurst Lane battlefield that it is even possible to work out where the artist recorded the scene. He was standing on the knoll at 50.9395, 0.5464, looking up the crest of the spur, just 300m from the action. His position is shown under the black arrow on Figure 47.

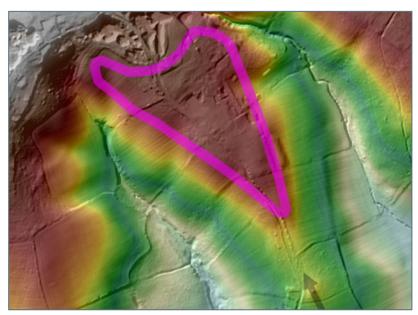


Figure 47: Artist's view for Panel 53/54 shown by a black arrow

#### Clue 27 - The battlefield was narrow

John of Worcester (Forester) says that: "because the English were drawn up in a narrow place, many slipped away from the battle line".

Wace (Taylor): "In the plain was a fosse which the Normans had now behind them, having passed it in the fight without regarding it ...", then: "... but the English charged and drove the Normans before them, till they made them fall back upon this fosse. Many were seen falling therein."

All the Clue 11 contemporary account statements.

As we say in Clue 11, if William's flank divisions were within voice and gesture command distance, the entire Norman front was narrow, probably less than 500m. John of Worcester specifically says that the battlefield is narrow. Wace implies it is narrow because the Normans were shield charged into a lateral ditch. As we say in Clue 22, this means that the ditch was probably less than 150m from the shield wall, and the shield wall was

probably less than 100m wide at its tip. All this suggests the battlefield was narrow, probably less than 400m.

Our proposed Hurst Lane battlefield is 375m wide at the contact zone. There are no side bounds at the orthodox battlefield. Shield walls have been proposed as short as 500m and as long as 2km, depending on the author's idea of the size of the English army. Austin's Telham Hill battlefield was bounded at about 750m. Grehan's Caldbec Hill battlefield has no physical bounds. He depicts it about 600m across, but with its bendy shield wall about 800m long. In other words, Hurst Lane is less than half the width of any of the other battlefield candidates. John of Worcester's statement matches Hurst Lane, it contradicts the orthodox battlefield, and it is just about consistent with Telham Hill and Caldbec Hill.

#### Clue 28 – The fighting was more intense in the middle

Wace (Taylor): "I [William] with my own great men, my friends and kindred, will fight in the middle throng, where the battle shall be the hottest".

Wace's statement makes no sense at the orthodox battlefield. The middle of the orthodox shield wall was on the steepest slope and was manned by Harold's elite huscarls. The orthodox flanks were on the shallowest slope and were manned by farmers armed with billhooks. If William could not flank the line, he would clearly have tried oblique order attacks on the English flanks until he broke through. Wace's statement makes almost as little sense at Telham Hill or Caldbec Hill. They have roughly the same slope along their proposed shield walls, but there is no reason the fighting would be more intense in the middle.

Wace's statement makes perfect sense at Hurst Lane. The slope before the middle of our proposed shield wall at Hurst Lane is around 6%, whereas the slopes on either side were around 15%. There was a barricade in the middle, but the sides were worse because a shield charge would force those at the back to get trampled to death in a lateral ditch (Clue 22). William's

middle division would have been the only part of his army that did any real fighting.

#### Clue 29 - The battlefield was steeper than the approach

Carmen (Tyson): "The duke below, fearing mastery from the height, checks the advancing column, and boldly approaches the steep slope."

Carmen (Tyson): "the Duke spies the King above on the steep hill".

The first Carmen passage specifically says that the terrain steepened as it got close to the battlefield. We interpret the second Carmen passage to mean that William could see Harold over the shield wall, which is only possible if the slope behind the English line is greater than the slope in front of it.

Hurst Lane steepens from 5% at Brede Lane to 10% halfway along the battlefield ridge crest. The proposed shield walls at Telham Hill and Caldbec Hill were at the steepest part of their slope. Note that the orthodox battlefield has been artificially steepened at the terrace in front of Battle Abbey. They are all shallower behind the shield wall than they were in front of it. Carmen's descriptions, therefore, match Hurst Lane but contradict the other battlefield candidates.

#### Clue 30 - The battlefield was on a north-south ridge/spur

CBA (Searle) says that the monks of Marmoutier: "... studied the battlefield and decided that it seemed hardly suitable for so outstanding a building. They therefore chose a fit place for settling, a site located not far off, but somewhat lower down, towards the western slope of the ridge. There, lest they seem to be doing nothing, they built themselves some little huts."

CBA is saying that the battlefield was on a ridge or spur. It had a western slope, so the ridge/spur ran predominantly north-south. The monks built their little huts 'somewhat lower down'. If this referred to the side slope off a ridge, it would be a tautology because anywhere away from the ridge crest

would be lower down. We interpret CBA to mean that the battlefield was on a north-south spur, so the monks' huts were a little down the crest of the battlefield spur, towards the western slope.

CBA's description matches Hurst Lane, which is on a north-south spur but contradicts the other battlefield candidates. The orthodox battlefield is on an east-west ridge. Telham Hill is an east-west spur. Caldbec Hill is on a level part of a ridge, albeit that ridge is roughly north-south.

## Clue 31 - The battlefield was difficult to tightly encircle

Poitiers (Chibnall): "Having used this trick [feigned retreat] twice with the same result, they attacked the remainder with greater determination: up to now the enemy line had been bristling with weapons and most difficult to encircle."

Poitiers presumably means more than he says. The Normans could easily encircle any of the battlefield candidates if they were prepared to stay 100m or more from the English line. This might have been William's objective if, for instance, he wanted to start a siege, but he did not have enough time to defeat the English by a siege. He must have had some other reason to want to encircle the English line, and a reason that the encirclement needed to be tight.

There is no reason William would want to encircle a straight or straightish shield wall, like that at the orthodox battlefield. The whole point of William's orthodox strategy was to get men behind the English line, so that they could attack and kill Harold. Spreading out to encircle the English line would waste time and give Harold an opportunity to escape. Poitier's statement, therefore, contradicts the orthodox battlefield, and anywhere else that proposes an open shield wall, including Telham Hill and Caldbec Hill.

William's biggest problem at Hurst Lane was the shortness of the contact zone. Figure 48 shows that the north of the shield wall was protected by the Hurst Lane iron ore pit and the sides were in a steeply sloping shield charge zone where the Normans dare not venture in force.

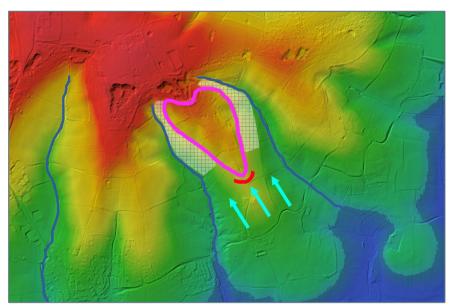


Figure 48: Battlefield relief, shield charge zone shown in hatching

The contact zone was barely 150m long. Harold could pack it 20 deep and still have plenty of men to defend the rest of the line. William stood virtually no chance of breaking through in a day. He would have wanted to stretch the contact zone, ideally to the entire length of the English line by encirclement, thereby thinning the English line and allowing him to use the Norman cavalry's greater mobility to probe for weaknesses. The geography at Hurst Lane made this impossible.

## Clue 32 - The battlefield was adjacent to roads, woodland, and untrodden wastes

Carmen (Tyson) describes the English occupy the battlefield hill: "Suddenly, a company of English emerged from the forest and the column rushed from wooded cover. Nearby was a wooded hill, neighbouring the valley. Its terrain was rugged and uncultivated.", then: "Only night and flight avail the defeated English, through cover and hiding places in the dense forest."

Poitiers (Chibnall) describes the English flight: "So they turned to escape as quickly as possible by flight, some on horses they had seized, some on foot, some on roads, others through untrodden wastes. Many left their corpses in deep woods, many who had collapsed on the routes blocked the way for those who came after. The Normans, though strangers to the district, pursued them relentlessly, slashing their guilty backs".

Quedam Exceptiones (Tyson): "Therefore, the enemy taking flight through the steeps of the mountains and the hollows of the valleys, an immense massacre of the English was accomplished by the Normans pursuing the fugitives until almost the middle of the night."

This clue exactly matches Hurst Lane. It was in *Herste* manor whose name means 'woodland'. It was surrounded by a moonscape of iron ore mines, which would have been 'untrodden wastes' by the time of the battle, and still are. They would have been too rugged to be cultivated, and still are. It would have been adjacent to metalled tracks that were used to carry iron ore from the pits to the Roman road and thence to the Brede for export.

The orthodox battlefield was on an unwooded part of the Hastings Ridge ridgeway. It was not adjacent to a wooded hill. QE's 'hollows of the valleys' (in Tyson's translation) presumably referred to iron ore pits. There were none within a kilometre of the orthodox battlefield, which also means there were no metalled roads near the orthodox battlefield. There is no reason or likelihood that the ridgeway was 'too rugged to be cultivated'. It is possible that the 'roads' mentioned in these statements referred to the ridgeway. Petlee Wood and Dunifold Wood were 2km away, which is perhaps just about within fleeing distance. And there must have been uncultivated ground to the north of the orthodox battlefield. Perhaps it is best to say that it is inconsistent with this clue rather than that it contradicts this clue.

## Clue 33 - The battlefield was not on the Hastings Peninsula

None of the contemporary accounts say or imply or even hint that the battle was fought on the Hastings Peninsula. It is often assumed that the battle's name means that it must have been fought on the Hastings Peninsula. It does not. The battle's name was coined in Domesday, which refers to 'bello de Hastinges', Norman Latin for the 'War of Hastinges'. Norman Hastinges in this period did not refer to modern Hastings or the Hastings Peninsula but to Hæstingaport. We think the battle took its name from Hæstingaport because it was the nearest place to the battlefield that had a name that all Normans would recognise. By tradition, Hæstingaport was at modern Hastings. We explain in 'The Camps' section above that it was at modern Winchelsea. It makes no difference here. Neither of these Hæstingaport location candidates nor any other plausible source of the battle's name fixes the battlefield on the Hastings Peninsula.

So, there is no evidence that the battle was fought on the Hastings Peninsula, apart from four 'Abbey on the battlefield' references which we think to be untrustworthy (see Clue 1 above and in 'The Traditional Battlefield' section below). What about contra-evidence, that the battle was not fought on the Hastings Peninsula?

Figure 49 shows the 11th century outline of the Hastings peninsula in cyan dots. Note once again that it was geographically distinct in those days, separated from the mainland by the Brede and Ashbourne estuaries. It had three crossing points that Harold's baggage train could have used: The Brede bridge at Sedlescombe (S); the Brede ford at Whatlington (W); and the isthmus (I). They were all narrow, making them ambush prone. The riverbanks at Sedlescombe or Whatlington would have been impossible to defend. The isthmus could have been defended but it had no safe way to withdraw. If the Normans blockaded the isthmus ridgeway, the English army would have been trapped.

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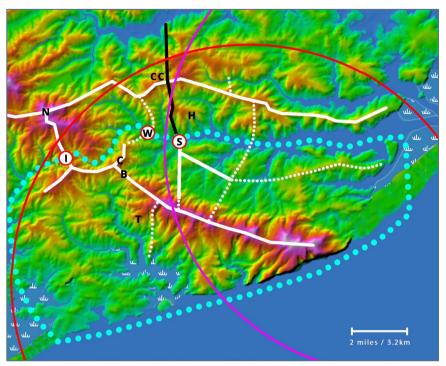


Figure 49: Hastings Peninsula outlined in cyan dots, 8 mile radius from modern Hastings (red) and from modern Winchelsea (magenta)

Harold had a personal manor on the Hastings Peninsula, so he knew the area intimately. He would have known the military risks. If he intended an early crossing onto the Hastings Peninsula, which we doubt (see Clue 8), he would have camped on the landward side of the crossing points until the other side had been thoroughly scouted and cleared. This would have taken days. William could not afford to wait, especially if he thought there was any chance of Harold fleeing or withdrawing. He would have attacked the English camp before they got a chance to move, and the contemporary accounts say this is exactly what he did. Therefore, the English never got the opportunity to cross onto the Hastings Peninsula.

If the English did not cross onto the Hastings Peninsula, the battle was not fought on the Hastings Peninsula. We discuss the evidence this was so in 'The Camps' above. It is worth reiterating for completeness, here using more recent translations by Eleanor Searle and Monika Otter.

John of Worcester (Searle): "Nine miles from Heastinga where they had earlier built a fortress, before a third of his [Harold's] army had been drawn up, on Saturday 22nd October, he joined battle with the Normans."

Baudri (Otter): "The enemies, shunning their horses, form a wedge shape together".

Brevis Relatio (Dawson): "Accordingly, coming to a hill which was on the side of Hastingas, opposite that hill upon which Harold with his army was, there under arms, they halted for a short time, surveying the army of the English."

Tapestry Panel 48 caption (Bruce): "Here the knights depart from Hestenga and march to battle against Harold the King".

John of Worcester's statement is the most straightforward. We discuss it in Clue 15. There are two possibilities for the meaning of his *Heastinga*: by tradition it was at modern Hastings; we think it was at modern Winchelsea. The nine Roman mile radius from both is shown on Figure 49. The orthodox battlefield, Telham Hill and Caldbec Hill are at least two miles too close to modern Hastings, and nowhere on the Hastings Peninsula is within the circle. The orthodox battlefield, Telham Hill and Caldbec Hill are at least a mile too far from modern Winchelsea. Hurst Lane exactly matches John of Worcester's statement, if his route was the most direct, 7½ miles up the Brede to Brede Barn Farm then ½ mile up the battlefield slope.

Brevis Relatio might be a key passage in locating the battlefield, if only it could be understood. It was written by a monk at Battle Abbey. Depending on his ethnicity, this *Hastingas* could refer to the Hastings Peninsula or *Hæstingaport*. Luckily, we think it makes little practical difference. The south bank of the Brede estuary was both 'on the side' of the Hastings Peninsula and 'to the side' of modern Winchelsea. If William and his barons were looking at the English army on a 'hill opposite' from a hill on the south bank of the Brede, the English army was not on the Hastings Peninsula.

Baudri of Bourgueil says of the English troop disposition: "The enemy, discarding their horses, form themselves into a close wedge". As we explain in Clue 10, the obvious reason for a wedge-shaped shield wall is that it was deployed following the contours on a spur. The only place it would appear wedge-shaped is from where the spur points, and at roughly the same height or higher. In this vicinity, this is only possible looking across the Brede estuary with the spur pointing south towards the Brede and the Normans looking north from the Hastings Peninsula.

ASC-D says that Harold: "assembled a large army and came to meet [or towards or against] him at haran apuldran", where we think that haran apuldran referred to the Rother estuary (see page 80). We discuss this in Clue 20 where we say that the most likely reason for this wording is that the Rother estuary was the closest named place to the battlefield that readers of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle were likely to recognise. They would have recognised 'Hæstingas', the Old English name for the Hastings Peninsula because it is used in the 1012 annal and is the root of Hæstingaport and Hæstingaceastre. Therefore, the English camp and the battlefield were not on the Hastings Peninsula.

Tapestry Panel 48 (Figure 29) is captioned: "Here the knights have left Hestenga and have come to the battle against King Harold". Panel 40 also mentions Hestenga, albeit spelled with an i rather than an e. It says that the Norman knights go foraging for food at Hestinga. They would not have gone chasing a few hens and goats around Hæstingaport. They would have gone to the richest farmland in the vicinity, which was south of the Hastings Ridge around Combe Haven. For this and other reasons, we think the Tapestry's Hest[i]enga meant the Hastings Peninsula. If it is consistent, Panel 48 is saying that the knights left the Hastings Peninsula to attack Harold.

All these statements match Hurst Lane but contradict all the other battlefield candidates.

# Conclusion and postscript

The Battle of Hastings was fought on the spur at Hurst Lane. We can be categorical because it matches 30 of the 33 battlefield clues, and there is a rational explanation for the only important exception. This is three times as many matches as the orthodox battlefield, and all bar one of those are among the most general. Contrastingly, Hurst Lane is a unique match for three of the most intricate clues and it explains five puzzling enigmas that have baffled historians for centuries.

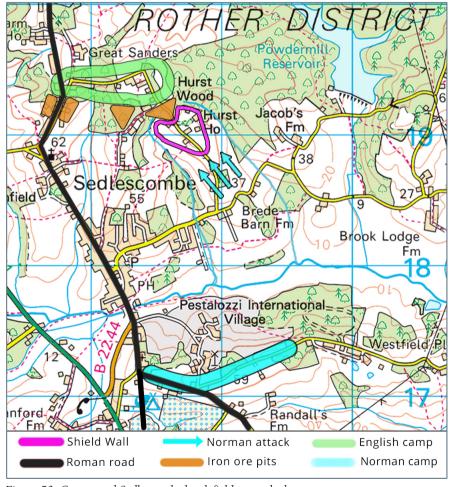


Figure 50: Camps and Sedlescombe battlefield troop deployments

This third edition has more and improved graphics, and clearer analysis. Nothing significant has changed. Figure 50 is a more detailed version of the engagement diagram we presented in the first edition.

One irony of all this is that we spent 20 years trying to work out what happened by re-translating and analysing hundreds of pages of Latin and Old French contemporary accounts, when the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle cuts to the chase in two lines: "he [Harold] assembled a large army and came to meet him [William] at the Rother estuary [expecting to negotiate his return to Normandy]. William came against him unexpectedly before all his army had arrived, and there he fell". As it says, Harold went to east Sussex to meet William, thinking he would be negotiating William's return to Normandy. He did not expect William to attack, and mistakenly thinking that he did not have enough men to attack. Had he realised the strength of the Norman army, he would have deferred until the rest of his men had arrived.

Proving any of this will be a bigger challenge than working it out. Large and/or valuable items from the battlefield and camps would have been scavenged. We have been metal detecting in Killingan Wood where we have found some Saxon era personal items, such as strap ends, a Norman manufactured horseshoe, and what looks like a tanged and barbed arrowhead. These items are consistent with the battle and have no business being there if they were not associated with the battle, but they fall short of proof. We are confident we will find more strap ends, broaches, buckles, Norman horseshoes, and arrowheads, but it is difficult to see how they might be tied definitively to the battle.

These days, everyone has become accustomed to 'proof beyond reasonable doubt' meaning DNA evidence. That means finding battle victims, human or equine. The Norman casualties were buried near the battlefield, probably by dropping their bodies into one of the iron ore pits and collapsing the side down on top of them. This was, most likely, the Hurst Lane pit, the closest to the battlefield, which is unavailable for excavation for the time being. Poitiers and Wace say that the English casualties were

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removed. Poitiers (Chibnall): "He [William] gave free licence to those who wished to recover their remains for burial." Wace (Burgess): "The noble ladies of the land came to seek their husbands: some went looking for their fathers or their spouses, or for sons and brothers, and they carried them to their towns and buried them in their churches. Clerics and priests in the country, at the request of their friends, took those they were seeking and built mass graves and placed them there." Bodies that were not collected might have been dropped into one of the iron ore pits. Most of the English died in Killingan Wood, so they would be under the north bank of the Killingan Wood pit.

Horses are probably the best bet to prove the battlefield location because they would not have been moved from where they died. Dozens of horses fell to their death in at least two pits near the battlefield. These ditches are still there, but the landowners would like some time before they allow them to be excavated. We are hopeful it will happen in the foreseeable future.

If any readers have ideas about where else to look and what else to look for, please contact us: momentousbritain@outlook.com.

## The Traditional Battlefield

We think that the Battle of Hastings was fought at Hurst Lane near Sedlescombe. If so, it was not fought at the traditional location around Battle Abbey. Here we explain why the traditional battlefield is an unlikely battle location, check its supporting evidence, investigate how the traditional narrative might be mistaken, and look at why Battle Abbey might have been built where it is.

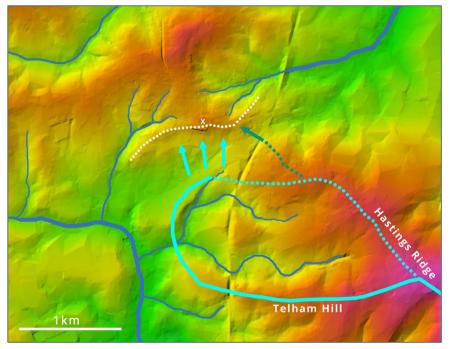


Figure 51: Traditional Norman attack

If anyone is unfamiliar with the traditional battle narrative, here is a recap. Harold, incandescently angry about the Norman invasion, raced down to Sussex hoping to execute a surprise attack on the Norman camp. Such was his haste that he left half of his army behind. He camped on Caldbec Hill. The Normans were camped at modern Hastings. Soon after dawn on the day of battle, Harold, too impatient to await the arrival of the rest of his men, ordered his understrength rag-tag army to attack the Norman camp. They set off southeast along the Hastings Ridge. Simultaneously, William

ordered his men to attack the English camp. They set off northwest up the Hastings Ridge. Scouts on both sides alerted their commanders that the enemy was heading towards them. The Normans halted at *Hechelande* near modern Telham where they formed a battle camp. Harold realised that the Normans were too powerful to fight on level ground, so he ordered his men to occupy the nearest hill, which happened to be the ridge at modern Battle (white dots on Figure 51). The English formed a tightly packed straightish shield wall near the top of the hill. Harold commanded his troops from behind the middle of the line (X). The Normans marched out along Telham Hill, formed into three divisions to the south of Battle Ridge and attacked up the slope (cyan line and arrows on Figure 51). After fighting all day without making a dent in the English line, William ordered a feigned retreat on one of the flanks. Some of the English chased, leaving a gap in the shield wall through which Norman horsemen got behind the line to attack and kill Harold. The rest of the English army held out until dusk, then fled.

There are major inconsistencies between this narrative and the contemporary accounts. Brevis Relatio and Wace, for example, say that Harold went straight to modern Battle and waited to be attacked. This would resolve one awkward issue about why Harold would try an understrength 'surprise' attack on a fortified Norman camp that could not be taken by surprise, insofar as Brevis Relatio and Wace say that he didn't. But it would create another. There is no conceivable reason that Harold would go to modern Battle, or anywhere else, and set the terms of a battle that he could not possibly win and would quite probably lose. Yet this would be the consequence of establishing a static shield wall at Battle. It also contradicts Carmen which says that the Normans see the English occupy the battlefield on the morning of the battle.

There is no agreement on the size or shape of the English shield wall either. Every reputable historian agrees that the battle was fought on the 2km long pseudo-ridge that is usually referred to as Senlac Hill or Battle Ridge (white dots on Figure 51). Early historians assumed that both sides had 25000 or more men, enough for the English to set up a shield wall along the entire

length of the ridge. In 1897, Willhelm Spatz calculated that neither side could have had more than 8000 men, probably less, so most subsequent analyses suppose that there were between 5000 and 8000 men on each side. It is not enough men to defend the entire ridge, so historians assume that Harold just defended the central 400m to 800m. Some propose that the line was straight, others that it was curved, others that it doglegged, and others still that it was straight but with 'refused' (i.e. bent) flanks.

Another inconsistency is the direction of the Norman advance. The cyan line on Figure 51 shows the traditional route. It is a partial match for Wace's description of the Norman advance, but it crosses a boggy stream in Malthouse Wood. Some historians believe that the Normans avoided this stream by staying on the Hastings Ridge until modern Starr's Green (route shown in cyan dots on Figure 51). But neither advance makes military sense because they both force the Normans to attack uphill. A better alternative, originally proposed by Time Team and now endorsed by English Heritage and others, would have been to stay on the Hastings Ridge and attack along the ridge crest from the east (teal dots on Figure 51). This is militarily most plausible, and it would explain why no archaeology has been found on the traditional battlefield, but it would contradict several contemporary account battlefield clues, including every aspect of Wace's description of the Norman advance and the steep battlefield. It would also mean that the English shield wall was facing in the wrong direction.

Here then is one reason to be sceptical about the traditional battlefield location. Every reputable historian that has written about the orthodox battle proposes a new scenario. They differ about the size and composition of the armies, where the English camped, how and why the English arrived at the battlefield, the direction from which the Normans attacked, the size and shape of the English shield wall, how and why William failed to outflank the English line, and so on. Some variables have many possibilities - 30 different shield walls are depicted on our website<sup>8</sup>. This creates

 $<sup>^{8}\</sup> https://momentousbritain.com/go/BOH_Evolution$ 

thousands of potential permutations, a huge number of which have been proposed as the most likely. There is not one orthodox battle consensus, but scores of competing hypotheses. A H Burne analysed all the proposals that had been published before 1950, lamenting: "There is a disparity of views. How are we to judge between such eminent authorities? When the doctors disagree, who shall decide?". He decided that they were all wrong, so he proposed yet another. Few historians were persuaded his theory was any better than its predecessors. Subsequent historians still think they are all wrong, so a constant flow of new permutations has been proposed.

Historians are too polite to openly criticise their colleagues, but in effect, each new engagement theory at the orthodox battlefield is saying that there are fundamental flaws in all the theories that have been proposed before. But other historians find just as many flaws in the new ones. In other words, leaving aside the participants and outcome, reputable historians do not accept any aspect of the orthodox battle narrative, other than that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield. And that is fishy, as we shall see next.

# A monastery on a battlefield?

The entire orthodox battle narrative is based on Battle Abbey having been built on the battlefield. It is incredibly unlikely.

No medieval Christian monasteries purport to have been built on a battlefield combat zone, apart from Battle Abbey. One reason is that medieval people were terrified of being haunted by the souls of victims of violence. Another is that it would be widely perceived as the glorification of violence. William would have been especially sensitive to this because he wanted to earn the Pope's absolution for the death and violence he caused at the Battle of Hastings. Building his Abbey on the battlefield would have done the opposite, exacerbating his sins in the eyes of the Pope.

Some contemporary accounts go further, claiming that the Abbey was built on the exact spot where Harold died. It would have been naïve of William

to mark that spot for posterity. It would create a permanent shrine, a place for Saxons to venerate Harold as a martyr and a focus for insurgents. Contrary to the orthodox narrative, in our opinion, the location of Harold's death would have been the very last place that William would have chosen to build his Abbey.

Then there is the Abbey's name, and that of the surrounding town, Battle. Many perceive them to be self-evident proof that the Abbey was built on the battlefield, but they only became known as 'Battle' in Middle English. The Abbey's original name was 'Sancti Martini de Bello'. 'bello' means 'to wage war', so it was 'St Martin of the War', making it sound like a memorial to the Conquest rather than to the battle. It is entirely consistent with the Abbey being at modern Battle, which was in what we might refer to these days as the 'theatre of war'. The Latin words for 'battle' are 'pugna' and 'preolium'. 'battlefield' was usually 'locus pugnæ', or occasionally 'acies'. If the Abbey had been built on the battlefield and William wanted to announce it, he would surely have named his Abbey 'Sancti Martini de Pugna'. Contrary to popular opinion, the names Battle Abbey and Battle are evidence that the battle was not fought there rather than that it was.

## Evidence that Battle Abbey is on the battlefield

English Heritage's Roy Porter published a paper entitled 'On the Very Spot: In Defence of Battle' to collate all the evidence that the Battle of Hastings was fought at Battle. It was endorsed by the Battlefields Trust, Royal Armouries, the Sussex County Archaeologist, Mark Morris and others, so they presumably did not have any extra evidence to add.

Porter summarises: "The Chronicle [of Battle Abbey] stands as the summation of a tradition placing the abbey on the battlefield, a tradition which is attested by several documentary sources which allow us to trace it back to within living memory of 1066. This historical evidence, buttressed by the physical peculiarities of the abbey, is enough to make a compelling case for the traditional site." This evidence needs to be checked.

## Documentary evidence that the Abbey is on the battlefield

Porter's only significant evidence that the battle was fought at Battle Abbey is documentary sources: Nine statements in contemporary accounts that say or imply that the Abbey was built on the battlefield. Here they are, using Porter's choice of translators. Note that he uses '...' to skip some parts of these statements for conciseness. We have filled them in, for completeness. Following our normal practice, translations to 'Hastings' have been reverted to the place named in the original manuscript.

- 1. The Chronicle of Battle Abbey, written by the monks of Battle Abbey contains what historians refer to as William's 'battlefield oath' (Searle): "And to strengthen the hands and hearts of you who are about to fight for me, I make a vow on this very battlefield I shall found a monastery for the salvation of all, and especially for those who fall here, to the honour of God and his saints, where servants of God may be supported: a fitting monastery, with a worthy liberty. Let it be an atonement: a haven for all, as free as the one I conquer for myself." Six or seven years after the battle, CBA says that William invites some monks from Marmoutier to build his abbey. They tell William that the battlefield is an inappropriate site for a monastery, but CBA (Searle) reckons that William tells them to build it there anyway: "When the king heard this he refused angrily and ordered them to lay the foundations of the church speedily and on the very spot where his enemy had fallen and the victory been won."
- 2. Brevis Relatio, also written at Battle Abbey (Van Houts): "And so Harold departed from London with all his troops and arrived at a place which is now called Battle". Later it says: "This battle took place on 14 October on the site where William, count of the Normans, but afterwards king of the English, had an abbey built to the memory of this victory, and for the absolution of the sins of all who had been slain there."
- 3. Wace (Burgess): "He [Harold] led his men forward, as troops who were fully armed, to a place where he raised his standard; he had his pennon fixed at the

very spot where Battle Abbey was built. He would, he said, defend himself against anyone who attacked him at that place."

- 4. John of Worcester (McGurk): "In the diocese of Chichester in Sussex two new monasteries have been founded. First St Martin at Battle which King William the Elder founded and erected at the site of his battle in England. The church's altar was placed where the body of Harold (slain for the love of his country) was found."
- 5. William of Malmesbury (Mynors): "The other monastery he built at Hastingis in honour of St. Martin, and it is called Battle Abbey because the principal church is to be seen on the very spot where, according to tradition, among the piled heaps of corpses Harold was found."
- 6. Orderic's recension of Juimiège's Gesta Normanorum Ducum (Van Houts): "The site, where, as we mentioned above, the combat took place is therefore called Battle to the present day. There King William founded a monastery dedicated to the Holy Trinity, filled it with monks of Marmoutier founded by Saint-Martin near Tours, and endowed it with the necessary wealth to enable them to pray for the dead of both sides."
- 7. Orderic's Historia Ecclesiastica (Van Houts): "he [William] built the abbey of the Holy Trinity at Senlac, the site of the battle, and endowed it with wealth and possessions."
- 8. Henry of Huntingdon (Greenway): "The battle took place in the month of September [sic], on the feast day of St Calixtus. In that place King William later built a noble abbey for the souls of the departed, and called it by the fitting name of Battle."
- 9. ASC-E (Garmonsway), in its obituary for William: "On the very spot where God granted him the conquest of England he caused a great abbey to be built; and settled monks in it and richly endowed it."

At face value, as Porter says, these statements look like compelling evidence that the Abbey was built on the battlefield, perhaps at the exact location where Harold died. It is less convincing under the hood.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is the only report from the losing side and the only one written within comfortable living memory of the battle. Porter says: "This evidence, written by an Englishman in English and emphatic in its identification of the abbey site being on the battlefield of Hastings ('On ðam ilcan steode'), is crucial on two counts: it is the earliest surviving reference to the dual location and it was written well within living memory of 1066, almost certainly before the end of the 11th century." It is not as emphatic as he makes out.

Firstly, Garmonsway's translation is quirky. Old English 'steode' means 'place', so Dorothy Whitelock translates William's obituary in the ASC as: "In the same place where God permitted him to conquer England, he set up a famous monastery and appointed monks for it". 'steode' has no implication of precision. While it could be a specific spot, thereby matching Garmonsway's translation, it could be as large as a kingdom. Its meaning depends on the remoteness of the place, its population density, and the context. For instance, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us that the place where Harold moored his fleet before the invasion was the Isle of Wight. Sub-Andredsweald East Sussex was just as remote and sparsely populated, so perhaps five miles of precision is all that can be expected.

Secondly, it is not obvious what the ASC means by 'where God permitted him to conquer England'. It seems unlikely that it referred to the battlefield because it would have been easier and clearer to say: 'William built a great abbey on the battlefield'. We think it is trying to say that William built his Abbey on what we would refer to these days as the 'theatre of war'.

Regardless, in our view, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's obituary for William is far from emphatic. It does not say that the Abbey is on the battlefield. On the contrary, in our opinion, it is more likely to be saying that the Abbey is not on the battlefield than that it is.

Something similar is going on with Huntingdon, Brevis Relatio and Orderic. Huntingdon says 'Quo in loco', Brevis Relatio 'in eo loco ubi'. Latin 'loco' means 'place'. Orderic does not explain what he meant by the term 'Senlac', but some of his other references to it encompass both camps and the battlefield, so it must have been large. We discuss what it probably meant in Clue 18. For our purposes here, it is sufficient to say that it is also an unqualified 'place'. An unqualified 'place', just as with the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's 'steode', can be vague in remote and sparsely populated areas like medieval sub-Andredsweald East Sussex. If, as seems likely, it referred to the theatre of war, there is no reason these statements are more likely to apply to the orthodox battlefield than to any of the other candidates.

Before discussing the next group, have you ever wondered, Kipling-like, how the 'Battle of Hastings' got its name? Obviously not because it was fought near modern Hastings, or anywhere that Normans might have referred to as *Hastinges*. Rather, it is to do with the Latin word 'bellum' and its declensions. As we say in Clue 2 above, for no rational reason 'bellum' is invariably translated as 'battle' in statements about the Battle of Hastings. The term 'Battle of Hastings' derives from 'bello de Hastinges', first used in Domesday. But 'bello' almost never means 'battle'. It is a verb usually meaning 'to wage war'. So 'bello de Hastinges' means 'War of Hastinges'. The war encompassed the battlefield, landing sites, camps, flight route, roads, rivers, skirmishes, foraging farms, and so on. These days it might be referred to as the 'theatre of war', and Hastinges (Hæstingaport) was the best-known place in this theatre of war. Hence the battle's original name.

Much the same applies to Battle Abbey and the town of Battle. The former was originally named 'Sancti Martini de Bello', from which the town was named 'Bello'. They took their names from the war rather than the battle. All three switched to 'Battle' during the transition to Middle English. There is no etymological justification. We suspect that the monks of Battle Abbey picked the new names for reasons of self-interest (more below).

bello has a wider significance with these 'Abbey on the battlefield'

references. They were all written in Latin, apart from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and Wace. The normal Latin word for battle is 'pugna', so a battlefield is usually 'loci pugnatum' or sometimes 'acies'. Orderic's extension of Gesta Normanorum Ducum is the only 'Abbey on the battlefield' statement to use this term. We will return to it momentarily. His other reference says the Abbey is 'ubi bellum factura est'. Huntingdon says it was 'Commissum est autem bellum'. Both are in the context: 'where the war took place'. This is consistent with the Abbey's location in the theatre of war, even if the battlefield was three miles away. Indeed, these accounts would probably have said that the Abbey was on the 'loci pugnatum' if it was on the battlefield, so they too are more likely to be saying that the Abbey is not on the battlefield than that it is.

That leaves the four accounts which specifically say that the Abbey was built where Harold's body was found, and the two which say that Harold came to 'the place now named Bellum', or similar, where he defended himself (Orderic's GND interpolation is double counted because it does both). Five of the six – Malmesbury being the important exception - are unequivocal, as far as we can see, not liable to significant translation errors or misinterpretation. If they are wrong, it is because they were part of a well organised campaign of disinformation or were influenced by one.

The only organisation with the means, the opportunity and the motive to run a prolonged campaign of disinformation on this subject was the monks of Battle Abbey. Eleanor Searle gives the background in the introduction to her CBA translation. She says that William established Battle Abbey as a richly endowed 'Royal Peculiar', independent of diocesan control, but he failed to permanently protect its status with a charter. After William Rufus's death, it became a plum asset that fell under immediate and regular threat of subjugation. Matters came to a head in the 1150s when Battle Abbey's abbot, Walter de Luci, was threatened with excommunication for contumacy, partially fuelled by a feud with the Bishop of Chichester who was trying to subjugate the Abbey. Walter needed a royal charter to give

him personal immunity and to substantiate Battle Abbey's status as a Royal Peculiar. Then, suspiciously, a series of writs appeared that did exactly that.

These Battle Abbey writs are reproduced and translated in Professor Nicholas Vincent's books about Henry II's writs as numbers 134, 137, 138 and 139. Their preambles contain the first mention of William's battlefield oath, in which they claim he vowed to build an abbey if God granted him victory. Some of them also say that the Abbey was built on the location where Harold died. These two notions are developed and embellished in the Chronicle of Battle Abbey (see above).

Searle and Vincent are convinced that the Battle Abbey writs are forgeries, commissioned by Walter de Luci to save his skin and to protect the Abbey's independence. They are also convinced that William's battlefield oath was fabricated. Indeed, Vincent is sceptical about the entire contents of the CBA9: "This in turn raises doubts over the abbey's chronicle [CBA], generally considered reliable save where indubitably proved false, better regarded, I would suggest, as unreliable in anything that cannot be independently substantiated".

Summarising, Searle and Vincent believe that the monks of Battle Abbey ran a campaign of disinformation through the second half of the 12th century to protect the Abbey's independence. It is possible that copies of the forged writs made their way to Wace, who might have been duped into using them as the source for his 'Abbey on the battlefield' statement. But this could not apply to the other 'Abbey on the battlefield' references all of which date to the first half of the 12th century.

Brevis Relatio is the earliest of the other 'Abbey on the battlefield' sources, and therefore the only one that could have influenced all the others. Elisabeth van Houts dates it to between 1114 and 1120. Their abbot at the time was Ralph of Caen. According to Van Houts (in 'The Memory of 1066 in Oral and Written Traditions'), his failing health might have led the Abbey's scriptorium to write Brevis Relatio, hoping to protect the Abbey's

 $<sup>^9</sup>$  'King Henry II and the Monks of Battle: The Battle Chronicle Unmasked' – published as a chapter in 'Belief and culture in the Middle Ages'

independence after his death. If so, Ralph's idea was effectively to claim that the battlefield was the location of divine intervention, where God turned the Battle of Hastings in William's favour in exchange for William's pledge to build a monastery on the battlefield. It's a good idea. Future kings would be reluctant to meddle for fear they angered God who might then rescind Norman power. Future bishops would be reluctant to meddle for fear they violated God's will.

The key question is whether Brevis Relatio records the de-facto truth that the Abbey was on the battlefield or whether the monks invented it. The only way to prove it, either way, will be to find physical evidence. In its absence, there is plenty of reason to think the notion was invented.

We explain above why it is unlikely that anyone would build a monastery on a battlefield, and why it is especially unlikely that William would do so. The monks of Battle Abbey had the motive to take unpious actions to protect their wealth and independence, and showed in later years that they would do whatever was necessary. They had the means to fabricate a creation myth that the Abbey was built on the battlefield. They had the opportunity to disseminate a creation narrative in Brevis Relatio. But just because they had the motive, means, opportunity and track record, does not mean they are guilty. The only evidence that they invented the creation story is in the way it is reported in the other contemporary accounts.

All the 'Abbey on the battlefield' references - bar the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Brevis Relatio and CBA - must have been sourced from Brevis Relatio or a lost account. Wace and Malmesbury are known to have seen Brevis Relatio. It is not unreasonable to suspect that most of the others had seen it to. Malmesbury qualifies his 'Abbey on the battlefield' statement with the words 'fuisse memoratur', 'it is said that'. This is a Latin way of saying something is unreliable hearsay. Greenway translates as 'by tradition', Giles translates 'as they report', 'they' being the monks of Battle Abbey. This is the only occasion in his entire chronicle that he uses this phrase, even though most of it derives from third party chronicles. It

implies to us that he was convinced that the monks of Battle Abbey fabricated the notion that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield.

John of Worcester's 'Abbey on the battlefield' statement is scribbled in the margin by a different hand. It was clearly a later addition, perhaps influenced by Brevis Relatio. Orderic seems to change his mind. He specifically says that the Abbey is on the battlefield in his interpolation of GND, but does not in his own work, as if he thought better of it during the intervening years. He is known to have visited William of Malmesbury, so perhaps he was influenced by Malmesbury's scepticism. Wace is the only non-Battle Abbey account that reports unqualified and uncorrected that the Abbey was on the battlefield, but he was writing 90 years after the battle, so he would have been easier to dupe, and after the forged writs had been published, so he was susceptible to them.

In summary, there is reason to distrust all the documentary evidence that the Abbey was built on the battlefield, and reason to believe that it was not. Why then did no one contradict 'Abbey on the battlefield' references at the time? No one would contradict the ASC statement because it accurately says that the Abbey was built in the place of war. One battle participant, Robert de Beaumont, was still alive (just about) when Brevis Relatio was written. As William's cousin, he was probably at the dedication for Battle Abbey, so he would have known whether the Abbey was on the battlefield. But he lived in the English Midlands. There is no obvious reason he would ever have heard of Brevis Relatio, let alone read it, and he probably could not read anyway. The monks of Marmoutier who oversaw the Abbey's construction would have known whether it was on the battlefield, but it is unlikely that any survived long enough to read Brevis Relatio.

Professor Searle was too wily to contradict the orthodox battle narrative, but we think she worked this all out thirty years ago. She said: "That the abbey was founded by the Conqueror, and on the scene of the battle, there need be no doubt". It is hardly a ringing endorsement. A 'scene' is far from a 'spot'. She could just as easily have said: "That the abbey was founded by the Conqueror and built on the battlefield there need be no doubt". It looks like

weasel words to us, only acknowledging that the Abbey was in the vicinity of the battlefield, which would be right for all the battlefield candidates.

## Non-documentary evidence that the Abbey is on the battlefield

Roy Porter has one non-documentary argument that the Abbey was built on the battlefield: "Building the abbey on the side of a hill presented the monks with practical difficulties they could have avoided had they chosen to build elsewhere. It is difficult to see why they would have chosen to build the abbey in such an awkward spot without a compelling reason". He implies that one reason that Battle Abbey might have been built on the side of the Hastings Ridge is that William demanded that his Abbey be built on the spot where Harold died and that was where he died. We are sceptical.

For a start, the original Abbey was not on anything normally recognised as a side slope. If it was not on the crest of the Hastings Ridge, it was precious close. Indeed, as A H Burne indicates by a dotted line on his troop deployment diagram (Figure 56, right), it looks like the ridgeway originally ran straight between modern Powdermill Lane roundabout and Abbey Green. In other words, Battle Abbey was built on the ridgeway, so the 'road' was re-routed around it. A ridge crest location would be an obvious choice for a monastery, being level and clear of vegetation, and having good access. It looks like the original chapter house was on something of a side slope, but it would not have presented any significant practical difficulties for the Normans, who were master stone masons.

Also, note that 'difficulties' are different from 'impossibilities'. At the end of the day construction 'difficulties' are just a matter of cost and time, both of which had been indemnified by William. The construction was not that difficult anyway. When the original Abbey fell in the 13th century, its replacement could have been built anywhere, but they chose to build it down the side of the Hasting Ridge where the slope was significant.

# Battlefield location clues and the orthodox battlefield

<pre> ✓✓ = Unique match; ✓ = Match; ✓ = Consistent  ✓ = Inconsistent; ✓ = Contradictory</pre>	Battle Abbey
Orthodox battlefield clues	
1. Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield	<b>///</b>
2. The battlefield was in the vicinity of Battle Abbey	<b>√</b> √
3. The Normans advanced up a steep slope	<b>√</b> √
4. The battlefield was at or near the top of a hill	<b>√</b> √
Battlefield fingerprint clues	
5. Non-fluvial ditches near the battlefield	xx
6. Wace's description of the Norman advance	×
Battle enigmas	
7. Why Harold went to Sussex	xx
8. Logistics & Harold's route to the battle theatre	xx
9. The shield wall was wedge-shaped	xx
10. The shield wall was enclosed	xx
11. William's military tactics	xx
12. Harold did not withdraw or flee before the battle	xx
13. Contemporary Archaeology	xx
Proximity to English and Norman camps	
14. The battlefield was roughly an hour's march from the Norman battle camp	<b>√</b> √
15. The battlefield was nine Roman miles from 'Heastinga'	×

= Unique match; = Match; = Consistent  = Inconsistent; = Contradictory	Battle Abbey
16. The battlefield was visible from the Norman battle camp and close enough that the English troop deployment and English Standards could be seen	×
17. The battlefield was adjacent to the English camp	✓
Placename clues	
18. The battlefield was at or near 'Senlac'	✓
19. The battlefield was at or near 'Herste'	xx
20. The battlefield was near a 'spinam'	xx
21. The battlefield was at or near 'haran apuldran'	×
22. The battlefield was on 'planis Hastinges'	×
Geographic clues	
23. A lateral ditch adjoined the battlefield	xx
24. There was a plain below the contact zone	✓
25. The battlefield was overlooked by another hill	✓
26. The battlefield was a small hill	xx
27. The battlefield was narrow	xx
28. The fighting was more intense in the middle	xx
29. The battlefield was steeper than the approach	✓
30. The battlefield was on a north-south ridge/spur	×
31. The English army was difficult to encircle tightly	xx
32. The battlefield was adjacent to roads, woodland, untrodden wastes, and land too rough to be tilled	×
33. The battlefield was not on the Hastings Peninsula	xx

Some of these clues are self-evidently consistent with the orthodox battlefield: Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield (Clue 1); the battlefield is in the vicinity of Battle Abbey (Clue 2); the Normans advanced up a steepish slope (Clue 3); the battlefield is near the top of a hill (Clue 4); the battlefield is roughly a one hour march from the orthodox Norman battle camp (Clue 14); the battlefield was just a mile away from the orthodox English camp at Caldbec Hill (Clue 17); there was a plain below the shield wall, albeit a long way – 300m - for the English to chase out of the shield wall (Clue 24); the battlefield was steeper than the approach (Clue 29).

Some of these clues are self-evidently inconsistent with the orthodox battlefield or contradict it: It has no nearby non-fluvial ditches (Clue 5); its shield wall was not wedge-shaped (Clue 9) or enclosed (Clue 10); it has no contemporary archaeology (Clue 13); it was a lot less than nine Roman miles from the orthodox Norman camp at modern Hastings (Clue 15); it is on an east-west pseudo-ridge, so its crest does not have a western side (Clue 20) and it is not on a north-south spur (Clue 30); it was not at or near anywhere known as 'haran apuldran' (Clue 21); it was not at or near anywhere known as 'planis Hastinges' (Clue 22); it was not beside a lateral fluvial ditch (Clue 23); it was not a small hill (Clue 26); it was not narrow (Clue 27); it would not have been difficult to encircle and it would have been irrational to do so (Clue 31); it was not close to untrodden wastes or to a road suitable for an army (Clue 32); it was on the Hastings Peninsula (Clue 33).

Note that, 'Abbey on the battlefield' references aside, the orthodox battlefield only matches the most general of these clues while it contradicts the more intricate clues. The other clues need some explanation.

## Wace's description of the Norman advance (Clue 6)

By tradition, the Normans started their advance from their battle camp at *Hechelande*. The name has been lost but CBA says it was near modern Telham. Wace describes the Norman advance, seen through Harold's eyes.

Wace (Taylor) "The Normans appeared, advancing over the ridge of a rising ground; and the first division of their troops moved onwards along the hill and across a valley ... another division, still larger, came in sight, close following upon the first; and they wheeled towards another side of the field, forming together as the first body had done."

If the Normans advanced along modern Telham Lane, then headed north from Lower Telham, they would have crossed the stream that now feeds the pumping station. They would have appeared over the rising ground upon which the B2095 now runs. They would then have crossed Sandlake Brook. New Pond was not dammed in those days, so they might have marched along the north bank of Sandlake Brook, which is a hill of sorts. The Norman flanks might then have wheeled a bit to face the English line. If the order of the events were jiggled around, the orthodox battlefield could be partially consistent with Wace's description. As the events are described, it is not.

Logistics & Harold's route to the battle theatre (Clue 7)

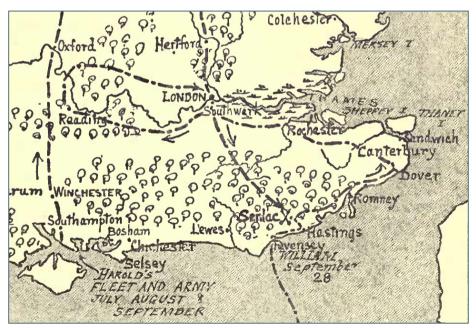


Figure 52: Edward Foord - Harold's route to the war through the Andredsweald

There is a suspicious reticence to write about the orthodox battle's logistics. We have read a hundred or more accounts of the Battle of Hastings. None of them mention Harold's baggage train or the English victualing needs. They do not have much to say about Harold's route from London either.

Freeman's immensely detailed 2200-page book about the Norman Conquest just has this to say this about Harold's route: "His course lay along the line of the great road from London to the south coast. He halted on a spot which commanded that road, and which also commanded the great road eastward from William's present position." The fact that he thinks modern Battle is on that road implies that he thought the English came down what was then known as Hastings Road, on the route of the modern A21. The first analysis to depict the English route from London – and still one of only a handful - is by Edward Foord in 1915 (Figure 52). He shows Harold marching directly to 'Senlac' along the approximate route of the A21.

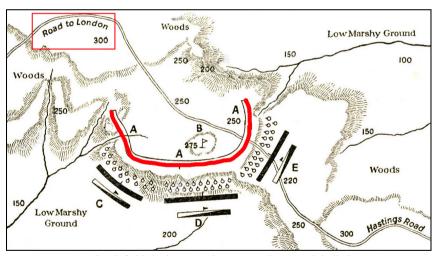


Figure 53: Oman battlefield deployment diagram with routes labelled

Lots of Battle of Hastings analyses are accompanied by initial troop deployment diagrams. Oman's (Figure 53) and Freeman's (Figure 54) are two examples among dozens shown on our website.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> https://momentousbritain.com/go/BOH\_Evolution

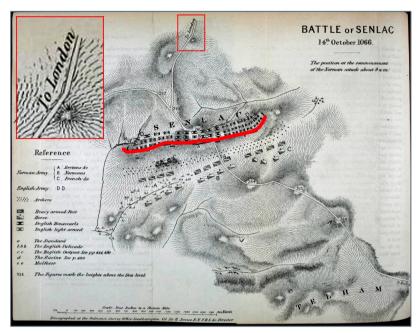


Figure 54: Freeman troop deployment with routes labelled

These troop deployment diagrams almost invariably label the A2100 as 'To London' or 'To Tonbridge', implying that the main route between the south coast and London was along the route of the A21, and therefore also by implication that this was the route upon which Harold arrived.

It is all nonsense. The route of the A21 was only cleared for the construction of the Hastings to Flimwell turnpike in the 1750s. The English could not have driven their baggage train through the Andredsweald in less than a month. They must have used a metalled or paved road and there were only two in the 11th century: the Lewes Roman road to the west and the Rochester Roman road to the east.

Frank McLynn is one modern historian that seems to have sussed it. He says of Harold's march: "The only real result of his overwhelming confidence was that he wore his men out by a gruelling 58-mile forced march over three days" The A21 route was 53 miles according to Google Maps whereas both Roman road routes were 58-miles. He must be referring to one of the Roman roads but does not say which.

In practice, the English could not have used the Lewes road because it does not pass within 15 miles of the Hastings Peninsula isthmus. It would have taken weeks to get hundreds of carts from the Lewes road to the theatre of war on forest tracks, whereas they arrived in no more than four days. Therefore, the English must have arrived on the Rochester road.

If the English arrived on the Rochester Roman road, the battle could not have happened at the orthodox battlefield. It is on the Hastings Ridge. The Rochester Roman road crossed the Brede at Sedlescombe (S on Figure 43). A metalled Roman mining track could have got the English as far as the Beauport Park bloomery. Then what? The Romans discovered that the steepest hill that a heavily laden cart could safely negotiate was about 9% but the climb from Beauport Park onto the Ridge was over 20%. The English would have had to unload their carts and carry their cargo onto the Ridge. It would have taken all day, during which they would have been hopelessly vulnerable on a steep downslope with no weapons, no shields, no armour. The Normans would have wiped them out. It is implausible.

Harold would only have ascended the Hastings Ridge if he thought the Normans were at their traditional camp near modern Hastings. His only credible motivation would have been to blockade them on the relatively barren eastern end of the Hastings Ridge or to try a surprise attack. Both are implausible. On the second, William knew where the English were because they had been exchanging messages, he had fortified his camp and he had posted guards against an attack. An attack on this camp would have been a Rorke's Drift style mass suicide. On the first, the Normans could circumvent a Hastings Ridge blockade by descending to the Roman mining track between Sedlescombe and modern Winchelsea, from where they could trap the English army on the eastern side of the Hastings Peninsula. Even if the English did get onto the Ridge above Beauport Park hoping to implement a blockade or a 'surprise' attack on the traditional Norman camp at modern Hastings, they needed to stay put or move towards modern Hastings, whereas they would have had to move away from modern Hastings to get to Battle, or Telham Hill or Caldbec Hill.

Evans worked this out independently. He has been sheepishly teaching his students that the English are more likely to have left the Rochester Roman Road at Cripps Corner (CC Figure 43), to cross the Brede at Whatlington ford (W) and climb up to the Ridge on the route of the modern Whatlington Road. 'Sheepish' because the drop from Woodmans Green to Whatlington is 15% in places, too steep for heavily laden carts on unmade tracks. Worse, the first carts would have rutted the ford and the riverbanks, and William would almost certainly have ambushed them at the crossing.

There is one other feasible route the English might have taken to get onto the Hastings Ridge, exiting the Rochester Roman road at Cripps Corner and then marching along ridgeways via Netherfield (N). But it is also slopey, exceeding 10% in places, and it required a risky crossing of the narrow ambush-prone isthmus at Sprays Wood (I).

In practice, it is logistically implausible that the English arrived at the battle theatre on any route other than the Rochester Roman road, and therefore logistically implausible that they ever climbed onto the Hastings Ridge, so the battle was not fought at the orthodox location.

# Harold's strategy and why he ventured so close to the Norman army (Clue 8)

Most of the contemporary accounts say that Harold went to Sussex because was driven by rage to try a surprise attack on the Norman camp, which could be consistent with the orthodox battlefield location if the Norman camp was at modern Hastings. But none of the contemporary accounts, were privy to the English court. They are guessing Harold's motivation based on their perception of his actions, and they have guessed wrong.

Harold could not possibly have been trying a surprise attack on the Norman camp because he had been exchanging messages with William on his trip down. William's messengers would have reported back his exact location and his route, so William was prepared. Harold would not have been so stupid as to try a surprise attack on an enemy that could not be

taken by surprise. Moreover, as we explain in Clue 8 above, it would have been totally out of character for Harold to act rashly or precipitately.

Frank McLynn ridicules all his predecessors for saying that Harold's motivation was to try a surprise attack on the Norman camp. Instead, he reckons that Harold was trying to blockade the Normans on the Hastings Peninsula. He has got the right tactic but the wrong blockade. Shortly after the English arrive at Caldbec Hill, McLynn says: "William tried to break out of the peninsula and, to forestall this, Harold sent his men to seize Battle Hill." Marjorie Chibnall says something similar, that Harold chose to defend Battle Hill because he: "may have supposed that he could effectively bar William's advance towards London." Other historians, if they have anything to say about Harold's route and destination, offer something similar.

It is bunkum. The route to and from the East Sussex coast was along the Rochester Roman road. It crossed the Brede at Sedlescombe. Historians – wrongly in our opinion (see 'The Landing' above) – believe that the Normans camped at modern Hastings. It seems unlikely that they would suddenly want to leave the Hastings Peninsula when they could have done freely so at any time in the previous two weeks. But, even if they did, the route would be along the Hastings Ridge to Baldslow and then down the Beauport Park mining track to Sedlescombe and off up the Rochester Roman road. English troops up at modern Battle would have been  $3\frac{1}{2}$  miles away from the egress route.

In our opinion, McLynn is right that Harold went to the theatre of war intending to blockade the Normans on the Hastings Peninsula, but he has confused the roads. The only way to implement a blockade was to barricade the landward side of the three egress points, at Sedlescombe, Whatlington and Sprays Wood, in which case Harold never crossed onto the Hastings Peninsula and the battle was not at the orthodox battlefield

#### The shield wall was enclosed (Clue 10)

The orthodox battle narrative has a straight or straightish shield wall that self-evidently contradicts Clue 10. It is possible that the historians have the

right location but the wrong shield wall deployment. Figure 55 shows what an enclosed shield wall with 6000 to 8000 men would have looked like at the orthodox battlefield. It is roughly on the 80m contour.

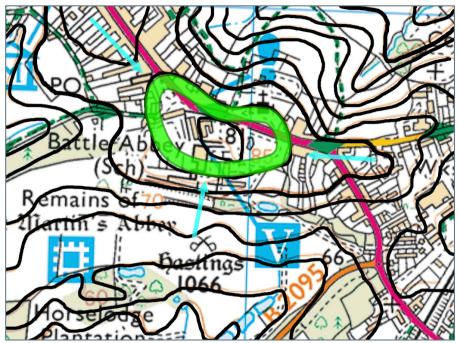


Figure 55: Enclosed shield wall on Battle Ridge

This English troop deployment would explain why William failed to outflank the English line, and it would explain why Baudri's men behind the line did not attack Harold from the get-go. Of course, this would apply anywhere if the shield wall was enclosed.

If William was faced with this enclosed shield wall, he would have split his forces to attack along the shallow ridge crest to the east and northwest (cyan arrows on Figure 55). This would contradict some key clues that the orthodox battlefield previously matched: Clue 3, that the Normans advanced up a steep slope; Clue 9, that the three Norman divisions attacked from the same direction within sight and hearing of William in the middle; and Clue 23, that there was a plain below the contact zone. It

would also be an even worse match for Clue 27, that the battlefield was narrow, and Clue 28, that the fighting was more intense in the middle.

If Harold had found himself defending the orthodox battlefield, he would have deployed his troops as shown on Figure 55. It would have given him a reasonable chance of surviving the day. But it is not the battle described in the contemporary accounts.

## William's military tactics (Clue 11)

Every Battle of Hastings military analysis ever produced, bar this one, proposes that Harold deployed a straight or straightish shield wall. William had a huge cavalry, Harold had none. William's best chance of victory against an open shield wall would have been to outmanoeuvre his footbound adversaries. At the orthodox battlefield, as we briefly explain in Clue 11 above, this means he would have sent his cavalry around the ends of the English line to lop off Harold's head before any fighting had begun.

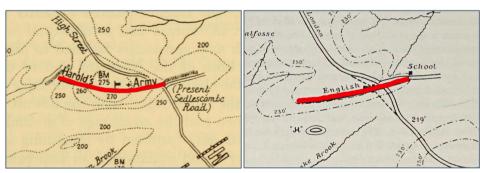


Figure 56: Some proposed English troops deployments at the traditional battlefield

Figure 56 shows two typical examples of shield walls that have been proposed at the orthodox battlefield - note that we added the red shield wall overlays for clarity and consistency. These two are by Major-General J 'Boney' Fuller (L) and Lieutenant-Colonel A H Burne (R). Four more are shown on Figure 35, Figure 53 and Figure 54, by Major E R James, Colonel C H Lemmon, Sir Charles Oman and Augustus Freeman respectively. Dozens of others are shown on our website – link on page 203. They are all implausible.

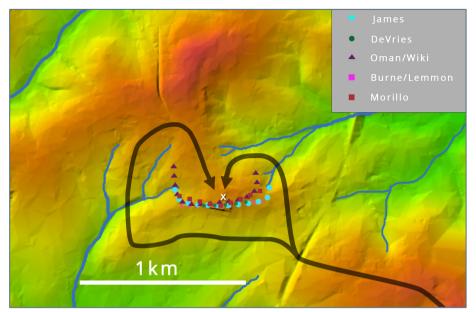


Figure 57: Flank attack on narrow shield walls

Figure 57 overlays five shield walls that have been proposed at the orthodox battlefield onto a heat relief map. Harold was commanding the troops from behind the English line, always assumed to be at the location of the quire of the original Battle Abbey, shown as a white X on Figure 57. He was protected by his personal guard, which put up no significant defence in the real battle. If William had been faced by any shield wall that has been proposed at the orthodox battlefield since the turn of the 20th century, he would have sent his cavalry around the ends of the English line on the route shown by black arrows.

Some historians have suggested natural barriers that protected the English flanks. Allen-Brown and McLynn propose impenetrable woodland, Freeman and Fuller propose ravines, Foord, Oman, Lemmon and Lace propose marshland. They are all wrong. There are no ravines near the orthodox battlefield today and erosion makes fluvial valleys deeper. There is not enough water near the Hastings Ridge crest to create a ravine anyway. The slope is too steep for water to accumulate other than in small clay pools. Dr Helen Read, a world-renowned expert on medieval woodland,

confirmed to us that there is no such thing as impenetrable mature deciduous woodland in temperate latitudes. Indeed, quite the opposite: The more mature a deciduous woodland, the denser the canopy, the greater the gap between trees, and the less vegetation on the understorey.



Figure 58: Streams flanking at Battle; northeast to the left and west to the right

The only landscape feature that might have hindered the Norman cavalry from outflanking the defence is streams. There was one on each side of the orthodox battlefield. In practice, they would have offered no protection at all. Figure 58 shows us standing over them at the locations the Norman cavalry would have crossed. They have barely more than a trickle of water. Dr David Robinson, a world-renowned expert on medieval landscapes, told us: "away from the immediate coast, rates of erosion are very slow and the physical form and depth of the valleys are unlikely to have changed since the 11th century." In other words, they would have been no more daunting in the 11th century than today, and they would not daunt a hedgehog today.

All these 20th and 21st century shield wall proposals have been influenced by Willhelm Spatz's 1898 analysis that showed neither army had more than 8000 men. Beforehand, it was assumed that each army had 20000 men or more, enough to occupy the entire length of Battle Ridge. Figure 59 shows 25000-man shield walls that were proposed by Freeman and George. It would have done nothing to prevent getting flanked. It just means that the Normans would have had to cross 200m downstream, following the route of the black line.

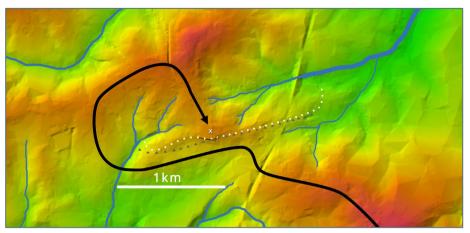


Figure 59: Long flank attack; Freeman and George shield wall dispositions

Military historians worked this out long before us. They have devised other excuses for William's failure to outflank or loop the defence. Major James says: "Flank attacks were but little practised in 1066, and Harold did not think of one as possible", Lieutenant-Colonel Burne: "Enveloping or flanking moves were seldom attempted". Both are right when the adversaries have similar mixes of infantry and cavalry because they are similarly mobile, but they are patently wrong when infantry comes up against cavalry. Forming enclosed loops to prevent getting flanked by cavalry had been standard military practice since Roman times. Just two weeks previously, Harald Hardrada looped his shield wall to prevent getting flanked by the English cavalry at Stamford Bridge. In practice, medieval military commanders were obsessed with protecting their flanks and devising ways to outflank the enemy. William and Harold would have been no exception.

Even if the English did have some sort of natural flank protection, the Normans could have looped behind the English line by backing up to the Rochester Roman road and following whatever route the English used to arrive at the battlefield. Moreover, Baudri (Otter) says: "Backing up the enemy line, at a distance, were horsemen, waiting to intercept anyone trying to flee". In other words, there were already Norman horsemen behind the English shield wall before the battle began. If they could get there, so could

the rest of William's cavalry. If there were any horsemen behind an open shield wall, they could have ridden up from behind to kill Harold before the battle began.

In summary, the orthodox battlefield contradicts William's military tactics.

## Harold did not withdraw or flee before the battle (Clue 12)

A passive shield wall has no hope of victory, its best outcome is to survive. If Harold's objective was to survive and he was at the orthodox battlefield, he would have withdrawn or would have left to recruit more men.

Safety was just four miles from the orthodox English camp at Bodiam. Right up to an hour before of the battle, the English could have reversed to safety back up the way they came, or Harold could have returned to London to collect the rest of his army. If Harold was not there, William would not have attacked. Even when the Normans were at the bottom of the battlefield hill, perhaps 30 minutes before hostilities began, Harold could have ordered his men to melt away into nearby woodland and make their way to safety through Lordship Wood. Instead, according to Wace, the English watched the Normans appear over rising ground, getting ever more discouraged about their chances of survival.

The only plausible explanation for Harold's failure to flee or withdraw is that he couldn't. This would only be so if the English were trapped, or at least if Harold thought they were trapped. This could not be the case at the orthodox battlefield, so it contradicts this clue.

The battlefield was visible from the Norman battle camp and close enough that the English troop deployment and English Standards could be seen (Clue 16)

Brevis Relatio (Dawson) describes William's arrival at the Norman battle camp: "Accordingly, coming to a hill which was on the side of Hastings, opposite that hill upon which Harold with his army was there under arms, they [William and his commanders] halted for a short time surveying the

army of the English", then: "he [William] began to enquire of a certain soldier who was near him, where he thought Harold was. The soldier answered that he thought he was in the midst of that dense array, which was before them on the top of the hill, for as he was thinking, he saw Harold's standard there."

The highest part of Telham Hill, near the Hastings Ridge, is at an elevation of 125m. Battle Abbey, where Harold and his Standard are assumed to have been, is at 85m. His men are supposed to have been 10m below at roughly 75m. In between, blocking the view, is Starr's Green at 100m.

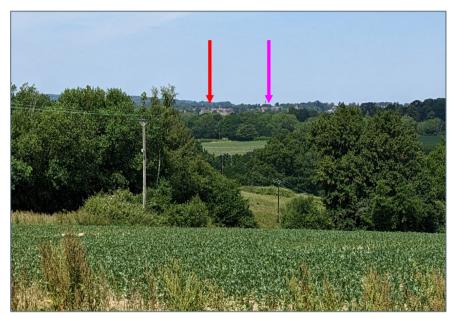


Figure 60: Battle Abbey (red arrow) viewed from Telham Hill

There is an east-west ridge between Telham Hill and Battle. It is at 110m on the ridge, falling to 95m at Loose Farm, to 70m where the public footpath passes west of Glengorse, back up to 80m over a conical hill beside the railway, then down to 50m at Battle Abbey Farm. Moving west along Telham Hill, improves the view around the shoulder of Starr's Green, but lowers elevation so that it is obstructed by the Loose Farm ridge. There is only one view of Battle Abbey (red arrow), shown on Figure 60 from 50.8989, 0.5046, 100m east of the power transformer. Even here, the bottom of the Abbey buildings, and therefore the orthodox location of

Harold's shield wall, are obstructed by vegetation on the Loose Farm ridge. The view of Harold's traditional left flank is obscured by the shoulder of Starr's Green (magenta arrow). The view of his traditional left flank is obscured by the hill adjacent to the railway.

In summary, there is no view of the orthodox battlefield from the orthodox Norman battle camp equivalent to that described in Brevis Relatio.

## The battlefield was at or near 'Senlac' (Clue 18)

Orderic has the only reference to 'Senlac', and no one knows what he meant by it. By tradition, it was a Norman French name meaning 'bloody lake'. But Orderic says that the place was 'anciently known as Senlac', which means that it is an Old English name. If so, it meant 'sandy lake' or 'sandy loch', which we think referred to the upper Brede estuary or, less likely, the entire Brede estuary or the Brede basin. The orthodox battlefield would contradict all these meanings. We have no proof these meanings are right. The only certainty is that Senlac was 'where the war took place', which is consistent with the orthodox battlefield.

#### The battlefield was at or near 'Herste' (Clue 19)

Here is Eleanor Searle's translation of the relevant CBA statement about 'Herste'

CBA Folio 12 (Searle): "The monk went quickly to Marmoutier and brought with him into England four monks from there: Theobald, nicknamed 'the old', William Coche, Robert of Boulogne, and Robert Blancard, men of outstanding in character and piety. They studied the battlefield and decided that it seemed hardly suitable for so outstanding a building. They therefore chose a fit place for settling, a site located not far off, but somewhat lower down, towards the western slope of the ridge. There, lest they seem to be doing nothing, they built themselves some little huts. This place, still called Herste, has a low wall as a mark of this."

Searle's translation is ambiguous, unclear whether the battlefield or the

little huts are at *Herste*, or both. Here is a transcript of the original Latin passage from 'They studied':

Qui memoratum belli locum considerantes, cum ad tam insignem fabricam minus idoneum, ut videbatur, arbitrarentur, in humiliori non procul loco, versus ejusdem collis occidentalem plagam, aptum habitandi locum eligentes, ibidem ne nil operis agere viderentur mansiunculas quasdam fabricaverunt. Qui locus, huc usque Herste cognominatus, quandam habet spinam in hujus rei monimentum.

Roy Porter discusses this in his 2014 paper 'On the very spot: In defence of Battle'. He summarises Nick Austin's argument that *Herste* referred to his proposed battlefield at Crowhurst: "Austin says that the use of 'qui' at the start of both sentences implies that the original author intended their mutual subject to be the battlefield ... Herste is the monastic scribe's mistaken attempt at writing a phonetic version of 'Crurst', which he claims was the local dialect form of Crowhurst."

Porter responds: "First, the double use of qui does not imply that both sentences have as their subject the battlefield. Searle's translation uses a standard usage known as a connective relative to differentiate between the monks in the first sentence and the battlefield in the final sentence. The subject of the first sentence is the group of monks from Marmoutier, who are listed in the immediately preceding sentence. The subject of the final sentence refers to the place the monks chose instead of the battlefield. This was Searle's understanding of the text, as in a footnote to this passage she notes that Herste is identified elsewhere in The Chronicle as being to the north-west of the abbey site and that this alternative location offered the monks a more suitable building site, being level ground by comparison with the hillside on which the battle was fought. When considered on its own merits, Austin's interpretation of this passage is eccentric, but when viewed in the context of The Chronicle as a whole it seems perverse. This is because the whole thrust of this part of the narrative is to underline that the abbey was built on the battlefield at the express order of William I."

Confusion reigns! Porter argues that Austin's grammatical argument is faulty, implying that the little huts were at *Herste*, not the battlefield. Then, in the same paragraph, he agrees with Eleanor Searle's argument that the battlefield was at *Herste*. Austin shoots himself in the foot too. Having provided his Latin grammar evidence that *Herste* was the name of the battlefield, in the next paragraph he argues that *Herste* referred to Crowhurst, 1400m from the battlefield, where he thinks the monks built their little huts.

Perhaps one source of the confusion is that there are some unfortunate typos in Porter's paper and an important one in Searle's. He misspells 'agere' as 'agree' and 'quandam' as 'quondam', he copies Searle's typo omitting the space between 'huc' and 'usque', and he misses some punctuation. These errors give a very different meaning to the original Latin text, but it is difficult to know whether he and/or Searle made the typos before or after they did the analysis.

We agree with Searle, and therefore with Austin's grammatical argument, that CBA is saying that the battlefield was at a place named *Herste*. Some of the confusion is that Searle divides one long Latin sentence into three English sentences. The subject of the Latin sentence is the battlefield, so *Herste* refers to the battlefield. It is not only semantics. It would be absurd for CBA to record the location of some temporary little huts but to omit the location of the battle. More important here, the little huts were 'not far off' from the battlefield, so they were probably both in *Herste*.

Time to take a step back. Why does the Chronicle of Battle Abbey go to such lengths to explain that the battlefield/huts are at *Herste*? As Porter says, the purpose of this CBA passage was to show that the Abbey was built on the battlefield. Elsewhere, CBA Folio 21 says that *Herste* was near the Abbey. Therefore, CBA is corroborating itself through the backdoor to claim that the Abbey is on the battlefield. The monks invented and/or forged all the other evidence that the Abbey is on the battlefield. Were they telling the truth about the battlefield being at a place named *Herste*?

CBA Folio 12 says that the battlefield 'is still called Herste', which implies it was known as Herste at the time of the battle. Herste is an Old English word which also implies that it dates to the battle. Yet no evidence of Saxon era settlement has ever been found in the vicinity of the orthodox battlefield. If the orthodox battlefield had no Saxon era settlement, there was no reason for it to have had an Old English name. 'herste' means 'wood'. The Abbey is on the ridgeway, which would not have been wooded and CBA says that the Herste next to the pilgrim house was an orchard rather than a wood. There would not have been an orchard in somewhere with no population, so it was probably planted by the monks and got its name long after the battle. Even if it was there at the time of the battle, it would not have been named Herste because Old English has other words for 'orchard'. These include the generic term 'ort-geard' from which orchard derives, 'apple-tún' for an apple orchard, and 'pir-gráf' for a pear orchard. For all these reasons, it seems implausible that there was a place named Herste at or near the orthodox battlefield at the time of the battle.

Therefore, the monks gave the name *Herste* to a place adjacent to the Abbey. There was a manor named *Herste* just three miles away. Monks spent most of their time scheming ways to acquire nearby land. It is totally implausible that they did not know of this manor. Choosing that particular name was bound to create confusion and ambiguity. Compound names including 'herste' were very common. *Croherste*, *Bodeherste*, *Lankherste* and *Cogherste*, for example, were all nearby. The monks could easily have avoided any confusion by picking a unique name with a 'herste' suffix, or indeed any unique Old English name. We think they wanted to cause confusion and/or ambiguity.

The monks of Battle Abbey wanted everyone to think that the Abbey was built on the battlefield. If the battle was fought at *Herste* and it was more than, say, one kilometre from the Abbey, there was a danger of getting debunked if an external reference divulged the battlefield's name. By giving the name *Herste* to somewhere near the Abbey, external references to the battlefield's name would endorse their argument rather than debunk it.

This is exactly analogous to what we think happened with the Norman battle camp: it was somewhere named *Hechelande* in the wrong direction from Battle Abbey for the battle to have been fought there, so they invented a *Hechelande* in the right direction.

Thus, this clue contradicts the orthodox battlefield because the Abbey's *Herste* was a post-Conquest name given by the monks of Battle Abbey. The *Herste* that existed at the time of the battle was somewhere else.

## A lateral ditch adjoined the battlefield (Clue 23)

Wace says that there was a ditch into which the Normans were shield charged at the start of the battle. He goes on to say that more Normans died in this ditch - all crushed or suffocated - than in the whole of the rest of the battle. He says that the Normans passed this ditch during their advance without noticing it. They could not have marched over this ditch without noticing it, so it must have been lateral, to the side of the battlefield and parallel to it. The battlefield was on a slope, so this lateral ditch was probably fluvial.

There were some fluvial ditches near the orthodox battlefield – shown on Figure 51. None of them could have been Wace's shield charge ditch. Asten Brook was below the orthodox shield wall, but it crossed the orthodox battlefield approach so the Normans could not have passed it without noticing, and it was 300m away, too far for the Normans to have been shield charged. Streams also radiated away from the orthodox battlefield, one heading east, one heading west, but the Normans would not have passed them on their advance, and they would need to have been shield charged in a semi-circle to fall into either of them.

By tradition, all the 13 contemporary account references to ditches near the battlefield, including Wace's shield charge ditch, referred to one ditch that is known under the umbrella term 'Malfosse'. Many places have been proposed as the Malfosse ditch, the most popular of which is Oakwood Ghyll, some 1300m north of the orthodox battlefield. None of them are

within shield charge distance, so this clue contradicts the orthodox battlefield

## The fighting was more intense in the middle (Clue 28)

Wace (Taylor) says that William chooses to: "fight in the middle throng, where the battle shall be the hottest". Figure 61 shows the slope analysis at the traditional battlefield, with level ground shown in green, 10% slopes in yellow, and 20% in red. The cyan arrows show the consensus three Norman divisions, with the consensus shield wall shown in transparent grey.

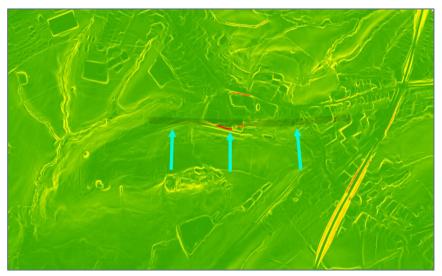


Figure 61: Slopes around traditional battlefield

You will need to use some imagination to regress the terrain. The land to the east of Battle Abbey has been built on, creating artificial slopes. The terraces south of the Abbey were made when the land was flattened for the 13th century abbey. Try to smooth it out in your mind. Hopefully, you will see that the ground in front of the middle division had a 15% slope, whereas the ground in front of the flank divisions was barely 5%.

It will hopefully be clear that if the battle was fought at the traditional location, the fighting would have been more intense on the shallow flanks than the relatively steep centre. Indeed, there is no reason there would have

been any fighting on the steep slope in front of the Abbey terrace, so this clue contradicts the orthodox battlefield.

## Why Battle Abbey is where it is

English Heritage say: "there is a widespread consensus among historians that William the Conqueror founded Battle Abbey as a penance for the blood shed at the battle and to commemorate his great victory". They are probably right, but neither of these reasons ties the Abbey to the battlefield. Æthelstan's Muchelney Abbey was penance for the Battle of Brunanburh which happened hundreds of miles away. Richard de Luci's Lesnes Abbey was penance for his role in Thomas Becket's death which happened fifty miles away. Contemporary medieval battle memorials are never positioned on their battlefield, which is one reason why medieval battlefields are so elusive. Instead, they are located in population centres, where lots of people will see them. Think Karnak, Titus Arch and Trafalgar Square, for instance.

There are plenty of alleged religious motives for William to have built his Abbey. CBA (Searle): "I [William] shall found a monastery for the salvation of all, and especially for those that fall here, to the honour of God and of his saints, where servants of God may be supported: a fitting monastery with a worthy liberty. Let it be an atonement: a haven for all, as free as the one I conquer for myself." Brevis Relatio (Van Houts): "[William] had an abbey built to the memory of this victory and for the absolution of the sins of all who had been slain there." Any or all of these are plausible, but again, none of them tied the Abbey to the battlefield. As far as we know, there is no religious merit in the notion that proximity to the place of sin helps the salvation of the sinner. If this were true, there would be lots of monasteries on medieval battlefields, whereas there is no evidence there are any.

Professor Searle discounted all these reasons too because she thought that William placed his abbey on the battlefield to curry favour with his barons; an act of insolence to humiliate the English. It seems unlikely to us. The

Abbey was clearly going to take a long time to build, by which time the worst of the danger would be over. Battle Abbey was so remote that Anglo-Saxon renegades are unlikely to have given two hoots what it was used for. And, anyway, the local population, just 370 families on the entire Hastings Peninsula, were mostly Jutes. If William wanted to humiliate anyone important, he would have built his abbey at Tamworth or Winchester (and, perhaps for this very reason, he built a castle at Tamworth and a cathedral at Winchester).

In our opinion, the entire argument is inside out. We think that William would have wanted his abbey anywhere except the battlefield and absolutely anywhere other than where Harold died. Putting it elsewhere would rob English insurgents of a focus. It would prevent the English from using the abbey to venerate Harold as a martyr. It would prevent the monks from being haunted by the souls of unburied English warriors - a huge fear at the time. It would prevent scavenging on the abbey grounds. It would let William hide the evidence of his sins. It would be clear that he was not glorifying violence. It would let him use the battlefield land for his own purposes. It would let him choose a location for his abbey where it might help the defence of his new realm.

Conversely, it is perfectly plausible that the Abbey was built at Battle despite the battle having happened elsewhere. In addition to all the reasons just mentioned, perhaps the battlefield land belonged to another religious order. If so, William would not have wanted to rile the Pope by sequestering land from the Church when the whole idea was to earn the Pope's absolution. Or perhaps the monks of Marmoutier decided to build it elsewhere. CBA says that they thought the battlefield was inappropriate for an important abbey. It goes on to say that William instructed them to build his abbey on the battlefield anyway, but perhaps this last bit was invented whereas the need to build elsewhere was not.

Assuming the battle happened elsewhere, why might William have chosen to build his abbey on the summit of Battle Ridge where the building

materials had to be hauled uphill and where there was no running water? CBA says that this was not a problem because they were mysteriously found nearby after the Abbey construction had been started. It sounds fabricated to appear to be divine intervention. Springs are never on hill crests, there is no evidence of nearby quarrying, and the building materials on show in the Abbey museum are from Caen and Purbeck.

It is possible that William instructed the monks of Marmoutier to build his Abbey on a hill because he wanted it to be prominent. Battle Ridge is not as prominent as Caldbec Hill or Blackhorse Hill, but perhaps William preferred it because it was closer to the battlefield, or more reminiscent of the battlefield, or perhaps he just liked it. Or perhaps the monks of Marmoutier preferred it because it was treeless on the ridge crest and therefore had better foundations and less need for site clearance. Professor Searle reckons that William probably wanted to position his Abbey on the Hastings Ridge for defensive purposes. She notes that it played an important defensive role when Sussex was invaded by the French several centuries later. But he could have chosen anywhere on the ridge. Blackhorse Hill and Caldbec Hill were both 40m higher and had better defensive possibilities.

We think the overwhelming reason for the Abbey's general position was the route of Marley Lane. We explain in Clue 7 above that there was only one metalled road from the Rochester Roman road onto the Hastings Ridge, a mining track through Beauport Park. It was designed to drop iron ore carts down to the Brede, far too steep to haul cargo up. The only route that carts could have taken between the Rochester Roman road and the Hastings Ridge was modern Marley Lane. It was an unmetalled track in those days, too rutted and bumpy for an army baggage train, but it was shallow enough - never more than 8% - to haul building materials onto the ridge for the construction of the Abbey, at least during the summer months. Moreover, the land was probably in Harold's ownership which became William's upon accession. As far as we can see, placing the Abbey at Battle would have been convenient for construction, politic and militarily sensible.

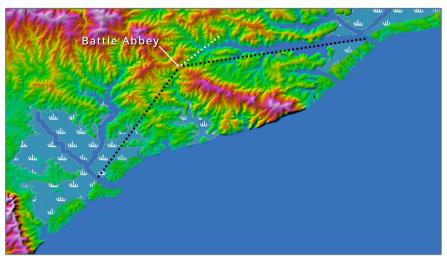


Figure 62: Battle Abbey lines of sight

We think that the Abbey's exact location was probably chosen for line of sight (Figure 62). It is at the only exact location on the Hastings Ridge that had a treeless view towards Old Winchelsea and Old Pevensey (black dotted lines), the two most likely incursion points for a future invasion. There would not be many days when either could be seen with the naked eye, so we guess that there were message relay towers on Standard Hill and Lower Snailham. It also happens to be the only place on the Hastings Ridge that has line of sight to part of our proposed Hurst Lane battlefield. This might have had some significance in its placement.

None of this absolutely refutes the possibility that the Abbey is on the battlefield. Only physical evidence elsewhere can do that. Rather, it is to say that the evidence that the battle happened at the traditional location is flimsy and probably contrived. The battle could have happened on pretty much any hill within, say, five miles of Battle. And, given the lack of archaeology and poor match with the contemporary account battlefield clues, it is unlikely to have happened at the traditional location.

# Epilogue

We are convinced we have found the Battle of Hastings battlefield at Hurst Lane in Sedlescombe. Hitherto, we have kept our discovery low key, promoted only among locals and enthusiasts, because we are nervous about the impact it might have on hospitality businesses in Battle town, visitor numbers to English Heritage's flagship Battle Abbey property, and academics who have publicly endorsed the orthodox battlefield. If anyone can think of a way to protect these interested parties while publicising the real battlefield location, we would love to hear from you.

Most people hate being criticised. Not us, at least as far our battlefield theories are concerned. We have made every effort to be meticulous but there are 100 or more innovations in this book. We are bound to have made some mistakes. Mistakes get fingered as evidence of general shoddy research. We do not want our baby thrown out with the bathwater, so we want our theory to be bulletproof. Please tell us about any errors you might find or ways you think that this book could be improved.

IHRG, the metal detectorists used by Time Team to survey the orthodox battlefield at Battle Abbey, Caldbec Hill and Telham Hill, have done some preliminary work in Killingan Wood. The relevant finds are shown on our website at the link below. <sup>11</sup> The Battlefields Archaeology Group is due to do a more intensive survey in October 2023. It is impractical to update this book with new finds, so we will post them on the same link.

We urge battlefield enthusiasts to visit Hurst Lane. It is an amazing place that thrills almost everyone that is steeped in the history of the battle. Every battlefield feature mentioned in the contemporary accounts is still there, apart from CBA's low stone wall which the monks of Marmoutier allegedly built at the battlefield. The Malfosse trench and the eastern side of the battlefield are in private land, but the battlefield is mirrored across Hurst Lane, so the western side is representative. Everything else is accessible on public footpaths.

<sup>11</sup> https://momentousbritain.co.uk/go/BOH\_Finds

Some of our favourite places are:

- 50.9279, 0.5483 to see William's view of the English camp and battlefield
- 50.9405, 0.5375 where the Normans got their first close up view of the battlefield
- 50.9420, 0.5427 to see the western side of the battlefield, and Harold's view of the Normans appearing over the Killingan Wood spur
- 50.9411, 0.5413 where many Normans died after being shield charged into the ditch
- 50.9403, 0.5455 where the artist stood to record the scene on Tapestry Panel 54 (the hedgerows and roadside trees would not have been there at the time of the battle)
- 50.9450, 0.5402 on the road where the ramp over the Hurst Lane iron ore pit would have been, across which the English withdrew to make a stand on the northern side of the pits
- 50.9441, 0.5371 where the artist stood to record the scene on Tapestry Panel 54
- 50.9445, 0.5370 where the English fled across the high side of the Panel 54 ditch
- Killingan Wood where hundreds of English troops died in flight

We look forward to hearing from you by email. Our address is: momentousbritain@outlook.com.

# Appendix A - Resolving some place names

## Hastinges / Hastingas / Hæstinga

Most of the contemporary accounts name somewhere that sounds like *Hastingas* as the Norman landing site and/or camp. A few say that it was in Sussex. CBA alone hints at where in Sussex, implying it was at modern Hastings. This was true when CBA was written in the 1170s, but not when most of the contemporary accounts were written – see 'Hechelande' below. *Hæstinga[s]* also appears in some ASC entries and in several Saxon Charters without adding any details beyond that it was on the coast. Occam's Razor fans, including us, would love *Hastingas* to have a simple single meaning common to all the contemporary accounts. It is a lot more complicated.

#### Hæstingas in the English accounts

If it were not for the Norman invasion accounts, there would be little doubt that *Hæstingas*, sometimes Latinised to *Hastingas*, referred to a substantial area on the south coast of England.

- Symeon of Durham describes Offa's defeat of the 'Hestingorum gentem' [the Hæstingas nation] in 771, which only makes sense if it was a substantial kingdom.
- Saxon Charter S318, dated 857, refers to a gift of coastal land in *Hastingas*; Charter S686, dated 960, refers to farmland in *Hastengas*. Both only make sense if it is a substantial area.
- Malmesbury says: "paucissimo stipatus milite Hastingas pertendit" ['he reached Hastingas with very few soldiers']. No one has ever suggested that Harold 'reached' modern Hastings, or any settlement that might have been named Hastingas, so this Hastingas meant an area.
- Malmesbury says that William's other monastery was in 'Hastingis'. It is referring to Battle Abbey, which was not at modern Hastings, or any settlement that might have been named Hastingis, so this Hastingis meant an area.
- Huntingdon refers to 'planis Hastinges' [the plains of Hastinges], which

only makes sense if it is an extensive area.

• Panel 40 (Figure 63) is captioned: "ET HIC MILITES FESTINAVERUNT HESTINGA UT CIBUM RAPERENTUR"; [here the knights have hurried to Hestinga to seize food]. They are depicted returning with livestock, so it Hestinga had pastural farmland which means it was an area.

Two related places are mentioned in the ASC before the invasion: 'Hæstingaport' and 'Hæstingaceastre'. 'port' is self-explanatory. 'ceastre' was the Old English term for a Roman fortification. These places sound like the major port and the major Roman fortification in the region of Hæstingas. Hæstingaceastre is listed as one of Alfred's burhs. These were the forerunners of modern boroughs. If Hæstingaceastre and 'Hæstingaport' were inside Hæstingas, then Hæstingas was a substantial area.

The ASC entry for year 1011 gives a good clue for *Hæstingas*'s meaning. It says that Vikings overran the land south of the Thames, which it defines as Kent, *Hæstingas*, Sussex, Hampshire and Surrey. This implies that *Hæstingas* was a county-sized area between Sussex and Kent, which therefore incorporated the Hastings Peninsula.



Figure 63 : Tapestry Panel 40

Tapestry Panel 40 provides the only other specific clue for *Hæstingas*'s meaning. It is caption, "here the knights have hurried to Hestinga to seize food". William landed on or near the Hastings Peninsula and needed to feed perhaps 10000 men. His knights would not have wasted their time chasing a few goats and hens around a port or any other settlement. They needed to secure a month's worth of food on the first day because, given half a

chance, the locals would have driven away their livestock and burned their grain stores. They must have raided the richest pastural farmland in the region, the location of which can be found in Domesday.

Domesday lists ten manors between the Brede and the Rother with 35 acres of meadowland between them; barely enough to sustain the Norman army for a week. It lists four manors between the Hastings Ridge and the Brede estuary with only 6 acres of meadowland between them, barely enough for a day. The Norman knights must have headed for Hooe, Filsham and Crowhurst, which had 116 acres of meadowland; enough livestock for a month. Therefore, the Tapestry's *Hestinga* referred to the Hastings Peninsula or, less likely, just the area south and west of the Hastings Ridge.

Hastingas is never referred to as a county and it is not listed as a county in Domesday, so what was it?

Briggs explains that the Old English suffixes -ing and -ingas mean 'followers of' or 'dwellers in', depending on whether the stem is a person's name or a landscape feature. Thus, *Hæstingas* is thought to mean a place inhabited by followers of *Hæsta*. There are many places in East Sussex with -ing suffixes that might previously have had -ingas names, including Guestling and Wilting on the Hastings Peninsula. They were no bigger than a hundred. *Hæstingas* seems to have been far more substantial.

There are other substantial -ingas places in England, perhaps most notably *Iclingas* and *Wuffingas*, the founding territories of Mercia and East Anglia. John Blair thinks they were once statelets or sub-kingdoms which he referred to as 'regio'. He studied two more, 'Woccingas' and 'Godhelmingas'. Both left a vestigial geographic meaning for their homeland, eventually evolving into modern Woking and Godalming. We think something similar is going on with *Hæstingas*.

The *Wihtwara* tribe left a vestigial geographic meaning for their homeland, the Isle of Wight. The *Dænningas* and *Tendringas* tribes left a vestigial geographic meaning for their homelands, namely the Dengie Peninsula and Tendring Peninsula in Essex. They had a lot in common with the *Hæstingas*:

physically isolated, big enough to protect themselves, yet small enough and passive enough to stay under the radar. These four tribes were among the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlers, which perhaps helped them retain racial integrity. We think the *Hæstingas* left a vestigial geographic meaning for their homeland, the Hastings Peninsula.

## Hastingas in the Norman accounts

Most of the Norman contemporary invasion accounts tell a different story. Poitiers, Jumièges and Benoît say that the Normans built a fortress at *Hastingas*, as if it were a settlement. CBA says that the Normans constructed a fortress at "a port named Hastinges". Brevis Relatio says that William: "arrived with his whole army at another port nearby named Hastingas". Malmesbury says that William: "built another monastery [Battle Abbey] near Hastingis". Benoît says that after the battle: "William placed his best knights to guard the fortress at Hastinges". John of Worcester says that Harold: "... gave them battle at a place nine miles from Heastinga, where they had earlier built a fortress". Heastinga is a Hastingas cognate. These last three references only make sense if Hastingas was a settlement. All seven say or suggest that Hastingas was a named settlement or a port, which means that it was probably the name of a port or a named settlement at a port.

We note that all the accounts that suggest *Hastingas* was a substantial area were composed in England by Englishmen, whereas those that suggest it was a settlement or port were composed by Normans or Anglo-Normans or in Norman monasteries. Thus, we think that Saxons used the term *Hæstinga[s]* to mean the Hastings Peninsula whereas Normans in Normandy, at least until the mid-12th century, used the term *Hastinges* to mean a named port and a settlement at a port.

There can be little doubt that Norman *Hastinges* referred to *Hæstingaport*. ASC says that the Normans built a fortress at *Hæstingaport*. Poitiers, Jumièges, Huntingdon, and Benoît say that the Normans built a fortress at *Hastingas*. CBA says that they built a fortress at a port named *Hastinges*.

John of Worcester say that they "had earlier built a fortress" at 'Heastinga'. They are all telling the same narrative, so these names are cognates.

Carmen has an independent reference to *Hæstingaport* as '*Hastinges portus*'. It gives a good clue to what's going on: Normans referred to *Hæstingaport* as '*Port de Hastinges*' (often Latinised to '*Hastinges portus*'), but usually dropped the '*port/portus*' part of the name. Foreigners tend to think in terms of their own experience so, for example, Europeans refer to Manhattan as 'New York' because they never go anywhere else in New York. Pre-Conquest Normans traded with *Hæstingaport*. There was nothing else on the Hastings Peninsula that they would know or care about before the invasion. It makes sense that they would usually drop the 'port' part of its name. It is the same as their use of the name '*Douvres*' to mean the 'port of Dover', and indeed, our modern use of terms like 'JFK' to mean 'JFK Airport' and 'Rotterdam' to mean the 'Port of Rotterdam'.

## Hastingas exceptions, anomalies and alternative theories

Domesday is an exception. It lists a place named *Hastinges* within the manor of Rameslie. If it were consistent with the other Norman accounts, this *Hastinges* should refer to *Hæstingaport*, and several Saxon era charters confirm that there was a port in Rameslie. But Domesday's *Hastinges* is listed with only 4 burgesses and 14 bordarers, too small to be the port, and there is no obvious reason the port would be broken out from the rest of Rameslie. Indeed, the port was one of Rameslie's main attractions and an important reason the Abbey of Fécamp coveted it. We think it was broken out because it was an area within Rameslie manor for which the Abbey of Fécamp was not taxed. The most obvious reasons are that it was a military garrison and/or administrative centre before the completion of the Norman castle at modern Hastings – see *Hæstingaceastre* below for more on this.

Norman writs increasingly refer to *Hæstingaport* as *'Hastinges portus'* through the 12th century. The probable cause was William's castle at modern Hastings. According to the 1182 Pipe Rolls, it was initially known as *"castelli Noue Hastinges"*. The settlement around the castle was therefore

known as 'Noue Hastinges'. 'Noue' presumably differentiated it from somewhere else already known as Hastinges. For Normans in England, this would have been Domesday's Hastinges, for Normans in Normandy it would have been Hæstingaport. During the late 12th, the 'Noue' was gradually dropped, so something had to be done to prevent confusion. Normans in England adopted the Old English names for Old Winchelsea and modern Winchelsea, 'Wincenesel' and 'Iham', respectively. Normans in Normandy increasingly referred to the port as 'Port de Hastinges', Latinised to 'Hastinges portus'.

There are two other complications. One is that four contemporary accounts were written by Anglo-Normans - John of Worcester, Orderic, Malmesbury and Huntingdon - who had English mothers. They might have been raised to use the Old English meaning of *Hæstingas*. The other is that some references to *Hastinges*, Wace's for instance, are in verbal quotes. These quotes might have been reported verbatim, so *Hastinges* meant what it did at the time of the quote, or they might have been edited for the meaning at the time of writing.

In some cases, it is possible to infer meaning from the context. Huntingdon says that the Normans built a fort at/near ['apud'] 'Hastings', which implies it he meant the port, but in the next sentence, he refers to planis Hastinges which implies he meant an area. Malmesbury's Hastingas references all refer a settlement. Wace could mean the port or the castle. He is pedantic about ports, using the term 'port de Lune' for Bordeaux, 'port de Saint-Morin' for Morin, 'port de Hantone" for Southampton, etc. He omits 'port de' from his Hastingues references, which implies he meant the castle, but both his references are in verbal quotes, so we suspect he meant the port.

In principle, the Anglo-Saxon region of *Hæstingas* might include land beyond the Hastings Peninsula. It cannot have extended west of Pevensey Levels because Pevensey was in Sussex. It cannot have extended east of the Rother, which was in Kent. The most likely extensions are the adjacent peninsulas of Wartling to the west and Udimore to the north (Figure 64). Doubtless members of the *Hæstingas* tribe spread from the Hastings

Peninsula and established communities outside. Perhaps the *Hæstingas* statelet included these extensions. But, by the time it only had a geographic meaning, we think *Hæstingas* was bounded by the Ash Bourne and Pevensey Lagoon to the west, and by the Brede estuary and the Andredsweald to the north.



Figure 64: Hastings and surrounding peninsulas in 1066

Kathleen Tyson has a different theory about *Hastingas*. She thinks that it was the Frankish name for the Brede basin, which was bounded by the Udimore and Hastings ridges. She reports it as fact, but then contradicts herself by saying that *Hastingas* was the cape between Winchelsea, Icklesham and Fairlight. We could not find her evidence for either argument. Both seem unlikely. The Brede basin and the Hastings Cape are too small to be the county-like place mentioned in ASC 1011 and too big to be a settlement or the port. We think our theory is more credible.

#### Hæstingaport

Locating *Hæstingaport* is important. One primary source says it was where the Normans landed, three more say they landed and/or camped at a port named *Hastingas*. Five more say that they landed and/or camped at

Hastinges which we believe to be the Norman name for Hæstingaport.

Hæstingaport's traditional location is in the Priory valley below modern Hastings. This is based on its proximity to the orthodox location of the Norman sea camp at modern Hastings, which is itself only supported by one interpretation of one statement in CBA. That evidence is flimsy, as we explain on page 20. Conversely, there are a bunch of good reasons to think that the Priory valley had no significant port:

- De Viis Maris, written in the mid-12th century, specifically says that there was no port within seven miles of modern Hastings.
- Dozens of excavations have failed to uncover any evidence of Saxon era occupation in the Priory valley or at modern Hastings.
- The Priory Valley would be a topographically idiotic place to have a port, at the bottom of a 100m high sea cliff.
- Modern Hastings had no nearby natural resources to export and few, if any, local inhabitants to draw imports. It had no reason to have a port.
- Modern Hastings had no access road. It is inconceivable that anyone
  would haul bulk goods like timber, salt and iron onto the Hastings
  Ridge, drag it miles along an unpaved ridgeway and drop it down
  100m on pulleys when it could be exported from near its origin.
- The Priory Valley's strand was too short for even half of the Norman fleet to have landed together, thereby contracting Wace, and defying military common sense.
- Militarily and logistically the Priory Valley would be a terrible place to land because it was so small, barren and siege prone.
- Sea access and egress to the Priory valley was through a treacherous narrow gap in sea cliffs which would have been risky for normal port traffic and potentially disastrous for the Norman fleet.
- In those days the sea cliffs were 300m or more out to sea, creating a long narrow access gorge which would be difficult and dangerous to

- navigate, and which could be easily blocked by shoving boulders off the cliff tops.
- Henry III acquired Rameslie manor's towns of Old Winchelsea and Rye and their ports in 1247. The supporting Charter says that he did so because they were a likely place of foreign invasion, and the monks that held the manor were unable to defend them. He does not mention modern Hastings or its port, so they were not a likely place of foreign invasion, and the port in the Priory Valley was still insignificant.

Any one of these reasons would discount the possibility that *Hæstingaport* was near modern Hastings, and there are ten of them. It leaves three plausible *Hæstingaport* candidates, namely Bulverhythe at the mouth of Combe Haven, Northeye at the mouth of Hooe Haven and the Ash Bourne, and Old Winchelsea (known to Saxons as '*Winchelse*') at the mouth of the Brede estuary.

De Viis Maris lists the ports, even the bad ones, from which crusaders might leave for the Continent in the 12th century. Between Folkstone and Beachy Head it has entries for Lympne, Romney, Hythe, Winchelse, Peneness (pefenes ea or Old Pevensey) and La Crumbie (probably Hydney, now in Eastbourne). One of these was surely Hæstingaport, the biggest port between Dover and Southampton. No ports are listed between Old Winchelsea and Old Pevensey. The gap includes Bulverhythe and Northeye. They did not silt up during the 130 years before De Viiis Maris was written, because they were active ports in the 13th century, so they were not international ports in the 11th century. De Viis Maris therefore infers that Hæstingaport was at Winchelse (Old Winchelsea).

John of Worcester says that Harold: "... gave them battle at a place nine miles from Heastingam, where they had built a fortress". Heastingam is a Hastingas cognate. It cannot have been at modern Hastings or Bulverhythe or Northeye because nine Roman miles from any of them would take the battle out into the Andredsweald. The only place that can plausibly fit this description is *Hæstingaport* at Old and modern Winchelsea.

The Hastings Peninsula and its surrounds were too small, too sparsely populated and too short of a hinterland to have had more than one major international port, and the only known major international port in the region was *Hæstingaport*. That port must have shipped the huge majority of the region's natural resources. This suggests two more methods to work out *Hæstingaport*'s location: 1) From references to the region's major port; and 2) From proximity to the major natural resource production centres.

Domesday says that Rameslie manor in the Brede basin had 100 saltpans, the greatest concentration in the south of England. The rest of the Hastings Peninsula combined had 35. Bulk salt would not have been hauled up and over the Hastings ridge to a port at Bulverhythe or Northeye. The Brede's salt must have been shipped from, or used at, Old Winchelsea.

S982 authorises the Abbey of Fécamp to take two-thirds of the tolls from *Wincenesel* (the Norman name for Old Winchelsea). There would be no point in making this provision if the tolls were not substantial. Yet the Abbey of Fécamp would not be taxing their own salt. Something valuable other than salt must have been shipped out of *Winchelse*. There were not enough people to make anything valuable. It must have been some sort of natural resource other than raw salt.

Fish were perhaps the most valuable natural resource in the region. There were fish all year around and huge herring shoals at certain times of year. Some fish were gutted, salted and packed at sea, some were brought ashore first. In the first case, barrels of salted fish would be unloaded for distribution, then salt and empty barrels would be loaded for the next trip. In both cases, the catch would be brought to a source of salt. On this part of the south coast, the only candidate is Old Winchelsea.

Timber was another rich natural resource. The south coast of England and most of its estuaries were lined by woodland in Saxon times. Uncut timber would have been almost impossible to move on the gloopy rutted tracks that were typical at the time. Daniel Defoe, the novelist, says that it took 22 oxen to pull a cart with one log, and progress was so slow that it sometimes

took two years to drag a log to Chatham. The ground would have been at least as gloopy and rutted in the 11th century. The Brede estuary, uniquely for the region, was lined by steep slopes on both banks. Timber would have been slid down to the Brede on log chutes. Local historian Mark Freeman has found what looks like a medieval log chute in Steephill Wood. Nearly all timber exports from this region would have been floated down the Brede to be shipped from Old Winchelsea.

In Roman times, the region's most valuable resource was iron. Cleere reckons that the Brede basin bloomeries at Beauport Park, Chitcombe, Footlands and Oaklands accounted for 80% of the region's iron output. He says that there is no evidence of Wealden iron smelting during Saxon times. Robert Turgoose of the Wealden Iron Research Group agrees. But there is hardly any evidence of Saxon era iron production anywhere in Britain, even though there was huge demand. Thomas Birch notes that some finished iron products were imported, and some iron was recycled. The rest must have come from domestic iron ore deposits. Turgoose told us that this is an inexact science because evidence of bloomery usage dates is indirect, through pottery or coins found in slag heaps. There could have been some iron production in the 11th century that left no evidence, albeit relatively small scale compared to Roman times. If there was any iron production, it would have been in the Brede basin and shipped though Old Winchelsea.

In summary, the Brede basin produced 70% of the region's salt, 70% or more of the region's salted fish, 70% or more of the region's timber, and 100% of any iron. All of it would have been shipped from Old Winchelsea. Natural resource production in the Combe Haven basin and the Pevensey Levels basin was relatively negligible, making Old Winchelsea by far the most likely *Hæstingaport* candidate.

The only other unambiguous evidence is that Domesday shows Rameslie manor – which included Old Winchelsea - was far more populous than the manors containing the other *Hæstingaport* candidates: 189 households compared to 14 at Wilting and 73 at Hooe. At least half the later would

have been farm workers because Hooe is listed with more than twice the farmland of any other manor on the Hastings Peninsula.

Based on natural resource production and Domesday's population figures, a port at Old Winchelsea should have been at least an order of magnitude bigger than any other port in the region. The Pipe Rolls of 1204 records that *Winchelse* (Old Winchelsea) was the biggest port between London and Southampton, and the third biggest on the south coast. The other *Hæstingaport* candidates at Bulverhythe and Northeye were negligible.

The relative importance of Old Winchelsea can be corroborated from 'Ship Service' records. They are an interminable source of confusion, so we will try to explain. Ship Service refers to a deal whereby the King could requisition ships and crews from local fleets in exchange for liberties; the more valuable the liberties, the more ships. It was established by Edward the Confessor and reinstated by the Plantagenets. A 1227 Charter reproduced by Jeake defines *Hastyng*, *Doverr*, *Romone*, *Hethe* and Sandwich – Hastings, Dover, Romney, Hithe and Sandwich, the original Cinque Ports - as 'Head Ports', charged with getting their apportionment of ships from 'member' towns in their vicinity. They were not chosen because of the size of their port but because they were the administrative hub for their section of the coast. The Ship Service is really saying that the *Count de Hastinges*, for instance, has responsibility to supply ships from the manors around him. It does not necessarily mean that Hastings provided any ships or, indeed, that it had a port.

Jeake's Charter demands 57 ships, listed as 21 from Hastings, 10 from Winchelse, 5 from Rye, 5 from Romney, 5 from Hithe, 21 from Dover, 5 from Sandwich. Lots of historians have looked at these figures and inferred that the port of Hastings was more than double the size of Winchelse and, crucially, that it was somewhere other than at Old Winchelsea. They are not mathematicians. These apportionments add up to 72.

Jeake explains that the sums only work if the 'Ancient Towns' - i.e. *Winchelse* and Rye - are included in Hasting's 21, and they are described as

'members' rather than Head Ports. The 57 then, are 21 from Dover, 21 from modern Hastings, 5 from Romney, 5 from Hythe and 5 from Sandwich. Within Hastings's 21, there were 10 from *Winchelse*, 5 from Rye and 6 from the other ports which are listed as Seaford, Pevensey, Hydney, Northeye, Bulverhythe, Iham, Beaksborne, Grench and, perhaps, modern Hastings. *Iham* was the name for the north of modern Winchelsea, so the Brede estuary (Old Winchelsea, Rye and Iham) provided more than 15 ships. On average, each of the other *Hæstingaport* candidates provided less than one. Therefore, the ports at the mouth of the Brede were more than ten times bigger than any other *Hæstingaport* candidate.

It does not necessarily follow that Old Winchelsea was the region's major port a hundred years after the battle so it must have been the region's major port at the time of the battle, but nothing significant had changed. Doubtless England's new masters required enormously more wine and oil imports, but Old Winchelsea was an export hub. Sylvester reports that at the turn of the 14th century modern Winchelsea exported 15 times as much as it imported, and that is after the huge increase in Norman wine and oil imports. Iron, fishing, salt and timber production techniques did not change significantly through the dark ages so there is no likelihood of exponential (or even significant) growth in any of those exports.

If Old Winchelsea was the region's dominant port when Domesday was collated and at the second crusade, and in 1204 and 1227 and later, we are convinced it would have been the region's dominant port at the time of the invasion, and therefore the most likely place to have been *Hæstingaport*.

There is an obvious problem. If *Hæstingaport* was at Old Winchelsea, then known as *Winchelse*, why do they have different names? We think they were not the same. There are only two references to *Hæstingaport*. One is the ASC annal explaining it is where the Normans landed, the other is stamped on the reverse of some coins produced at the *Hæstingaceastre* mint. It could be a range of things. We think that *Hæstingaport* referred to the physical port – quays, piers, mooring poles, cranes, warehouses, etc - whereas *Winchelse* referred to the nearest settlement to the port.

Old Winchelsea would have been far from ideal for some port functions. It was on a shingle spit that would have had no running water apart from rain, limited choice of fresh food, no fuel, no road access and, just a metre or so above high tide, it would have been flood prone during storms. We guess that professionals and artisans – port administrators, mint moneyers, tax collectors, shipwrights, sail makers, rope makers, ship chandlers, etc - were somewhere more comfortable, probably at modern Winchelsea.

Even though De Viis Maris says that modern Hastings had no port and there is no mention of one in the Pipe Rolls or Ship Service, Hastings did have a port a hundred years after the Conquest. It is listed in some Norman Charters as *Portus de Hasting*. It has to be at modern Hastings because the same Charters mention *Winchelse*, Rye, Bulverhythe and all the other known ports in the region. Presumably, it was in the Priory valley, as it is often depicted, beside the priory. There is no evidence it existed before the invasion, and it never amounted to much. Even when it was servicing Hastings Castle in the 14th century, Sylvester reckons that *Portus de Hasting* only had 15 ships, compared to modern Winchelsea's 115.

## Hæstingaceastre

'ceastre' is the Old English name for a fortified Roman settlement or fortress. The earliest reference to *Hæstingaceastre* is as one of Alfred's 33 'burhs', which were fortresses to give early warning of Viking raids. Alfred liked to build them at former Roman fortifications. The next *Hæstingaceastre* reference is to license a mint in 928. It would make sense to place the mint, toll house and defensive garrison inside the walls of *Hæstingaceastre*. The ASC annal for 1050 says that boats and boatmen from *Hæstingaceastre* defeated two of Sweyn's ships on behalf of the King. The last probable reference is on Panel 40 of the Bayeux Tapestry, which is captioned: "*He orders his men to dig fortifications at Hestenga (Ceastra)*", with the 'CEASTRE' embroidered inside the palisades of a hilltop fortress.

John of Worcester repeats ASC entries about *Hæstingaceastre* and *Hæstingaport*, in which it refers to both as *Heastinga*. Coins from the *Hæstingaceastre* mint were stamped '*Hæstinga*' or '*Hestingpor*' or an abbreviation of one or the other. This suggests to us that *Hæstingaceastre* and *Hæstingaport* were either adjacent or encompassing. Presumably, the mint melted and restamped foreign coin and bullion taken as payment from *Hæstingaport* customers.

As we conclude above, *Hæstingaport* comprised docks and warehouses at Old Winchelsea and an administrative centre at modern Winchelsea. Alfred would not have built his burh at sea level, so we think *Hæstingaceastre* was in modern Winchelsea, probably on the summit where St Thomas' is today. Its wall, calculated from the Burghal Hidage, would have been some 760m long, spreading 190m north and west from the junction of Back Lane and St Thomas Street

Modern Winchelsea would have been a typical location for a Roman fortress, on the only promontory that overlooked and protected the Brede basin's port and natural resources. It would have been a typical location for an Alfredrian burh too, on the only defensively sound bluff at the only place on the Hastings Peninsula that had an uninterrupted view of Old Romney which was a previous Viking incursion point. It was also the only place north of the Hastings Ridge that had a view of the Fire Hills, which was presumably the location of a Saxon era messaging beacon.

This central location in modern Winchelsea might explain several longstanding conundrums. The field in the northwest corner of Winchelsea has always been known as 'Castle field' when it is not near any known castle. We guess it was named after the castle like burh of *Hæstingaceastre*. Modern Winchelsea's first church, St Leonards, was built in the northwest corner of Winchelsea instead of the natural prominent location in the middle. We guess that it could not be built where St Thomas' now stands because that was inside the burh walls and it was a military garrison.

One more puzzle is Domesday's entry for *Hastinges*. It has a sub-listing within Rameslie manor, showing it had 4 burghers and 14 bordarers, far too few to have been *Hæstingaport* – the much smaller harbour of *Pevenesel* had 110 burghers, for comparison. It is known that Normans in England referred to Old Winchelsea as *Wincenesel* and they assimilated the local name Iham for the north of modern Winchelsea. Both places are recorded as ports in the Pipe Rolls for the next 150 years. *Hæstingaceastre* is the only other known place in Rameslie manor that might have warranted a Norman name and Domesday listing, and it is about the right size. We therefore believe that Normans in England knew *Hæstingaceastre* as *Hastinges*, at least until the castle at modern Hastings was finished. We guess it had a separate listing in Domesday because it was unavailable to the monks of Fécamps, perhaps because it was garrisoned or because it was the administrative hub for Hastings Rape until the castle was finished.

There are other theories about *Hæstingaceastre*'s location. One is in Martin White's submission to the Bexhill Bypass commission suggesting that *Hæstingaceastre* was at Wilting in Combe Haven. This is the site proposed by Nick Austin for the second Norman camp. White uses much the same *Hæstingaport* juxtaposition arguments as us, only with *Hæstingaport* being in Combe Haven rather than the Brede estuary. He has three additional items of evidence. One is the impression of a Roman enclosure he has found on a LiDAR scan of Wilting which seems to conform with *Hæstingaceastre*'s listing in the Burghal Hidage. Second, he believes that nearby Silverhill might have taken its name from the *Hæstingaceastre* mint. Third, he has found a nearby area of land named 'Burghs' in the 1847 Hollington tithe maps, which might have taken its name from *Hæstingaceastre* burh.

We are unimpressed. There are no known references to Silver Hill before the 18th century, and it is named then as Salver Hill (to save) on the Yeakell & Gardiner map. We suspect its name was changed by an enterprising Georgian estate agent. It is only to be expected that the Romans would build an enclosure to protect their port at Monkham Wood. They did the same for most of their ports. And most medieval ports were 'burghs', of a

sort. The term typically means that they have royal liberties. This would probably have applied to both Bulverhythe and Filsham after the Conquest, not least because they serviced the new Norman castle at modern Hastings. Their market would naturally have been on the high ground at the top of Gillmans Hill, on the land known in the 19th century as the Burghs. But this does not mean it was a Saxon burh beforehand and it is 1500m from White's proposed *Hæstingaceastre* burh location. White's evidence, in our opinion, is weak.

Keith Foord thinks that *Hæstingaceastre* was adjacent to *Hæstingaport* on the Camber shingle bar. This would have been the best place to defend the port, but it seems implausible. We cannot believe that the Romans would fortify anywhere on a shifting shingle bank. If they did, it is unlikely to have survived 500 years until Alfred needed somewhere for his burh. Even if it survived, Alfred would not have built his burh at sea level because it was supposed to be a lookout. And Tapestry Panel 45 shows William's camp at '*Hestenga ceastra*' at a hill, so it could not have been on a shingle spit.

Kathleen Tyson thinks that *Hæstingaceastre* was at Icklesham, a few miles upstream from modern Winchelsea. She notes that it had a Roman bloomery, so the Romans were there. She has a reasonable argument, but we think that there is a better argument for modern Winchelsea, which was closer to the sea and with a wider field of vision that included the Fire Hills messaging beacon and the Old Romney incursion point.

#### Old Winchelsea's location

Modern Winchelsea's founding Charter and *De Viis Maris* and S982 say that Old Winchelsea was a port on the Camber shingle bar. It was inundated by the sea following a series of violent storms in the late 13th century, as explained by Cooper in the 1850s and more recently by Thomas Dhoop. No trace of it has ever been found, but Cooper lists some reasonably specific coordinates. He says that it was roughly 6 miles NE of Fairlight Cliff, 3 miles ESE of modern Winchelsea, 2 miles SSE from Rye and 7 miles SW of Old Romney. Jeake says that it was more than a mile east of modern

Winchelsea (see Figure 65).

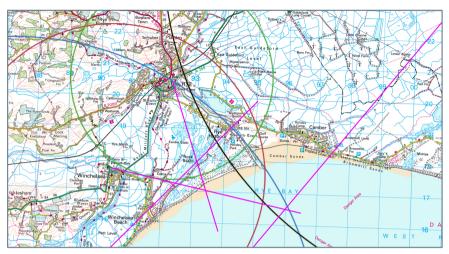


Figure 65: Cooper's coordinates for Old Winchelsea

Whole number of miles and 1/16th compass points leaves plenty of room for interpretation. Dugdale reckons Old Winchelsea was somewhere under Rye Harbour Nature Reserve; Cooper reckons to the east side of the east pier head, which would put it under Rye Golf Course. The distances intersect near Rye harbour; the directions intersect 2km southwest near Watch House. At least one of the directions or distances is rogue. The only way to fix a location to within 11° and 0.5 miles of all Cooper's clues with one change is to revise the distance from Winchelsea to 2 miles. This would place Old Winchelsea at 50.92112, 0.74778, roughly 1.75 miles east of St Thomas's, Winchelsea.

Old Winchelsea was a thriving place with 300 homes - and its own hospital, two churches and a friary - when it succumbed to the sea in the 13th century. It was not that big in 1086 when the whole of Rameslie had 189 households. Allowing for the farm and salt workers, we guess it had somewhere between 80 and 120 households before the invasion. That is still an enormous number of people to be living on a flood prone shingle bar. But Old Winchelsea was not a normal port.

Pearson hints at Old Winchelsea's secret in Figure 66, where he marks 'Possible tidal inlets' on the Camber bar. Leeman too in Figure 12. The bar extended 20 miles northeast from in medieval times. It would have looked rather like the bar part of Pagham Rife, just along the coast.

Cunliffe and Green analysed the flow of the Brede and Rother from Roman times. One of their investigations is why the Brede had the greatest concentration of saltpans in southern England while the Tillingham and Rother further north had none. It is odd because the main sea water access was through a breach at Old Romney which was north of all of them. Sea water from Old Romney would have had to pass through Guldeford and Walland marshes to get to the Brede, but neither show signs of marine encroachment. Their conclusion is that there must have been at least one other breach in the Camber near the mouth of the Brede. It would be around what is now Rye Golf Course, which is where Cooper suggests Winchelse was located.

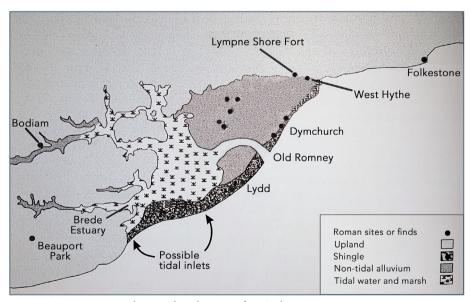


Figure 66: Romney Marsh in medieval times; after Andrew Pearson

De Viis Maris, written in the 12th century, is more explicit. It says: "and

further up the Winchelse inlet is a good town called Rie". It is saying that there was an inlet through the Camber at Old Winchelsea which led to Rye.

This breach would explain Old Winchelsea's success. Presumably, the settlement grew up to service ships and barges passing through the Camber. Why else would anyone build a settlement on a shingle bar with no road access, little food, no running fresh water, that was prone to flooding and too unstable for building foundations? Cooper reports that Old Winchelsea had bridges. There is no reason for bridges on a shingle bar, other than to cross a channel or canal. Note that if Old Winchelsea was at this breach, Pearson is right to suggest that there was a third breach towards Pett because *Winchelse* has the 'ea' sounding suffix associated with islands in this region. Jeake and Cooper both reckon it was an island.

Green thinks that the Camber breach was narrow and perhaps blocked at low tide. If he is right, ships must have docked on both sides, either to be loaded/unloaded or to wait for the tide before making the Camber crossing. This was doubtless profitable for pubs – of which there were apparently 11 - and brothels, but they cannot account for more than a fifth of the people that lived there.

Even though a channel or canal would be a lot faster than the route via Old Romney, it would still be inefficient, requiring a high tide to get in and another to get out. From the number and type of people that are named in the 1288 Charter, we think the Romans developed a better logistics system that was still in use at the time of the invasion, and which employed the balance of Old Winchelsea's population.

Old Winchelsea seems to have been a rudimentary transhipment hub. The commercially sensible process would be for inshore barges to take salt, timber and, probably, iron from jetties on the banks of the Brede to Old Winchelsea where they would wait for the tidal current to whisk them across the Camber bar. On the seaward side, the barges could be unloaded directly into sea-going vessels or into warehouses. If the channel was

temporarily blocked by storms or longshore drift, perhaps cargo was carried across the Camber in carts.

Some natural resources would have been exported to the Continent. Rather than return empty, presumably the freight vessels returned wine, oil, fruit and cloth, most of which would have been destined for London or Winchester on tidal drifters, or to Canterbury and the hinterland on the Rochester Roman road. This would explain how Norman navigators got to know the treacherous cliffs and ever-changing offshore sand banks around East Sussex.

Cunliffe explains that the most likely reason for the Camber breach at Old Winchelsea to remain open was if freshwater channels were feeding through from the Brede and Tillingham. He still seems a little perplexed that eastward shingle drift did not block the breach or create its own spit. We have a simple explanation: We think it was dredged and had been since Roman times.

Wealden iron ore was a major reason for the Roman invasion of Britain. We think that the Romans, who hated bendy transport systems, cut the Camber breach to accelerate exports of iron and salt, then established the docks to facilitate loading. Those docks would be within two miles of the location described by Ptolemy – i.e. mid-longitude between what is now Cannon Street in London and South Foreland in Kent – for 'Portus Novus'. If we are right, Winchelse was the major port in East Sussex from Roman times right through to the 13th century.

## Pefenesea, Pevenesel and Old Pevensey

*Pefenesea* is universally understood to have been the Old English name for the place that eventually became modern Pevensey. As we will explain later, *Pevenesel* is the Norman name for *Pefenesea*. Historians interpret the ASC, the Tapestry, Chronicon, Brevis Relatio and Benoît to be saying that the Normans landed at one or the other. We think that both notions are wrong.

Some of our reasons are laid out in the section above about 'The Traditional Norman landing'. Perhaps the most significant is that landing at modern Pevensey made no military or logistical sense. In the unlikely event that the Normans entered Pevensey Lagoon, as Ramsay pointed out 100 years ago, they would have avoided all the hazards by landing on the east bank at Hooe rather than the west bank at modern Pevensey.

It should come as no surprise then that none of the contemporary accounts say that the Normans did land at *Pefenesea* or any of its cognates (note that we believe *Penevesellum* is not a cognate). Instead, they say that the Normans 'arrived near' or 'came to' or 'moored in the shallows near' *Pefenesea*. Therefore, in our opinion, *Pefenesea* played no role in the Norman Conquest. We could leave it there, but it might help future researchers if we explain why we think *Pefenesea* was not modern Pevensey.

Pevensey Castle was known as 'castele a Pefenesea' by Saxons after the Conquest, 'Castelli Peveneseli in Old French and 'Castrum Pevenesel' in Latin. There is copious evidence in Charters and Pipe Rolls that modern Pevensey was known as Pevenesel after the 12th century. The evidence for what Pefenesea meant at the time of the Conquest is far more limited.

As far as we know, there is only one locational reference to pre-Conquest *Pefenesea*. It is in Saxon Charter S527, dated 963, which gifts a saltearn opposite 'pefenes ea' and land at 'hanecan' (later named 'hacanan hamme') near a place named 'glindlea'. Glindley and Hankham survive, not far from modern Pevensey. This implies that pefenes ea was in the vicinity of modern Pevensey, but it does not say or imply that it was at modern Pevensey.

Indeed, we can be certain that pre-Conquest *Pefenesea* was not at modern Pevensey from its founding Charter, issued in 1207: "... we have granted to the barons of Peuensel and confirmed by this our present charter that they may build a town on the headland between the port/harbour of Pevenesel and Langeney, which lies within the liberties of the Cinque Ports, to keep and maintain according by which our subjects of the Cinque Ports possess."

In other words, Pevenesel, the Norman name for Pefenesea – see below - was

analogous to Winchelsea and Romney: a coastal harbour that was threatened and eventually destroyed by storms. And, like Winchelsea and Romney, its population moved inland taking the name with them. We will therefore refer to it in this document as Old Pevensey, analogous with Old Winchelsea and Old Romney. We can work out where it was.

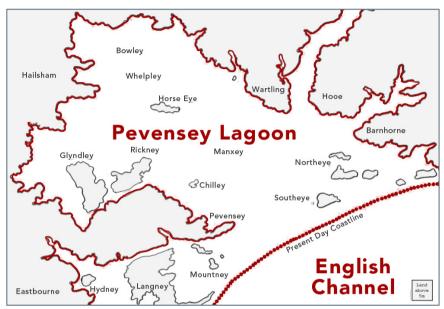


Figure 67: Pevensey lagoon in medieval times, based on map by Tom Chivers

Tom Chivers' map (Figure 67) hints at what is going on. It shows Pevensey Lagoon in the 11th century, dotted with Old English place names ending 'ea', 'ey' or 'eye'. In this area, as local name expert Simon Mansfield once told us, they all mean 'island'. They are surviving places that were inhabited islands during Saxon times.

Figure 68 is our interpretation of the coastline in 1066. Note that Pevensey Lagoon was retained by a shingle bar, missing from Chivers' diagram. It is known as 'The Crumbles', named after a Norman era port named 'La Crumbie' which was somewhere near Eastbourne. The shingle bar roughly followed the modern coastline. Langney, Northeye and Southeye are surviving places that were islands on this shingle bar.

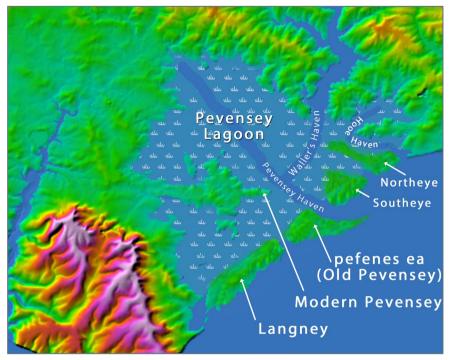


Figure 68: Pevensey Lagoon in 1066

Modern Pevensey's founding charter says that its 11th century predecessor, *Pevenesel*, was east of Langeney, implying it was not as far east as Southeye. This means it can be exactly located to the south side of Pevensey Haven, which separated it from Southeye. Pevensey Haven had a confluence with Waller's Haven just to the east of modern Pevensey. It drained most of the Pevensey Lagoon basin. It is likely then to have created a spit tail, which presumably formed the safe harbour for which pre-Conquest *Pefenesea* was famous.

There is a dependency. The location description in modern Pevensey's founding Charter is for *Pevenesel*. It only applies to *Pefenesea* if they referred to the same place. We are confident they do. The Bi-Lingual F recension of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle translates *Pefenesea* to *Pevenesel* in the same pre-Conquest annals that the C, D and E recensions refer to *Pefenesæ*, *Pefenesea* and *Peuenesea* respectively. The Norman Conquest accounts, and two of the three Anglo-Norman Conquest accounts, refer to William's arrival off

the Sussex coast as being near *Pevenesel*, the English accounts and John of Worcester say that it was near *Pefenesea*.

R G Roberts has a plausible explanation for why the Norman referred to *Pefenesea* and *Pevenesel* in his 1914 book 'The Place-Names of Sussex'. In this vicinity, Old English 'ea' means island. Roberts thinks that the 'el' at the end of *Pevenesel* is the Frankish root for the modern French word île meaning 'island'. The only other known Saxon, Latin or Norman place name ending 'el' (apart from places ending 'dell' which would not apply here) is 'Wincenesel', the Frankish and/or Norman name for Winchelse. The most plausible explanation is that *Pefenesea* and Winchelse were part of Bertoald's 8th century gift (attested in Charter S133 and S318) to the Frankish Abbey of St Denys. If they owned *Pefenesea*, it makes perfect sense that they would transliterate *Pefenes* to *Pevenes*, and translate 'ea' to 'el', to make the name 'Pevenes el' The Normans presumably adopted the name.

To summarise, there was an island harbour named 'pefenes ea' between Langney and Southeye until the early 13th century. This name is usually contracted to Pefenesea. Normans referred to it as Pevenesel. It was gradually destroyed by storms. Its population moved 2km northwest to the peninsula upon which the Roman fortress of Anderida stood, taking the name Pefenesea with them. From 1207, Pefenesea and Pevenesel referred to modern Pevensey, beforehand they referred to pefenes ea island. An identical fate befell Winchelsea and Romney. Their original locations are referred to as Old Winchelsea and Old Romney. We will adopt the same convention in this document by referring to pefenes ea as Old Pevensey.

This name schema is consistent with all contemporary account references to *Pefenesea* and cognates, unlike modern Pevensey. The Old English suffix 'ea' ('eg') always means 'island' in this vicinity. Domesday lists the manor of *Pevenesel* as a 'borough' which implies liberties which implies a coastal location. Old Pevensey was an island harbour on the coast. Modern Pevensey was an inland peninsula. The only pre-invasion Saxon reference that almost certainly refers to modern Pevensey names it *Andredesceaster*. There is no reason why it would also be known as *Pefenesea*. Domesday

lists the manor of *Pevenesel* with 110 burgesses and a mill in 1086. This sounds about right for the coastal harbour of *Pefenesea*, but not for modern Pevensey which proved to have no civilian population at the time of the Conquest during extensive excavations by Dully in the 1960s.

Old Pevensey is also consistent with De Viis Maris, a mid-12th century guide. It lists ports where soldiers might get a ship to Normandy on their way to the Crusades. *Penress/Peneness*, presumably Old Pevensey, is said to be eight miles west of '*Hastinges castellum*' and two leagues east of the unreliable port of *La Crumbie*. *La Crumbie* is lost but must have been near Eastbourne. Distances are rough and ready in De Viis Maris, but this points to a place consistent with our proposed location for Old Pevensey.

Benoît says that the Normans: "Arrived at Pevenesel, at a harbour beneath a fortress handsome and strong". There were a few former Roman fortresses dotted around the East Sussex, but the only one that might warrant the description 'handsome and strong' is Anderitum at Pevensey. Old Pevensey was a harbour beneath Anderitum, modern Pevensey was not.

Pevensey Castle is a source of some confusion. Three accounts of Odo's rebellion, during which he holed-up in Pevensey Castle, refer to it as the fortress of *Pefenesea*, *a* fourth account as the fortress of *Pevenesel*. Pipe Rolls entries in the 12th and 13th century refer to Pevensey Castle as *Castrum Pevenesel* or *Castelli Pevenesel*, and separately refer to modern Pevensey as *Pevenesel*. A post-Conquest entry in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle refers to Pevensey Castle as 'castele a Pefenesea', 'the castle at Pefenesea'. They imply that *Pefenesea* referred to modern Pevensey, but we think the castle was named after the nearest settlement that had a recognised name. This would make it analogous to *Castelli Windelesores*, which took its name from its nearest named settlement *Windelesores* (modern Old Windsor), four miles away. And, also like Windsor, the settlement eventually moved to the castle, taking its name with them.

Kathleen Tyson has come up with two more clues. She resolves the name *Pefenesea* to mean 'near-the-ness island'. At least two of the references to

Pefenesea in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle say it was used as a maritime refuge or harbour. Kathleen interprets one of them to mean that it was at a sea ford. She deduces that *Pefenesea* was somewhere on the Camber shingle bar near Lydd. It is plausible but would contradict some of the other clues, including the specific clue in *De Viis Maris* that Old Pevensey was eight Roman miles west of Hastings Castle. It would also be a peculiar interpretation of Pevensey's foundation Charter, equivalent to describing Devon's location as between Cornwall and East Anglia; not wrong but misleading. It would contradict S527, which says that *pefenes ea* is near Glindlea and Hankham whereas Lydd is 20 miles away. And it would contradict Benoît's description of William "arriving below a fortress handsome and strong". We are convinced that her new clues better points to an island near the ness of modern Pevensey, which is consistent with our proposed location for Old Pevensey. It could easily have had a low tide ford to Langney.

Perhaps we should explain our thinking with the rest of Figure 68. There must have been at least one break in *The Crumbles*, to allow fresh water to drain into the sea. Pevensey Haven (aka Hurst Haven) drained the land to the north and west. Waller's Haven drained the land to the east. Waller's Haven was redirected in the 16th century. Its original route can be followed along 'Old Haven' on OS maps. It makes an inland confluence with Hurst Haven several hundred metres to the east of Pevensey. It had to drain into the sea somewhere to the southeast of that. It is common for silty estuaries to form spits at their mouth. We think Old Pevensey had just such a spit tail, somewhere around modern Beachlands.

We discuss the international port above. It is just worth noting here that Old Pevensey was not it. A port has a wharf to load/unload cargo, whereas a harbour does not. Old Pevensey had no natural resources, no hinterland, no roads to distribute goods, and hardly anyone to distribute them to. It was, as ASC suggests, a sheltered harbour rather than a port. We say earlier that there was no port or settlement at modern Pevensey at the time of the

invasion. It is accurate. Old Pevensey was not at modern Pevensey and it was not a port.

Our proposed location for Old Pevensey sheds a new light on S133, a Saxon Charter dated 790 which gifts land in East Sussex and elsewhere to the Frankish Abbey of St Denys. The gift included a port: "de portu super mare, Hastingas et Peuenisel", "the coastal port of Hastingas and Peuenisel". Note 'port' singular. It is ambiguous. It could be trying to say: "the coastal port of Hastingas et Peuenisel", with 'Hastingas et Peuenisel' as a noun, or "the coastal port of Hastingas, and Peuenisel", with Peuenisel somewhere other than the port. In the first edition of our book, we speculated that that the former was more likely, because we thought that it could be synonymous with the port mentioned by Orderic as Hastingas et Penevesellum. We have subsequently refined our understanding of Penevesellum – see below - which makes this unlikely. We now think that the latter is more probable. The attestation in S318 suggests so, in that it refers to the gift as land in/at Hastingas and land in/at Peuenisel.

One source of confusion about the Norman landing is that ASC-D, the Tapestry and Chronicon immediately pass from the arrival at Old Pevensey to the construction of a fortress or, in the case of Chronicon, to the battle. Historians read into this an implication that the Normans landed at *Pefenesea*. We think the journey to the landing place and the landing itself were redacted. All three of these accounts are heavily abridged, covering the invasion in a few paragraphs. They had to redact uneventful details like the journey to the landing site and the landing.

There are a few puzzles about the Norman Channel crossing and Pefenesea.

Why did the Normans moor near Old Pevensey if their ultimate destination was the Hastings Peninsula? We guess that it was standard practice for Norman trading ships to moor off Old Pevensey before docking at *Hæstingaport*, probably to wait for the tide. With the prevailing southwesterly breeze, they had to moor somewhere southwest of *Hæstingaport*. The only shallows were Royal Sovereign Shoal, five miles south of modern

Pevensey, and Four Fathom Sand Ridge, four miles south of modern Hastings. The latter was closer to *Hæstingaport* but also close to a rocky lee shore, a dangerous place to sail in a ship with no centreboard, especially in the dark. Royal Sovereign Shoal was off the Crumbles shingle bank, which would have been a comfortable place to land if there had been a minor navigation error or a sudden squall. Wace says that the fleet steered towards a port/harbour, which was presumably well known to his sailors and navigators. We think that harbour was Old Pevensey whereas Four Fathom Sand Ridge was not in the direction of a port or harbour. Poitiers explains that William wanted to avoid sailing in dangerous or unknown waters at night. Royal Sovereign Shoal would have been well known and safe whereas Four Fathom Sand Ridge was unsafe.

Why did William delay the invasion – as Wace and WP say – to wait for a southerly breeze? It is very odd. The fleet started at Dives-sur-Mer, needing to sail north-northeast to arrive near Pevensey. WP says that they were born to St Valery on a westerly breeze. But they could easily have made the Channel crossing to near Pevensey on a westerly breeze. Indeed, it would have been the optimal wind direction if they used an ebb tide to offset leeway. Instead, they sailed to St Valery, from where they needed to sail northwest to arrive near Pevensey. A 60° change of direction, yet William still waited for a southerly breeze. We explain in our book that William needed a southerly breeze to affect a simultaneous Brede landing.

In the first edition of this book, and the blogs upon which it was based, we speculated that *Peuenisel* with an 'i' – as mentioned in S133 - might have referred to somewhere other than *Pevenesel* with an 'e'. Refinements to our understanding of the name *Penevesellum* have persuaded us otherwise. We now think they both referred to Old Pevensey (*pefenes ea*).

## Rameslie manor

Rameslie was a big and wealthy manor in *Guestlinges* hundred, which it shared with the manors of *Guestlinges* and *Ivet*. Manors in the same hundred were not always contiguous, but most are, especially as in this case, when

one is dominant over the others. Guestling survives as a settlement south of the fluvial part of the River Panel. *Ivet* was very small. There are no other hundreds in the vicinity. Therefore, it is safe to assume that part of Rameslie manor filled the Winchelsea Peninsula between the Panel and the Brede.

Domesday lists Rameslie manor with 100 saltpans, 35 ploughlands, 7 acres of meadowland, 2 woodland swine renders and 5 churches. The Winchelsea Peninsula was not big enough to hold it all. It must have had a lot of other land, including perhaps four other significant settlements.

In 1247, Henry III did a deal negotiated through the Pope to swap Old Winchelsea and its port for lands elsewhere, claiming it was vulnerable to an invasion because monks could not defend themselves. There is no mention of modern Hastings which implies that it was not in Rameslie and/or that it did not have a port, even in 1247.

By tradition, Rameslie stretched from Rye to modern Hastings. The Rye part is good: Rye and Old Winchelsea were still in Rameslie manor when they were exchanged by Henry III in 1247. Like so much else, the rest is derived from the traditional location of *Hæstingaport* below modern Hastings. *Rammesleah* manor was gifted to the Norman Abbey of Fécamp by King Cnut as a dowry for his Norman bride Emma of Normandy in 1017. Rameslie manor was held by the Abbey of Fécamp in Domesday and *Rammesleah* looks like an alternative spelling of Rameslie. We will assume they were one and the same. The gift is described in a Charter (S949), which notes that the manor had saltpans and a port. The only significant port in the vicinity was *Hæstingaport*, traditionally located in the Priory valley. This is how Rameslie traditionally stretched along the coast from north of Rye to southwest of modern Hastings.

Rameslie's traditional footprint is an implausibly gigantic 11 miles long. No one would haul bulk freight like salt, timber and iron from their source in the Brede basin up and over the Hastings Ridge to be shipped from modern Hastings, so there is close to zero chance that it held the port mentioned in S949. It is unlikely that a coastal manor of  $30 \text{km}^2$  would only have 7 acres

of meadowland. And Dawson and Taylor reckon that *Ivet* manor was around modern Pett, so *Guestlinges* and *Ivet* manors bounded Rameslie to the south. Thus, Rameslie did not extend south of the Pannel, and it did not come within five miles of modern Hastings.

If Rameslie did not stretch south of the Pannel, it must have stretched west and/or north from the Winchelsea Peninsula. Matthew concludes that Rameslie spanned the Brede. It certainly contained Rye and Old Winchelsea on either side of the Brede. Medieval salt evaporation ponds in this region average 30m across. They are best placed on the north strand of a wide east-west estuary, where they get reflected sunlight, no riverbank shade and have no need for deforestation to prevent tree shade. Better on an east flowing river, where they are protected from storm surges or bores that might flood the saltpans. Most estuaries on the south coast are south flowing. The east flowing Brede was the only east-west estuary on the south coast that was long enough to hold 100 saltpans. If these saltpans were predominantly on the north bank, Rameslie must have stretched at least as far west as Brede Place on the north bank of the Brede.

This is still not big enough for five churches. Iham (which became modern Winchelsea) had one, St Leonards. Old Winchelsea had two, St Thomas and St Giles, the latter known to have been built by the Abbey of Fécamp. Two more to find. S982 confirms that the manor of *Bretda* was included in Cnut's gift of *Rammesleah* to the Abbey of Fécamp. Manors that are worth coveting should be wealthy enough to have a church. *Bretda* is never mentioned again, so it was presumably absorbed into Rameslie. We think it accounted for one of the two remaining churches, probably at Brede village. By a process of elimination, the fifth was probably at Cadborough, Rye or Icklesham, the only other Domesday era settlements adjacent to the Brede estuary. We think Cadborough because there is a legend that the stones for St Mary's Udimore came from a church closer to the sea (we are unconvinced about the part of the legend that they were moved by angels).

Cooper must have gone through similar reasoning 170 years ago, because he worked out – without saying how – similar locations for Rameslie's five

churches. He says that one was at Brede village, one in Rye, two in *Winchelse* (St Thomas and St Giles), and one at Winchelsea (St Leonards). We think he is right, other than that his church at Rye (see Rye below) is more likely to have been at Cadborough or Icklesham.

The fact that *Bretda's* status had to be confirmed in S982 suggests that it was not specified in the earlier S949 Charter. This means that *Bretda* did not incorporate the port or the saltpans. Its name makes it sound like it was beside the Brede, in which case it was either west of Brede Place on the north bank, or west of Guestling on the south bank, or both.

Bretda's location could be narrowed down by excluding land occupied by other Brede side manors. *Ivet* (sometimes spelled *Luet*) was once thought to be centred on Lidham, and therefore with estuary frontage, but it is now thought to be centred on Pett. The only other Domesday manors in the vicinity that might have had estuary frontage were Sedlescombe and Dodimere. Sedlescombe was south of the Brede and upstream of the current the Sedlescombe crossing in the 11th, at least 1km beyond the head of tide. That leaves Dodimere.

By tradition, Dodimere manor surrounded the settlement of Udimore on the Udimore ridge. East Sussex HER says that Dodimere was a dispersed ridgetop hamlet on the Udimore Ridge. This seems unlikely because 'mere' is the Old English term for a body of water, which would not apply to a ridgetop settlement. The manor is not listed with any saltpans, which implies it did not have Brede estuary frontage. It was in Babinrerode hundred, whose only other manor was tiny Kitchenham (2 households) on the Rother. If Dodimere was on the Udimore Peninsula, Goldspur hundred would have separated it from Kitchenham. Divided hundreds are not uncommon, but it would be very odd for one that only has two manors when the other is tiny. Something must be wrong.

Dodimere manor is associated with Udimore because Robert Count de Eu was Lord of the manor and Dodimere sounds like Udimore which was named after him. But he was Lord or Tenant-In-Chief of over 100 East

Sussex manors any of which might have been named after him. We suspect that Dodimere and Udimore were different places that were independently named after him, and that Dodimere manor spanned the Rother Peninsula north from Beckley Furnace.

If we are right, *Bretda* manor lined one or both banks of the Brede estuary downstream from the tidal limit at modern Sedlescombe, meaning that Rameslie manor entirely lined both banks of the Brede estuary. We are inclined to think that *Bretda* was on both banks of the Brede, but Kathleen Tyson told us that she has evidence it was only on the north bank, so that is how we depicted it in Figure 69.

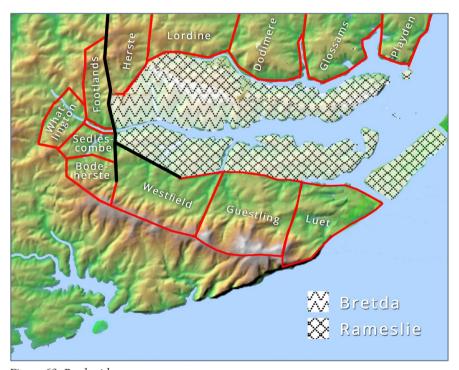


Figure 69: Brede side manors

*Bretda's* location would have made it prime real estate. It controlled the Rochester Roman road and the Sedlescombe river crossing, through which all land hauled imports and exports would have to pass. It contained a rich woodland that conveniently sloped down to the estuary banks for easy export of valuable timber. It is unclear how much iron was being produced

in this vicinity in medieval times, but it contained the Chitcombe iron bloomeries, and controlled the output from the three other biggest Romano-British iron bloomeries, at Footlands, Oaklands and Beauport Park, once the third biggest source of iron in the Roman empire.

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 *Winchelse*. 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. Kathleen Tyson has found evidence there was once a low-tide canal from Sedlescombe to Winchelsea, which presumably took timber, salt and perhaps iron on barges to the port at *Winchelse*.

Jetties, wharfs, barges, warehouses, ferries, paved roads, canals, bridges, and a river crossing do not come cheap and there are no surviving Charters to make anyone responsible for maintaining them. 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.

## Hechelande.

Hechelande has a dual significance: It alone associates Hastingas with modern Hastings, thereby providing the only evidence that the Normans landed in the Priory Valley and camped at modern Hastings; It alone suggests that the Normans advanced along the Hasting Ridge, thereby providing the only evidence for the orthodox engagement scenario.

Hechelande is unknown, apart from a handful of references in the Chronicle of Battle Abbey. Four of those references are in the financial part of the manuscript, where it is variously spelled *Hechelande*, *Hecilande* and

Hechilande. One explains that it is just shy of 1½ miles southeast of Battle Abbey, between Bodeherste and Croherste. This places it on the Hastings Ridge, immediately northwest of modern Telham. Two more references corroborate this vicinity. A third says that it is the name of a wood. That land now contains Bushy Wood. Professor Searle translates Hechelande as Hedgeland. There could be a Middle English etymological transition from Hedgey to Bushy.

CBA has another reference to *Hechelande* in the narrative part of the manuscript where it describes William's arrival at the Norman battle camp: "Perveniensque ad locum collis qui Hechelande dicitur, a parte Hastingarum situm, ...". The translation is not straightforward. Lower has: "Having arrived at a hill called Hechelande, situated in the direction of Hastings, ...". Searle has: "Arriving at the called Hechelande, which lies towards Hastings, ...". Both are viable. We will return to another possibility momentarily.

If Lower and/or Searle are right, a line drawn from Battle Abbey through *Hechelande* extrapolates to *Hastingarum*. CBA claims that *Hechelande* was immediately northwest of modern Telham (on the Ridge, not Telham Hill). The line extrapolates to the coast at modern Hastings. Therefore, historians believe that *Hastingas*, *Hastingarum*, and its other declensions are cognates of modern Hastings. This is the only evidence that Normans landed at *Hæstingaport* in the Priory Valley below modern Hastings, that they camped at modern Hastings, and that they advanced to the battlefield from modern Hastings along the Hastings Ridge.

There are reasons to be sceptical. One is that CBA claims that *Hechelande* is the name of a wood, but it means 'heath land'. Another is that CBA claims that *Hechelande* is a hill but describes its location on a part of the Hastings Ridge that is relatively level. A third is that CBA was written by the monks of Battle Abbey who, as Nicholas Vincent says, cannot be trusted about any uncorroborated evidence that the Abbey was built on the battlefield.

The monks of Battle Abbey could easily have given the name *Hechelande* to a place near Telham to support their claim that Battle Abbey was built on

the battlefield. Their likely motivation, as we explain in the 'Documentary evidence' sub-section of 'The Traditional Battlefield' above, would have been that the Norman battle camp was at *Hechelande*, in the wrong place and/or wrong direction for the battle to have happened at Battle Abbey. If so, another contemporary account might have mentioned it, thereby destroying their argument that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield. However, if they gave the name *Hechelande* to somewhere consistent with a Norman battle camp that might have led to a battle at Battle Abbey, other references to it would endorse their claim.

Whether or not the monks of Battle Abbey invented *Hechelande* on the Ridge, CBA still seems to be saying that it is in the direction of *Hastingarum*, creating the evidence that the Normans landed and camped at modern Hastings. We are not convinced by the translation. CBA has other passages that describe the 'direction of a place' and 'towards a place' that do not use 'a parte'. On the other hand, all 30 of its other uses of 'a parte' means 'side', as in the 'south side', the 'opposite side', the 'side of the church', and so on. The most natural translation of the CBA passage is: "Arriving at the hill named Hechelande, located to the side of Hastingarum". This exactly describes our proposed Norman battle camp at Cottage Lane, to the side of our proposed Norman sea camp at modern Winchelsea.

Even if CBA's 'a parte' did mean 'in the direction' (Lower) or 'towards' (Searle), it could be an anachronism. CBA is probably saying that its *Hechelande* was in the direction of *Hastingarum* at the time it was written. This would be true because the settlement around the Norman castle at modern Hastings was known as *Hastinges* by the 1170s. It does not mean that *Hastingarum* was at modern Hastings when the battle happened. Indeed, the settlement around the Norman castle at modern Hastings was known as 'Nove Hastinges' until the mid-12th century, inferring that *Hastinges* was somewhere else at the time of the battle.

## Rye

The 1247 Charter in which Henry III acquires the towns of Old Winchelsea and Rye explains that they were in the manor of Rameslie which still belonged to the Norman Abbey of Fécamps. Modern Domesday analyses always refer to Rameslie manor as Rye manor, as if Rye was its major town. We cannot find the origin of this conventional wisdom, but it is clearly faulty. Rye has been subject to dozens of excavations without finding any evidence of Saxon era occupation. It was a small uninhabited island in the 11th century, perhaps with a harbour and low tide causeway, which makes it an implausible hub for a huge and hugely wealthy manor like Rameslie.

Yet Rye had become a major port by the time of the Ship Service in 1227, being charged to provide five ships, as many as established ports like Romney and Hythe, half as many as *Winchelse*, and five times more than any other port around the Hastings Peninsula. It cannot have grown to half the size of *Winchelse* in less than 100 years. A Charter assigning it additional liberties was issued in 1191, which means it was already well established by then. These liberties were later sold by the Abbey of Fécamp.

This might solve one last enigma, which is the meaning of the 'novus burgus' in Rameslie's Domesday listing. Domesday's boroughs generally refer to somewhere that has liberties and/or rights to toll, typically a port or harbour. In our opinion, *novus burgus* probably referred to Rye, established less than twenty years previously.

We believe that the Abbey of Fécamp established some sort of administration and maritime service centre at Rye soon after the Conquest. Perhaps they just needed more capacity to handle extra passenger and freight traffic with Normandy. We suspect that they were pushed out modern Winchelsea when Norman military administrators and a garrison moved into *Hæstingaceastre*.

As a matter of interest, it is usually assumed that the name Rye has an Old

English root, with its 'ye' ending being typical of many islands in this region, and it was an island in Saxon times. Yet Rye was originally spelled 'Rai' which, as far as we know, would be a unique structure for an Old English place name. It was in the Abbey of Fécamp's manor of Rameslie. We think they named it after Rai, a town in Normandy some 60 miles south of Fécamp.

# Appendix B – Nick Austin's Combe Haven landing and Hæstingaport

Austin's battle scenario depends upon the Normans landing in Combe Haven. It contradicts our Brede estuary landing theory, and he proposes different locations for *Hæstingaport* and *Hæstingaceastre* from those we suggest in Appendix A. We need to explain why we think it unlikely that the Normans landed in Combe Haven, and why we think his proposed locations of *Hæstingaport* and *Hæstingaceastre* are not right.

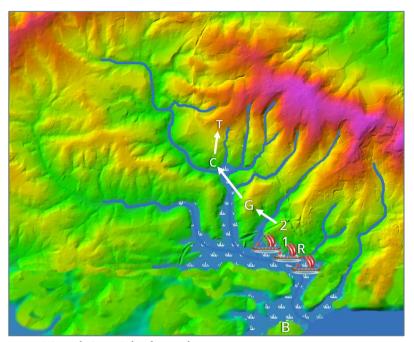


Figure 70: Nick Austin's landing and engagement scenario

Austin's theory about the landing place names is ingenious. He thinks that *Hastingas* and cognates referred to *Hæstingaport*, which he places at Bulverhythe (B on Figure 70). He thinks that Pevensey and cognates referred to the region defended by the fortress at Pevensey, which would include the entire Hastings Peninsula. Thus, all the landing accounts could be right because they all say that the Normans landed and/or camped somewhere that sounds like one or the other or both.

The landing and Norman camp are crucial to Austin's battle narrative because there are only a couple of places that the Normans could have camped that might lead to a battle on the southern slope of Telham Hill. If they had camped anywhere north of Crowhurst, the English would have had to pass through them to get to Telham Hill. If they had camped anywhere on the Bexhill Peninsula or on the west bank of Combe Haven, they would have looped around ridgeways to attack from the north. The Hastings Ridge spurs east of Crowhurst were not navigable from Combe Haven. So, if the Normans landed in Combe Haven, they can only have landed and temporarily camped at Redgeland and Monkham Woods.

Austin therefore predicted in *Secrets of the Norman Invasion* that there must have been a port at Redgeland Wood. He was vindicated during survey work for the Bexhill Link Road in 2015 when the remains of Romano-British era jetties were found at Redgeland Wood.



Figure 71: Yeakell and Gardner map of Combe Haven's north shore in 1770

On the other hand, there are some discrepancies about a Redgeland Wood landing. Austin says that the Normans would need at least 2 miles of strand upon which to land (we calculate over 3), but the northwest end of his landing area is bounded by Little Bog, which leaves less than 2 miles of strand to the sea. Yeakell and Gardner (Figure 71) shows that Monkham Wood and Redgeland Wood were more extensive in the 18th century than now, lining most of the proposed landing site to a depth of 500m. If the

woodland was like this in 1066 - and it is difficult to believe that anyone would plant new woodland between 1066 and 1770 - it is quite unlike the level treeless plain next to the landing area described by Wace and depicted on the Tapestry.

There are some discrepancies about Austin's *Hastingas* and Pevensey theory too. Several primary sources say that William did not stay in 'Pevensey' but quickly moved to 'Hastingas'. This would not make sense using Austin's definitions, because they did not leave the region controlled by the fortress at Pevensey until a week after the battle. Orderic says that the Normans occupied 'Pevensey' and 'Hastingas', which would make no sense if, as Austin suggests, the latter was inside the former. Several primary sources say that the Normans built their first camp at 'Pevensey', then their second at 'Hastingas'. But both camps would be in Austin's Pevensey. CBA says that William leads his men from where they landed to a "port not far away", but Austin thinks that they landed at the port.

Hæstingaport's location is crucial to all Battle of Hastings theories because several contemporary accounts specifically say it is where the Normans landed, most of the others say it is where they camped. It is especially crucial to Austin's theory because the only plausible way that the battle could have been fought on the southern slope of Telham Hill is if the Normans landed at Redgeland Wood. Therefore, Austin's battlefield theory depends upon Hæstingaport having encompassed Redgeland Wood. He lists four main arguments in SOTNI that Hæstingaport encompassed Redgeland Wood, and he contacted us about another after the publication of the first edition of our book.

Austin's first argument is that CBA "specifically names the port at a place named Hedgeland". It does no such thing, at least not 'specifically'. It mentions Hechelande (the Old English for Hedgeland) five times, four of which say it was near Telham, 4½ miles from the nearest coast and therefore not a port. The other says that Hechelande was 'a parte Hastingarum', which he interprets to mean 'beside Hæstingaport'. Lower translates as 'in the direction of Hastings', Searle as 'which lies towards

Hastings', both of which would accurately describe *Hechelande* if it were adjacent to the Hastings Ridge near Telham. Austin provides no reason to prefer his unorthodox interpretation. These are all valid translations of Latin 'a parte' but unnatural and rare. We think this phrase uses the natural and most common translation of 'a parte' meaning 'to the side'.

Austin's second argument is that *Hechelande* referred to modern Redgeland, explaining that they would have been pronounced similarly in the local dialect of the day. It seems unlikely. CBA says that the Normans dress for battle at *Hechelande*. Austin reckons that their camp was at Upper Wilting. Redgeland Wood is 1km to its southeast, in the opposite direction to his battlefield. Needlessly returning to Redgeland Wood to dress for battle would waste an hour which might have been crucial with daylight limited and English reinforcements arriving all the time.

Austin's third argument is that the first Norman Sheriffs, namely Reinbert and Ingelrann, were "installed at Wilting Manor", the location he proposes for the second Norman camp. He says that this reflects Wilting's "paramount importance", implying it was the administrative centre for Hæstingaport. But Reinbert and Ingelrann were only subtenants of Wilting Manor, a role they shared with three others. Reinbert was sole subtenant of 15 other Sussex manors, including valuable Udimore and Whatlington, plus joint subtenant of 8 more. Ingelrann was subtenant of two big Sussex manors, Hooe and Filsham, and referred to himself as Ingelran of Hooe. It seems to us that their involvement with Wilting was incidental, and their bases were elsewhere.

Austin's fourth argument is an analysis of Domesday manor valuations that tries to calculate the location of the second Norman camp, and therefore of *Hæstingaport*. His principle is that the manors most plundered, and therefore those that lost most value during the Conquest, would have been those closest to the Norman camp. He disqualifies what he believes to be unlikely camp/port candidates, including small manors and those with only minor impairment in 1066. His analysis shows that the manors most plundered were on the north bank of Combe Haven, centred on Wilting

manor. Austin concludes that the second Norman camp was therefore at Upper Wilting. It sounds scientific but, in our opinion, makes some faulty assumptions.

The manors lining the north bank of Combe Haven, especially Crowhurst, Hooe and Filsham, had the biggest and best agricultural land on the Hastings Peninsula. They alone had enough livestock and grain stores to feed the Norman army. Moreover, they were in Harold's ancestral homeland. Some say his wife and children lived in Crowhurst manor. These manors were bound to be most plundered, no matter where the Normans landed or camped.

In addition, we think the qualification process is flawed because Rameslie manor around the Brede estuary, where we think the Normans landed and camped, belonged to the Norman Abbey of Fécamp. It lost no value in 1066, so Austin qualifies out its port of *Winchelse* (aka Old Winchelsea) as a *Hæstingaport* candidate. But William was the abbey's patron. In effect, Rameslie belonged to William and it paid taxes to the Roman Church. He would not have plundered himself or his most important sponsor, the Pope, so it would not have lost value in 1066 even if the Normans landed and camped there.

Austin's fifth argument concerns *Hæstingaceastre*. As we note in Appendix A, *Hæstingaceastre* was probably encompassed by, or adjacent to, *Hæstingaport*. '*Ceastre*' is the Old English term for a Roman fortification. Austin has found the impression of a probable Roman fortification on a LIDAR scan of Upper Wilting. One of King Alfred's burhs was at *Hæstinga ceastre*. Its dimensions are recorded in a document known as the Burghal Hidage. Those dimensions match the LIDAR impression at Upper Wilting. Austin is confident it is *Hæstingaceastre*. If he is right, whatever our misgivings, part of *Hæstingaport* probably was at Redgeland Wood, but there is no evidence he is right.

Alfredian burhs were typically built on promontories. Upper Wilting was not a promontory. Their main purpose was to watch for Viking sea raiders.

The sea view from a burh at Upper Wilting would have been blocked to the east and southeast and interrupted to the southwest. The Bexhill Link Road excavations unearthed no evidence of Saxon or Norman occupation. It did uncover 14 Roman era bloomeries at Wilting and a Roman road from Wilting to Crowhurst Park where there were more Roman era bloomeries. Almost certainly then, iron products were exported from a major port at Redgeland Wood in Roman times. It would have had a nearby enclosure, from where the port was administered. We think it happens to be roughly the right size to have been *Hæstingaceastre* but is otherwise unrelated.

We checked Monkham, Redgeland and Upper Wilting against some of the other primary source landing and camp clues. Carmen says an English spy was standing at the bottom of a sea cliff watching them land. There are no sea cliffs beside Combe Haven. Warenne Chronicle says that the Normans entered England between two fortresses. Fortresses are usually built on high ground, which was absent beside Combe Haven. Austin counters that a building associated with the port might have looked like a fortress. One was a mint, so it is possible. Carmen says that a monk emissary leaves the Norman camp on a road, Latin 'iter'. 'Iter' usually means a metalled agger road, of which there was only one on the Hastings Peninsula, on the far side of the Hastings Ridge. Austin thinks it referred to a trackway on the route of his old London road, along which he thinks the English army approached, which is not impossible.

In our opinion, Austin's argument that *Hæstingaport* was in Combe Haven gets the cart before the horse. On the day before the invasion the Brede basin produced 70% of the region's salt, and probably 90% of its timber and iron. It is implausible that bulk goods like these were hauled up, over and down the Hastings Ridge to be exported from Redgeland Wood when they could be exported by water via Old Winchelsea. If they were exported from *Winchelse* on the day before the invasion, Old Winchelsea was the major port in the region and the most likely place to have been *Hæstingaport*. This cannot be made wrong just because the Normans plundered elsewhere. Indeed, it is unlikely to change over the next decade or the next century. And the only unambiguous clues about the region's

major port – mid-12th century De Viis Maris, the 1204 Pipe Rolls and the 1227 Ship Service records – all list Old Winchelsea as the major port in the region. They have one minor entry for Bulverhythe and nothing for Redgeland.

There are flaws in all five of Austin's arguments that *Hæstingaport* was at Bulverhythe and Redgeland Wood. It has only superficial matches against the contemporary account landing site and camp descriptions. De Viis Maris lists no major ports between Old Winchelsea and Pevensey Levels and we think that there were none at the time of the invasion.

# Appendix C - Verifying the landing timing

It is interesting to check the order of events versus the tides and sunlight. Sunrise on the 28th of September was at 5.57, sunset at 17.44, low tide at 09:45, high tide at 16:00. Carmen suggests that the Normans left their mooring place near *pefenes ea* at sunrise. They would have aimed to disembark simultaneously at high tide when the estuary took them as high as possible up the bank. At any other time, there would have been a risk of horses and armoured men getting stuck in the mud and perhaps drowning. Tapestry Panel 39 depicts some men and horses disembarking. They are high up the riverbank on solid ground. The lead ship would need to get far enough up the Brede estuary - say to Brede Place - before high tide. Do the timings work?

According to Carmen, the Norman fleet reached their 'safe landing place' at the third hour of the day. Whether it means safe from sea cliffs or safe from storms, it would refer to *Winchelse* for a Brede landing. The third hour of the day would mean the lead ship arrived at *Winchelse* around 09:00, 45 minutes before low tide. If they needed a minimum of, say, 30 minutes to organise the midstream anchoring before landing, the lead ship had roughly six hours to get 10km to Brede Place. Their ability to achieve this depends on the wind and how long it took to cross the Camber spit, which in turn depends upon its width and when it opened.

If the Normans arrived just before low tide, it suggests that the cross-spit channel was open soon after low tide, if not always, perhaps because it was dredged. It seems likely then that the idea was to drift through the channel on the flood tide, steering with a pole. If Chesil Beach is a good model at 200m across, it would have taken around 10 minutes to make the crossing. Pearson and Leeman both depict the spit as roughly 1km wide at *Winchelse*, which would have taken more like 30 minutes. Worst case, assuming the crossing started soon after low tide, the lead ship had 5 hours to get 10km to Brede Place on a rising tide. The tide had to come through the main

lagoon entrance at Old Romney. It would be 30 minutes late and slow; more like a lock rising than a tidal bore. Perhaps it contributed 5km, leaving the lead ship to make 5km in five hours. The Viking Ship Museum in Roskilde, Denmark, told us that a fully manned Snekka could row at 2km per hour for five hours in a neutral wind. Even the Karvi could probably row 5km in five hours. The simultaneous landing would therefore be achievable in anything other than a westerly breeze.

But five hours of rowing after a sleepless night is far from ideal for a fighting force. As it happened, the English garrisons were empty. William was not to know. He expected to fight ashore and/or to face a garrison counterattack. Even though his troops would have been fit and strong, William would surely have hoped for some help from the wind as they made their way up the Brede. Even a modest southerly, south-easterly or easterly breeze, along with the flood tide, would give steerage way and comfortably take the lead ships to Brede Place in five hours without any exertion.

William's long wait for a southerly breeze is more evidence that he landed in the Brede. It is important to note that he waited for a southerly breeze while the fleet was at Dives-sur-Mer and while it was at St Valery, even though there was a 60° difference in the direction they needed to travel. Therefore, the wind direction was not relevant to the Channel crossing. Indeed, the westerly wind that carried the Norman fleet from Dives-sur-Mer to St Valery would have been perfect for a Channel crossing to near Pevensey. Rather, the wind direction must have been relevant to the landing.

It is clear that the Norman fleet was not trapped in port for a month by a northerly wind. For one, since records began, there have never been more than seven consecutive days of northerly wind in September in the Channel. For two, according to WP, the fleet was carried to St Valery on a westerly breeze. For three, Heimskringla says that the Norse army were without their armour two days before the Normans sailed because it was so

unseasonably warm. There is no reason a westerly, south-westerly, south-easterly or easterly might have jeopardised a landing in Pevensey Lagoon or Combe Haven. But they would jeopardise a landing in the Brede. A westerly or south-westerly would jeopardise passage up the Brede estuary. An easterly or south-easterly would jeopardise the passage from near Pevensey to *Winchelse*. If William intended to land in the Brede, he had to wait for a southerly breeze and a low tide between 08:00 and 12:00

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# Endnote

'Hæstingaport' and 'Hæstingaceastre' are usually translated as one capitalised word. The scan below clearly shows it as 'hæstinga port', two words. 'hæstinga ceastre' was the same. Both are word uncapitalised. We know it is wrong, but we will follow the modern practice of showing them as one capitalised word for the sake of readability.

n pophicon cascel ær hæsanga popir.

inge ge civos. The gavepave sa migcel
genep ær bæpe hapan apulopan.

n on unpæp æpsprpoligepilces