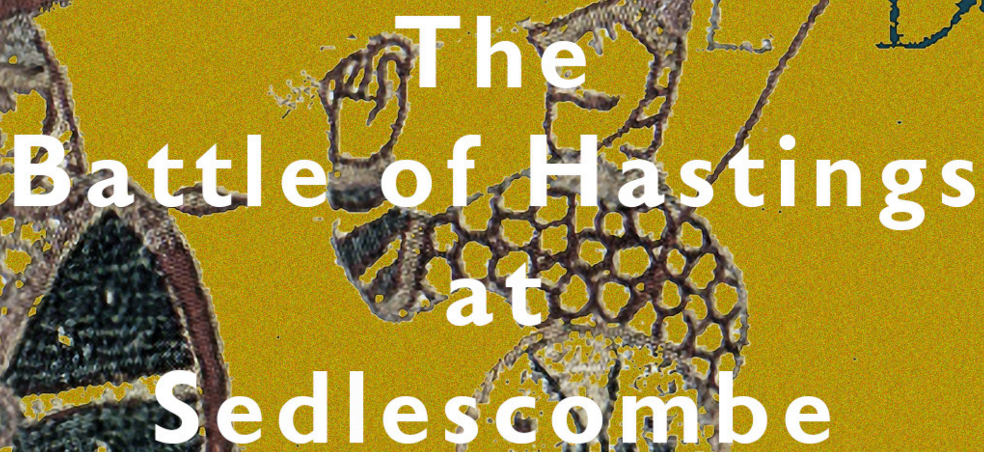

The Battle of Hastings at Sedlescombe

Jonathan Starkey & Michael Starkey

The Battle of Hastings
at
Sedlescombe

By

Jonathan and Michael Starkey

Third Edition – Rev 3f

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Acknowledgements

This manuscript doubtless contains more errors than we would like. They are entirely our responsibility. 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, and nature.

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Introduction

The exact location of the Battle of Hastings battlefield is uncertain because no one has 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. 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 adopted 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. One reason is that she believes 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. This yielded 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.

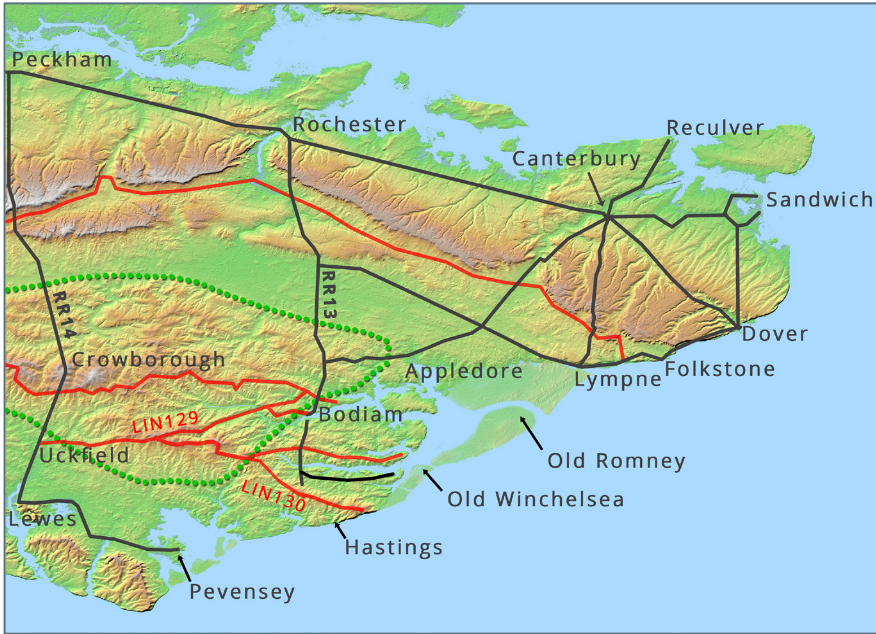

Figure 1: 1066 coastline showing Roman roads (black) and probable trackways (red)

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-mile-long shingle bar retained an enormous inland lagoon that eventually became Romney Marshes. A shorter shingle bar retained a lagoon that eventually became Pevensey Levels. All the places named on this diagram were there at the time, except modern 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 metalled Roman road. There were

only two metalled 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.

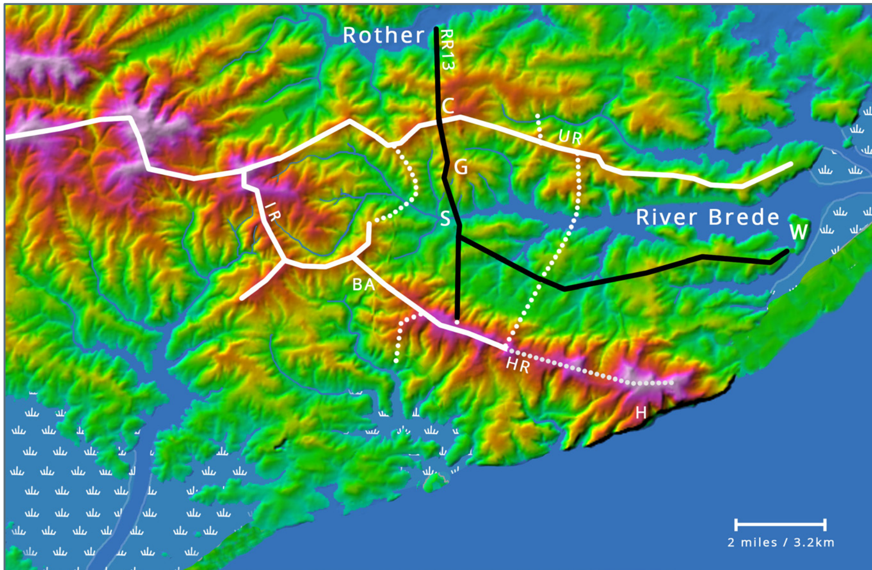

Figure 2: East Sussex geography and topography with roads

Figure 2 shows the East Sussex topography at the time of the invasion, with the Rochester Roman road in black. Some probable earthen tracks and ridgeways are shown in white, some possible earthen 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 invasion 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 31 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, we might have omitted contra-evidence, our research might be poor, or our reasoning might be faulty. It is not that anyone has found any examples of these issues, but they assume it would be a waste of their time to give our theory a chance because the orthodox battle narrative is based on two apparently incontrovertibly facts: 1) Every contemporary account says that the Normans camped at Hastings, in which case the battle was probably on the Hastings Ridge; 2) The battle's location is marked by Battle Abbey, which is on the Hastings Ridge. These 'facts' are not what they seem:

1. The Pipe Rolls for 1181/2 and 1182/3 refer to modern Hastings as '*Noue Hasting*'. The '*Noue*' disambiguates it from somewhere in the vicinity that was already known as 'Hastings' before the castle was built. So, the 'Hastings' referred to by the contemporary accounts, the place where they agree that the Normans camped, was this 'Old Hastings'. The only place it could not have been is modern Hastings.
2. The earliest claim that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield, and the likely source of all the others, was made by the monks of Battle Abbey in Brevis Relatio written around 1115. Their independence and wealth depended on the acceptance of this claim, and they are known to have run a fifty-year campaign of forgery and deceit to support it. The claim was almost certainly fabricated, along with the supposed evidence to support it. This is clear because: 1) Battle Abbey's original name was 'Sancti Martini de Bello', so it commemorated the Conquest not the battle; 2) No Christian abbeys have ever been built on places of violence. So, contrary to popular opinion, Battle Abbey provides definitive evidence that the battle was not fought at Battle.

There are 22 more reasons to believe that the battle was not fought where Battle Abbey was later built, listed in the 'Battlefield location clues' section on page 125. Perhaps the most telling is that the English army arrived at the theatre of war on the only metalled trunk road in the region, the Rochester Roman road. It crossed the Brede at Sedlescombe and terminated at modern Winchelsea. A climb up the Hastings Ridge would have been on earthen tracks, too steep for Harold's carts, so there is no way the English army could have got to the orthodox battlefield with their equipment.

We propose that the battle 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 our conjecture is obviously right, 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 the Brede before a food chain had been established. That 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 Harold's main 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 as we made the discoveries. They got big and messy. We were asked to amalgamate them 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.

Other non-orthodox battlefield candidates have been proposed. In our opinion, they are all fundamentally flawed. In previous editions of this document, we included a section entitled 'Alternative Battlefield Theories', which was necessary at the time due to the significant and vocal support for Nick Austin's Crowhurst battlefield theory. Given its prominence, it had

to be addressed. In fairness, we also discussed the other theories, despite their minimal support. Nick proposed that the Norman camp was at Upper Wilting, along the proposed route of the Bexhill Bypass. When objections to that route were eventually dismissed and work started, support for his theory dwindled, falling to the low level of the others. They became an unnecessary distraction here, so we moved that section to our website.[1]

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 31 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 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

[1] https://momentousbritain.co.uk/go/BOH_Alternative_Battlefield_Theories

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 this means. We are going to refer to them hereafter as '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 valid translations. Those translations often have multiple viable meanings. None of the placenames survive, apart from Battle. They lack modern understanding of geomorphology. 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 orthodox 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, and he is right. As a result, we approach our conjectures with caution, often prefacing them *"we*

think" (130 of these), "*we guess*" (26), "*we interpret this to mean*", "*surely*", etc. It makes our Battle of Hastings theory sound less authoritative than others, because they use more assertive terms such as "*This proves …*" and "*Certainly then, …*". 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 of them were written in Normandy to glorify Norman culture or their Norman patron. Troop numbers, casualty figures and heroic deeds cannot be trusted in any of them. The most detailed accounts – Wace, Carmen, Poitiers and Jumièges - are 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 they are all 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. Rather, they add flesh to the bones of a core revised narrative based on 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) and 'The Norman Conquest' by Marc Morris (Windmill Books) for the details, but there are dozens of alternatives.

A few words about ethnicity before the nitty-gritty. 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 correct 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. Of the rest, if Wace's list of the English army's home counties is accurate, there were at least as many ethnically Danish Jutes and Angles as there were ethnically Jastorf Saxons.

The Landing

The traditional Norman landing

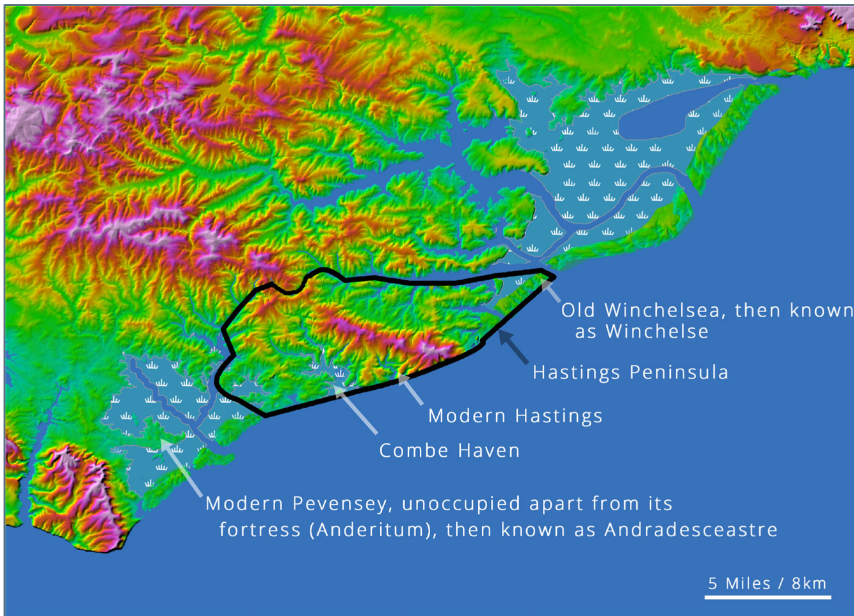

Figure 3: Some Saxon era East Sussex coastal features

Everyone knows the traditional Battle of Hastings landing narrative from our schooldays. 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*. Of these, the Tapestry

and ASC-D imply so 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.* Orderic refers to Pevensey castle as *Penevesellum* in Odo's obituary, Gesta Stephani repeatedly refers to Pevensey Castle as '*Penevesel castellum*', both implying that *Penevesel* is another cognate for *Pefenesea*. Eight independent references seem incontrovertible proof that the Normans initially landed at modern Pevensey. In addition, 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 landing accounts have been misinterpreted, as we will soon explain, and 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 *Pevenesel*, 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.

Bayeux Tapestry panel 40 shows the Norman landing. It is captioned: "*Here the knights have hurried to Hestinga to sieze food*". There might be some disagreement about the meaning of *Hestinga*, but it was on the Hastings Peninsula, on the other side of the huge Pevensey lagoon (Figure 3). The quickest land route was at least 25 miles, through 10 miles of marshland and 10 miles of primeval *Andredsweald* forest. It is implausible that the Norman knights would make this long and treacherous journey, and return

livestock on the same route, when plentiful livestock and grain could be found at Willingdon, four miles away along a Roman road.

The perilous land route from modern Pevensey to anywhere on the Hastings Peninsula is also inconsistent with contemporary account descriptions of the Norman army's move from their landing place to their permanent camp. The descriptions make the move sound trivial, as if they are immediately adjacent, whereas a move from modern Pevensey to anywhere on the Hastings Peninsula was anything but. Sir James Ramsay was clearly right when he pointed out 100 years ago that if, by accident or design, the Norman fleet entered Pevensey Lagoon, 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.

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 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 Pevenesel"*; 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 that 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* was the major port in the region. 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. Thus, *Hæstingaport* was not adjacent to modern Hastings - see Appendix A for more details.

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.[2] This was based on a petition raised by the canons of 'St Mary in the Castle' in the 13th century.[3] 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

[2] Château Gaillard European Castle Studies: III: conference at Battle, Sussex, 19-24 September 1966

[3] Public Record Office Ancient Petitions (SC 8), File 328, No E.668

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 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 wells, 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, the port of '*Hastinges*' 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.

Some landing background information

Contemporary account landing and camp descriptions

The only landing clues are in 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 in England 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, Heastinga, Heastingum, Hestingan, Hestinga, Hestenga, Hastingae, Hastingum, Hastinges, Hastingis, 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 consonantal u 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 by 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 the landing 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, warehouses and fisheries were at Old Winchelsea, a shingle island at the mouth of the Brede. That island 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* commercial centre, with businessmen, traders, and mint was 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 *Nove Hastinges*. As it gradually dropped the *Nove* part of its name during the 12th century: *Hæstingaport* was increasingly referred to as *Port de Hastinges* (Latinised to *Hastinges Portus*) by Normans in Normandy; *Hæstingaport* was increasingly referred to as *Wincenesel* by Normans in England; *Hæstingaceastre* was absorbed into *Iham* and *Wincenesel.*
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 in the centre 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 southesst 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 generally refer to the 11th century '*pefenes ea*' as 'Old Pevensey'.

9. The Norman fleet did not land at or near Old Pevensey but moored in the shallows offshore to wait for sunlight and the flood tide.
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. The Roman fortress of Anderitum is at modern Pevensey. It was garrisoned until a few weeks before the Norman invasion but was otherwise unoccupied. The fortress was known to the Saxons as *Andredesceaster* and later as '*castele a Pefenesea*'. It was known to the Normans as *Castelli Pevenesel*, Latinised to *Castrum Pevenesel*.
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.

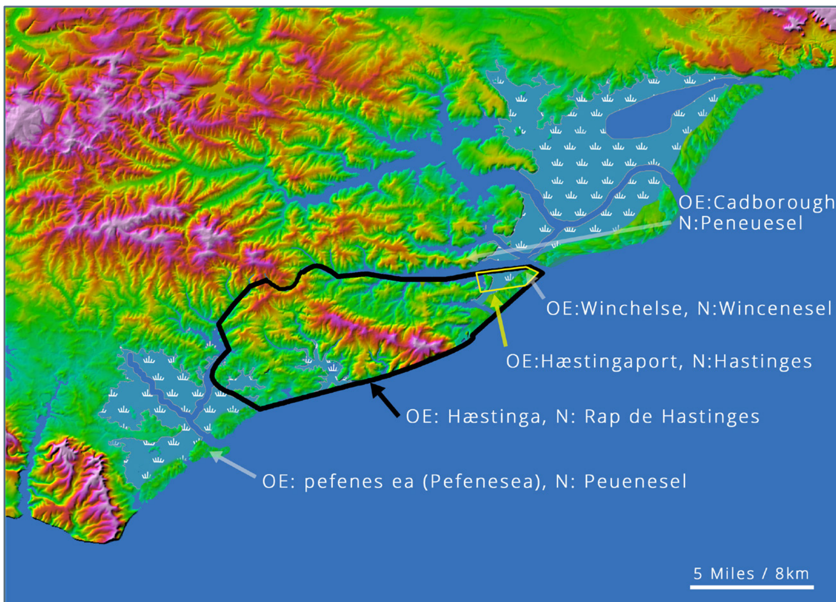

Figure 4: East Sussex post-Conquest place names

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 *Andredesceaster* 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* for *Hæstingaport*. The latter was usually abbreviated to *Hastinges*, Latinised to *Hastingas*.

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

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.

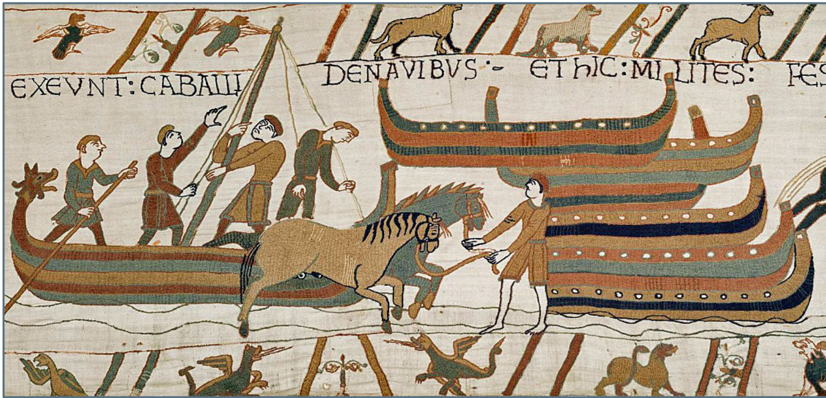

Figure 5: Tapestry Panel 39

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.

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

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 seized strand is sheltered, which means it is in an estuary or inlet. Carmen 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. Bexhill was a peninsula in those days, narrowing to 500m at its isthmus. It looks 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. So, the Normans used 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 sea-going 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. Gillmor calculated that most of the Norman fleet was requisitioned fishing and cargo vessels, most of which would have been small.

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, 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 reckons 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 re-transcribed 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 the Normans mooring 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, which makes military sense. It stretches 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. The scene is depicted on Tapestry Panel 39 (Figure 5). It is ambiguous. The unloaded boats have open oar ports, but that might have been done after they were unloaded. The ship being unloaded is aground with closed oar ports, so it was probably not rowed ashore. There is a man in the stern with a pole, which perhaps hints that it was poled ashore, but

it seems to us that he is holding the boat steady while the horses are unloaded. Its mast is up so, most likely, it was sailed 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.

A Brede estuary landing

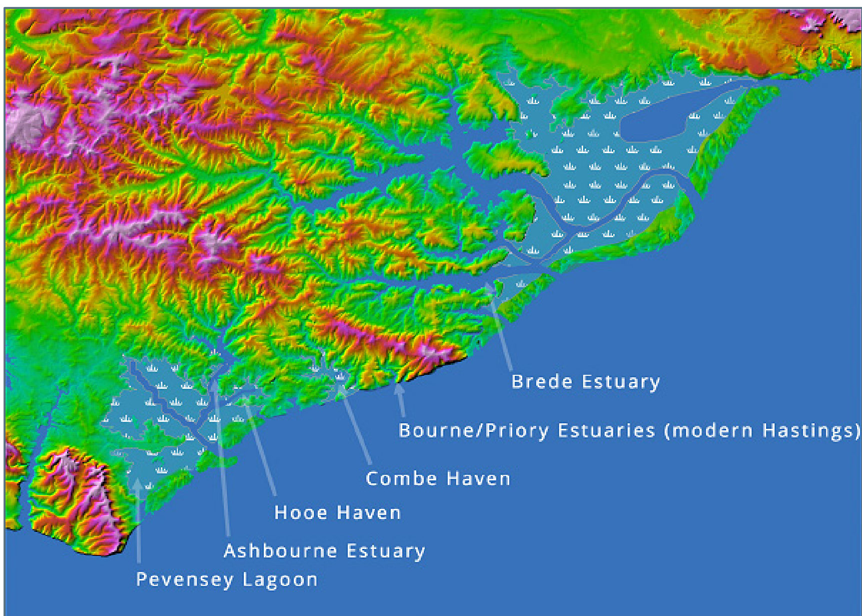

Figure 8: 11th century East Sussex coastline with landing site candidates

Figure 8 shows the 11th century East Sussex coastline. The only estuaries or inlets around the Hastings Peninsula that were 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'. Three points to note about the geography: 1) Pevensey Lagoon (now the Pevensey Levels), Combe Haven and the Brede estuary were open to the sea; 2) The estuaries were deeper and much wider than they are now; 3) Shingle bars retained Pevensey Lagoon and what is now the Romney Marshes.

Although the four candidates are all feasible, 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 smaller or more compact than we think. We will give them the benefit of the doubt.

Logistics does not help to narrow down the candidates. They were all close to fresh water. They all match Carmen's description of 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 Ashbourne 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.

Nick Austin favours a Combe Haven landing. We explain flaws in his evidence and in some of his arguments in Appendix B. All the genuine clues point to a Brede estuary landing:

1. The Brede estuary was crossed by the only metalled Roman trunk road in the region. Metalled roads linked this trunk road to Beauport Park and modern Winchelsea. They would have been used by the Normans for troop movement and foraging. The other candidates were close to ancient trackways and/or mining tracks which might have been adequate for Norman troop movement and foraging 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 that was overlooked by sea-cliffs, those at Cadborough.
3. Wace (Taylor): *"They arrived near Hastingues each ship ranged by the other's side."* Norman *Hastingues* referred to *Hæstingaport* at Old and modern Winchelsea, at the mouth of the Brede estuary.
4. Carmen (Barlow): *"[William] repairs the remnants of earlier fortifications"*. So, there were at least two extant fortresses near the landing site, neither of which were Anderitum at modern Pevensey. Warenne Chronicle says that the Normans passed safely between fortresses at *Hastingas* and *Penenesellum* as they entered England. This implies that the fortresses were either side of an estuary or inlet near 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. It was beside the Brede estuary. Note, there is LiDAR evidence of a Roman enclosure at Wilting that might be described as a fortification, but it is not on the coast and the Normans could not have passed it, so it matches neither clue.
5. Jo Kirkham proposed back in the 1990s that the Norman fleet landed in the Brede estuary because the invasion was planned by the monks of Fécamp Abbey who had a cell in Rameslie manor in the Brede basin. 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 are confident that Jo Kirkham is right.
6. Carmen says that the Norman fleet arrived at 'safe landing grounds' at the third hour of the day. It was not referring to the actual landing site because they expected it 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 ten-mile run to Bulverhythe, let alone a six-mile run to The Crumbles. It would be about right for the 20-mile reach to Old Winchelsea against the tide.

7. William waited in Normandy for nearly a month for a south wind. 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 he couldn't because there was a constant north wind. 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 probably from the 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).
8. Wace says that the Normans landed on a strand adjacent to a plain where they assembled a kit-fortress. The Brede's strand was adjacent to a hundred saltpans according to Domesday. Repeated top skimming of briny alluvium would have levelled the ground. It was perfect terrain for the landing, firm enough underfoot to support mounted horses and flat enough to assemble a kit-fortress without first digging a motte. Why were the saltpans there? It was protected from storms and flooding by the Camber shingle bar. It has an east-west orientation to keep the north bank out of shade. There were similar saltpans in Hooe Haven, but only 30 according to Domesday, not enough to land half the Norman fleet.
9. Poitiers, Jumièges and Orderic say that the Normans initially landed at *Peneveselllum*. This is a Latin format name that is only used by Normans.

The only likely reason that Normans might have had a Latin 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 provide another possible clue. Note first 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 other coasts 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) depict the Norman landing site. The

characters are on a non-bobbly baseline without a foreground building or motte in sight. It is the only outdoor scene on a non-bobbly baseline, apart from sea, rivers, hills, buildings and mines. We interpret this to mean that the landing site was as flat and smooth as a road. 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. Hooe Haven had too few saltpans to land half the Norman fleet. The Brede matched it perfectly.

Figure 11: Tapestry Panel 41

The huts in the background of Panel 41 (Figure 11) corroborate a salt-evaporation plain landing. One is weatherboard with a timber roof, one weatherboard with a tile roof, the third is stone with a tile roof. This at a time when nearly all dwellings in England were wattle and daub with a thatched roof. They are the only modest buildings on the entire Tapestry – i.e., not fortresses, churches or manor houses – so they probably say something salient about the geography. We think they were evaporation chambers, where brine was concentrated to crystallise salt. If so, those huts would have been beyond the evaporation ponds, exactly as depicted.

The only significant argument against a Brede estuary landing is the danger of getting stuck. The main entrance to the Romney Marshes lagoon was at Old Romney. The Normans did not use it. We know because Wace reports

that several ships landed there by mistake; their crews getting killed by the local inhabitants. Therefore, if the Normans landed in the Brede, they had to cross the Camber shingle bar through a more southerly channel or canal.

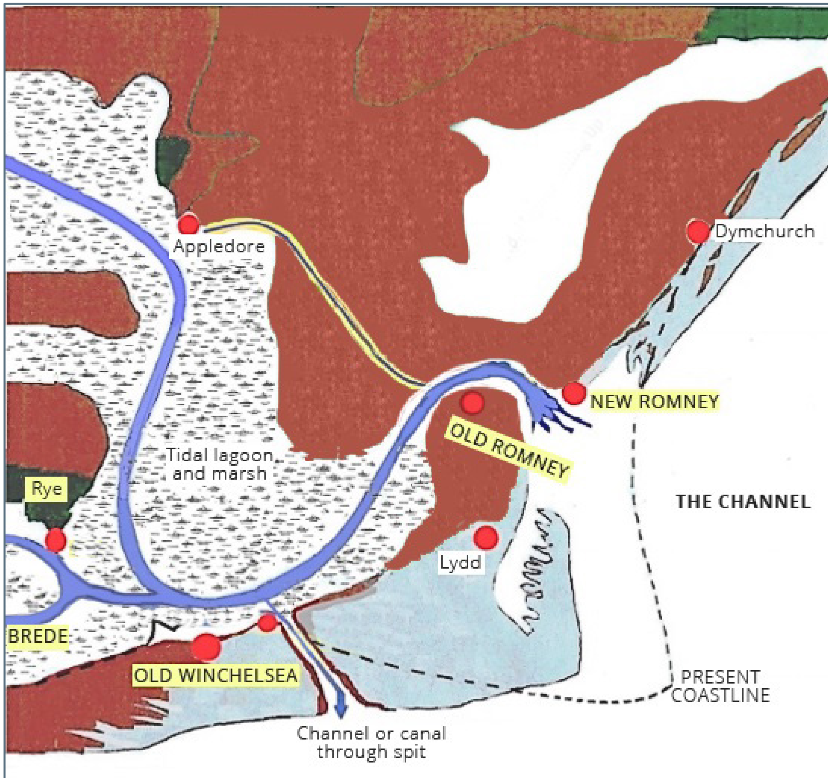

Figure 12: Romney Marsh in medieval times after Bernard Leeman

Andrew Pearson, Bernard Leeman, Andrew Long and others (Figure 64 and Figure 12) show the Camber crossing at Old Winchelsea. We doubt it was that narrow, but it might have been. Either way, getting 700 ships through on one flood tide would have needed stringent timing, discipline, and no crosswind or headwind. The wind is important. We guess that ships normally rowed through the gap, but this would have been too slow for the invasion, and several accounts say that the Normans never had to use their oars. Norman ships had no centreboard or daggerboard, so they slipped horribly in a cross-wind. The prevailing south-westerly wind could easily

have led to the fleet getting beached on the marshy east bank, perhaps drowning or injuring horses, and scuppering the invasion.

In our opinion, William reasoned that the benefits (listed above) of landing in the Brede outweighed the danger of crossing the Camber shingle bar, as long as they did not have a crosswind or headwind. So, William waited for a southerly breeze. 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 more favourable. We think that William's long wait for a southerly breeze is good evidence for a Brede landing. Appendix C gives one more cross check, by working out the approximate timing against the tides.

A Brede north bank landing

The Normans could have landed on either or both banks of the Brede. Wace clearly says that they did not land on both: *"The ships steered to one port [or 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."* So, they landed on one bank, but which, north or south? The evidence suggests the north:

1. Wace (Taylor): *"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."* So, there was a plain adjacent to the landing strand, and it was firm enough to support mounted knights. As we say above, we think it was a plain of dried out salt-evaporation ponds. Those ponds would have been on the 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"*. We think that the Tapestry's *Hestinga* referred to the Hastings Peninsula. 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. Three early and trusted accounts say that the Normans landed at *Penevesellum*, one says that they passed a fortress at *Penevesellum* during their landing, two more say that the Normans repaired fortresses at *Penevesellum* soon after they landed. We think *Penevesellum* was on the Brede north bank, as we will explain in the next section.
4. 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. There was no equivalent on the Brede south bank.

In summary, the clues point to a Brede north bank landing, albeit short of proof. It would help to tie down *Penevesellum's* location.

Penevesellum

Poitiers, Jumièges and Orderic specifically say that the Normans landed at Penevesellum. We conclude above that they landed in the Brede estuary. If so, *Penevesellum* was in the Brede estuary. Some of the evidence in the contemporary accounts disagrees, so it needs to be reviewed. Here are the references to *Penevesellum* in event order:

- Orderic (Chibnall): *"When Harold of England learned of the arrival of the Norwegians, he abandoned Hastingas and Penevesellum and the other seaports opposite Neustria"*.
- Warenne Chronicle (Van Houts): "*[William] crossed to England; without any resistance, between the forts of Hastinges and Penenesellum [sic] he entered the land of the English*".
- Poitiers (Chibnall): *"Carried by a favourable breeze to Penevesellum, they disembarked easily from the ships, without having to offer battle"*.
- Poitiers (Chibnall): *"The Normans, rejoicing after they had landed, occupied Penevesellum with their first fortification, and Hastingas with their second, as*

a refuge for themselves and a defence for their ships".

- Jumièges (Van Houts): *"[William] landed at Penevesellum, where he built a strongly entrenched fortification which he entrusted to his valiant warriors. Thence he speedily went to Hastingas where he built another one".*
- Orderic (Chibnall): *"They [the Normans] took possession of Penevesellum and Hastingas and gave them into the charge of certain soldiers as a base for the army and shelter for the fleet".*
- Quedam Exceptiones (Tyson): *"[William] landed at Penevesel, where at once he restored the most strongly entrenched fortification".*
- Poitiers' account of William's return to Normandy in 1067 (Chibnall): *"The king, having thus provided for the governance of the kingdom, betook himself to Penevesellum - a place whose name, we consider, deserves to be remembered because it was there that he had first landed".*
- Orderic's account of William's return to Normandy in 1067 (Chibnall): *"The king [William], having provided for the administration of the kingdom, betook himself to Penevesellum, where many Englishmen of high rank came to meet him".*
- Gesta Stephani's account of Odo's rebellion (Potter): *"Penevesel is a castle rising on a very lofty mound, fortified on every side by a most beautiful wall, fenced impregnably by the washing waves of the sea".*
- Orderic's account of Odo's rebellion: *"At his [William's] suggestion Robert, count of Mortain, had held Penevesellum".* According to Domesday, Robert held the manor of *Pevenesel* which included Old and modern Pevensey, but he did not hold any manors near the Brede estuary.

Most of these statements are vague about *Penevesellum's* location but the last two, both accounts of Odo's rebellion, are specific. They unequivocally say that it referred to Anderitum at modern Pevensey and *Penevesellum* sounds a bit like *Pevenesel* (albeit n/v switched), the post-Conquest Norman name for the manor and rape that encompassed modern Pevensey. No references specifically contradict this notion and there are no other places in the region from which the name might derive, so historians have good reason to believe that *Penevesellum,* like *Pevenesel,* is a Pevensey cognate.

But Poitiers, Jumièges and Orderic say the Normans landed at *Penevesellum* and they would not have landed west of the Pevensey Lagoon, for the many reasons we list in the Traditional Norman Landing section on page 17. And it is inconsistent with some of the other *Penevesellum* references. Jumièges, for one, because there is no way that William could have moved 'speedily' from the west side of Pevensey Lagoon to *Hastingas* on the east side through ten miles of salt-marsh and ten miles of untracked woodland. The gap would also preclude Orderic's claims that *Penevesellum* and *Hastingas* were defended by *"one body of men"* and that they were a joint *"base for the army"*. It is also inconsistent with CBA, ASC, the Tapestry and others that say or infer the initial landing place was close to *Hastingas*, because *Hastingas* was at least fifteen miles away on the far side of Pevensey Lagoon.

The Warenne Chronicle might provide evidence for *Penevesellum's* location, but it is confused by Elizabeth Van Houts's translation. She suggests it is saying that William entered the land of the English between a fortress at *Hastinges* and the fortress of *Anderitum*. It seems unlikely.

First, Van Houts's translation is geographically weird. If, as she thinks, the Normans landed at modern Pevensey, they would have entered England through the Crumbles shingle bar, which was between modern Pevensey and anywhere that might have been *Hastinges* when viewed from the sea. But it is like describing Truro as between Penzance and Hamburg: accurate but too misleading to be plausible. If the Normans landed at modern Pevensey, there was no reason to mention a fortress at *Hastinges*.

Second, in its strict meaning, it is only geographically accurate if the Normans landed on the north bank of Pevensey peninsula, which seems implausible. It was only 2km long, too short to land even half the Norman fleet, separated from Pevensey Haven by saltmarsh, and it was narrow and bendy, quite unlike the flat plain landing area described by Wace.

Third, the Latin manuscript uses the term '*atque*': *"in Angliam transvehitur, nulloque resistente inter duo castra Hastinges atque Penenesellum, terram*

Anglorum ingreditur". This '*atque*' is a conjunction often equivalent to '*et*', both meaning 'and'. They are interchangeable in many circumstances, but '*atque*' is usually preferred when there is a link between its subjects. It would be preferred in modern English terms like 'salt and pepper', 'Simon and Garfunkel', 'Chelsea and Westminster'. It seems to us that there is too much distance between *Anderitum* and anywhere that the fortress of *Hastinges* might have been to justify this use of '*atque*'.

Finally, Van Houts has changed its meaning of the sentence by moving the comma from after '*Penenesellum*' to before '*inter*'. The natural translation is: "*without resistance between the two fortresses at Hastinges and Penenesellum, he entered the land of the English*". Moving the comma makes her translation imply that the Normans faced no resistance during the entire landing. She presumably did this to match other accounts that say the Normans landed unopposed, but it is not what the Warenne Chronicle says.

Presumably, Van Houts changed the punctuation because the natural translation of the first phrase makes no sense if *Penenesellum* referred to modern Pevensey. It would be saying that the Normans faced no resistance as they sailed from modern Pevensey to somewhere on the Hastings Peninsula. They would be sailing northeast along a rocky lee shore, so they would at least a kilometre out to sea. A medieval trebuchet had a maximum range of about 300m, a ballista perhaps 500m, nowhere near long enough to resist the Norman fleet when they were this far at sea.

We think it more likely that the Warenne Chronical statement means exactly what it says: That the Normans entered England in an inlet or estuary that had fortresses on either side, one at *Hastinges*, the other at *Penenesellum*. We presume that it mentions the lack of resistance because they sailed within trebuchet range of one or both fortresses. The fortress at *Hastinges* would have been *Hæstingaceastre*, Alfred's burh fortress which we believe was at modern Winchelsea for a bunch of reasons we list in Appendix A. If so, *Penenesellum* was on the other side of the Brede estuary. This is consistent with its Latin format name, presumably coined by the

Latin speaking monks that held Rameslie manor which lined the Brede estuary. Several trusted accounts say that the Normans landed at *Penevesellum*, so the author got the second 'n' wrong not the first.

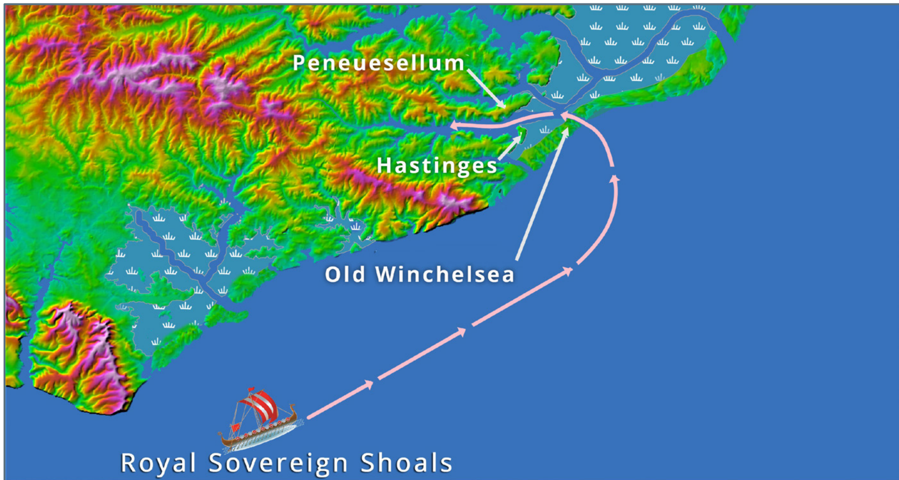

Figure 13: Norman fleet route for Brede landing

If we are right about a Brede estuary landing, *Penevesellum* did not refer to modern Pevensey, so Orderic and Gesta Stephani are wrong. They were written more than 50 years after the Conquest about a place the authors never visited. Which is more likely: That the Normans landed on the west side of the Pevensey Lagoon or that Orderic and Robert of Bath (Gesta Stephani's author) were confused by an obscure placename that had lapsed thirty years or more before they were writing. We are convinced that Orderic and Robert were confused, and that *Penevesellum* was on the north bank of the Brede estuary.

Penevesellum's exact location

It might be possible to narrow down *Penevesellum's* exact location. We had a go at this in the first edition of this book. As we said therein, the name looks like a Latin conjunction of *Penevesel*, the name used by Quedam Exceptione for the landing site. 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'. 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 therefore revised our opinion.

The last syllable of *Penevesel* is interesting because *'sel'* is the Frankish and Old French (and modern French) word for 'salt', the Brede estuary's primary medieval product. It is related to *'sal'* and *'sealt'* the Latin and Old English words for 'salt'. *'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 enclosure', a fortification to defend the saltpans. Kathleen Tyson translates the name rather differently, as 'fortress in the wash'. It is just as plausible.

Both placename translations suggest that *Penevesellum* was a fortress or stronghold. There is corroborating evidence. Quedam Exceptione says that William restored a fortress near where he landed at *Penevesel*. Carmen says that William restored fortresses at his landing site. These restored fortresses were in addition to the kit fortress that Poitiers and Jumièges say that the Normans built near where they landed. Warenne Chronicle says that there was a fortress at *Penevesellum*, opposite a fortress at *Hastingas*. Orderic says that *Penevesellum* was abandoned shortly before the Normans landed, giving the impression that it was some sort of garrisoned stronghold.

This evidence suggests that *Penevesellum* was a fortification on the north bank of the Brede, opposite *Hæstingaceastre* at modern Winchelsea. Yeakell & Gardner's map (Figure 14), surveyed around 1780, 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 circumscribe 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.

Figure 14: Yeakell & Gardner Cadborough in 1770

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 argument. Udimore has shown no archaeological evidence of pre-Conquest occupation, let alone of a fort. It has a severely restricted sea view that 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-tide 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'. We think that the fortress at *Penevesellum* is more likely to have been at Cadborough than at Court Lodge. It is closer to the sea, protected by a sea cliff to the south, has a wider sea view, and better fits the etymology and the contemporary account *Penevesellum* clues.

If we are right, the Norman fleet sailed northeast from their overnight mooring on the Royal Sovereign Shoals, then passed between the fortress of *Hæstingaceastre* (known to Normans as *Hastinges*) at modern Winchelsea and *Penevesellum* at modern Cadborough (as depicted on Figure 13).

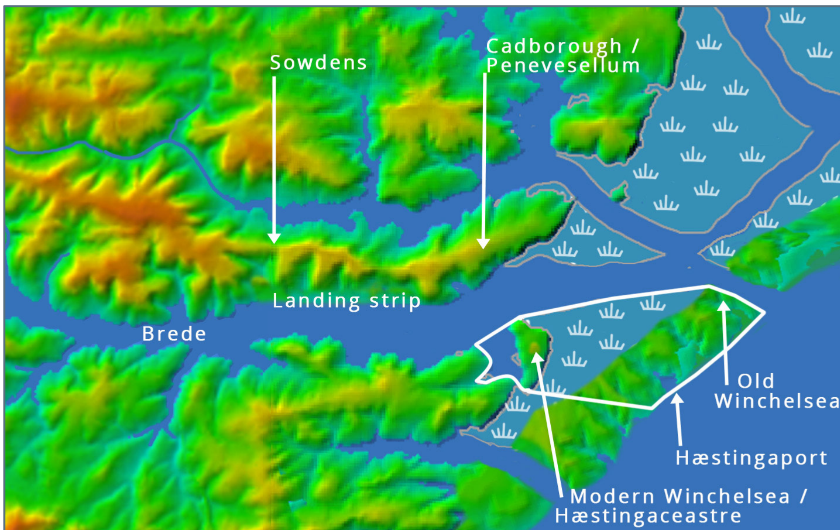

Figure 15: Brede estuary 11th century place names

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, labelled 'Landing strip' on Figure 15. 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 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 the Normans 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. However, the mint might not have changed their 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 Sedlescombe hoard is often said to be Harold's war chest. It seems unlikely. The coins were low denominations. The mint at *Hæstingaceastre* 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 low denomination coins minted at *Hæstingaceastre*. They were probably used and collected locally.

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 spirit the coins away 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. We guess that they buried the coins as soon as they saw the Norman knights, then fled and never returned.

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: *"[William] 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 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"*. 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. But where was it? Those same accounts, as well as the Tapestry and CBA, say that the Normans soon moved to another camp. But 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 16: Tapestry Panel 42

First, the fortress. Tapestry Panel 42 (Figure 16) shows cooks working in front of a towered structure at the first Norman camp. This is usually 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 believe 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 supported 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. While the bobbles could be a mistake, we suspect that they indicate both buildings are far distant, beyond bobbly fields. If so, the building on Panel 42 (Figure 16) 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.

The Normans did build a prefabricated kit fortress at their first camp. Jumièges says that it had a strong rampart. Wace says they brought the stakes from Normandy and pegged it together near the landing site. Earlier, Wace 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 determine its location.

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.

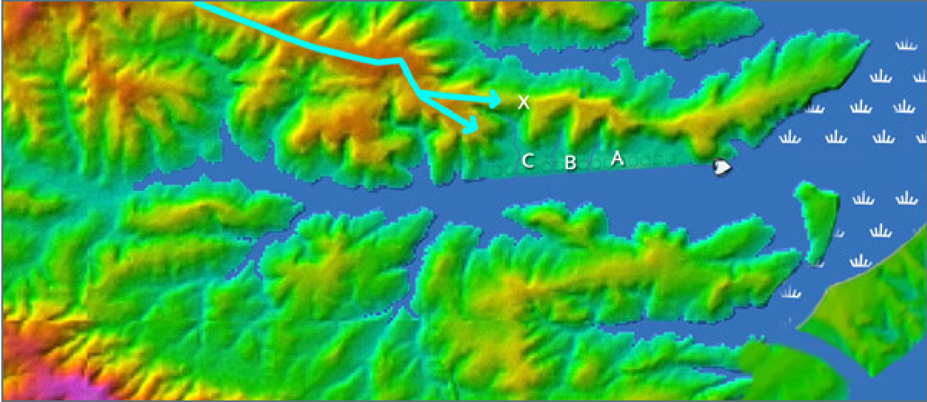

Figure 17: Bridgehead fortress location

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 most obvious observation place was Float Farm, south of Cock Marling, where a spur approached the water's edge (eye in Figure 17). 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.

On the day of the invasion, the major English garrisons in the vicinity – at Lympne, Pevensey and *Hæstingaceastre* at modern Winchelsea - were empty, 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 17.

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 it 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 brief 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 caucus that evening and it was there that they decided to move to modern Winchelsea, probably the day after Michaelmas Day. Even so, Norman scouts and foragers 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. It was overlooked by the Sowdens pinch point, ideal to block a counterattack. And William expected the south bank to be defended by a garrison at modern Winchelsea.

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 Peninsula 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"*. ASC-D says that: *"soon after his landing was effected, they built a fortress at Hæstingaport"*. 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'. It 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 18: Tapestry Panel 45

We explain in Appendix A why *Hæstingaport* encompassed Old Winchelsea *(Winchelse)* on the Camber shingle bar and modern Winchelsea. Tapestry Panel 45 (Figure 18) 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 island 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) 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 18) 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 an old fortification, typically a former Roman fortification. 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, and others - reckon that *CEASTRA* is a misspelling of '*castra*', Latin for 'camp', separate from the main caption and there to indicate the location of the Norman camp. 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 raised level ground upon which a castle keep 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.

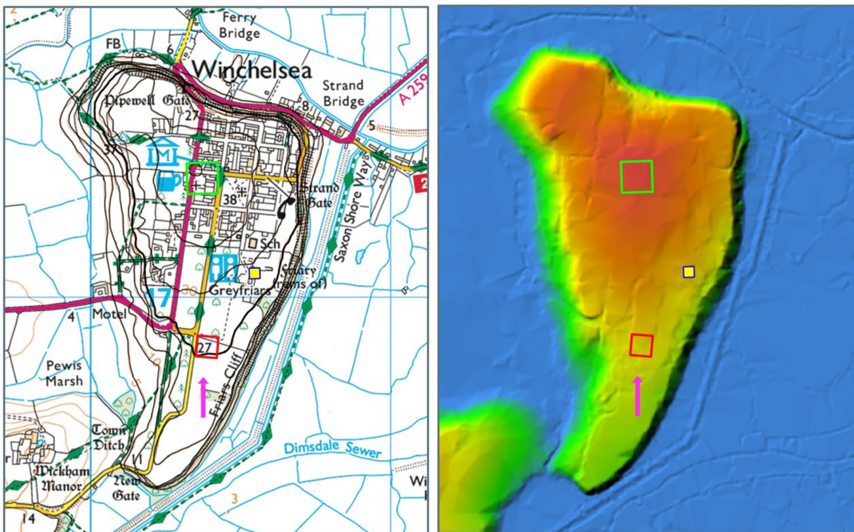

Figure 19: Artist's view for Tapestry Panel 45

Figure 19 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? It is timber framed, so Anglo-Saxon in origin, already there when the Normans 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 Anglo-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. Nearly all those that survive are stone belltowers that were originally attached to monasteries. There must have been many more Saxon timber belltowers, but none survive, so there is no way to know how they looked. We think it unlikely to be a belltower: 1) No monastery is visible near the Tapestry tower; 2) 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. 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 20), 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 20: 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 it 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 21: Monastery from Panel 48 (L); Sea Camp from Panel 45 (R)

We note that the top of the Panel 45 tower (Figure 21, 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 the 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.

More likely, we think, the Tapestry tower's 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 codified 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* walls were too high to see the port below or it was reserved for military use whereas the timber tower was for civilian port administration.

The commanders' plans

Harold's plan

One of the most baffling aspects of the Conquest is why Harold would jeopardise his life, dynasty and kingdom by venturing within striking range of the enemy, especially with a poorly equipped understrength army.

Traditionally, it is said that Harold was driven by a red haze to attempt a surprise attack on the heavily fortified Norman camp supported only by the men immediately available to him. Then, upon arrival at the theatre of war, he supposedly realized his folly and decided instead to defend the miserably inadequate ridge where Battle Abbey now stands. Rather than deploy his troops in a relatively secure enclosed loop, he supposedly deployed them in a line across one side of the hill, gambling that William was too inept to ride around the open ends of the line to kill him and secure victory before a blow had been struck in anger. It all seems very unlikely.

Our focus here is on Harold's plan, not his response to supposed events. The only aspect he might have premeditated is the surprise attack. It has some supporting evidence. Jumièges says that Harold was enraged by 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."* Similarly, Poitiers says that: *"the king in his fury had hastened his march … he [Harold] thought that in a night or surprise attack he might defeat them"*. They seem to agree that a furious Harold raced down to the theatre of war intending to launch a surprise attack, which can only have been on the Norman camp.

Yet, Harold was not impulsive or hot headed. His 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." This is not the portrait of someone who would kick his mother, or jeopardise his life, his dynasty or his race in a fit of impetuosity. Moreover, a surprise attack on the Norman camp is implausible:

1. Poitiers and Wace explain that William and Harold exchanged messages as the English army advanced towards Sussex, so Harold knew that William knew his location and could not be taken by surprise.
2. Jumièges, Poitiers and Wace explain that William prepared his defence against an attempted surprise attack.
3. Harold would not have left half his army behind if he intended an immediate attack on the fortified and prepared Norman camp.
4. Harold would not have left his archers and horsemen behind if he intended any sort of attack on the Norman camp – note that he took big contingents of both to the Battle of Stamford bridge.
5. There were only three crossing points for an army to get onto the Hastings Peninsula, all narrow, ambush prone and bound to be guarded. The English could not have entered the Hastings Peninsula unnoticed, and it is inconceivable that Harold would try to cross onto the Hastings Peninsula before the other side of his preferred crossing point had been thoroughly scouted and cleared which would have taken days.

One interpretation of Jumièges and Poitiers' statements is that Harold intended a surprise attack on the Norman camp when he left London, realised enroute that William could not be taken by surprise, but decided to attack the Norman camp anyway. It is even less plausible. The English and Normans had roughly the same number of men, but the Normans had thousands of archers and cavalry while the English had none. A surprise

attack on an unprepared Norman camp had very little chance of success. A bludgeon attack on a prepared fortified Norman camp had none.

Norman sources were not privy to conversations in the English court. They probably extrapolated Harold's frame of mind and his intention to launch a surprise attack from what they saw: Harold placing himself within their striking distance protected by a feeble army. It would have been logical to conclude that he was behaving irrationally through anger or stupidity. But that does not make it right.

Harold had four obvious strategies to evict the Normans: to attack and defeat them, to starve them, to buy them off, or to lure William into an ambush. Each of the first three strategies, and probably the fourth, would only be effective if the invaders were first weakened by a blockade. The absence of English archers or cavalry suggests this was Harold's immediate objective, insofar as they would not be needed for a blockade. Poitiers and Wace report that Harold immediately sent messengers and scouts into the theatre of war, presumably to assess the enemy's strength and deployment. It seems likely that, based on this intelligence, Harold dispatched what he thought would be enough men to blockade the Normans on the Hastings Peninsula. Then, once he thought the Normans were trapped, he went down in person. Jumièges seems to corroborate this by implying that Harold rode overnight to an established English camp.

If Harold's strategy was to evict the Normans by an attack or siege, he had no reason not to delegate the task brother Gyrth. The fact that he went in person suggests he intended to meet William, either to negotiate his return to Normandy or hoping to ambush him. The intended meeting is corroborated by ASC-D which says: *"com him togenes æt þære haran apuldran"*. *'togenes',* the root of the modern word 'together', typically means 'to meet', so it is saying: 'Harold went to meet him [William] at *haran apuldran*'. Early translations, such as those by Ingram, Thorpe, and Swanton agree. However, 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 probably 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'*. It seems likely that modern translators have been duped into an obscure translation of *togenes* to avoid contradicting the orthodox engagement narrative.

The leaders' strategies can be inferred from Carmen which says that William warns his men that Harold intends (Barlow): *"…to conquer not by force but by deceit and, while pledging his faith with his lips, to hand out death"*. It quotes William saying that Harold intended to (Tyson): *"trap and ambush us"*. She translates Latin *'fallere'* to 'ambush' rather than its usual 'deceive' but we think she is right. William's envoy returns from the English camp to report (Tyson): *"Without warning he [Harold] hopes he may ambush you"*. Finally (Barlow), *"while he [Harold] sought to deceive, he was himself deceived and destroyed"*. Carmen is clearly suggesting that Harold and William each planned to ambush the other. It implies they had agreed to a face-to-face meeting. Negotiations between commanders generally took place on bridges or islands. In this region, the likely meeting place and mutual ambush would have been on Sedlescombe bridge over the Brede.

Why did Harold have an understrength army? The answer lies in logistics and his intended blockade. The Andredsweald forest was vast, sparsely populated, and devoid of food sources other than skittish wild animals. The English could have eaten the oxen that pulled their carts, but they would not last long. Thereafter, the English would need a steady supply of food to maintain a blockade. The only rich farmland in that area was on the Hastings Peninsula, already impounded to feed William's army. The remainder of the Rother Peninsula, according to Domesday, had just 35 acres of meadowland, and William might have already taken its livestock. The nearest source of plentiful food would have been Maidstone and Ashford, both 25km away. A blockade takes time to have an effect. It might have taken weeks to soften William's negotiating demands, or months to

starve the Normans into submission. Even for a king, it would have been very challenging to drive hundreds of sheep, cattle and carts 25km across the Andredsweald every day for months. Thus, Harold was forced to compromise, bringing no cavalry or archers, and the minimum number of infantry that would be needed to establish a blockade.

Some historians, realising that Harold would not have launched an immediate attack on the Norman camp, agree that he intended a blockade, but propose that it was at or near modern Battle hoping to trap the Normans on the barren southeastern end of the Hastings Ridge. They are confused about the roads, which we discuss two sections hence. For here, it is enough to explain that the Normans, from their sea camp on the coast, could leave the Hastings Peninsula on the Rochester Roman road without going within two miles of Battle. Indeed, if the English were camped at modern Battle, the Normans would have used the Rochester road to loop around and to attack on the level ground from the north, not up the slope from the south, thereby contradicting all the contemporary accounts.

Harold therefore intended, initially at least, to blockade the entire Hastings Peninsula. If the blockade was successful and he had camped at a safe distance from an enemy, he would have been victorious. Something went wrong. Poitiers, Jumièges, Wace, Carmen and others report that Harold, while still in London, sensibly dispatched messengers and spies to scout the enemy position, strength, fortifications. They must have reported that it was safe to venture beyond the Andredsweald or he would not have crossed the Rother. This implies that Harold planned to camp north of the Brede and that he thought it was safe because his men could defend the river's crossing points. We will return to this in the English Camp section below. Unfortunately, Harold's intelligence was faulty, probably because his scouts were hoodwinked, as we will explain in the section about 'William's plan'. This is what led to his downfall.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle does not report the details, but what it says is an accurate description of the essential events: Harold went to the theatre

of war to meet William, he thought he had camped at a safe place and safe distance, but William came against him unexpectedly.

William's plan

Ceteris paribus, William's chances of a successful Conquest were negligible. Harold could have raised an army five times larger than William's. If the invaders were blockaded and besieged, or if Harold implemented a Fabian strategy, William would eventually have been forced back to Normandy. Worse, William needed to kill Harold quickly, before his army got depleted by sickness and before Harold levied too many men. Ideally, he needed to lure Harold into an ambush, but Harold had no incentive to leave London.

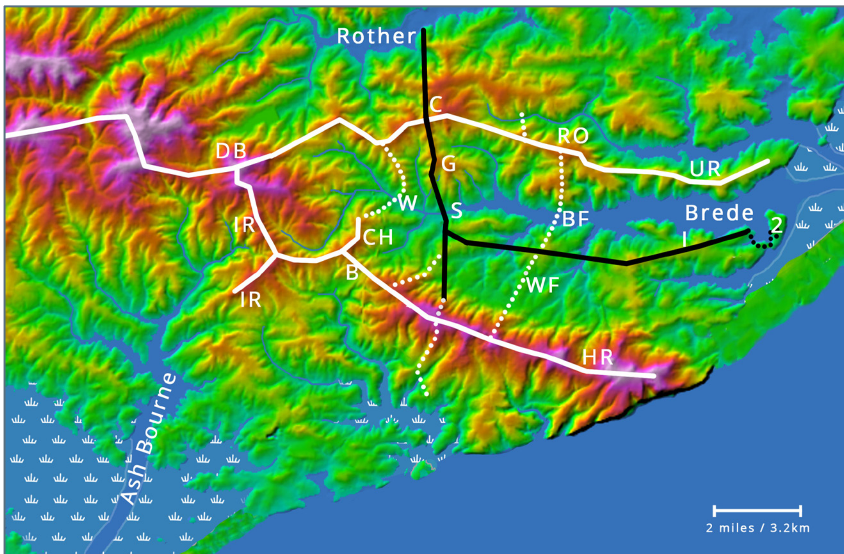

Figure 22: East Sussex topography, roads and trackways

William's opportunity lay in East Sussex's unique geography: a narrow-necked peninsula within a narrow-necked peninsula crossed by a steep sided watershed – these are the Hastings peninsula, Rother peninsula, and Brede basin respectively. They provided serial chances for an ambush or trap. The isthmuses are barely 1km and 500m across, ideal for an ambush or trap. The Brede basin watershed – Udimore Ridge to north, Hastings Ridge to the south and Isthmus Ridge to the west (see Figure 22) – was

another trap. The River Brede crossing points were perfect for an ambush or trap. William knew all this before leaving Normandy: he aimed for the Hastings Peninsula, landed there, camped there, and did not move before the battle. He must have been advised by someone with expert local knowledge, likely monks of Fécamps who had a cell in the Brede basin.

William's biggest challenge was to lure Harold beyond the Rother, the first of the ambush and entrapment opportunities. According to Norman accounts, William goaded Harold down to the theatre of war by ravaging his ancestral lands on the Hastings Peninsula. They are trying to portray Harold as a rash and impulsive fool, but he was far from that, as we explain in the previous section. Doubtless, the Normans did ravage the land – lots of accounts says so, and all the nearby manors were 'wasted' in Domesday. However, by the time Harold got the news, it was too late to prevent the destruction, and he was too rational and composed to have jeopardised his life and his kingdom to retaliate for what was no more than a minor insult.

Carmen explains – see previous section – what was really going on: William and Harold each intended to deceive the other, probably by an ambush. It has the ring of truth, because there is no other reason Carmen would accuse William of such unheroic behaviour. As Frank Barlow points out, Carmen justifies William's underhand tactics by saying that he always prefers to fight, but if his enemy tries to be deceitful, he is better at that too.

The only obvious way Harold and William might have deceived their way to victory is if they agreed to meet. While Harold intended to ambush William at the meeting place (see above), we think William was one step ahead, intending to trap Harold at the English camp before the meeting took place (see the section 'William's trap'). Our evidence is that William seems to have been sandbagging, as if trying to mollify Harold's fears by pretending that his army was small and impotent. William's method was threefold. Firstly, he placed himself and his barons at modern Winchelsea, as far as possible from the oncoming English army and visible from Cadborough across the Brede. Secondly, William dispatched his knights

and perhaps half of his infantry to forage for food every day, thereby dispersing them thinly over the Hastings Peninsula. This would be why, as Poitiers reports, William's knights were away from the Norman 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 had not. Thirdly, William escorted two of Harold's scouts around the Norman camp and sent them back to Harold. With most of the Norman cavalry out foraging, the scouts would have reported that the invaders were perhaps half their actual number of men, remote, toothless and mostly footbound.

Harold would have thought that he had plenty of men to blockade the three main Hastings Peninsula egress points against a Norman infantry attack. Once the blockade was in place, Harold would have felt secure to cross the Rother, thinking that the footbound Normans were impotent on the other side of the River Brede. Unfortunately, unbeknownst to Harold, the Normans had a huge cavalry that could ride around ridgeways to trap the English between the Rother and Brede or between the Udimore Ridge and the Brede, depending on how far they advanced. The English would have been worse off had they advanced further by trying to cross the Brede, as it would have allowed the Normans to ambush them on boggy riverbanks.

Harold's ignorance of the Norman cavalry is described by Wace, who says that Harold discovers the enormous number of Norman horsemen on the morning of the day of battle, having discovered only the previous day that they had a significant number of horses. Wace goes on to say that Harold blames the Count of Flanders (Taylor): *"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 with all Wace's reports from the English camp, although perhaps Wace's sources knew that the Count had been feeding Harold with disinformation. Regardless, his conclusion is probably correct because Harold would not have crossed the Rother if his messengers and scouts had given him any hint about the strength of the Norman cavalry.

Harold's route to Hastings

The English army marched from London to Sussex. They had to cross the immense lozenge-shaped Andredsweald forest (outlined by green dots on Figure 1). The 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 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.

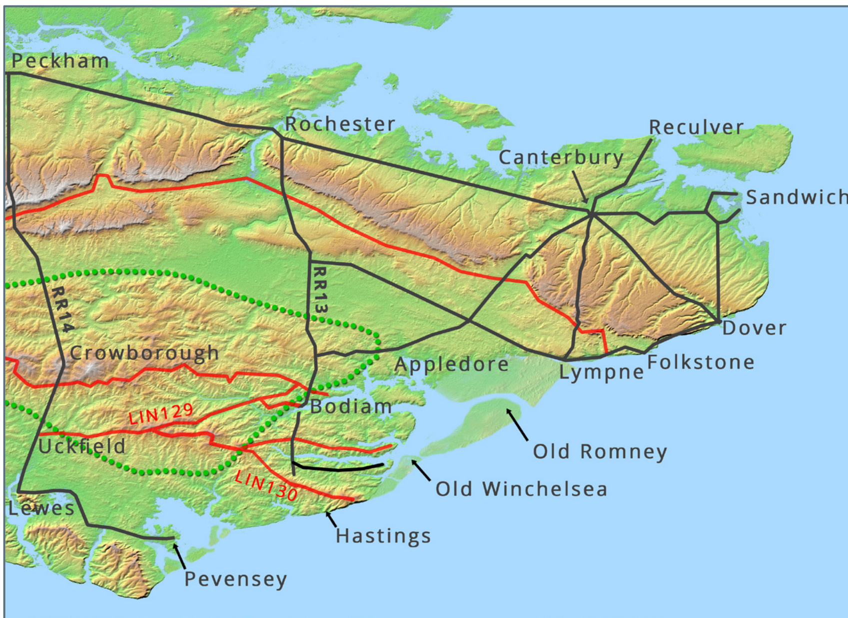

Figure 1: Roman roads in medieval southeast England; Andredsweald outlined by green dots

A H Burne's diagram (Figure 23) is typical. Thirty others are depicted on our website[4], two of which are shown on Figure 51 and Figure 52. 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 1750s. Yet they

[4] https://momentousbritain.co.uk/go/BOH_Evolution

imply it is still more likely than that the English arrived on RR13 or RR14 because both Roman roads are incompatible with the orthodox battlefield.

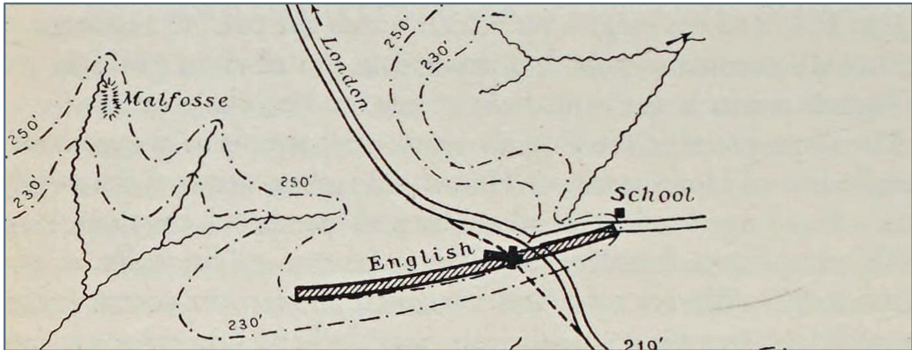

Figure 23: A H Burne's troop deployment diagram

RR13 crossed the Brede at modern Sedlescombe then forked to Beauport Park and to modern Winchelsea (Figure 1). The risk of Harold getting ambushed at the Brede crossing was prohibitive, so the probability that he crossed the Brede is almost non-existent. But, if we imagine for a moment that he did, his only feasible motivations are: 1) To try an immediate attack; or 2) To blockade the Hastings Ridge thereby trapping the Norman army in the relatively barren southeastern part of the Hastings Peninsula. Both possibilities depend on a track from RR13 to the Hastings Ridge, for which there is no evidence. A track could only have joined the Ridge at Baldslow or at Battle Wesleyan Chapel, but both routes are too steep for carts. Moreover, they are inconsistent with Harold's possible motivations and the orthodox battlefield: 1) Harold would need to have moved away from the Norman camp to get to Battle, which he would not have done if he was trying to attack; 2) Battle was 5km from the main egress route via Baldslow and the RR13, which would be useless if he was trying a blockade.

RR14 did not pass within 15 miles of the Hastings Peninsula. The route from Uckfield on the RR14 to the theatre of war went through the Andredsweald. It was 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 logs 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 and food. It would have taken a week or more to cross the Andredsweald from Uckfield to Netherfield on well-maintained forest tracks, and there is no reason to think that they were maintained at all. 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 few active bloomeries which might have incentivised someone to maintain the tracks. Hardly any Saxon archaeology has been found nearby. Wolves and bears lived in the forest, and there were no settlements for shelter, food or repairs to broken carts, so hauliers and travellers are unlikely to have ventured within. If the Andredsweald forest tracks were unmaintained, it might have taken a month for the English army to get from Uckfield to the orthodox battlefield.

Even if the Andredsweald forest paths were pristine, there are several good reasons why Harold would not have used them. Snipers and ambushers could have been hiding anywhere. Having emerged from the Andredsweald at Netherfield, the isthmus at Sprays Wood was especially prone to ambushes and traps. 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 if 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. It is inconceivable that he would ride 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 was suitable for the baggage train, and the only route quick enough to be consistent with contemporary account timings. It passed through rich farmland for food as well as significant settlements for shelter, equipment, repairs and extra troops. It was easy for the main army to muster with the huscarls and Kentishmen. It is consistent with Jumièges because Harold might conceivably have ridden on a metalled Roman road in moonlight. It is consistent with Poitiers too because RR13 crossed two major rivers, the Medway and the Rother. We guess it was trying to say that the English army arrived earlier than the Normans expected because they somehow jury bridged 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 might have liked to execute a surprise attack, but William knew his location, so he couldn't. 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 þa mycelne here, com him togenes æt þære 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'. Any sort of tree seems implausible to us. 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 and permanent landmarks, so not trees, and especially not short-lived wild apple trees.

Stenton notes that *'haran'* is used in the names of geographic features like pools and rivers, which are not hoary or grey. 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 Appledore or the Rother or both, Harold can only have arrived on RR13, augmenting its practical and logistical advantages.

The Norman battle camp

Hechelande

The Chronicle of Battle Abbey says that William had a battle camp at *Hechelande* (Lower): *"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 ..."*. So, 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 264) 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.

There are four possibilities concerning *Hechelande* and the Norman battle camp: 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 at *Hechelande* and it was at the location described in CBA near modern Telham; or 4) There was a Norman battle camp at *Hechelande*, but it was somewhere other than the place described in CBA.

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 there was a Norman battle camp which was not at *Hechelande*, CBA's author would either have not mentioned its location or would have said it was somewhere consistent with Battle Abbey having been built on the battlefield, such as *Telleham*, modern Telham. What then of (3), the orthodox engagement narrative that the Norman battle camp was at *Hechelande* and *Hechelande* was 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*. The land holdings are described in by Mark Gardiner in Appendix 2 of his PhD paper. The stations are depicted on Figure 24, confirming that *Hechelande* (spelled *Hecilande* in this part of the manuscript) was just northwest of *Telleham* (modern Telham).

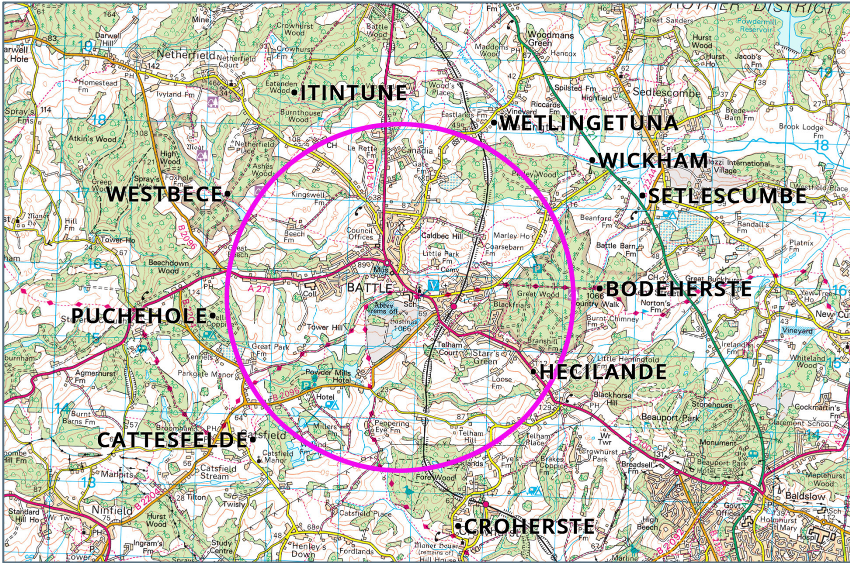

Figure 24: Leuga around Battle Abbey

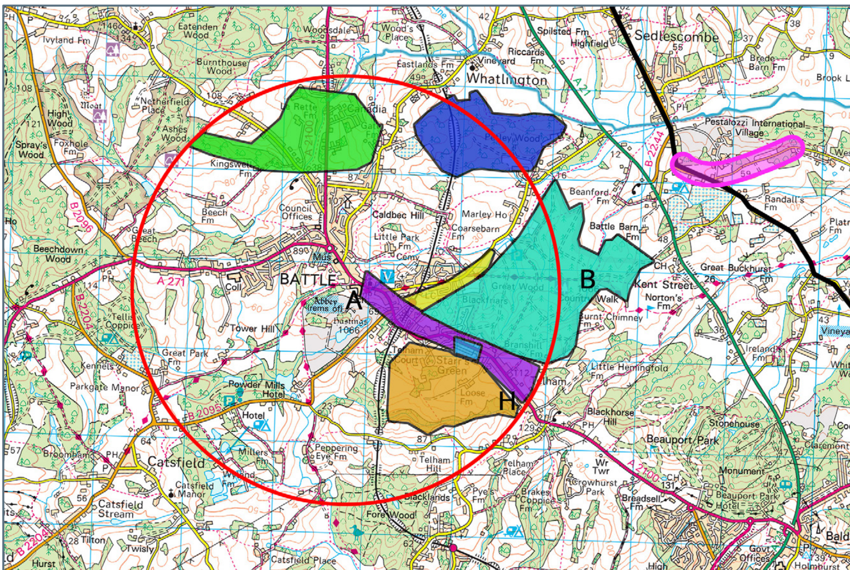

Figure 25: CBA Leuga. Duniford Wood in green; Petley Wood in blue; Bodeherste Wood in teal; Hechelande Wood in orange; the 37 acres in purple; the wist between Bodeherste Wood in cyan; plain in yellow; A = Battle Abbey; B = Bodeherste manor house; H = Hechelande manor house.

CBA describes some other features inside its Leuga, depicted on Figure 25. 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' near *Telleham* was the Hastings Ridge ridgeway.

One inconsistency is that Carmen, Brevis Relatio and Wace 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 implausible, 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 58 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. Also, the orthodox English camp at Caldbec Hill is 1km further away, obscured by Battle Ridge. There are other reasons to doubt CBA's description of *Hechelande's* location. CBA says that *Hechelande* was a hill, whereas Telham was on a level part of the Hastings Ridge. *Hechelande* means 'heathland', whereas CBA says it was woodland. CBA says that *Hechelande* was beside a '*viam*' which usually refers to a metalled road

whereas CBA's location for *Hechelande* was on an earthen ridgeway.

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). Twenty years ago, Nick Austin explained to us 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 located at *Hechelande* and it was inconsistent with Battle Abbey having been built on the battlefield. Their concern would have been that another contemporary battle account might have stated that the Norman battle camp was at *Hechelande,* scuppering 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 right to us.

CBA's Leuga boundary description corroborates Austin's *Hechelande* theory. 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 in the right place 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. We will explain *Hechelande's* most probable actual location below.

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'*, meaning a metalled Roman road. The only metalled road in the vicinity is the Rochester Roman road which terminated at modern Winchelsea, the likely location of the Norman sea camp – see above. But the only hill visible from modern Winchelsea and on the Rochester Roman road is the elevated part of Icklesham between the school and the A259. Icklesham would have been within the Norman sea camp, so there is no possibility that the English camped there. Therefore, Carmen is referring to a Norman camp that was not the 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 need 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.

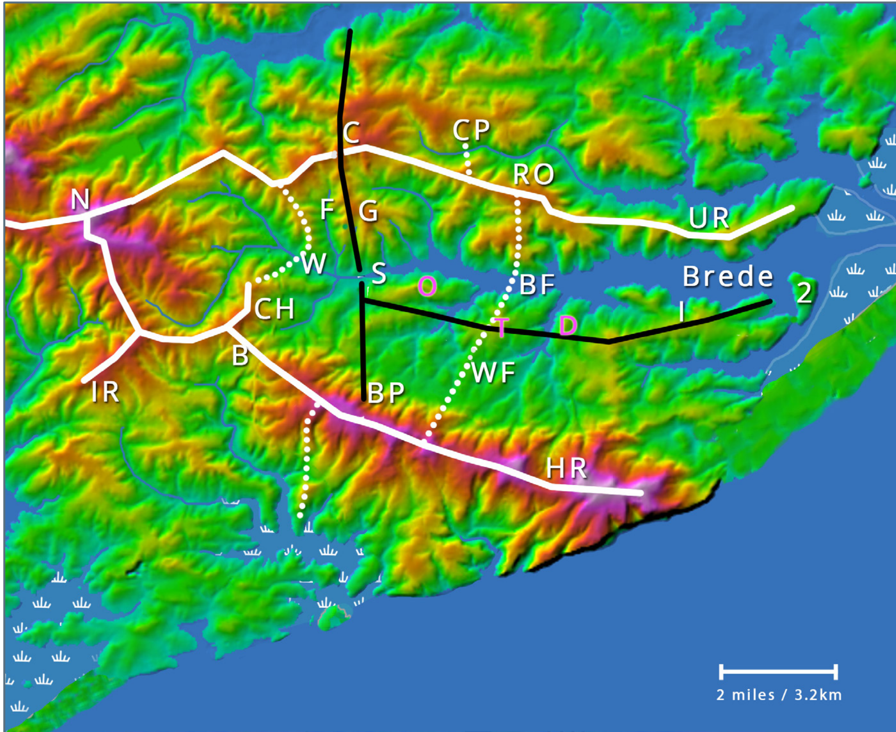

Figure 26: Battle theatre showing topography and roads

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 metalled 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 26) 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.

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.

Other clues about *Hechelande* are consistent with Cottage Lane but not Telham. CBA says that *Hechelande* was a hill. Cottage Lane was a hill whereas Telham was on a level part of the Hastings Ridge. *Hechelande* means 'heathland'. Cottage Lane might have been heathland whereas Telham was in woodland. CBA says that *Hechelande* was beside a '*viam*'. Cottage Lane was beside the metalled Roman road to Winchelsea whereas Telham was on an earthen ridgeway path. A place named '*Hothlands*', the Middle English equivalent of *Hechelande*, is mentioned in a 1483 indenture[5] which describes it as *"on either side of a lane from Alkysford to 'le Galowes de Horn' "* in Sedlescombe. There is no reason to doubt that *Hothlands* was a later name for *Hechelande* and that its lane became Cottage Lane, with Alkysford crossing modern Forge Stream. *Hothlands* could not have been at the place described in CBA's because Telham was not in Sedlescombe and there are no fords on the Hastings Ridge.

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

- 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.

[5] Report on the manuscripts of Lord De l'Isle & Dudley preserved at Penhurst Place

- Military responsiveness: It was close enough to the 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. It had ridgeway tracks to the other Hastings Peninsula access points.
- Natural resources: The metalled track to the Hastings Ridge gave it access to the rich farmland southwest of the Ridge.
- Defence. It was a steep-sided ridge, especially to the north, ideal to defend against an English attack across the Brede.
- Offence. It was the closest place on the Hastings Peninsula to the English camp and was connected to it by the only metalled 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 in it. *'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 battle's name changed to the 'Battle of Senlac'. *'Bello de Hastinges'* is more appropriate than he makes out.

Latin *'bello'* means 'war' or 'to wage war'. *'Bello de Hastinges'* therefore refers to the theatre of war rather than to the battlefield location. The only place within the theatre of war that would have been familiar to most Normans in 1087 is *Hastinges*. The battlefield could have been anywhere south of the Rother and still be consistent with the name *'Bello de Hastinges'*. Heimskringla does much the same for its Norse audience by saying that the battle was fought *'near Helstingaport'*.

The only real 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. Others think that *Hæstingaport* was at modern Hastings or Combe Haven. Nowhere on the Hastings peninsula away from the coast was more than seven Roman miles from either of them, meaning that neither of them was *Hæstingaport* or that the battlefield was not on the Hastings Peninsula or both.
- 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 its meaning were clearer. It was written by a monk at Battle Abbey, and depending on his ethnicity, this *Hastingas* could refer to the Hastings Peninsula or to *Hæstingaport*. Luckily, we think this distinction makes little practical difference. If the monk 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 might also be 'on the side of *Hæstingaport*' at modern Winchelsea. The term 'opposite' hints mirror image, implying a body of water separated the armies. If William was on a south bank hill observing the English army on a 'hill opposite', 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 85). 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*. We explain above why neither army would stray from the Rochester Roman road. It was 20 marching kilometres from the Rother to modern Winchelsea. If the battlefield was materially closer to the Rother than to *Hæstingaport*, it was north of the Brede and therefore not on the Hastings Peninsula.
- Tapestry Panel 48 (Figure 27) 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.

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.

Figure 27: Tapestry Panel 48

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 and at the Brede's head of tide. No one would have built a wharf that could only be used at the spring flood tide, a couple of times a year. More likely, the foundations were associated with a monastery building. Not the monastery itself, we think. Sedlescombe Parish Church was built by Normans on the site of an earlier Saxon era church according to Beryl Lucey. Battle Abbey's Leuga shows that Anglo-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

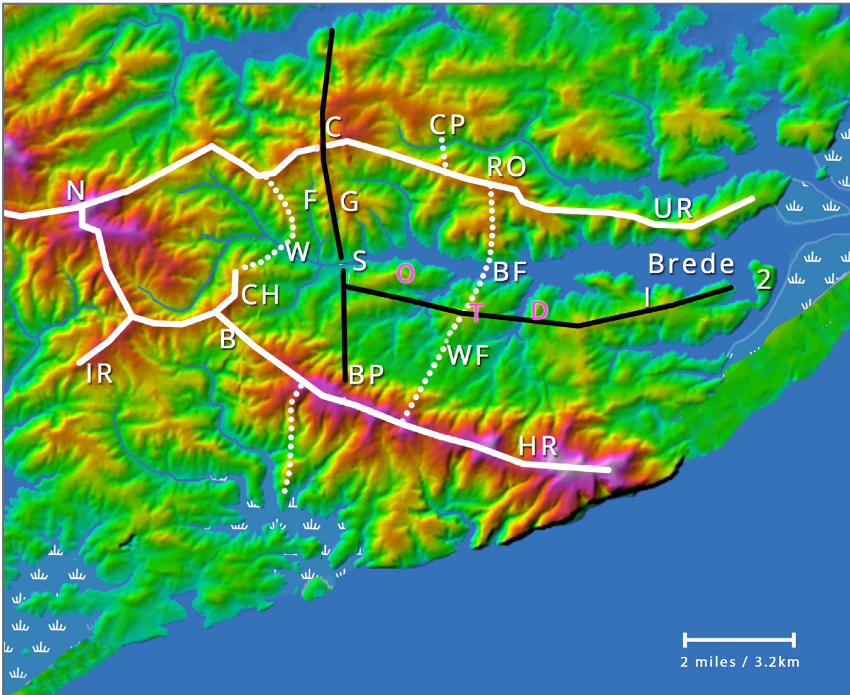

Figure 28: East Sussex topography, roads and trackways

By tradition, the English camped on Caldbec Hill (CH on Figure 28). 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 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 85 - 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.

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"*. Malmesbury, John of Worcester, 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, scouting activities and 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

hoping that he would try to cross the Brede. 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 contingencies and only report events.

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 metalled road. The only major metalled 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.

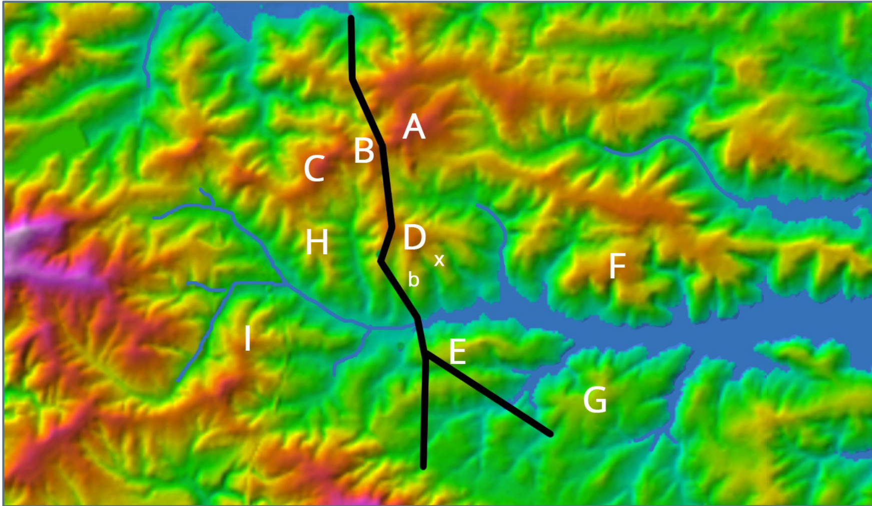

Figure 29: English camp candidates

There are only three English camp candidates that fit the bill (Figure 29): 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), then out along the Udimore ridgeway to trap the English in their camp. That leaves Great Sanders ridge (D) 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 pre-existing 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'*).

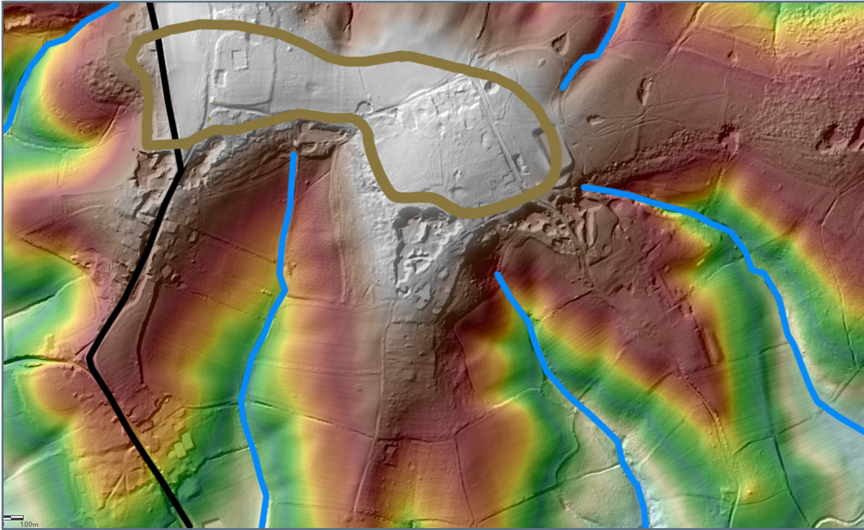

Figure 30: English camp on Great Sanders ridge, with camp outlined in brown

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 30). 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.

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 30). 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 29).

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?

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.

Wace's provenance has to be questioned. 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.

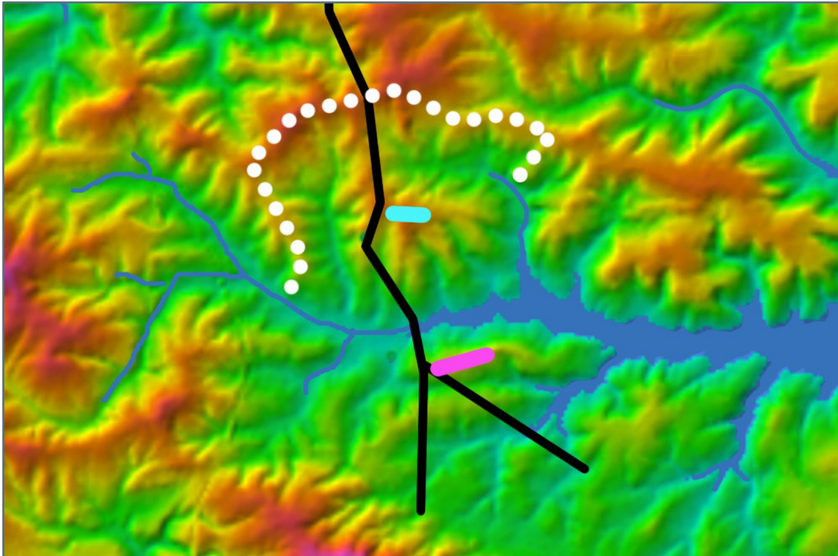

Figure 31: William's trap, English camp in cyan, Norman battle camp in magenta

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"*. Figure 31 shows Harold's predicament. The English camp on Great Sanders ridge (cyan line) is surrounded by the Udimore and isthmus ridges, (white dots). As soon as the English made camp, William would have

dispatched men to cross the Brede on Whatlington ford then occupy the surrounding ridges. It was roughly 7km long, needing perhaps a thousand men to catch Harold if he tried to flee. If, on the other hand, Harold tried to withdraw the main English army along the Roman road, the main Norman cavalry at William's battle camp (magenta line), could ride up the Roman road to catch them in the open before they reached Cripps Corner. If the footbound English army was caught in the open by the Norman cavalry and would likely have been annihilated.

Harold had no active options. He could not retreat in person or lead the English army to safety because the surrounding ridgeways were guarded. He could not attack the Norman battle camp because the English would get ambushed as they tried to cross the Brede. 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. He would not have to wait long because William needed to slay him before significant English reinforcements arrived.

The Battle

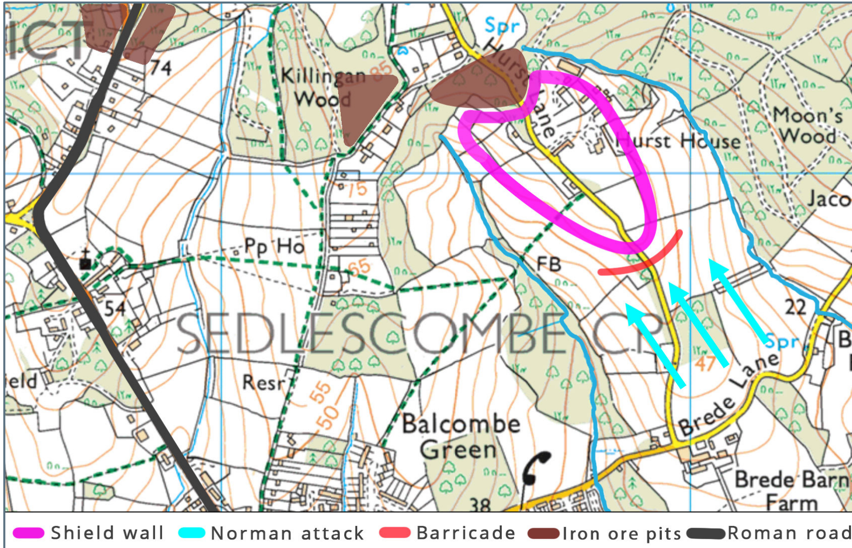

Figure 32: Sedlescombe battlefield at Hurst Lane

In this section, we present our argument that the Battle of Hastings was fought on the spur at Hurst Lane in Sedlescombe (Figure 32). We know it will be a tough sell. Our proposed battlefield appears to contradict the conclusions of every professional historian and military expert that has written about the Battle of Hastings. It challenges what most of us have accepted as irrefutable fact since school. Convincing others, especially academics, to accept our theory will prove harder than locating the battlefield itself. We can but try.

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. The notion is unsound.

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 for William's failure 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. Each variable – such as the size of the armies, and the shape of the shield wall - 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.

This leads us to argue that the flaws in the orthodox battle theories stem from a fundamental misunderstanding: the belief that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield. That belief is supported by, and only by, statements in some of the contemporary accounts. At least four of these statements are not ambiguous or mistranslated or misinterpreted. We explain in 'The Traditional Battlefield' 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', leading most people to assumes that *bello* means 'battle'. It does not. In Latin, *'bello'* means 'war' or 'to wage war'. This suggests that Battle Abbey was located in what we might now call a 'theatre of war'. Even if the battlefield were five miles away, the Abbey's name would still be appropriate.

B. Battle Abbey is the only medieval Christian place of worship that purports to have been built on a battlefield. This is no coincidence. Constructing a church directly on a battlefield would have been seen as glorifying violence, and medieval people were terrified of being haunted by the souls of those who had died violently. Some churches were built near battlefields - at Shrewsbury, for instance.[6] - and we think this is the case with Battle Abbey, but if it is not on the battlefield, the entire orthodox battle narrative collapses.

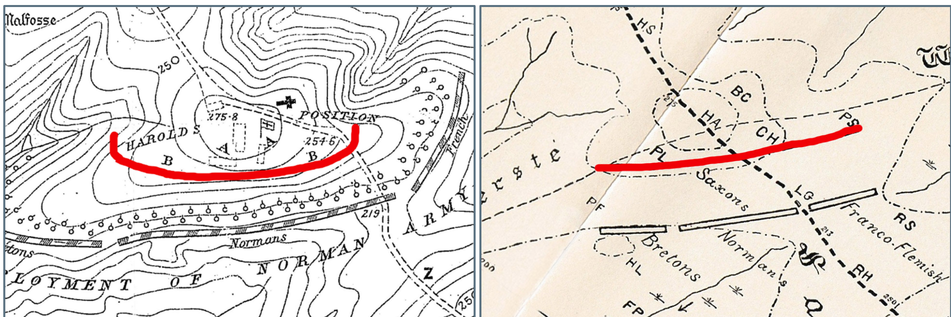

Figure 33: Traditional shield wall deployments by Major James (L) and Colonel Lemmon (R)

C. Every shield wall that has been proposed at the orthodox battlefield site is straight or near straight. Figure 33 shows two typical examples by Major E R James and Colonel C H Lemmon (with our red highlights over their shield walls). More examples can be found on Figure 54 in Clue 11. Dozens of others are depicted on our website.[7]. 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

[6] 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.
[7] https://momentousbritain.com/go/BOH_Evolution

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

Feeling sceptical yet? If not, consider 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 launch a surprise attack on the Norman camp? Is it believable that Harold persisted with a 'surprise' attack when William knew where he was and couldn't be taken by surprise? Is it likely that Harold would continue with this plan when he discovered that the Norman army was much stronger than his and ready to ambush him? And does it make sense that Harold chose to fight a battle he was likely to 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 align with our theory that the battle was fought at Hurst Lane.

We believe our argument is irrefutable. Of course, we are not the first to claim this level of certainty. Others have made similar assertions when arguing that the battle was fought at Battle Abbey or one of the other proposed locations. However, these authors (subconsciously, we like to think) skew the data by excluding contra-evidence, biased interpretation of the source material, using flawed reasoning, and/or poor research. We have made every effort to be scrupulously objective, thorough, and fair. No one has ever found an error in our research or our reasoning, but we welcome the challenge. We want our theory to be bulletproof. If you can find errors or omissions in our evidence or reasoning, please contact us by email at 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.

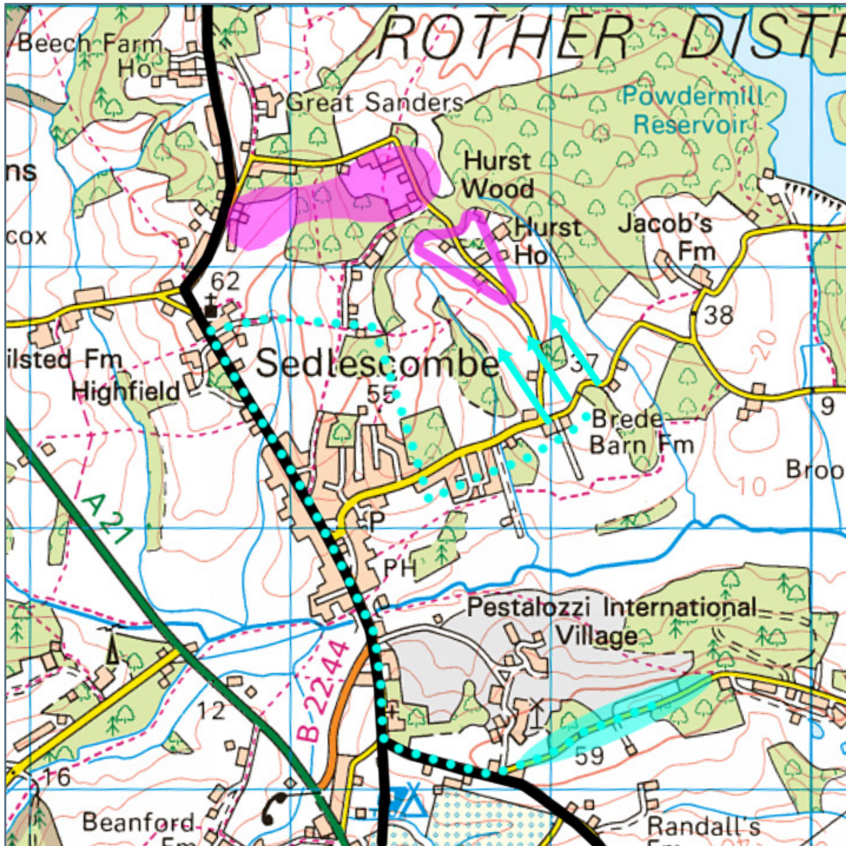

Figure 34: Norman advance from Norman battle camp shown in cyan dots

The Battle of Hastings started with both armies at their respective camps. The English camp spanned Hurst Wood, Killingan Wood and Combe Wood (magenta drumstick on Figure 34). Each of these woods, and therefore the English camp, was protected to the south by immense iron ore pits (see Clue 5 for more). Meanwhile, William and his barons were stationed at their Winchelsea sea camp. The bulk of the Norman army was

at their Cottage Lane battle camp (cyan oval on Figure 34). William also had men on the Udimore Ridge whose job was to block English reinforcements and to catch anyone trying to flee.

Harold could see the Normans massing to attack. He ordered his troops to occupy the battlefield as soon as they had taken breakfast. They crossed the iron ore pits south of Hurst Wood and Killingan Wood on narrow ramps that were once used by mining 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 at their battle camp witnessed this scene, as 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 (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 34. 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 35) in front of a water-filled ditch.

Figure 35: Extract from Tapestry Panel 53 showing the English barricade

The Norman horses do not seem to have been struck. 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. It seems unlikely. 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 part of 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 observing the English shield wall deployment from the Norman battle camp. His messengers and scouts had previously ridden through the English position and 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 steep, roughly a 15% gradient. The only potential breach in the English line, despite being protected by a barricade, was at the front tip where the slope was a relatively benign 6%. This point 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*".

At their camp, William and his barons dressed for battle. William accidentally put on his hauberk backward. 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."* After giving his pep talk William and the Normans set off for the battlefield. Their route is, as described by Wace (Clue 6), uniquely matches north Sedlescombe. It is depicted in cyan dots on Figure 34. The route ends near modern Brede Barn Farm, below the Hurst Lane battlefield, some 2½ miles away. 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 correct because the context suggests Poitiers was speaking 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, Poitiers says that the Normans began with a ranged attack. Wace (Taylor) explains that it was ineffective: *"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, lacking crossbowmen and with very few archers – just one English archer is depicted on the Tapestry, on Panel 52 (Figure 42) – were unable to return ammunition. According to Draco Normannicus (Dawson): *"Only when the quivers were emptied did the discharge of arrows cease"*. Thus, the Norman archers and crossbowmen exhausted their ammunition and retired from the battle.

Next, the Norman heavy infantry launched a hand-to-hand attack, but it also proved unsuccessful. 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) describes an English shield-charge (Clue 23) on 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 or drowned, the Norman heavy infantry fled. After this, William seems to have refrained from ordering more men to become axe fodder. Contrary to the popular view, the intense 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 switched strategies, trying to lure the English out of their 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) adds: *"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"*.

According to tradition, many English troops chased after a feigned retreat, leaving a gap through which the Norman cavalry penetrated the shield wall and killed Harold. However, none of the contemporary accounts explicitly state this. Wace and Carmen present a fanciful and sycophantic version of 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, only noting that it was late in the day. Our interpretation is that no one knows how Harold met his end, but it probably was late in the day. Had Harold died early, the English troops would have probably melted away into nearby woodland. Orderic is not necessarily wrong. The Norman knights avoided direct contact for most of the battle, cajoling the infantrymen to take all the risks. Harold could well have been killed in the first mounted attack. Despite the lack of concrete evidence, we lean towards the traditional

theory that the Norman cavalry entered the shield wall through a gap left when English troops pursued a feigned retreat. There are no other ways that the Normans could have breached a solid enclosed shield wall.

More is written about the English flight than about the battle and Harold's death combined. There is a reason for this. 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 detailed focus on the English flight likely stems from the fact that 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' – they are really pits - 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

✓✓✓ = Unique match; ✓✓ = Match; ✓ = Consistent ✗ = Inconsistent; ✗✗ = Contradictory	Hurst Lane	Battle Abbey
Orthodox battlefield clues		
1. Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield	✗✗	✓✓✓
2. The battlefield was in the vicinity of Battle Abbey	✓✓	✓✓
3. The Normans advanced up a steep slope	✓✓	✓✓
4. The battlefield was at or near the top of a hill	✓✓	✓✓
Battlefield fingerprint clues		
5. Presence of non-fluvial ditches near the battlefield	✓✓✓	✗✗
6. Wace's description of the Norman advance	✓✓✓	✗
Battle enigmas		
7. Credible explanation for Harold's actions	✓✓	✗✗
8. Logistics & Harold's route to the battle theatre	✓✓	✗✗
9. Wedge-shaped shield wall	✓✓✓	✗✗
10. Enclosed shield wall	✓✓	✗✗
11. William's military tactics	✓✓	✗✗
12. Credible reason for why Harold did not withdraw or flee before the battle	✓✓	✗✗
13. Contemporary archaeology	✓✓	✗✗
Proximity to English and Norman camps		
14. The battlefield was roughly an hour's march from the Norman battle camp	✓✓	✓✓
15. The battlefield was nine Roman miles from 'Heastinga'	✓✓	✓

✓✓✓ = Unique match; ✓✓ = Match; ✓ = Consistent ✗ = Inconsistent; ✗✗ = Contradictory	Hurst Lane	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'*	✓✓✓	✗✗
20. The battlefield was near a *'spinam'*	✓	✗✗
21. The battlefield was at or near *'haran apuldran'*	✓	✗
22. The battlefield was on *'planis Hastinges'*	✗	✗✗
Geographic clues		
23. A lateral fluvial ditch adjoined the battlefield	✓✓	✗✗
24. There was a plain below the contact zone	✓✓	✓
25. The battlefield was overlooked by another hill	✓✓	✓
26. The battlefield was a small hill	✓✓	✗✗
27. The battlefield was narrow	✓✓	✗✗
28. The fighting was more intense in the middle	✓✓	✗✗
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	✓✓	✗✗
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	✓✓	✗✗

Clue 1 - Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield

The only significant evidence suggesting that the Battle of Hastings was fought at Battle Abbey – and not Hurst Lane – comes from a few contemporary accounts that specifically say Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield. We refer to these as the 'Abbey on the battlefield' references. They are discussed, along with translations of the relevant statements, in more detail in section 'The Traditional Battlefield' below. A precis should suffice here.

Six contemporary accounts either state or imply that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield. In chronological order, these 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 on the spot where Harold died.

While this may sound convincing, there are a few indications that these statements may not be as they seem. Orderic's reference, for example, is scribbled in a margin of the earliest manuscript, clearly added at a later date. Malmesbury qualifies his 'Abbey on the battlefield' statement with the phrase *'fuisse memoratur'*, 'it is said that'. This is a Latin way of saying something is unreliable hearsay. Greenway translates it as 'by tradition', Giles translates as 'as they report', with 'they' referring to the monks of Battle Abbey. This is the only instance in Malmesbury's entire chronicle where he uses this phrase, even though much of his work is based on third party sources. This implies that he was sceptical of the monks' claim that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield and suspected they were trying to propagate this deceit through third party annals, likely by distributing copies of Brevis Relatio to other monasteries in England and Normandy.

Both Brevis Relatio and the CBA 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 believe, the monks invented the notion that the Abbey was built on the battlefield and propagated it through Brevis Relatio, then all these references would be incorrect.

The monks of Battle Abbey were notorious for their efforts to defend the Abbey's independence from diocesan control. According to Nicholas Vincent, the Chronicle of Battle Abbey is filled with fabrications intended to support this independence. The monks are also known to have forged charters to strengthen their position when their independence was threatened. There is little doubt that they fabricated all the evidence that the Abbey was built on the battlefield.

However, this does not necessarily mean that the Abbey was not built on the battlefield. It is possible that the monks fabricated the evidence to support what they genuinely believed to be the de-facto truth. While we cannot definitively disprove this, it seems highly unlikely for reasons we explain in the section 'The Traditional Battlefield' below. Given these doubts, the 'Abbey on the battlefield' evidence should not be used to dismiss non-orthodox battlefield location candidates.

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

Three contemporary accounts state or imply that Battle Abbey was built in the vicinity of the battlefield. In chronological order, these 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 provided in 'The Traditional Battlefield' section.

The best known of these statements comes from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. It is crucial because 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 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, influenced by centuries of received wisdom, tend to read more into these statements than they say, not least due to some egregious translation. Garmonsway's translation above is one example. Another issue is that Latin passages about the Battle of Hastings nearly always translate '*bellum*' as 'battle' when it means 'war'. For example, Orderic writes '*ubi bellum factura est*', Huntingdon '*Commissum est autem bellum*'. Both are saying that the Abbey was built where the war took place, which could refer to any of the serious battlefield candidates.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle uses the Old English phrase '*on ðam ilcan steode*', while Huntingdon the Latin '*Quo in loco*'. Both phrases mean 'in the [same] place'. So, Dorothy Whitelock's translation is more accurate: *"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 a large area. We discuss the likely meaning of this term in Clue 18. For now, it is enough to say that 'Senlac' also refers to an unqualified 'place'.

An unqualified 'place' is not the same as an 'exact spot', which is why we reject Garmonsway's translation. Indeed, in a remote sparsely populated region like 11th century sub-Andredsweald Sussex, 'place' could be quite vague. For example, the 'place' where William Rufus died was the New Forest, a vast area. Hurst Lane spur is only three miles from Battle Abbey, which would be negligible when viewed from Peterborough, Saint-Evroul-sur-Ouche or Little Stukeley, where these passages were recorded.

In fact, any location within five miles of Battle Abbey would probably be considered 'in the same place' as the Abbey by these three authors. Therefore, these passages support Hurst Lane as much as Battle Abbey, and

they could also apply to 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. Although contemporary sources mention the English holding the advantage of higher ground (discussed in Clue 29), there is no specific evidence about the steepness of the combat zone. Two contemporary accounts do mention 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"*.

The term 'steep' is unqualified, making it vague. For example, the Crecy battlefield is always described as steep, but its incline is less than 5%. An advance up Hurst Lane spur and Battle Abbey would be close to 6%, whereas an advance up Caldbec Hill or Telham Hill would be nearer 10%. Based on our scoring system, it is reasonable 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 William *"boldly approaches the steep slope"*, as if the approach steepens as it nears the battlefield. Both translations seem 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 a hilltop.

> 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.*"

Traditionally, these statements have been interpreted to mean that the shield wall was on the absolute top of a hill, matching the traditional battlefield location. However, none of the contemporary accounts explicitly state or imply any such thing. This is relevant because our proposed Hurst Lane battlefield is not on the summit of its hill. Its highest point is 400m from the summit of Great Sanders ridge in Killingan Wood, and it is only about two-thirds of the way up the slope.

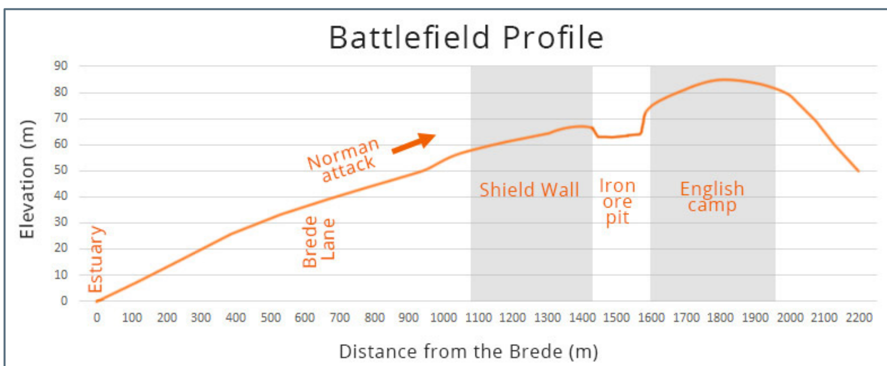

Figure 36: Hurst Lane spur hill profile

However, Hurst Lane serves as a hilltop for battlefield purposes. There is an immense iron ore pit - 100m by 50m and 8m deep - partway up the Hurst Lane slope to leading to Great Sanders ridge. In effect, this pit creates an artificial summit at what is now Hurst House Cottage, beside modern Hurst Lane. This is depicted on Figure 36, the hill profile diagram. Hurst Lane's artificial summit aligns with all the contemporary account descriptions of the battlefield hill, while also addressing three inconsistencies that contradict the orthodox battlefield.

First, Carmen mentions that Harold's Standards at the English camp were visible from the Norman battle camp. For this to be accurate, 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 summit would have obscured the Normans' view of the English camp beyond. The only way Carmen can hold true is if the English camp was beyond the battlefield on the same hill. This exactly describes Hurst Lane while contradicting the other battlefield candidates.

Second, the Latin phrase of from 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 dismiss one of the terms, assuming it is redundant. However, there is a plausible explanation at Hurst Lane spur. The spur's crest slopes down from its parent ridge towards the river. If applied to Hurst Lane spur, the statement would describe the banner being planted *"at the highest point of the crest of the hill"*, which makes perfect sense at Hurst Lane.

Third, Wace (Taylor) describes the English retreat 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."* This implies that 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. However, at Hurst Lane, a valley in the form of an immense iron ore pit is directly adjacent to the battlefield, and on the only feasible retreat route (1 on Figure 37). The ground on the north side

of the pit is 5m higher than that on the south. If the English retreated from a Hurst Lane battlefield, exactly as Wace describes, they would have crossed a valley to rising ground just 50m away.

Clue 5 – Presence of 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 in the contemporary accounts, so a thorough explanation is essential. These ditches at Hurst Lane not only match the specific descriptions in the contemporary accounts, but a programmatic analysis of LiDAR data also reveals that they are unique to this location. Hurst Lane is the only place that matches any of these ditch descriptions - and it matches all of them.

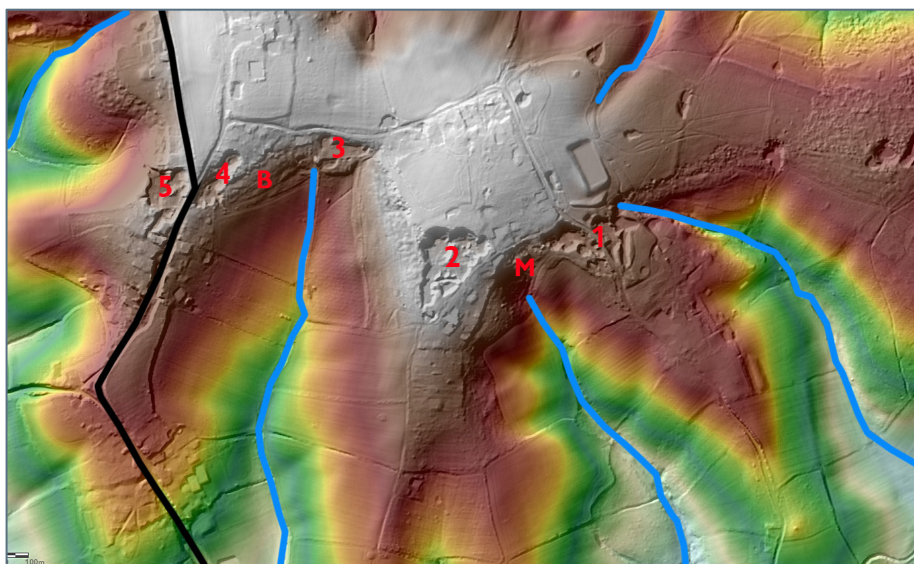

Figure 37: Iron ore pits near Hurst Lane

The contemporary accounts give detailed descriptions of at least three different non-fluvial ditches involved in three different phases of the battle, all located at or near the battlefield. No such non-fluvial ditches exist within 4km of Battle Abbey, leading many historians to 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 that this Malfosse ditch refers to modern Oakwood Ghyll, while Nick Austin thinks it was Hunter's Ghyll, adjacent to his proposed Telham Hill battlefield. However, both of these are fluvial ditches, which contradict the descriptions in the contemporary accounts. Oakwood Ghyll is doubly inconsistent, being 1500m from Battle Abbey, whereas the Chronicle of Battle Abbey states that the Malfosse was 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 still exist at Hurst Lane (Figure 37).

North Sedlescombe is riddled with iron ore pits. We counted more than a hundred on a recent stroll through Moon's Wood. It is truly a *"labyrinth of ditches"*, a common translation of Poitiers' term, and the only concentration of such pits in the region. We will focus on the three largest, each covering over 2000 square metres. 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 37. Each pit lies at the head of a spur pointing south from the Great Sanders ridge (the elevated area coloured white on Figure 37).

The first non-fluvial ditch was encountered as the English forces fell back in fading light towards the end of the day, as 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 original Latin states that the ditch was *"inter hostiles gladius"*, meaning 'between the hostile armies', and describes it as *"precipitium"*, 'precipitous'. Searle seems to have emasculated the translation to avoid contradicting the orthodox battlefield interpretation. Lower's translation is more accurate: *"There lay between the hostile armies a certain dreadful precipice"*. It is still a little odd. We translate it as: *"There was an immense precipitous pit between the two armies"*.

Two key points emerge from this description: 1) The ditch was between the two armies because the English had retreated over it, placing it on the opposite side of the battlefield from the Norman attack; 2) It was described as a 'hollow' – from the Latin *'concauatione'* - so it was a pit rather than a fluvial valley. CBA's speculation that the pit was formed by geological activity or storms is plausible, but given the region's history, the most likely origin of any large precipitous non-fluvial pit is Roman-era iron ore mining.

The Hurst Lane iron ore pit (1 on Figure 37) is roughly triangular, approximately 100m wide, 50m long and 5 to 8 metres deep. It precisely matches CBA's description. The only similarly immense precipitous pits in the entire region are in neighbouring Killingan Wood and Combe Wood, but their spurs are too wide to have been part of the battlefield. Thus, the Hurst Lane pit uniquely corresponds to the 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 explicitly say they did. They use the Latin words *'impetu'* and *'ruebant'*, respectively, both meaning 'rushed'. The translations of these words as 'galloping' are faulty. This is important because a trotting horse can stop almost instantly, whereas a galloping horse cannot. CBA's 'waste ground', in context, refers to the Hurst Lane pit. Brambles and other shrubs can grow up to 3m high, but they would still be 3m or more below the lip of the Hurst Lane pit. A trotting horse would likely see the drop and have ample time to stop, suggesting that CBA's Malfosse is probably not describing the main Hurst Lane iron ore pit. However, it has a 30m trench extending west from its northwest corner (M on Figure 37), 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 to believe it would have been any different in the 11th century. This trench lies 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 trench is the only one of its type in the entire region, making it highly likely to be the CBA's Malfosse. If excavation were permitted, we believe that Norman horse bones might still be found at the bottom.

The third non-fluvial ditch is where the English made a stand during their flight. 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."* In his redaction of Gesta Normannorum Ducum, Orderic Vitalis repeats this same narrative, later referring to the area as an *"abyss of destruction"*, clearly indicating the location was a former iron ore mine.

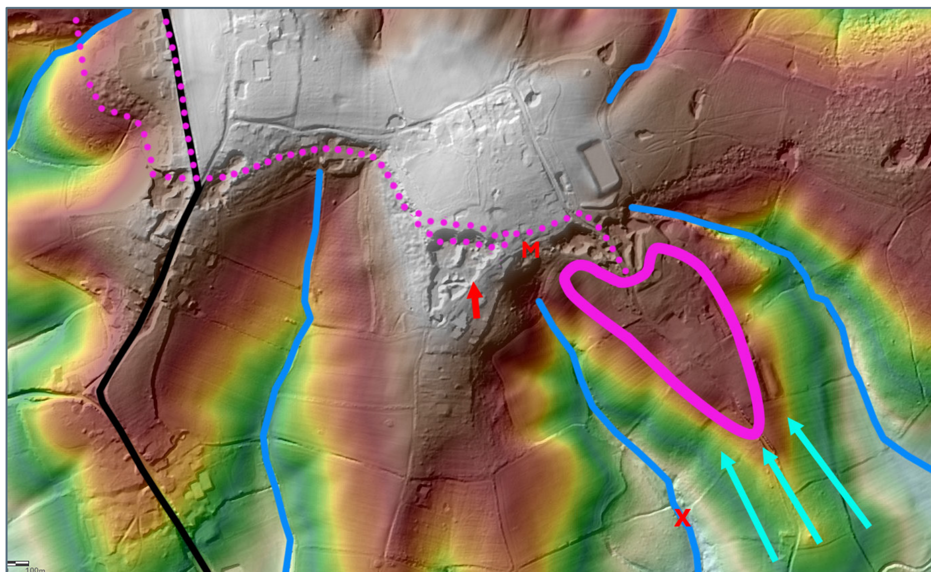

Figure 38: English flight path shown in magenta dots

There is only one place in the entire region that matches these descriptions: the Roman road that bisected the Combe Wood iron ore pit (between 4 and 5 on Figure 38). The English flight path is shown as magenta dots on Figure 38, heading towards this road. It lies amidst of a labyrinth of ditches, exactly as Poitiers and Orderic describe, and the terrain would have been extremely unfavourable for the Normans, with precipitous pits on either side. The broken ground on the slope up to the Combe Wood pit may have been Poitiers' 'broken rampart', though it is more likely he was referring to the ditches on either side of the Roman road. The Eustace story could be allegorical – punishment for advising a retreat when William wanted to advance – but the pit east of the Roman road, about 25m wide, is narrow

enough that someone might have been hit by a missile thrown from the other side.

These three non-fluvial ditches not only provide incontrovertible evidence that the Battle of Hastings was fought at Hurst Lane, but they also clarify 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. Given that they were at the battlefield for no more than two hours before the battle began, a ditch dug in such a short time would have been ineffective - too narrow and shallow to offer real protection, and too easy to bridge. Wace had no reason to know about the region's mining history and he never visited the site, so his speculation about the English having dug the pits is rational, albeit wrong.

Wace's protective ditch is usually assumed to have been on the downslope between the English and Normans, but he later describes a different defence in the same area (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"*. If the downslope was already protected by such a formidable barricade, there would be little reason to add a protective ditch in the same location.

This suggests that Wace's protective ditch was on a side of the English line that did not face downslope. It contradicts the orthodox battlefield, as well as Caldbec Hill and Telham Hill, because all the shield walls that have been proposed at these battlefield candidates were straight or nearly straight,

facing entirely downslope with only a front side directed at the enemy. The ditch could not be protecting a flank either, because that would not be *"across the battlefield"*. The only credible interpretation of Wace's description is that the ditch crossed the battlefield to protect the English rear. Again, the English did not have enough time to dig a useful ditch to protect their rear, and there are no landscape ditches at the orthodox battlefield or Telham Hill or Caldbec Hill. Yet this is an accurate description of our proposed shield wall at Hurst Lane where the Hurst Lane iron ore pit crossed the battlefield to protect the English rear.

Wace (Taylor) describes a ditch that the English had to cross 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."* An English retreat to rising ground on the far side of a valley sounds implausible if we imagine a typical battlefield scenario. A defensible hill that could accommodate an army of 6000 men would be a substantial landscape feature, and the nearest rising ground beyond a valley would be at least 500m away. The leaderless English fyrd could not have made an organised retreat over such a large distance without being decimated by the Norman cavalry, making this scenario incompatible with the orthodox battlefield and 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, crossing the Hurst Lane iron ore pit. The pit had rising ground on the far side, and the Normans would have had to pursue them across the pit - a 'valley' of sorts – just as Wace describes. Therefore, Wace's fallback ditch is yet another description of the first non-fluvial ditch mentioned by CBA.

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."* It seems implausible that the Normans, who were positioned behind the fleeing English, could have been trampled in a way that filled a deep ditch. However, at Hurst Lane, there is a credible explanation. If, as we propose, the English crossed the Hurst Lane or

Killingan Wood iron ore pit and were followed by Normans, the English could have made a stand close to the pit (within 10m, for example) and pushed the Normans back into it. Those that fell in would be crushed by others falling on top, creating a trample effect. It would only take 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 30), noting that Harold: *"surrounded it by a good fosse, leaving an entrance on each of three sides, which were ordered to be all well-guarded"*. Given that the English had only been at their camp for a day when the Norman messenger sees this ditch, they could not have dug a substantial defensive ditch in that short time. Most of Wace's camp ditch must have been in the landscape before the English arrived. This description is consistent with our proposed English camp on Great Sanders ridge, which was already 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, the remnants of access ramps appear to cross the Killingan Wood pit, and Hurst Lane runs on what might have been access ramps across the Hurst Lane pit. These three features may have formed the three well-guarded entrances Wace refers to.

Carmen (Barlow) describes the English emerging from woodland: *"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 a hill were in front of the English camp, the Normans would not have been able to see Standards at the English camp or the English 'spew out' of their woodland camp. Moreover, hills are adjacent to valleys, making mentioning the valley redundant. However, Carmen's description fits the terrain at Hurst Lane. The proposed battlefield there lies 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 Standards and them leaving their camp to occupy the battlefield hill. The Latin text reads: *"Mons silvae vicinus erat, vicinaque vallis"*. *'vallis'* is typically translated as 'valley' in Latin prose, but in Latin poetry it often means 'pit'. Carmen, being a Latin poem, likely refers to a pit adjoining the battlefield – probably the Hurst Lane iron ore pit.

Quedam Exceptiones (Tyson) notes: *"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 aspects of this translation: There are no mountains within fleeing distance of the Hastings Peninsula, and 'hollows of the valleys' makes little sense in context. The original reads: *"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 in this region could only refer to iron ore pits. This description matches the terrain at Hurst Lane, further contradicting the other battlefield candidates.

Figure 39: Tapestry Panel 58

The non-fluvial ditches near Hurst Lane also help explain the final Tapestry scene, Panel 58 (Figure 39). Experts have pondered the meaning of its double-decker depiction for centuries. While this scene is difficult to reconcile with other proposed battlefield candidates, it aligns perfectly with the Killingan Wood pit. Most of the English likely fled towards the Rochester Roman road, as shown by the magenta dotted lines on Figure 38,

with their route passing through Killingan Wood. Both Malmesbury and Wace describe the English falling back across the first fingerprint ditch, placing them north of the Hurst Lane and Killingan Wood pits, with the Normans to the south. The Tapestry, therefore, seems to depict the English fleeing along the top and base of the Killingan Wood pit, as viewed from perspective marked by the red arrow in Figure 38.

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 Poitiers' steep slope. 'Wheeling' refers to a military manoeuvre where a body of men pivots to a new direction. This implies that the Normans approached the battlefield slope from the side. But why did they not march directly from their battle camp to the battlefield? The most likely reasons are the presence of a river or bog between to two, or of a Roman road that provided an expressway to the side of the battlefield - or both because Roman roads often crossed rivers at their tidal heads. If a river separated the battlefield from the Norman battle camp, and a Roman road was nearby, it would have crossed the river at its tidal head, perfectly matching the terrain at Hurst Lane.

There are many spurs and ridges on or near the Hastings Peninsula, but only five roads or tracks that crossed low ground (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 fits Wace's description of the Norman approach to the battlefield.

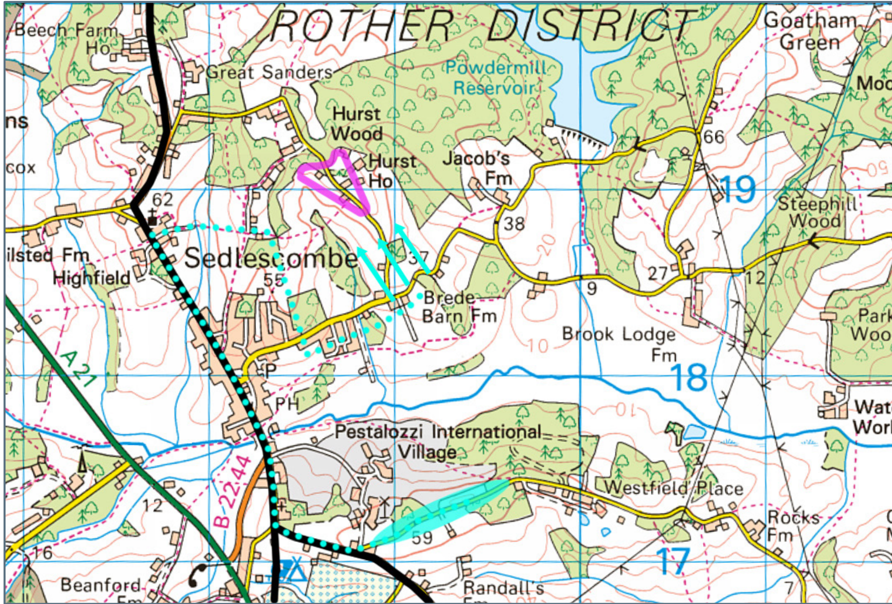

Figure 40: Norman advance shown by cyan dots

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 along the Roman road until turning east at what is now St John the Baptist Church. Up to this point, the Killingan Wood spur concealed them from the battlefield. They reappeared to the English upon reaching the crest of that spur at 50.9407, 0.5365. From there, they marched down the crest towards Balcombe Green and turned east along what is now Brede Lane. After crossing a stream at 50.93669, 0.54345, they wheeled left at what is now Brede Barn Farm to confront the English. The route is depicted on Figure 40. It uniquely locates the battlefield at the Hurst Lane spur.

One oddity about the route described by Wace is that it would have saved the Normans 30 minutes had they turned off the Roman road earlier, at

modern Brede Lane. Given how close the Normans came to losing, those 30 minutes might have been critical to the outcome of the battle. We propose 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 receive a blessing before the battle at a Saxon-era church, later replaced by 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 plausible.

Clue 7 – Credible explanation for Harold's actions

By tradition, Harold raced down from London to Sussex, hoping to launch a surprise attack on the Norman camp, so hastily that he left half of his army behind.

> Jumièges (Van Houts) recounts how Harold dismissed his brother Gyrth's advice to remain 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, however, were privy to conversations in the English court. They speculate about Harold's motivation from the Norman perception. They knew Harold only had to keep at a safe distance to win the war. Seeing him arrive with an understrength army and camp within striking distance, they reasoned that he must be stupid, mad, or reckless through anger.

However, Harold was not reckless, mad or stupid. His sister describes his character in Asser's The Life of Alfred stating 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 opposite of someone who might be driven to suicidal idiocy by a tantrum. Furthermore, William and Harold had been exchanging messages as Harold advanced towards Sussex. William knew his exact location and he posted guards at the Hastings Peninsula crossing points. According to Wace, these guards captured Harold's scouts and sent them back to Harold. If two scouts could not take the Normans by surprise, the entire English army certainly couldn't. Moreover, an open attack on the Norman camp, would have exposed the English army to a devastating the Norman cavalry assault.

The only credible reason for Harold to approach the Normans in person is to negotiate face-to-face with William. The only credible reason he might have done so with an understrength army is that he intended first to orchestrate a blockade. 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 41: S, the Sedlescombe bridge over the Brede; W, Whatlington ford over the Brede; and I, the isthmus. Harold brought enough men to blockade these points.

Common sense supports this conjecture, as does an objective interpretation

of ASC-D's engagement description: *"com him togenes æt þære haran apuldran"*. This phrase is normally translated as something like: *"he [Harold] came against him [William] at haran apuldran",* giving the impression that Harold went to attack William. However, *'him togenes'* usually means to 'meet him' or 'towards him'. ASC-D continues: *"Wyllelm him com ongean"*, 'William came against him'. It uses *'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) all interpret *'togenes'* as 'to meet' or 'towards'. This suggests Harold went to East Sussex intending to meet William, presumably to negotiate his surrender or withdrawal. Wanting to negotiate from a position of strength, Harold would have first secured the area through a blockade of the Hastings 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 negotiate their return to Normandy. Something must have gone wrong with his calculation of a safe distance. 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."* Wace was not privy to the King's conversations. 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 is that he had underestimated the Norman cavalry. This is consistent with events as we propose. From their camp on Great Sanders ridge, the English could have effectively blockaded the Norman infantry, but not the Norman cavalry.

To execute a blockade, Harold would have positioned barricades at the landward side of the three access points. He likely never crossed any of these points, as they were prone to ambushes (as mentioned in Clue 7 above), and he had not been in the area long enough for the far side to be

thoroughly scouted and cleared. William, needing to trap or attack the English quickly, did so, and the battle ensued. This places the battlefield on the landward side of the Hastings Peninsula crossings, consistent with Hurst Lane and contradicting the other battlefield candidates.

Clue 8 - Logistics & Harold's route to the battle theatre

Harold's initial thinking would have been dominated by logistics - specifically the need to transport tents, armour, weapons, shields, tools, fortifications, food and soldiers to the battle theatre. Everything apart from the men would have been carried on carts. Hundreds of them. Robert Evans, logistics expert and Head of the Army Historical Branch, estimates that 100 carts would have been needed just to carry tents. These carts would have been almost exclusively drawn by oxen, which were slow, hungry and, er, messy.

The vast lozenge shaped Andredsweald forest posed a significant logistical challenge. This dense woodland stretched approximately 60 miles north to south and 120 miles east to west with no significant settlements, no east-west metalled roads, no cartwrights, fodder or food stores. Harold's army had few, if any, archers. Their chances of hunting 200 skittish deer or boar each day in the forest 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 Winchelsea (RR13). In Roman times, several east-west forest tracks were used to haul iron ore from the High Weald to the Rother estuary for export, but mining stopped after the Romans left. There is no reason to believe these forest tracks had been maintained during the subsequent 600 years, and by the 11th century, they were probably overgrown.

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 about 20 miles, while the shortest west to east crossing from the Lewes

Roman road would have been 16 miles. To put this into perspective, Daniel Defoe, writing about the Andredsweald in the 17th century. Noted that it took 6 oxen to pull a carriage that took one old lady to church, and 22 oxen to pull a cart carrying one log. Progress was so difficult that it sometimes took two years to haul a log the 33 miles to Chatham. Conditions would probably have been worse in the 11th century when much of the woodland was still uncleared.

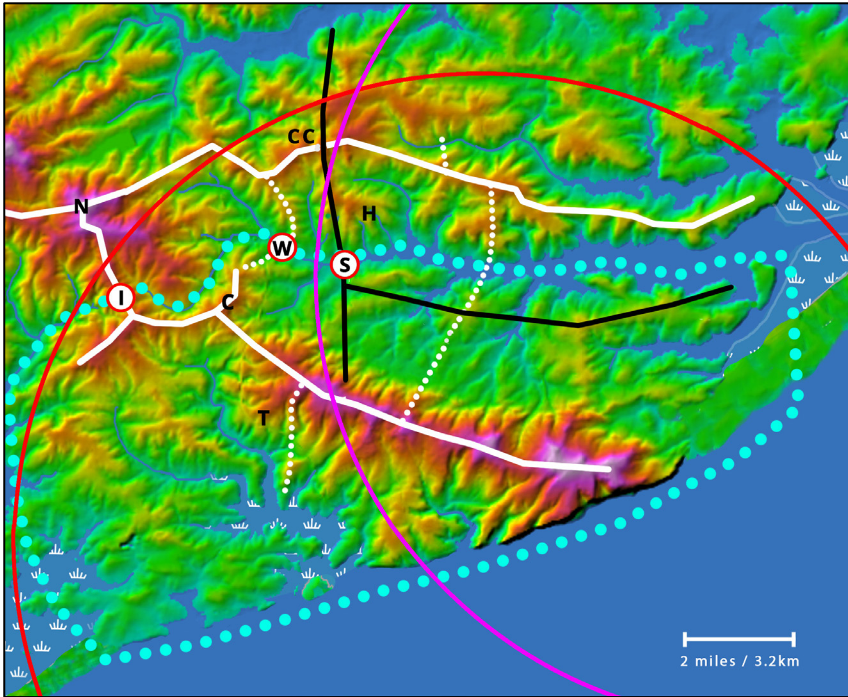

Figure 41: Harold's route to the orthodox battlefield; Roman road in black; trackways in white

On this basis, it would have taken weeks - or perhaps months - for Harold's baggage train to cross the Andredsweald using even well-maintained forest tracks. However, Harold's army arrived in the theatre of war within a matter of days. The only feasible route they could have used, as Robert Evans confirmed to us, was Margary 13, the Rochester Roman road (black line on Figure 41).

In those days, the Hastings Peninsula was a physically isolated peninsula, bordered by 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 41). Its isthmus (I), a narrow ridge at modern Spray's Wood, was one of only three routes that Harold could have used to cross 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 locations were vulnerable to ambush.

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. This process would have taken at least a couple of days, during which the English would have camped near the Rochester Roman road. William could not afford to wait, because the balance of Harold's army would arrive within days. This would have forced William to attack the English camp, a scenario that only aligns with a Hurst Lane battlefield (H on Figure 41), contradicting all the battlefield candidates.

Clue 9 – Wedge-shaped shield wall

> 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 suggests that the English shield wall was straight or nearly straight. However, this is not supported by any contemporary account. Instead, it was inferred from the geography of the orthodox battlefield during Victorian times. This inference contradicts the only account that directly describes the shape of the shield wall: Baudri unequivocally states that it was wedge-shaped. The

most plausible reason for Harold to deploy a wedge-shaped shield wall is that it followed the contours of a spur – a characteristic that matches Hurst Lane but contradicts all the other battlefield candidates.

Hints in other contemporary accounts support Baudri's description. Wace, for example, implies that the shield wall had a pointy front, insofar as the only reason that the 'men of Kent' would likely strike the first blow in a defensive formation is if 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 numerous spurs on and near the Hastings Peninsula, so why are we confident that Baudri's description refers specifically to Hurst Lane spur? One reason is that most of these spurs are too big or too small for the probable number of troops. Another is that Hurst Lane is the only spur in the region with natural upslope protection that made it impregnable to an attack from above (see Clue 5). A third reason is that a wedge-shaped shield wall on a spur would only look wedge-shaped from the direction in which it points. Baudri observes that the shield wall looked wedge-shaped from the Norman battle camp which, as explained in 'The Camps' section above, was at Cottage Lane. In other words, the battlefield spur pointed to Cottage Lane. Only two spurs in the region - Hurst Lane and Churchlands Lane - point to Cottage Lane, and Churchlands Lane spur is too wide to have been the battlefield. Therefore, Hurst Lane uniquely fits the contemporary account descriptions of a wedge-shaped shield wall.

While the direct evidence corroborating a wedge-shaped shield wall is scant, there is strong indirect evidence that the English flanks were tightly refused, or that the English were fighting back-to-back which amounts to 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 42) and Panel 54 (Figure 44) show the English fighting back-to-back.

Figure 42: 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 considered to be a mistake. In a straight or near straight shield wall, no one would face away from their attackers. However, they might do so if they were fighting back-to-back, curious or anxious about what was going on behind them.

Wace's statement that William chooses to fight 'in the middle throng' is inconsistent with the orthodox battlefield and any other scenario involving a straight or straightish shield wall. The English were largely passive during the battle, meaning that the fighting would take place wherever William decided to strike. On the orthodox battlefield, the only adverse terrain was

in the middle, particularly in front of what is now the Abbey's terrace. It is here that the orthodox battlefield slope was steepest, making it likely to have seen the least intense fighting. Conversely, Wace's description fits Hurst Lane, where the only significant fighting would have been in the middle because the flanks were perilously narrow and three times steeper than the middle.

Wace's statement about the English knight says that the Normans 'thronged in front of the battle'. This description makes little sense at the orthodox battlefield because the Normans could only have been in front of a straight or straightish shield wall. However, 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 at Hurst Lane would have been in the middle, with the Norman knights and barons thronging 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 – Enclosed shield wall

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 or imply that Harold was surrounded by his troops, suggesting that the shield wall was enclosed. The following two strongly indicate it was enclosed as this is the only way it could be 'impenetrable' and the only way it could 'enclose a field'. The last three statements require further explanation.

Poitiers says that the English line was difficult to encircle, which would not make sense if the shield wall was open. After all, if the Normans could get behind the shield wall, they would have immediately killed Harold rather than worrying about encircling the English line. Huntingdon says that the shield wall looked like a castle, likely meaning that the shields resembled a row of wooden stakes. The fact that he says it looked like a 'castle' rather than a 'palisade' implies the shield wall was enclosed. Baudri says that

William posted horsemen behind 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, while it contradicts the other battlefield candidates whose 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, all attacking from the same direction, that the flanks were within William's sight and earshot, and that they maintained this order throughout the day. This formation makes no sense at the orthodox battlefield (or Telham Hill or Caldbec Hill) where William's only rational tactic would have been to send his cavalry around the open ends of the English line to strike Harold early and directly. However, all the accounts agree that he neither did this nor attempt it.

If William were unable or unwilling to outflank the shield wall at the orthodox battlefield, his next best tactic would have been to engage as much of the English line as possible to thin it out, then try to breach the weakest flank using an oblique order attack. Yet, the Normans did not attempt this either. Instead, they fought on a narrow front, with the flanks close enough to see and hear William's commands.

It is not just that William failed to use the only tactics that make sense at the orthodox battlefield; he implemented the only tactics that might allow the English to survive the day by concentrating his best troops on the most adverse terrain where Harold's only well-armed troops were posted.

Things were difference at Hurst Lane where the flanks were too narrow (100m or so) and too steep (15%) for any serious fighting. William was forced to concentrate his best troops in the middle, and the flanks were so narrow that they had to stay within William's sight and earshot.

Clue 12 – Credible reason for why 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 left to recruit

more men, but he did neither. It was not due to lack of time because Wace and Carmen both say that Harold arrived at the English camp two days before the battle.

Wace offers one possible explanation reason for Harold's decision to stay 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 then 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 scouting the Norman camp alone, they both died in the battle, and they would not have reported this conversation to anyone on their return to camp. Wace likely inferred the conversation from events, 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, it does seem possible 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. It highlights that one of his greatest strengths was that he *"often sought some way out when fighting against great odds"*. Harold's men are equally likely to have understood that avoiding a hopeless battle was a wise strategy. They would have known that William would not attack if Harold was not there. Therefore, they would have realised that their best chance of ultimate victory and of personal survival was to withdraw to safety or allow Harold to leave and recruit more men.

A passive shield wall has no hope of victory; at best it can hope to survive. If Harold's goal was to survive and he was at the orthodox battlefield, he could have ordered his army to fall back along the route they arrived. He had the entire day before battle, and at least two hours on the morning of the battle, to reach safety at Bodiam, just four miles away. Even when the Normans gathered 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 merely watched the Normans appear over rising ground, growing increasingly pessimistic about their chances of survival.

Harold's inaction makes no sense at the orthodox battlefield or Telham Hill or Caldbec Hill. A more likely explanation is that Harold was unable to flee or withdraw. This would not be so at the orthodox battlefield, but it would have been true at Hurst Lane. Once the English army passed Cripps Corner, William would have sealed off their escape by positioning forces along the Udimore Ridge, effectively trapping Harold and the English army.

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 extensive metal detecting. The generally accepted excuse is that small ferrous items, like arrowheads, would have corroded away to nothing in the acidic soil, while larger ferrous items and all non-ferrous items would have been scavenged soon after the battle. While both are partially true, neither excuse seems entirely credible.

Roman-era iron nails are not uncommon metal detecting finds, even in acidic soil. There is no reason that similar-sized battle-related ferrous items, like arrowheads, would not have survived, albeit probably disfigured through corrosion. Larger 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 Englishman would have had at least two copper alloy strap ends, a copper alloy shoulder brooch, and a copper alloy buckle. During the battle and flight, many of these have come loose, with some trampled into the ground. 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 on the flight route, and it seems likely that there are some at the battlefield.

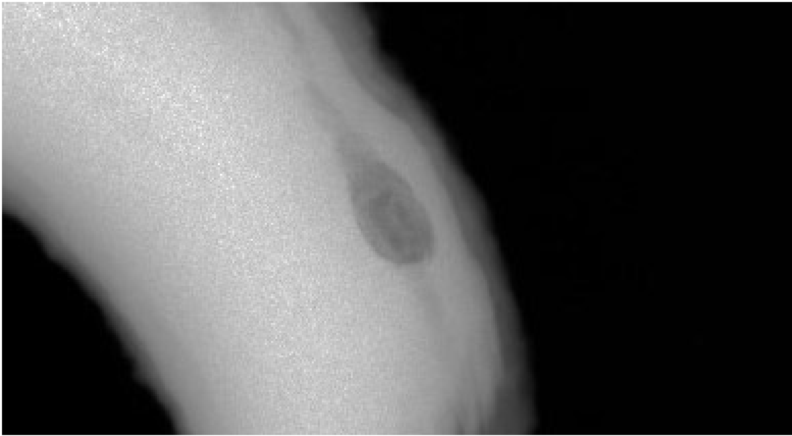

Figure 43: Killingan Wood horseshoe X-ray showing 'Norman' profile and hole

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 detected items in Killingan Wood in an area through which English would have fled. They found two Saxon copper alloy strap ends, several Saxon pins, a Saxon brooch, a Norman manufactured calkined horseshoe (X-Ray Figure 43), and what is almost certainly a medieval arrowhead.

These items are rare. Only one Norman 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, pins and brooches are less rare, but they are usually found in association with burial sites because senior Saxons were buried fully clothed. Only a dozen or so have been found in East Sussex outside burial sites, 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, pins and brooch might be earlier than the battle, tanged barbed arrowheads were in use a century before the battle, the Normans brought blacksmiths with them, and Norman manufactured horseshoes were made in England by Norman blacksmiths 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, 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 enroute to anywhere. There is no ordinary reason why any Saxon or Norman items would be there. 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 English flight path is at least 99.9%, and the Old English root of its name - '*quillen*', meaning 'to kill' – strengthens the likelihood of this connection.

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 and everyone assumes the third hour meant 09:00. It is not as straightforward as it seems. Firstly, the medieval day was split into 12 equal parts, 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. Fortunately, Wace specifically says that the battle started at tierce, which refers to the end of the third hour, 09:00.

Before leaving their battle camp, the Normans had already attended Mass, eaten breakfast, and listened to William's pep talk. They then needed to form into a column, march to the battlefield, and reorganise into three divisions upon arrival. Given these delays, the march to the battlefield from the Norman battle camp cannot have been much longer than an hour.

These timings match a battlefield at Hurst Lane, 2½ miles from our proposed Norman battle camp at Cottage Lane following the very specific route that Wace describes (see Clue 6). They contradicts the other battlefield candidates: the route to the orthodox battlefield and Caldbec Hill from the orthodox Norman camp at modern Hastings is too long, and Nick Austen's route to Telham Hill from his Norman camp at Upper Wilting is too boggy.

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, making the distance from the battlefield to the Norman camp at 'Heastinga' about eight imperial

miles. It gives the impression that he was referring to crow-flying miles, which moderately aligns with the orthodox battlefield, roughly six crow-flying miles from the orthodox Norman camp at modern Hastings. It is a better match for our proposed battlefield at Sedlescombe, which is 7½ direct miles from our proposed Norman camp at modern Winchelsea.

We are sceptical that anyone in the 12th century could accurately calculate inland crow-flying miles, unless the end points were joined by a straight road or river, or were visible to each other, or both visible from an intermediate point. None of these conditions would apply to the orthodox battlefield and the orthodox Norman camp, nor to Caldbec Hill. Telham Hill and its corresponding proposed Norman camp at upper Wilting would have both been visible from Green Street. Hurst Lane and our proposed Norman camp at Winchelsea would have both would have been visible from Snailham.

It seems more likely to us that John of Worcester meant marching miles. If so, the orthodox battlefield is roughly seven marching miles from the orthodox Norman camp, a near match. Caldbec Hill would be a good match at eight miles. Telham Hill would be a poor match at two miles. Hurst Lane would be a good match at eight miles.

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 an unobstructed view. It is close enough that the English deployment would have been clearly visible, and the English standards easily 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 for more.

Clue 17 - The battlefield was adjacent to the English camp

Carmen and Brevis Relatio say that the English camp and the battlefield were both visible from the Norman battle camp. Carmen adds that the English camp was in woodland.

> 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' "*.

The implication is that the English camp was adjacent to and beyond the battlefield when viewed from the Norman battle camp. Our proposed battlefield at Hurst Lane is 1.6km from our proposed Norman battle camp at Cottage Lane, with the English camp at Great Sanders 400m beyond that. The camp's elevation, 10m higher than the battlefield, would have made

both the camp and battlefield clearly visible from the Norman battle camp, matching this clue. This clue contradicts the orthodox battlefield, where the battlefield hill obscured the orthodox English camp. It is also incompatible with Telham Hill where neither the battlefield or proposed English camp are visible from the proposed Norman camp, and it makes no sense at Caldbec Hill which is the proposed English camp and battlefield.

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 references it ten times, 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' but both translations are wrong. *'bellum'* means 'war', not 'battle'. So, Orderic is saying that Battle Abbey was built where the 'Senlac war' took place. The normal Latin root word for 'battle' is *'pugna'*. Orderic's use of *bellum* rather than *pugna*, implies that Senlac referred to a district rather than a settlement. It is therefore consistent with all the battlefield candidates.

Etymologists have examined the probable meaning of *Senlac*. Freeman and others suggest that it might derive from the Old French *'Sanguelac'*, meaning '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,

meaning it is Old English, not Old French.

Most etymologists agree that *Senlac* was Old English for ‘sandy loch’ or ‘sandy lake’. In Saxon England, a ‘loch’ might have the general meaning ‘lake’, or the more specific meaning ‘a body of water cut off at low tide’. The Brede estuary had a low-tide ford below Brede village. Thus, the upper Brede estuary became a ‘sandy lake’ and a ‘sandy loch’ at low tide. That body of water could easily have been the ancient name for the upper Brede basin, encompassing our proposed Hurst Lane battlefield and Cottage Lane Norman battle camp, thereby matching this clue. The orthodox battlefield, Telham Hill and Caldbec Hill are all on ridgeways, as unlikely as anywhere to be in a district named after a lake.

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 located in *Herste*. We will explain in greater detail why we think that the CBA is saying that the battlefield was at *Herste* in the Clue 19 section of The Traditional Battlefield.

CBA does not clarify what it means by *Herste*. By context and with an upper case ‘H’, it seems to be a proper noun rather than the Latin transliteration

of the Old English word for 'wood'. In those days, the only inland places that routinely had names were manors, settlements, woods, hills, rivers, and lakes. These names were typically compounded with an adjective: Hawkherste, wood frequented by hawks; Penherste, Pena's Wood, etc. Therefore, *Herste* on its own probably refers to a manor. Three are listed in Domesday, one of which surrounded or abutted Hurst Lane.

The Sussex *Herste* manor was in Staple hundred. It is listed in Domesday alongside the manors of *Selescome* (Sedlescombe) and *Fodilant* (Footlands), implying that it is in the south of that hundred. See Figure 67 for a graphical representation. In those days, Sedlescombe was south of the Brede and upstream of the crossing point (see Leuga diagram Figure 24). Footlands was located 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, it would have encompassed Hurst Wood, Hurst House, Hurst Lane and, thus, our proposed battlefield.

A battlefield located in *Herste* manor might also 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. *Herste* is the only manor held by a Saxon in sub-Andredsweald East Sussex. It seems likely to us that Normans may not have wanted to possess the battlefield manor, fearing it would be haunted by the souls of unshriven (and very peeved) English soldiers that died in the battle.

In summary, while the evidence supporting this clue is ambiguous, we are confident that the CBA is saying that the battlefield and the little huts were in *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*, discussed in Clue 19 above. While *spinam* usually means 'thorn bush', this would not be a useful marker in a landscape likely covered with thorn bushes. However, *spinam* has a niche meaning for the dividing wall between the turning posts at a Roman circus. This wall was usually made of stone and low enough for the charioteers to see across to the other side. While there was certainly not a Roman circus at the site of Battle Abbey, Professor Searle presumably knew that it had a broader meaning 'low stone wall' (see translation above), which could serve as a plausible battlefield marker.

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 located on east-west ridges, while Caldbec Hill lies on a southwest to northeast ridge. None of these locations have a western slope, nor were they situated near a place named *Herste* at the time of the battle (see Clue 19), so they all contradict this clue.

In contrast, 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 positioned towards the western slope, they would have been around 50.9390, 0.5456. Alas, 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"*.

We provide Ingram's translation. Other translations vary significantly in meaning, as discussed on page 85. 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, however, think it has something to do with 'hoary' or 'grey' apple trees. While all of these translations are valid in different contexts, they do not seem appropriate in this context.

ASC-D's author was trying to provide useful information to his readers about where Harold went to meet William. His readers are unlikely to have known about the location of a specific apple tree in sub-Andredsweald Sussex, especially as it would likely have died by the time he was writing. Apple trees are mentioned as boundary markers in Saxon charters, as John Grehan explains, but in a local context. They are not mentioned as markers in Bede, or in Asser's Life of Alfred the Great, or in any recension of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, aside from this one alleged exception. Thus, it seems highly implausible 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 from the ASC's account of the 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.

By contrast, all the other battlefield candidates are on the Hastings Peninsula, 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 entries. If the battle had been fought on the Hastings Peninsula, the ASC would surely have said that Harold went to *Hæstingas*. Thus, 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*".

Both these translations are wrong. 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"*, but he assumes that Huntingdon's *Hastinges* referred to modern Hastings, which has not plains and which is about as far from 'flat' as anywhere in the region. As explain elsewhere, *Hastinges* never refers to modern Hastings, so Lower's comment is out of context, but he might still be right that Huntingdon was confused.

Hastinges can refer to the Hastings Peninsula or to *Hæstingaport*, depending on the author and the context (Appendix A). There were no plains at the port and the battle was not fought on the coast. While there is some relatively flat land on the Hastings Peninsula, it lies to the southwest of the Hastings Ridge and is low lying, so not where Harold drew up his lines.

Huntingdon's statement looks faulty: the battle was fought on a hill (Clue 4), so it was not fought on a plain. There are three possibilities: 1) Huntingdon, as Lower says, was confused about the local geography; 2) *'planis'* is a misspelling; or 3) *'planis Hastinges'* is a term used at the time

to differentiate the Hastings Ridge from everywhere else on and around the Hastings Peninsula.

Huntingdon might have been confused. *'planis'* might be a misspelling, although it is not obvious what it was meant to be. *'planis Hastinges'* might be a medieval geographic term, perhaps to refer to areas on and around the Hastings Peninsula what were not on the Hastings Ridge. It is feasible then that none of the battlefield candidates match this clue. However, if *'planis'* was not a misspelling, it is more consistent with Hurst Lane than any of the other battlefield candidates because it alone was not on the Hastings Ridge.

Clue 23 - A lateral fluvial 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 encountered during their advance without noticing it. They could not have crossed that ditch without noticing it, so it must have been positioned laterally, to the side of the battlefield. One interpretation of a 'shield charge' could be another's 'feigned retreat'. We suspect that Huntingdon was describing the same event as Wace, only he took a more positive view of the Norman's bravery. Therefore, this ditch must have been close to the battlefield, running roughly parallel with it, and not separated from it by

woodland. Given that the battlefield was on a slope, the ditch was probably fluvial.

As the English pushed the Normans back, the shield wall would have stretched, increasing the risk of dangerous gaps. It's unlikely that they would have shield-charged more than 50 meters. If the Norman lines were approximately 100 meters deep, the ditch must have been within 150 meters of the shield wall for those at the back to be forced into it.

These descriptions contradict the orthodox battlefield, Caldbec Hill and Telham Hill. The orthodox battlefield lacks lateral ditches within shield charge range, as does Caldbec Hill. Telham Hill has a lateral ditch, but it is wooded, so the Normans could not have been shield charged into it. Moreover, all the battlefield candidates aside 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 primarily 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 clue 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 reiterates that there was a plain below the shield wall where the English were drawn when chasing the feigned Norman retreat. The Norman knights surrounded and slaughtered anyone running out of the shield wall. So, how far might the English chasers have run out of the shield wall before realising their danger and attempting to return? In our view, this distance would be no more than 150m.

Wace's description perfectly matches Hurst Lane spur where a level area lies 100m below the front of our proposed Hurst shield wall (beside the modern metal gate), with a slope shallow enough to be described as a plain. Although there is a level area below the orthodox shield wall, just north of Powdermill Lake, it is 700m from the orthodox shield wall – too far for the Normans to have effectively staged a feigned retreat. 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 matches this clue.

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 describes how spectators watched the battle from a nearby hill with an unobstructed view. This matches Hurst Lane, which is overlooked from Killingan Wood spur, offering an ideal vantage point at 50.941,0.539. It may also be consistent with the orthodox battlefield, where a partial view through the tress might have possible from the conical hill between modern Glengorse and modern Brede Abbey Farm (at 50.9049, 0.4915). Wace's description 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 the Hastings Ridge to be covered in impenetrable woodland. If so, spectators would not have been able to get to Telham and even if they did, they would not have been able to see through the trees.

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*".

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

Tapestry Panel 54 (Figure 44) depicts the battlefield hill as small, low, flat topped, and rugged especially on one side.

Figure 44: 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."*

Pseudo-Ingulf says that the battlefield was a small hill, which is consistent with the depiction on Tapestry Panel 54, albeit the Tapestry's scale is inconsistent with the relative sizes of its people. Wace's account of the shield charge ditch involves a fluvial ditch to the side of the battlefield and no more than 150m from the contact zone (see Clue 23). If half the battlefield was roughly 150m wide, it was a small hill.

Malmesbury's passage requires explanation due to his confused sequencing. 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 first stand on a knoll and a second beside a precipitous ditch; 5) Alternating fortune lasted until Harold died, after which the English fled until nightfall.

Most historians interpret Malmesbury's statements to be in chronological order, which would mean that the English occupied the knoll during their first flight, and it was not at the battlefield. Some historians believe that the small hill shown on Tapestry Panel 54 represents this knoll, so it was not at the battlefield. Historians generally dismiss Pseudo-Ingulf's account as confused, because they think that Harold died at Battle Abbey, which was not on a small hill.

However, no other accounts suggest that the English repositioned while Harold was still alive. Most say that the English fled after his death. We interpret this to mean that Malmesbury's last two statements are adding detail to the first three, out of sequence in the timeline. We interpret Malmesbury to be saying that the English made a stand on a knoll, referring to the main battlefield, and that after Harold's death, they fled and made a second stand at a ditch. This brings Malmesbury in line with Poitiers and Wace. It means that Malmesbury is also saying that the main battlefield was

a small hill. This is consistent with Pseudo-Ingulf and with the Tapestry because the small hill is depicted on Panel 54 yet Harold does not die until Tapestry Panel 57.

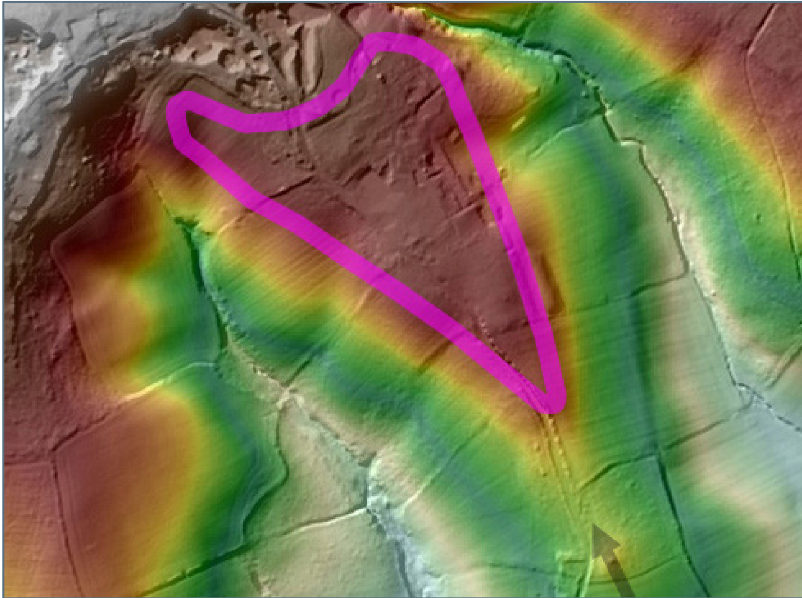

Figure 45: Artist's view for Panel 53/54 shown by a black arrow

This clue matches Hurst Lane, a small hill, and contradicts all the other battlefield candidates. Indeed, Panel 54 is such an accurate rendition of the Hurst Lane battlefield that it is possible to deduce where the artist was standing when he recorded the scene, on a 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 45.

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.

John of Worcester specifically says that the battlefield is 'narrow'. As we say in Clue 11, several accounts say that the Norman flanks were within William's sight and earshot throughout the battle. It seems unlikely that the flank commanders, presumably positioned in the centre of their flanks, could have been more than 200m away from William, implying that the entire Norman front was less than 500m. Wace, as we say in Clue 23, implies the battlefield was roughly 400m wide.

The orthodox battlefield is usually depicted with a shield wall ranging from 600m to 800m, assuming both sides were bounded by impenetrable woodland. As we explain elsewhere, there is no such thing as impenetrable mature deciduous woodland. In practice, the orthodox battlefield was more than 2km wide. Nick Austin's Telham Hill battlefield is depicted at roughly 750m wide, but this also incorrectly assumes impenetrable woodland boundaries. In practice, it would have been at least 1km wide, bounded by Hunter's Ghyll to the east and the end of the hill to the west. John Grehan's Caldbec Hill battlefield is depicted at about 800m long, but it also incorrectly assumes impenetrable woodland boundaries. In practice, it would have been over 1km wide, limited only by the width of the hill.

So, this clue matches our proposed Hurst Lane battlefield which would have been 375m wide at the contact zone. It contradicts all the other battlefield candidates which were all more than 1km wide.

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 says that William positions himself in the middle division where he expected the most intense fighting to occur. This would be true for our

proposed Hurst Lane battlefield, where slope is around 6%, less than half that on the flanks, where the slope reaches around 15%. According to Wace, the English deployed a barricade to protect the middle, but the flanks were still more dangerous, susceptible to being shield charged into the flanking streams (Clue 22). At Hurst Lane, William's flank divisions would have done little fighting, leaving the middle division to bear the brunt of the battle.

Wace's statement contradicts the orthodox battlefield. In that scenario, the middle of the shield wall was on the steepest slope, defended by Harold's elite huscarls. Meanwhile, the orthodox English flanks were on the shallowest slope, manned mainly by farmers armed with billhooks. If William chose not to outflank the English line, he would have opted instead for an oblique order attack on the weakest English flank. This same issue applies to Caldbec Hill. On Telham Hill, the slope would have been consistent along the English line, but there is still no reason the fighting would be more intense in the middle.

Thus, this clue matches Hurst Lane while contradicting the other battlefield candidates.

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 neared 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 was greater than the slope in front of it.

Hurst Lane steepens from 5% at Brede Lane to 10% halfway along the battlefield ridge crest. In contrast, the proposed shield walls at the orthodox battlefield, Telham Hill and Caldbec Hill were on the steepest part of their

slope (note that the orthodox battlefield has been artificially steepened at the terrace in front of Battle Abbey). These other battlefield candidates were shallower behind the shield wall than they were in front of it, the opposite of what Carmen describes.

Thus, this clue matches Hurst Lane but contradicts 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."*

The Chronicle of Battle Abbey says that the battlefield was on a ridge or spur that had a western slope. This means that the ridge or spur ran predominantly north-south. It says that the monks built their little huts 'somewhat lower down'. If this referred to the side slope of 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 ridge or spur, so the monks' huts were a little down the crest of the battlefield ridge or spur, on 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.

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 says that the shield wall was difficult to encircle. He means more than he says. While it is true that any inland position could be encircled with enough men and spacing, there must have been a tactical advantage to encircle the shield wall at the Battle of Hastings.

This clue is inconsistent with all the battlefield candidates except Hurst Lane. As we say in Clue 10 above, if the English line was straight or nearly so, William had had no incentive to try an encirclement, since getting any men behind the English line would have allowed a direct assault on Harold.

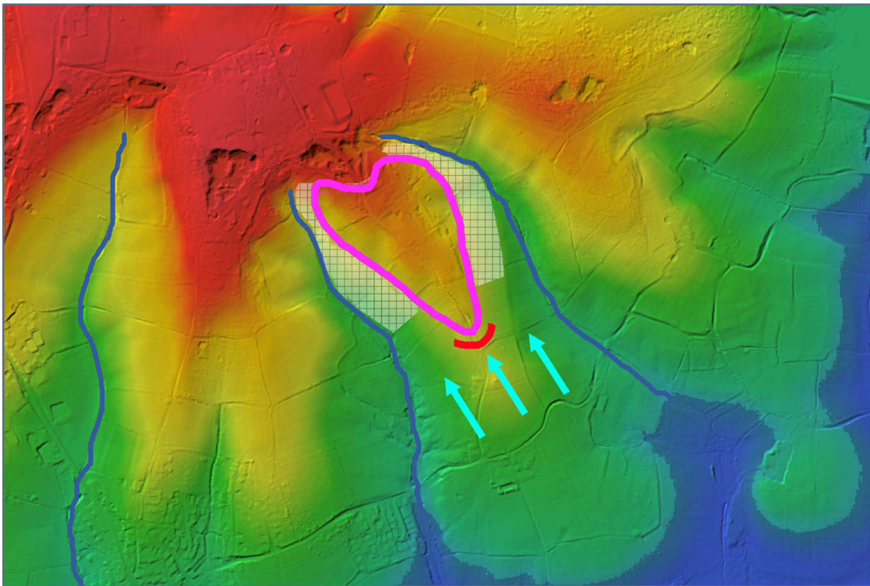

Figure 46: Battlefield relief, shield charge zone hatched

In contrast, at Hurst Lane, William would have been eager to tightly encircle the English line, but it would have found it implausibly difficult. Figure 46 shows the problem. To the north, the shield wall was protected by the Hurst Lane iron ore pit. The English flanks were protected by streams and a deadly shield charge zone. The front tip of the shield wall was further protected by a barricade. The effective contact zone was barely

150m long, allowing Harold could stack his troops twenty ranks deep, and still have enough men to comfortably protect the rest of the hill. With only one man engaged per metre, William could only bring about 150 men into hand-to-hand combat at any one time. Given his disadvantageous uphill fighting position, breaking through the English line by force would have taken days.

Thus, this clue matches our proposed Hurst Lane battlefield and contradicts the other battlefield candidates.

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.*"

Both Carmen and Poitiers say that the battlefield was adjacent to woodland and rough scrubland. Poitiers adds that it was adjacent to a road leading to safety. Carmen says that it was adjacent to hills and valleys. We interpret Quedam Exceptiones's 'hollows of the valleys' to mean iron ore mines.

All these descriptions match Hurst Lane. It was in *Herste* manor, a name that means 'woodland'. It was surrounded by a moonscape of iron ore mines (Clue 5), which would have been 'rugged and uncultivated' and 'untrodden wastes' by the time of the battle, and still is. It was adjacent to metalled tracks that the Romans used to carry iron ore to the Rochester Roman road and thence to Rother and safety.

In contrast, Carmen, Poitiers and QE contradict the orthodox battlefield and Caldbec Hill. The orthodox battlefield lies on an unwooded part of the Hastings Ridge ridgeway. It was not adjacent to a wooded hill. It was not adjacent to a Roman road. It was not adjacent to any iron ore mines, which also means that it had no nearby metalled roads. While the 'road' might refer to the Hastings Ridge ridgeway, it would not have led to safety. There is no reason or likelihood that the Hastings Ridge was 'too rugged to be cultivated'. All this would apply equally to Caldbec Hill which was nearby. Telham Hill is a better match, adjacent to some iron ore mines, Roman mining tracks, although those led to the sea rather than to safety, and rugged uncultivated land.

Thus, this clue is a good match for Hurst Lane and Telham Hill but contradicts the orthodox battlefield and Caldbec Hill.

Clue 33 - The battlefield was not on the Hastings Peninsula

None of the contemporary accounts explicitly state, imply, or even suggest that the Battle of Hastings was fought on the Hastings Peninsula. It is often assumed that the battle's name indicates it took place on the peninsula, but this is a misconception. The battle's name was first recorded in the Domesday Book as *'bello de Hastinges'*, which in Norman Latin translates to the 'War of Hastinges'. At that time, *'Hastinges'* did not refer to the modern town of Hastings or the Hastings Peninsula but to *Hæstingaport*. We believe the battle was named after *Hæstingaport* because it was the nearest well-known location that all Normans would have recognized. By tradition, *Hæstingaport* was located at modern Hastings, but as we explain in the

section 'The Camps', it was likely situated at modern Winchelsea. However, this distinction is irrelevant to the main argument. Neither of these *Hæstingaport* location candidates - nor any other plausible origin of the battle's name - ties the battlefield specifically to 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?

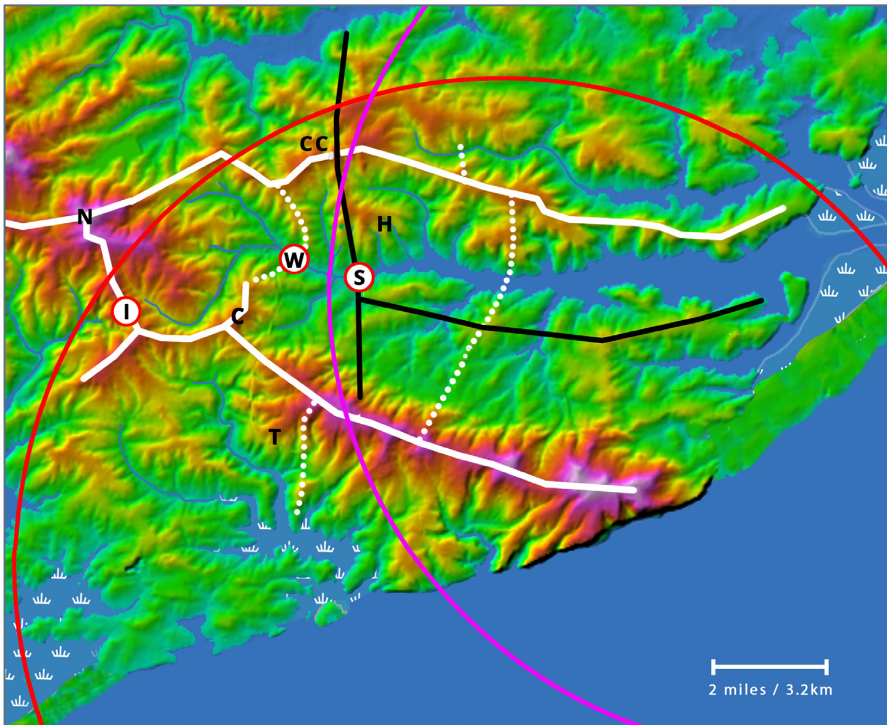

Figure 47: Hastings Peninsula outlined in cyan dots, 8 mile radius from modern Hastings (red) and from modern Winchelsea (magenta)

Figure 47 shows the 11th-century outline of the Hastings peninsula in cyan dots. Note once again that, at that time, it was geographically distinct 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). All of these crossing points were narrow, making them ambush prone. The riverbanks at Sedlescombe or Whatlington would have been impossible to defend, while the isthmus could have been defended but lacked a safe way to withdraw. If the Normans blockaded the isthmus ridgeway after the English had passed, they would have been trapped.

Harold had a personal manor on the Hastings Peninsula and was intimately familiar with the area, including its military risks. If he had intended an early crossing onto the Hastings Peninsula – something 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, however, could not afford to wait, especially if he thought there was any chance Harold would flee or withdraw. He would have attacked the English camp before they got a chance to move, and the contemporary accounts say this is precisely 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 supporting this claim in 'The Camps' section 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"*.

We discuss John of Worcester's statement in Clue 15. It does not imply or suggest that the battlefield was on the Hastings Peninsula, and if it was on the Hastings Peninsula it was near the northern boundary. It is just as likely to refer to Hurst Lane, not on the Hastings Peninsula, as Caldbec Hill, and it is a better match for both than the orthodox battlefield or Telham Hill.

Brevis Relatio might provide key information about the battlefield's location, but its meaning is not clear. It was written by a monk at Battle Abbey. Depending on his ethnicity, its *Hastingas* could refer to the Hastings Peninsula or *Hæstingaport*. Fortunately, we believe that this distinction makes little practical difference. The south bank of the Brede estuary lies both 'on the side' of the Hastings Peninsula and 'to the side' of modern Winchelsea. If William and his barons were observing 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 location 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 vantage points where this is possible would look across the Brede estuary, with the Normans on the south bank and the English on the north bank. If the English were on the north bank, they were not on the Hastings Peninsula.

ASC-D says that Harold: *"assembled a large army and came to meet [or towards or against] him at haran apuldran"*. We explain on page 85 why we think that *haran apuldran* referred to the Rother estuary. We discuss this in Clue 20 where we say that the wording probably indicates that the Rother estuary was the closest named place to the battlefield that readers of the

Anglo-Saxon Chronicle would recognise. They would have recognised '*Hæstingas*', the Old English name for the Hastings Peninsula because it appears in the 1012 annal and is the root of both *Hæstingaport* and *Hæstingaceastre*. Therefore, it follows that the English camp and the battlefield were not on the Hastings Peninsula.

Tapestry Panel 48 (Figure 27) 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*; instead, they would have sought 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* as referring to the Hastings Peninsula. If this interpretation 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 31 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.

This third edition has more and improved graphics, and clearer analysis. Nothing significant has changed. Figure 48 is a more detailed version of the engagement diagram we presented in the first edition.

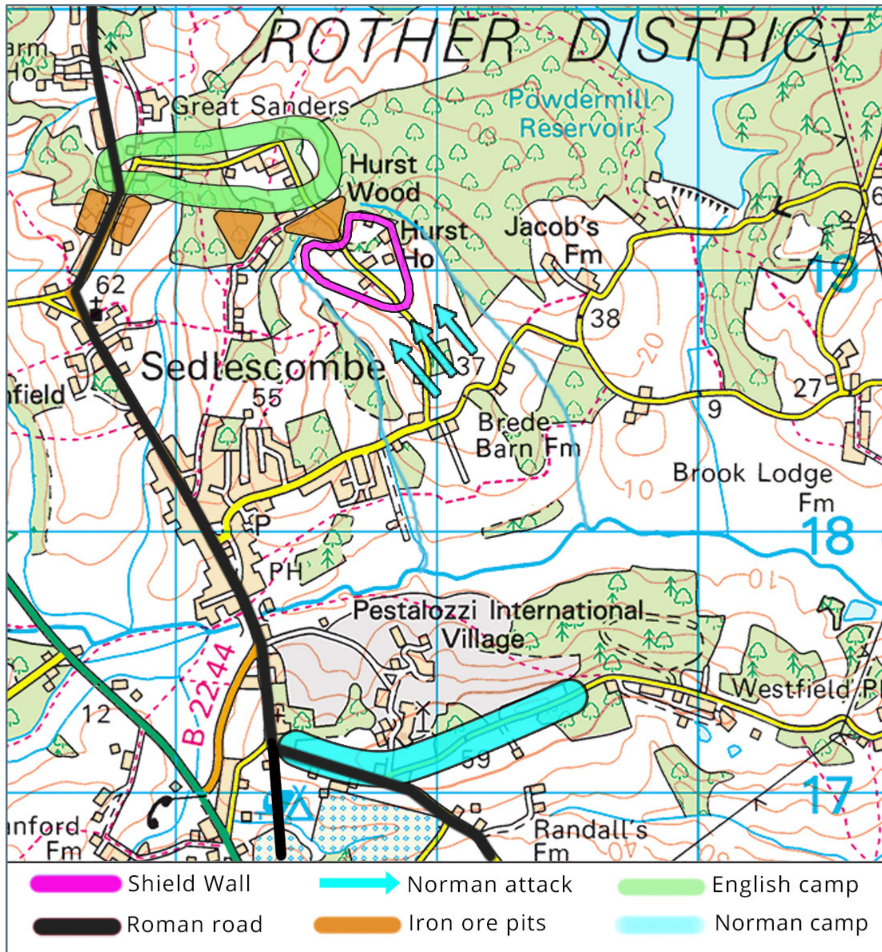

Figure 48: Camps and Sedlescombe battlefield troop deployments

One irony in all of this is that, after spending 20 years trying to piece together the events by re-translating and analysing hundreds of pages of Latin and Old French contemporary accounts, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle sums it up in just 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 states, Harold went to the Rother estuary expecting to negotiate William's return to Normandy. He did not anticipate William launching an attack, mistakenly believing that William's forces

were not strong enough. Had Harold realised the true strength of the Norman army, he would probably have left London – and would certainly would not ventured close to the Norman army - before assembling an overwhelming force.

Proving any of this will be a bigger challenge than working it out. Large and valuable items from the battlefield and camps would have been scavenged soon after the battle. The western side of the battlefield has been metal detected, with hopes of finding, at the very least, a large number of arrowheads. Disappointingly, nothing predating WWII was found. The landowner explained that the Canadian Army practiced making aircraft landing strips there before D-Day, probably bulldozing away the top few inches of topsoil in the process.

In contrast, Killingan Wood - through which we think the English fled and where most of them died - has yielded a dozen or so Saxon era personal items, including strap ends, pins and a brooch. A very rare Norman manufactured horseshoe, and an even rarer tanged barbed arrowhead were also found. While these items are consistent with the battle and seem out of place if they were not associated with the battle, they fall short of providing definitive proof.

People have become accustomed to thinking of 'proof beyond reasonable doubt' meaning DNA evidence, which in this context would mean finding human or equine battle victims. We are hopeful. According to Wace, the Norman casualties were buried near the battlefield, probably by dropping their bodies into one of the nearby 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. It is currently unavailable for excavation, but that might still change.

As for the English casualties, Poitiers and Wace both say that the English dead were mostly removed. Poitiers (Chibnall): *"He [William] gave free licence to those who wished to recover their remains for burial."* Wace (Burgess)

says something similar, then: *"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."* Any 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 we hope to find them under the north bank of the Killingan Wood pit.

Horses may provide compelling evidence of the battlefield location because they would not have been moved from where they died. Dozens of horses are said to have fallen to their death in the Malfosse, which we think referred to the Hurst Lane iron ore pit. These remains should be still there, although as we say above, it is currently unavailable for excavation.

One final hope is that a mass grave of English battle victims might be found. Wace's 'clerics and priests' probably buried many of the English victims beside a nearby church. Domesday lists Rameslie manor with five churches, probably excluding the Fécamps Abbey church, and there might have been a Saxon era church at Sedlescombe. Mass graves could be at one or more of these, and perhaps at some other nearby Saxon church. Alas, the exact location of these churches is unknown.

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

The Traditional Battlefield

We believe the Battle of Hastings was fought at Hurst Lane in Sedlescombe, rather than at the traditional site around Battle Abbey. In this section, we explain why the traditional battlefield location is unlikely, examine the supporting evidence, explore how the accepted narrative might be mistaken, and consider why Battle Abbey was built where it is.

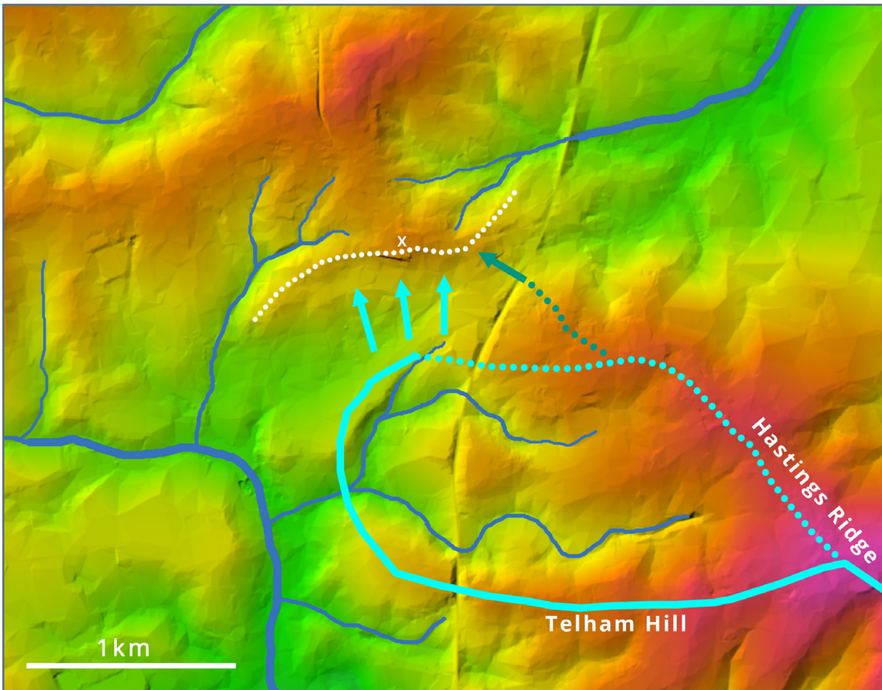

Figure 49: Traditional Norman attack

For those unfamiliar with the traditional battle narrative, here is a brief recap. Harold, furious about the Norman invasion, rushed to Sussex, hoping to launch a surprise attack on the Norman camp. In his haste, he left behind half of his army. He camped on Caldbec Hill. The Normans were camped at modern-day Hastings. At dawn on the day of the battle, Harold, too impatient to wait for reinforcements, ordered his understrength, rag-tag army to march southeast along the Hastings Ridge to attack the Norman camp. Simultaneously, William ordered his men to

march northwest up the same ridge toward the English camp. Scouts from both sides warned their commanders about the approaching enemy.

The Normans halted at *Hechelande*, near modern Telham, and formed a battle camp. Realizing that the Normans were too powerful to fight on level ground, Harold ordered his men to occupy the nearest hill, which happened to be the ridge at modern Battle (white dots on Figure 49). It is known as 'Senlac Hill' or 'Battle Ridge' – we will use the latter. The English formed a tightly packed, straight or straightish open shield wall on some or all of Battle Ridge, 50m or so below the ridge crest. Harold commanded from behind the centre of the line (X). The Normans, having advanced out along Telham Hill, divided into three groups and attacked up the slope south of where the Abbey now stands (cyan lines on Figure 49). After fighting all day, the Normans had made no impression on the English line. William ordered one of his flanks to feign a retreat, luring some of Harold's troops to break formation. This created a gap, through which Norman horsemen breached the shield wall, allowing them to attack and kill Harold. The English forces held out until dusk before fleeing.

There are major inconsistencies between this traditional narrative and the contemporary accounts. Brevis Relatio and Wace, for instance, state that Harold went straight to modern Battle and waited to be attacked, contradicting the idea that he attempted a surprise attack on the Norman camp. If this is true, it resolves the question of why Harold would make a reckless understrength attack on a fortified Norman camp. However, it would raise a new problem that is just as thorny: why would Harold establish a static shield wall at Battle, or anywhere for that matter, effectively setting the terms of a battle he could not possibly win? Moreover, this scenario contradicts the Carmen, which says that the Normans saw the English occupy the battlefield on the morning of the battle.

There is also no consensus on the size or shape of the English shield wall either. Reputable historians agree that the battle took place on Battle Ridge, but it was 2km-long. Early historians assumed each side had 25000 or

more men, enough for the English to defend the entire ridge. In 1897, Wilhelm Spatz calculated that neither side could have had more than 8000 men, probably fewer. Thus, most modern analyses estimate that each side had between 5000 and 8000 men, far too few to defend the entire ridge. They propose that Harold defended only the central part of the ridge, but estimates vary between 400m and 800m for the shield wall's length. Its shape is also debated - some believe it was straight, others curved, doglegged, or straight with 'refused' (bent) flanks.

Another inconsistency involves the direction of the Norman advance. The cyan line on Figure 49 represents the traditional route, which partially matches Wace's description. However, it crosses a boggy stream in Malthouse Wood, leading some historians to believe the Normans took a dry route by staying on the Hastings Ridge until they reached modern Starr's Green (cyan dots on Figure 49). This seems sensible but contradicts Wace. Neither route makes military sense, as both would require the Normans unnecessarily to attack uphill. A more plausible option, initially proposed by *Time Team* and now endorsed by some in English Heritage, would have been for the Normans to remain on the Hastings Ridge and attack from the east along the ridge crest (teal dots on Figure 49). This would explain why no significant archaeological evidence has been found at the traditional battlefield. However, it contradicts multiple battlefield clues from contemporary accounts, including Wace's description of the Norman advance and the steepness of the battlefield. It would also mean the English shield wall was facing the wrong direction.

Here then is one reason to be sceptical about the traditional battlefield location. Every reputable historian who has written about the battle proposes a different scenario. They disagree on the size and composition of the armies, where the English camped, how and why they arrived at the battlefield, the direction of the Norman attack, the size and shape of the shield wall, and how William failed to outflank the English line. Some variables have many plausible values – there are 30 different versions of the

shield wall alone.[8] This creates thousands of potential battle scenarios, many of which have been proposed over the years. It means that there is no single orthodox consensus but rather many competing hypotheses. A H Burne, who analysed battle theories published before 1950, lamented: *"There is a disparity of views. How are we to judge between such eminent authorities? When the doctors disagree, who shall decide?"* He concluded that they were all wrong and proposed yet another theory. It was not widely accepted either. Later historians have similarly dismissed previous theories, leading to a continuous stream of new proposed battle scenarios.

Historians rarely openly criticize each other's theories, but in essence, each new engagement theory implicitly challenges the validity of earlier proposals. Likewise, new theories are often met with similar scepticism. In short, reputable historians struggle to agree on any major aspect of the traditional battle narrative - except for the claim that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield. And that, as we will explore next, is fishy too.

A monastery on a battlefield?

The entire orthodox Battle of Hastings narrative relies on the notion that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield. It is highly unlikely.

Battle Abbey is unique as the only medieval Christian monastery anywhere in the world that purports to have been built on a battlefield combat zone. The absence of other examples stems partly from the medieval fear of revenants and thus of being haunted by the souls of those killed in violent conflict, and partly to avoid being accused of glorifying violence. William the Conqueror, known for his piety, would have been particularly sensitive to this latter reason because his motivation for building the Abbey was to earn the Pope's absolution for blood spilled during the Conquest, notably during the 'Harrying of the North'. Constructing a penance abbey on the site of his greatest military victory would have worsened his sins in the eyes

[8] https://momentousbritain.com/go/BOH_Evolution

of the Pope. Contrary to popular belief, the Abbey's location suggests the battle was not fought at the traditional site, rather than that it was.

Some contemporary accounts go further, claiming the Abbey was built on the exact spot where Harold was killed. This is even less likely. It was William's Osama bin Laden moment. It would have been implausibly naïve of him to permanently mark the location of Harold's death, for fear it became an Anglo-Saxon shrine where Harold could be venerated as a martyr, and a focus for rebel insurgents. In our view, the location of Harold's death would have been the last place William would choose for his abbey.

The Abbey's name also demands scrutiny. Many people believe the name 'Battle Abbey' proves it was built on the battlefield, but this is a misconception. The Abbey's original name was *Sancti Martini de Bello*. The Latin word *bello* means 'war' or 'to wage war' in a broad sense, making the Abbey a memorial to the campaign rather than to the battle specifically. This is consistent with the Abbey's location in modern Battle, which would have been part of the 'theatre of war'. The Latin terms for 'battle' are '*pugna*' and '*proelium*'. A battlefield was usually referred to as '*locus pugnæ*' or sometimes '*acies*'. If William had intended to highlight that the Abbey was built on the actual battlefield, he would have named it '*Sancti Martini de Pugna*'. Contrary to popular belief, the names 'Battle Abbey' and 'Battle' are more evidence that the Abbey was not built on the battlefield, 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, TV celebrity historians 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 statement 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 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. We have reproduced them in full, 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."*

These statements, as Porter says, do seem to state or suggest that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield, perhaps at the exact location where Harold died. They are less convincing upon closer inspection.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is key, as it 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, 'where God permitted him to conquer England' is an odd and vague choice of words. If it referred to the battlefield, it is more likely to have said: 'William built a great abbey on the battlefield', perhaps adding 'where God gave him victory over the English' for piety's sake. The Battle of Hastings was an important aspect of the Conquest but not the only one. Success was only assured when London chose not to resist. That is a more accurate interpretation of the ASC statement, but in entirely the wrong place. Medieval clerics thought that God predetermined the outcome of battles, so the statement might refer to where William prayed before the battle, but the only place that could not have been is the battlefield. We suspect that the ASC's author chose these words because he knew that the battle was fought in the vicinity of Battle Abbey but not at the Abbey, and this was a concise and pious way of saying so.

Secondly, 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', like 'place', has no implication of precision. While it can refer to a specific spot, thereby matching Garmonsway's translation, it could just as easily refer to an area 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 says that the place where Harold moored his fleet was the Isle of Wight, and the place where William Rufus died was the New Forest. Sub-Andredsweald East Sussex was just as remote and sparsely populated, so perhaps five miles of precision is all that can be expected.

Regardless, 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. It is therefore worth investigating the other accounts.

Huntingdon and Brevis Relatio use similarly imprecise language. Huntingdon says *'Quo in loco',* Brevis Relatio *'in eo loco ubi'*. Latin *'loco'* means 'place'. An unqualified *loco*, like an unqualified *steode*, can have a wide range of meanings, especially in remote and sparsely populated areas like medieval sub-Andredsweald East Sussex. Then there is Orderic's '*Senlac'*. He does not explain what he meant by the term, but some of his other references to it encompass both camps and the battlefield, so it was too large to be the battlefield. We discuss what it probably meant in Clue 18 above and below. For our purposes here, it is sufficient to say that it is also an unqualified 'place' with the same vagueness as *steode* and *loco*.

It seems likely to us that none of these authors knew the exact location of the battle, other than that it was in the vicinity of Battle Abbey, so they are effectively saying that the Abbey was built in the vicinity of the battle, or perhaps in the theatre of war. If so, there is no reason they are more likely to apply to the orthodox battlefield than to any of the other candidates. Indeed, it is quite the opposite: they imply that the Abbey is not on the battlefield.

Before discussing the other group, it is interesting to consider, Kipling-like, how the Battle of Hastings got its name. Obviously not because it was fought at modern Hastings, or anywhere that Normans might have referred to as *Hastinges*. Rather, it is to do with the Latin word *'bellum'* and its inflections. 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 means 'war' or 'to wage war'. So *'bello de Hastinges'* means 'War of Hastinges' or 'Campaign of Hastinges'. The campaign's 'theatre of war' encompassed the battlefield, camps, flight route, and surrounds. *Hastinges* (*Hæstingaport*) – see Appendix A - was the best-known place in this theatre of war, so gave its name to *'bello de Hastinges'*.

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 campaign 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 to defend their independence (see below).

This brings us to the five other references. John of Worcester, Malmesbury and the Chronicle of Battle Abbey say that Battle Abbey's nave was built on the spot where Harold's body was found. Wace and Orderic's GND redaction say that that Harold came to *'the place now named Bellum'*, or similar, where he defended himself, implying that the battlefield was at Battle. They look like compelling evidence supporting the orthodox battlefield at Battle Abbey, but there are reasons to be sceptical.

John of Worcester's 'Abbey on the battlefield' statement is scribbled in the margin by a different hand, clearly a much later addition. William of 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 the monks of Battle Abbey fabricated the notion that Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield. So, the only emphatic original statement that the Abbey was built where Harold died is in the Chronicle of Battle Abbey, which was written 130 years after the battle by the same monks that William of Malmesbury thinks to have invented the notion that the Abbey was built on the battlefield.

Elisabeth van Houts explains their possible motivation in her paper 'The Memory of 1066 in Oral and Written Traditions' where she writes about Battle Abbey's manuscript Brevis Relatio. She dates it to between 1114 and 1120, making it the earliest unequivocal 'Abbey on the battlefield' reference. Ralph of Caen was abbot at the time. According to Van Houts, his failing health might have led the Abbey scriptorium to write Brevis Relatio, hoping to defend the Abbey's 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.

Eleanor Searle supplies the background in the introduction to her CBA translation. She explains 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. Vincent is sceptical about its entire contents: *"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".* [9]

So, there is a plausible explanation as to why Porter's contemporary account references are not compelling evidence that the Abbey was built on the battlefield. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is saying that the battle took place in the vicinity of Battle Abbey, rather than at the precise location of the Abbey. The next relevant source, Brevis Relatio, fabricated the notion that the Abbey was built on the battlefield to protect their independence. Subsequent accounts repeat one or both these sources. They would all have had access to the ASC. Wace and Malmesbury are known to have had copies of Brevis Relatio. John of Worcester is known to have visited William of Malmesbury. It is not unreasonable to suspect that the others had seen it too. While Malmesbury's scepticism appears before the monks are known to have made a claim that the Abbey's altar is on the spot where Harold's body was found, they could have made this claim in a letter or by word or in a lost manuscript.

Why then did no one contradict 'Abbey on the battlefield' references at the time? No one would contradict the ASC statement in William's obituary because it does not say that the Abbey was built on the battlefield, and what it does say is accurate. One battle participant, Robert de Beaumont, was

[9] 'King Henry II and the Monks of Battle: The Battle Chronicle Unmasked' – published as a chapter in 'Belief and culture in the Middle Ages'

still alive (just about) when Brevis Relatio was written. As William's cousin, he was probably at the dedication for Battle Abbey, so he might 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 it is very unlikely that he could 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 of them 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 presents one physical 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 reasons that that the decision to build in such an awkward spot might indicate that William demanded the abbey be constructed on the exact place where Harold died, implying that this was where Harold fell. However, this claim invites scepticism.

Firstly, the original Abbey was not on the crest of the Hastings Ridge crest, not on a side slope. Indeed, as A H Burne indicates by a dotted line on his troop deployment diagram (Figure 54, 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. While some claustral buildings were on a side slope, their construction would not have presented any significant practical difficulties for the Normans, who were master stone masons.

Porter's argument conflates 'difficulties' with 'impossibilities'. In reality, construction challenges are typically a matter of cost and time - both of which William had indemnified. Even if the construction was somewhat challenging, it was not impossible. When the original abbey collapsed in the 13th century, its replacement was built 50 meters down the slope of the Hastings Ridge, where the incline was pronounced, suggesting that any slope-related difficulties were not a deterrent.

Battlefield location clues and the orthodox battlefield

✓✓✓ = Unique match; ✓✓ = Match; ✓ = Consistent ✗ = Inconsistent; ✗✗ = Contradictory	Battle Abbey
Orthodox battlefield clues	
1. Battle Abbey was built on the battlefield	✓✓✓
2. The battlefield was in the vicinity of Battle Abbey	✓✓
3. The Normans advanced up a steep slope	✓✓
4. The battlefield was at or near the top of a hill	✓✓
Battlefield fingerprint clues	
5. Presence of non-fluvial ditches near the battlefield	✗✗
6. Wace's description of the Norman advance	✗
Battle enigmas	
7. Credible reason for Harold's actions	✗✗
8. Logistics & Harold's route to the battle theatre	✗✗

✓✓✓ = Unique match; ✓✓ = Match; ✓ = Consistent ✗ = Inconsistent; ✗✗ = Contradictory	Battle Abbey
9. Wedge-shaped shield wall	✗✗
10. Enclosed shield wall	✗✗
11. William's military tactics	✗✗
12. Credible reason for why Harold did not withdraw or flee before the battle	✗✗
13. Contemporary archaeology	✗✗
Proximity to English and Norman camps	
14. The battlefield was roughly an hour's march from the Norman battle camp	✓✓
15. The battlefield was nine Roman miles from 'Heastinga'	✓
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'*	✗✗
20. The battlefield was near a *'spinam'*	✗✗
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	✗✗
24. There was a plain below the contact zone	✓
25. The battlefield was overlooked by another hill	✓
26. The battlefield was a small hill	✗✗

✓✓✓ = Unique match; ✓✓ = Match; ✓ = Consistent ✗ = Inconsistent; ✗✗ = Contradictory	Battle Abbey
27. The battlefield was narrow	✗✗
28. The fighting was more intense in the middle	✗✗
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	✗✗
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	✗✗

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); it was roughly nine Roman marching miles from the orthodox Norman camp at modern Hastings (Clue 15); 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 300m away - onto which the English chased a feigned retreat (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 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. Some of the other clues need an 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.

Credible explanation for Harold's actions (Clue 7)

Most of the contemporary accounts say that Harold went to Sussex because he 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 3½ 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.

Logistics & Harold's route to the battle theatre (Clue 8)

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.

Figure 50: Edward Foord - Harold's route to the war through the Andredsweald

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 50). He shows Harold marching directly to 'Senlac' along the approximate route of the A21.

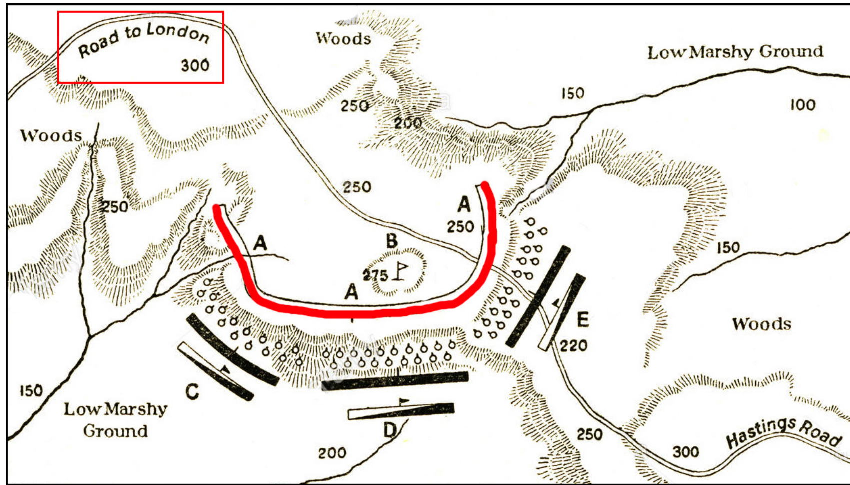

Figure 51: Oman battlefield deployment diagram with routes labelled

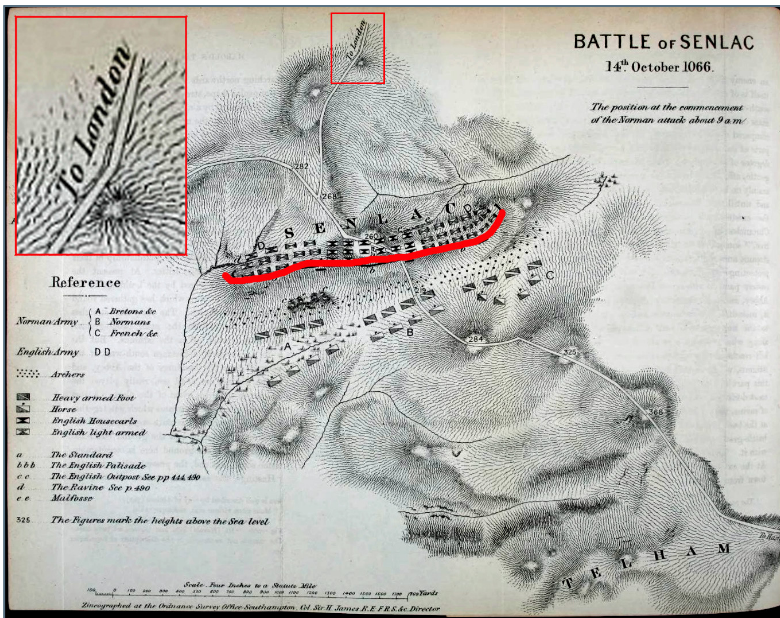

Figure 52: Freeman troop deployment with routes labelled

Lots of Battle of Hastings analyses are accompanied by initial troop deployment diagrams. Oman's (Figure 51) and Freeman's (Figure 52) are two examples among dozens shown on our website.[10]

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 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 41). A metalled Roman mining track could have got the English as far as the Beauport Park bloomery. Then what? The Romans discovered that the

[10] https://momentousbritain.com/go/BOH_Evolution

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 41), 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.

Enclosed shield wall (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 53 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 53: 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 53). 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 53. 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 54 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 33, Figure 51 and Figure 52, 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 208. They are all implausible.

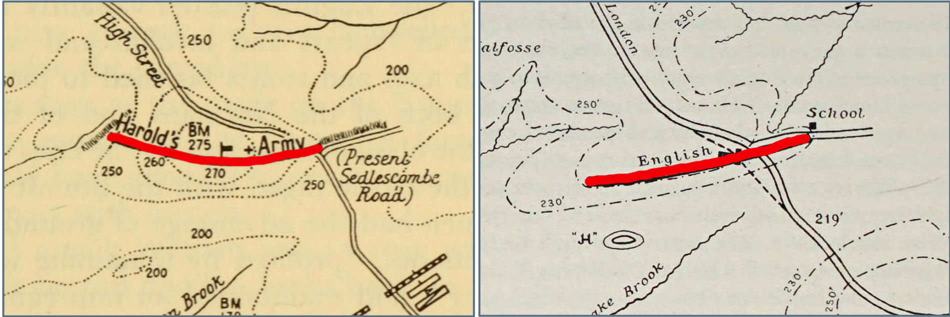

Figure 54: Some proposed English troops deployments at the traditional battlefield

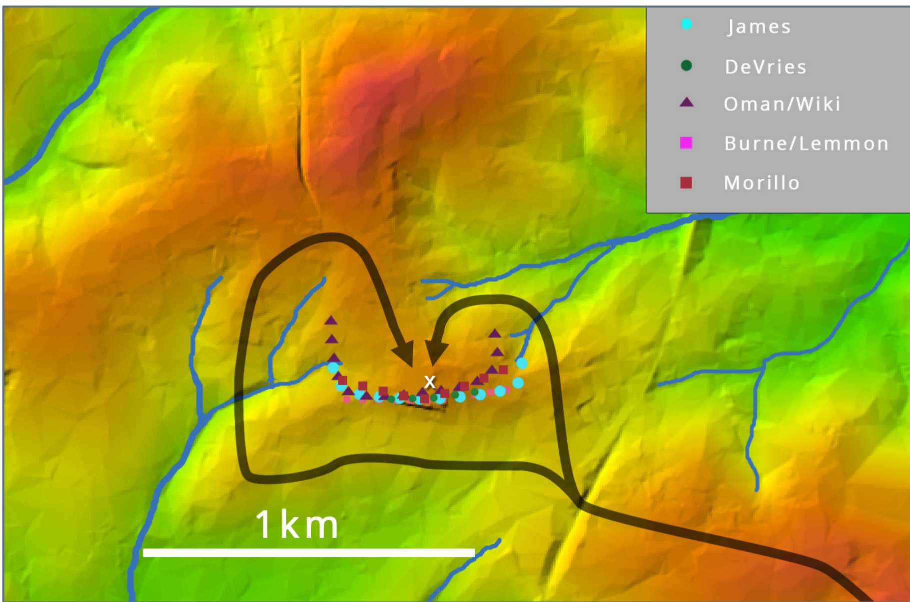

Figure 55: Flank attack on narrow shield walls

Figure 55 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 55. 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. A study of 27 ancient woodlands by Elisa Fuentes-Montemayor showed understory vegetation coverage of less than 20% and typically 0%.

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Figure 56: 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 56 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 57 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.

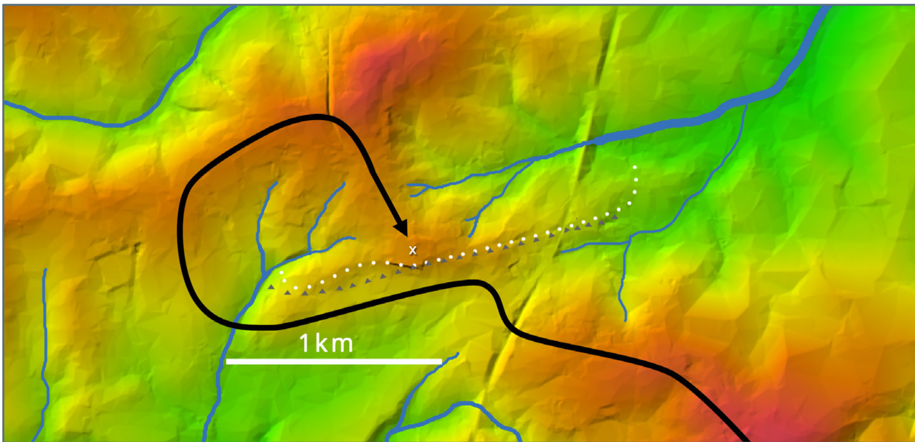

Figure 57: Long flank attack; Freeman and George shield wall dispositions

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.

Credible reason for why 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.

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 79m over a conical hill through which the railway was cut, 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 the elevation so that the Abbey is increasingly obscured by Loose Farm ridge. There is only one view of Battle Abbey, shown by a red arrow on Figure 58, looking north from 50.8989, 0.5046, 100m east of the power transformer. It looks through a gap where the public footpath runs between the shoulder of Starr's Green to the east

and the 79m conical hill to the west. Even here, the bottom of the Abbey buildings, and therefore the orthodox location of the middle of Harold's shield wall, are obscured by vegetation on the Loose Farm ridge. The English flanks would have been obscured by the two hills just mentioned. It was therefore impossible to view any part of the English troop deployment from Telham Hill, contradicting Brevis Relatio.

Figure 58: Battle Abbey (red arrow) viewed from Telham Hill

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 CBA statement about *'Herste'*.

> CBA Folio 12: *"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 passage in his 2014 paper 'On the very spot: In defence of Battle'. He discusses 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.

We originally thought that one source of the confusion is 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 omits some punctuation. These errors give a very different meaning to the Latin text. He graciously explained to us that his interpretation was made on the original pre-typo Latin text, but Searle's errors would have been in that too.

Anyway, we agree with Searle, and therefore with Austin's grammatical argument, that CBA is saying that the battlefield was at a place named *Herste*. The cause of confusion, we think, is that 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. The English

sentences have different subjects, leading to the ambiguity. 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. Having said this, the little huts were 'not far off' from the battlefield, so chances are that they were both in *Herste*.

Take a step back. As Porter says, the purpose of the passage about *Herste* is to corroborate the monks' claim that the Abbey is on the battlefield. The mechanism, again as Porter says, is that CBA Folio 21 says that *Herste* was near the Abbey. In effect, everywhere near the Abbey was on the battlefield, so it does corroborate the monks' claim, albeit through the backdoor. But were they telling the truth? The monks are known to have invented and/or forged a lot of the other evidence that the Abbey is on the battlefield. Perhaps the same applies to their claim about *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 the name 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. CBA says that *Herste* was an orchard whereas *'herste'* was Old English for 'woodland'. Orchards are planted and picked artificially, but there is no evidence of Saxon era occupation at Battle Abbey. Even if it was an orchard 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 *Hechelande* and 'Senlac', the Norman battle camp and Orderic's name for the battlefield, respectively. They were in the wrong direction and too far from Battle Abbey for the battle to have been fought there, so the monks invented a *Hechelande* and a Senlac close to the Abbey.

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 in north Sedlescombe.

A lateral fluvial 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 49. 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, a single ditch, usually referred to by the umbrella term 'Malfosse', encompasses all the contemporary account references to ditches near the battlefield. 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)

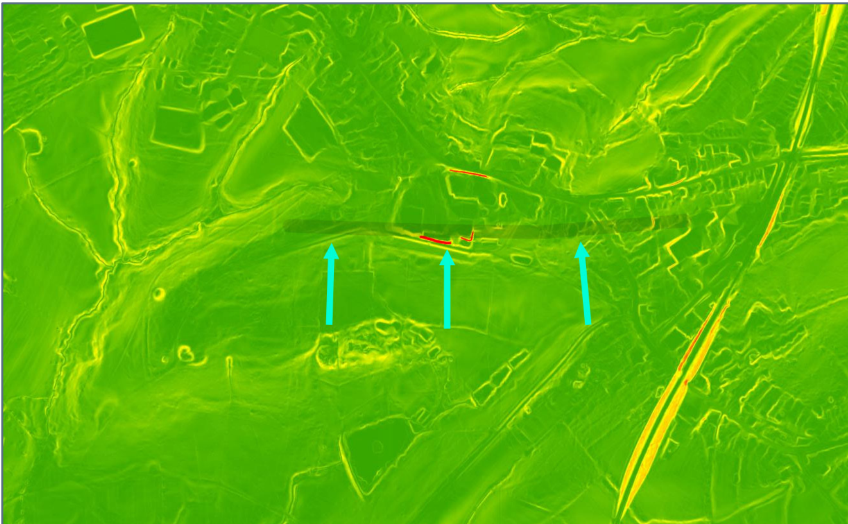

Figure 59: Slopes around traditional battlefield

Wace (Taylor) says that William chooses to: *"fight in the middle throng, where the battle shall be the hottest"*. Figure 59 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.

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 l 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.

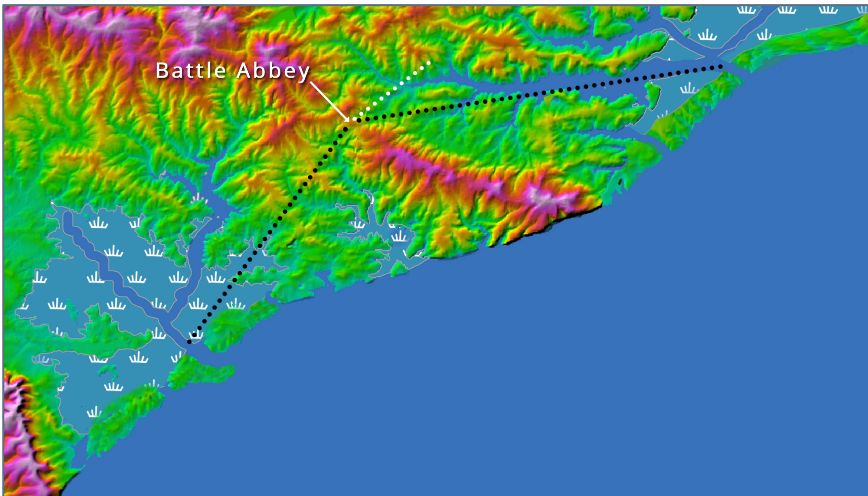

Figure 60: Battle Abbey lines of sight

We think that the Abbey's exact location was probably chosen for line of sight (Figure 60). 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. They made some thrilling finds including Saxon strap ends, a Saxon brooch, Saxon pins, a Norman manufactured horseshoe, and a probable barbed tanged arrowhead. The Norman horseshoe with its diagnostic eye shaped holes is the first of its kind to be found in England outside London. They will be shown on our website at the link below.[11]

The Battlefields Archaeology Group surveyed the western side of the battlefield on 14th October 2023, the anniversary of the battle. Disappointingly, they found nothing pre-WWII. A local landowner explained that the Canadians – who were based nearby before D-Day - bulldozed off the topsoil when practicing building aircraft runways.

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[11] https://momentousbritain.co.uk/go/BOH_Finds

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. 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 Hastings as the Norman landing site and/or camp. It is always assumed to mean modern Hastings. There is a compelling reason to think not. The 1181-1182 Pipe Rolls refers to the castle at modern Hastings as '*castelli Noue Hasting*', while the 1182-1183 Pipe Rolls refers to the area around the castle as '*Noue Hasting*'. In this form, '*Noue*' was a device to disambiguate a new settlement from somewhere in the vicinity that was already known by the same name. In other words, when the Norman castle was built at modern Hastings, there was already somewhere in the vicinity known to the Normans as *Hastinges*, so they referred to the area around the new castle as '*Noue Hasting*'. It is this Saxon era *Hastinges* where the early contemporary accounts say that the Normans landed and/or camped, and the one place it could not have been was at modern Hastings.

Occam's Razor adherents, including us, would love all the references to somewhere that sounds like Hastings to have a single meaning, common to all the contemporary accounts. It is not so simple.

Hastingas in the English accounts

If it were not for the Norman invasion accounts, there would be little doubt that *Hastingas* referred to a substantial area on the south coast of England.

- The ASC entry for year 1011 gives the clearest clue. It says that Vikings overran the land south of the Thames, which it defines as Kent, *Hæstingas,* Sussex, Hampshire and Surrey. It implies that *Hæstingas* was a county-sized area between Sussex and Kent. If so, it referred to the Hastings Peninsula or to an area that encompassed the Hastings Peninsula.
- Symeon of Durham describes Offa's defeat of the '*Hestingorum gentem*' [the *Hæstingas* nation] in 771, which implies they occupied a substantial territory that took their name.

- Saxon Charter S318, dated 857, refers to monks residing 'in *Hastingas*'. Charter S686, dated 960, refers to farmland 'in *Hastengas*'. They give the impression that Hastingas was a substantial area.
- Malmesbury says that William's other monastery was 'in *Hastingis*'. The 'other monastery' refers to Battle Abbey. No one has ever claimed that Battle Abbey was in any settlement that might have been referred to as *Hastingis*. This statement suggests that *Hastingis* was a substantial area.
- Malmesbury says: "he [Harold] reached *Hastingas* with very few soldiers". Pseudo-Ingulf (Riley) says that Harold: *"Arriving with all speed at Hastingas, …"*. Ex Chronico Alberici Trium-Fontium Monachi (Starkey) summarises: *"In the meantime King Harold was returning from the battle against the Norse, and having brought to him the news of the arrival of the Normans, he went to Hastingas"*. No one has ever suggested that Harold 'reached' or 'arrived at' or 'went to' modern Hastings or any settlement that might have been referred to as *Hastingas*, so these statements suggest that *Hastingas* referred to a substantial area.
- Huntingdon refers to *'planis Hastinges'* ['the plains of *Hastinges*'], which only makes sense if it is a substantial area.
- Tapestry Panel 40 (Figure 61) is captioned: *"ET HIC MILITES FESTINAVERUNT HESTINGA UT CIBUM RAPERENTUR"*, 'and 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, and they needed to do it quickly because, given half a chance, the locals would have driven away their livestock and burned their grain stores. The Norman knights must have raided the biggest grain stores and the richest pastural farmland. 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. The Norman knights must have headed for Hooe, Filsham and Crowhurst, which had 116 acres of

meadowland between them; enough livestock for a month. Therefore, the Tapestry's *Hestinga* referred to the Hastings Peninsula or, less likely, just the part south and west of the Hastings Ridge.

Figure 61 : Tapestry Panel 40

- Two related places are mentioned in the ASC before the invasion: '*Hæstingaport*' and '*Hæstingaceastre*'. We will discuss these more below. For here it is just worth noting that they refer to a port and to a former Roman fortification respectively, and that their names imply that they were in a substantial area named '*Hæstinga*'.

All these references suggest that *Hastingas* was a large district or a small county sized area, yet it is not listed as such in Domesday or elsewhere. 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 bigger.

There are other substantial *-ingas* places, 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 early Anglo-Saxon *Dænningas* and *Tendringas* tribes left a vestigial geographic meaning for their homelands, namely the Dengie Peninsula and Tendring Peninsula in Essex. Likewise, the *Wihtwara* left a vestigial geographic meaning for their homeland, the Isle of Wight. They had a lot in common: physically isolated, big enough to protect themselves, yet small enough and passive enough to stay under the radar. These tribes were among the earliest Anglo-Saxon settlers, which perhaps helped them retain racial integrity. These conditions all apply to the *Hæstingas* tribe, so we think that *Hæstingas* was the Old English name for the Hastings Peninsula, consistent with all the references above.

Hastingas and Hastinges in the Norman accounts

Other contemporary invasion accounts tell a different story. Poitiers, Jumièges, Huntingdon and Benoît say that the Normans built a fortress at *Hastingas*, as if *Hastingas* 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 near Hastingis, dedicated to St. Martin"*. That monastery was Battle Abbey, so it only makes sense if *Hastingis* was a settlement. Benoît says that after the battle: *"William placed his best knights to guard the fortress at Hastinges"*, which only makes sense if *Hastinges* was a settlement. John of Worcester says that Harold: *"… gave them battle at a place nine miles from Heastingam"*, which can only refer to a settlement. They all say or suggest that *Hastingas* was a settlement or port, which means that it was probably a settlement at a port.

It is noteworthy that all the accounts that suggest *Hastingas* was a substantial area were written in England by people born in England, whereas those that say or suggest it was a settlement or port were written by Normans or in Norman monasteries. We interpret this to mean that Anglo-Saxons used the term *Hæstingas* to mean the Hastings Peninsula

whereas Normans, at least until the mid-12th century, used the term *Hastinges* – often Latinised as *Hastingas* - to mean *Hæstingaport*.

The rationale is straightforward: as long as it does not lead to ambiguity, humans tend to abbreviate for convenience and tend to think in terms of their own experience. So, almost everyone in Britain refers to 'London Heathrow Airport' as 'Heathrow' because the tiny village of Heathrow had nothing else of any significance. Most of us refer to the 'Port of Rotterdam' as 'Rotterdam'. The French refer to the 'Port of Dover' as *Douvres*. Pre-Conquest Normans traded with *Hæstingaport*. They had no interaction with anywhere else on the Hastings Peninsula. It would have been human nature to abbreviate *'Portus Hastinges'* to *'Hastinges'*.

Hastingas exceptions, anomalies and alternative theories

Domesday is an exception. It lists a place named *Hastinges* within the manor of Rameslie which was held by the Abbey of Fécamp. If it was consistent with the other Norman and Anglo-Norman accounts, this *Hastinges* should refer to *Hæstingaport*. But it is listed with only 4 burgesses and 14 bordarers whereas the much smaller harbour of Pevenesel is listed with 110 burgesses. Also, 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 it was coveted by the Abbey of Fécamp. We think it was broken out because it was an area within Rameslie manor for which the Abbey of Fécamp was not taxed. Perhaps it was a military garrison and/or an administrative centre before the completion of William's castle at modern Hastings. This implies that Domesday's *Hastinges* referred to *Hæstingaceastre* (see below).

There are two other complications. One is that four of the contemporary account authors - John of Worcester, Orderic Vitalis, William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon - were Anglo-Normans with English mothers. They might have been raised to use the Old English meaning of *Hæstingas*. Huntingdon and Malmesbury, we think, did so selectively. Huntingdon's only reference not copied from the ASC, was to

the *'plains of Hastingas'*, which implies it was an area. Most of Malmesbury's references imply that *Hastingas* was a substantial area too, but his reference to Battle Abbey being near *Hastingis* implies it was a settlement. Orderic and John of Worcester seem to adopt the Norman usage, saying that *Hastingas* was a seaport or settlement. John of Worcester even removes *Hæstingas* from the ASC's list of counties occupied by the Danes in 1011, presumably because he thought it was a settlement rather than a county.

If we are right about this name evolution, *Hastingas* in the 11th century Norman accounts - Poitiers, Jumièges and Carmen - meant *Hæstingaport*. *Hastinges* was increasingly likely to have meant Hastings Castle through the 12th century, but the only account written late enough to be affected was CBA. It seems to use both meanings at different times but disambiguates when there might be confusion. So, it seems to refer to the castle at modern Hastings as *Hastinges* when explaining it is on a line from the Abbey through *Hechelande,* but it had previously said that William led his men to a port named *Hastinges*.

The other complication is that some references to *Hastingas* are in verbal quotes. They might have been reported verbatim, so *Hastingas* meant what it did at the time of the quote, or they might have been edited for the meaning at the time of writing. The most important was Wace. 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 does not refer to *'port de Hastingues'*, so he might be referring to an area, but his references to *Hastingues* seem to refer to a settlement and they are in verbal quotes, so we think he meant the port.

In principle, the Anglo-Saxon region of *Hæstingas* might include land beyond the Hastings Peninsula. It cannot have extended east of the Rother, which was in Kent. According to Mark Gardiner, it probably did not extend west of Pevensey Lagoon because its placename conventions are different. The most likely extensions are the adjacent peninsulas of Wartling to the west and Udimore to the north (Figure 62). 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 *Hæstingas* only had a geographic meaning in the 10th century, we think it was geographically bounded, by the sea to the south, by Pevensey Lagoon to the west, by the Ash Bourne estuary to the northwest, and by the Brede estuary to the north.

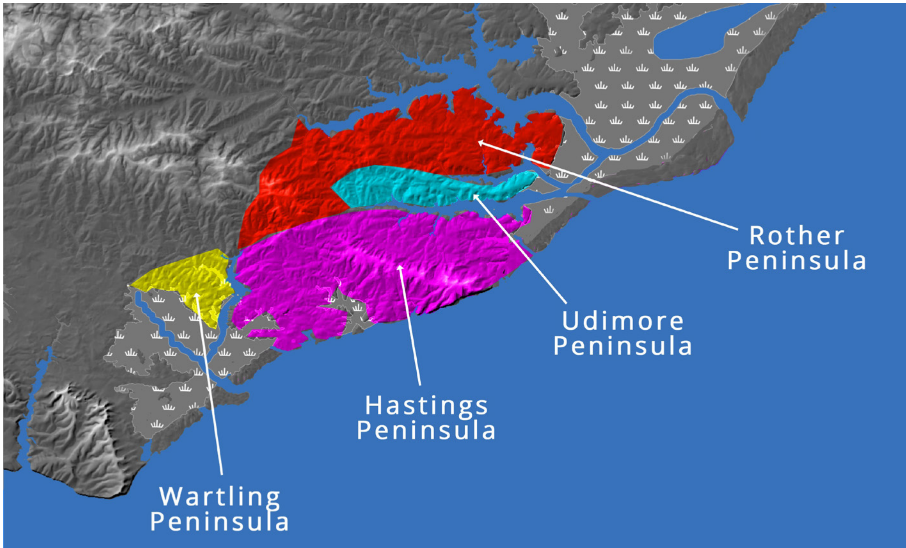

Figure 62: Hastings and surrounding peninsulas in 1066

Kathleen Tyson has a different contra-orthodox 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.

Hæstingaceastre

To summarise from above, most of the Norman and Anglo-Norman contemporary accounts say that the Normans camped at a port named *Hastingas*. It is safe to assume it is one and the same as the place named

Hæstingaport in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle because both sets of accounts say that this is where William assembled his second wooden fortress. By the same token, it was also known as *Hæstingaceastre*, because the caption on Bayeux Tapestry panel 45 says that William assembled his second wooden fortress at *'HESTENGA CEASTRA'*. This is important in the search because we can be moderately confident about *Hæstingaceastre's* location.

Hæstingaceastre is listed on the Burghal Hidage as one of Alfred the Great's 33 'burh' fortifications, constructed in the late 9th century to defend Wessex against Viking attacks. These were substantial places, precursors of the modern borough with self-sustaining land and workforce. The burh fortification was the administrative centre for its proto-borough and the defensive refuge for its district. All but one pair of south coast Alfredian burhs are separated by 20 to 30 miles. *Hæstingaceastre* appears second on the list, immediately before Lewes, which suggests it was 20 to 30 miles east of Lewes, between Bexhill and modern Winchelsea.

Modern Hastings is roughly midway between Bexhill and modern Winchelsea, in the right vicinity to be *Hæstingaceastre*. But, as we say above, many excavations have uncovered no evidence of Saxon era or Roman era occupation at Hastings Castle or elsewhere in modern Hastings, so it is unlikely.

Horace Round pondered this in his 1899 paper 'Some Early Sussex Charters'. He conjectured that *Hæstingaceastre* is more likely to have been at modern Pevensey. This theory was picked up by Pamela Coombes in her 1995 paper 'Hastings, Haestingaceaster and Haestingaport', and more recently by Jeremy Haslam in his 2020 paper 'The location of the burh of hæstingeceastre of the Burghal Hidage'. They all note that Anderitum at modern Pevensey is the only known Roman fortification between Lewes and Kent, and it was referred to as a *ceastre*. It sounds like a good argument, but there are reasons to be sceptical:

1. Anderitum is only 13 miles east of Lewes. All but one pair of south

coast burhs are separated by 25 miles or more. The exception is Twynham and Wareham, but even they are 16½ miles apart. Thirteen miles seems too close for Anderitum to have been an Alfredian burh.

2. Anderitum already had an Old English name, '*Andredesceaster*', according to the 491 annal of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. There is no obvious reason it would change in the following 600 years, and it was not edited to *Hæstingaceastre* by any of the monks that updated or copied the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in the 10th or 11th centuries.
3. A passage in Neustria Pia describes land gifted to the Abbey of Fécamps in 1054. It ends: *"Deinde in Horsea similiter est terra cum prato. Item apud Cæstram cum salinis et duodecim domibus. Quræ omnia Leuigar et Eggardus presbyteri quoad vixerunt a predictis regibus sine diminutione in elemosina tenuerunt."* As Horace Round says, all the places named in this gift surround Pevensey Lagoon. The '*Cæstram*' must therefore be *Anderitum*, yet it is not referred to as *Hæstingaceastre*, and the absence of a proper noun or adjective component in its name implies it was unoccupied at the time. The houses and salt-pans would presumably have been at *pefenes ea* (see below).
4. Excavations inside Anderitum uncovered no evidence of pre-13th century civilian occupation. Excavations outside Anderitum uncovered no evidence of any pre-13th century occupation. *Hæstingaceastre* was a substantial place through Saxon times. Its civilian inhabitants should have left some evidence of their occupation but there is none at modern Pevensey.
5. Modern Pevensey was not established as a civilian settlement until 1207 according to its foundation charter, consistent with the archaeological evidence. This charter states that modern Pevensey was established on the headland already occupied by Anderitum, and that it was visible from the sea between the coastal islands of '*langeney*' and '*pefenes ea*'. We will discuss this more below. It is sufficient here to say that the '*pefenes ea*' referred to in pre-13th century charters and manuscripts was this island harbour. One of those manuscripts is Domesday, which refers to the manor of '*Pevenesel*' (a '*pefenes ea*'

cognate for reasons we explain below). If *Hæstingaceastre* was at Anderitum, it seems implausible that the Domesday manor would be named after the island harbour of '*pefenes ea*'.

6. Anderitum was only 4m above the 9th century sea level and at least a mile from the coast. *Hæstingaceastre* burh is unlikely to have been at modern Pevensey, where it would have had a restricted sea view, blocked towards the prevailing wind by Beachy Head, and the sea view from a 10m tower would be less than six miles because it was so low-lying. It would be an atypical place for Alfred to place one of his burhs.
7. There is no reason to believe that *Hæstinga* expanded west of the Pevensey Lagoon. Mark Gardiner explains that the *Hæstingas* tribe, the first Anglo-Saxon occupants of the Hastings Peninsula, were Jutes closely related to the people of Kent but unrelated to the Saxons of Sussex. He says that the only evidence of expansion is east into Kent. If *Hæstingas* did not expand west of the Pevensey Lagoon, there is no reason for the Anderitum to get the *Hæstinga* part of *Hæstingaceastre's* name.

This falls short of proof that *Hæstingaceastre* was not at modern Pevensey, but there are so many contra-indicators that it seems implausible to us.

Another *Hæstingaceastre* location theory appears in Martin White's submission to the Bexhill Bypass commission where he suggests that it was at Wilting in Combe Haven. This is the site proposed by Nick Austin for the second Norman camp. White's submission has three 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 *Hæstingaceast*re'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.

The planning authority was unimpressed, and so are we. It is only to be expected that the Romans would build an enclosure to administer their

port at Monkham Wood. They did the same for most of their ports, but these enclosures were not fortified enough to be known as *ceastre's*. There are no known references to Silver Hill before the 18th century, and it is named Salver Hill on Yeakell & Gardiner's 18th century map. We suspect its name was changed by an enterprising Georgian estate agent. 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 Gillman's 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. The argument, in our opinion, is feeble.

Kathleen Tyson thinks that *Hæstingaceastre* was at Icklesham. She notes that it had a Roman bloomery, so it might have had a Roman fortification to become a *ceastre* in Saxon times. On the other hand, it had an Old English name that appears in some Anglo-Saxon Charters, it has no evidence of Roman buildings or a burh wall, and it would be a poor lookout station, more than two miles from the sea, with no sea view and no view of the Fire Hills messaging beacon. Kathleen's theory is not impossible, but in our opinion, it is unlikely.

We think that *Hæstingaceastre's* location has been hiding in plain sight, pointed to by Margary 13, the Rochester Roman road. It is referred to as the 'London to Winchelsea road' in a 1294 writ, the southern part of it as the 'Winchelsea to Robertsbridge road' in a 1300 writ. So, it terminated at modern Winchelsea. Consider this: 1) Roman roads linked garrisons, so there was a Roman fortification at modern Winchelsea; 2) Modern Winchelsea was on a defensively sound promontory with a wide sea view, typical of the places that Alfred liked to build his burhs; 3) Old English *Hæstinga* referred to the Hastings Peninsula and *Hæstingaceastre* was the only place on the Hastings Peninsula with the characteristic '*ceastre*' name. So, we think that *Hæstingaceastre* was at modern Winchelsea, which means

that Norman *Hastingas* and Old English *Hæstingaport* were there too. This is corroborated by Wickham, just outside modern Winchelsea. Places with 'ceastre' names, or its modern equivalent, are former Roman fortifications. The Wickham name is always associated with Roman vicus, which were civilian settlements immediately outside Roman fortifications.

There is no physical evidence to prove that *Hæstingaceastre* was at modern Winchelsea, but we are not without hope that some might be found. The northern part of modern Winchelsea, a section of which might have been within the walls of *Hæstingaceastre*, belongs to the National Trust. They have always prohibited archaeological work and metal detecting on that land. It is not so much that no supporting evidence has ever been found, than that no one has been allowed to look for it. Tantalizingly, the field that covers most of the National Trust land is named 'Castle Field'. There are no known castles at modern Winchelsea, but *Hæstingaceastre* was an Alfredian burh which would have been a sort of castle.

There is a complication. The location of the first burh on the Burghal Hidage list, Eorpeburnan, has been lost. The next eleven – skipping over a four-burh diversion up to Chisbury - progress eastwards along the south coast. A few experts think this implies that Eorpeburnan was east of *Hæstingaceastre* near the Wessex-Kent coastal border. This would make modern Winchelsea an unlikely *Hæstingaceastre* candidate because it is only five miles from the current Sussex-Kent border, far too close to an eastern Eorpeburnan. Those experts are in the minority. There is no evidence that Eorpeburnan was near the coast. Most think it was at Newenden, some 8½ miles from the medieval coast. We suspect it was further north. The biggest single gap between any two Alfredian burhs is fifty miles between Southwark and *Hæstingaceastre*. It seems likely to us that Eorpeburnan plugged the gap, probably on the north scarp of the Andredsweald. The most promising location we have found is Brenchley Castle (51.1594, 0.4185). It makes little difference here. If Eorpeburnan was not near the coast, *Hæstingaceastre* can be at modern Winchelsea.

One argument that *Hæstingaceastre* could not be at modern Winchelsea is that it does not appear in the '*Comes litoris Saxonici per Britannias*' section of the Notitia Dignitatum, the source of the famous 'Saxon Shore Forts'. Indeed, Notitia lists no fortresses between Lemmanis at modern Lympne and Anderitum at modern Pevensey. The Notitia is not infallible, so it might just have been omitted. We think there is a more likely explanation.

Henry Cleere analysed more than a thousand Classis Britannica tablets that were found at Beauport Park. It showed that the iron workings were abandoned in the middle of the third century, presumably because the ore was mined out. Beauport Park was by far the biggest of the Brede basin's four giant iron ore mines. The others were presumably already mined out. Cleere thinks that the Brede estuary provided the low hanging fruit of iron ore in the Weald. When it got mined out, he thinks that the miners moved to the much smaller, more distant, High Weald iron ore mines. Their blooms would have been shipped out from a port at the mouth of the Rother, so we guess that the Roman fortress at modern Winchelsea was abandoned in the 3rd century. It would have fallen into disrepair by the time the Notitia was being compiled and was probably unoccupied, which we think to be why it was omitted.

Hæstingaport

We explain above that there is a link between *Hæstingaceastre* and *Hæstingaport* and Norman *Hastinges* insofar as different contemporary accounts say that William assembled his second fortress at each was these places. This implies that the names were cognates or that the places were adjacent or encompassing. There are other reasons to think so. John of Worcester repeats ASC entries about *Hæstingaceastre* and *Hæstingaport,* referring to both as *Heastinga*. *Hæstingaceastre* was one of 36 'Grately Code' places in England that were licensed by Æthelstan as mints. Coins from that mint are stamped with an abbreviation of '*HÆSTINGACEASTRE*' or an abbreviation of '*HESTINGAPORT*'. We presume that *Hæstingaceastre* mint melted and restamped foreign coin and bullion taken as payment from

Hæstingaport customers.

Hæstingaceastre could not have encompassed *Hæstingaport*, nor were they cognates, because the former was an elevated burh in a Roman fortification whereas the latter was at sea level. The reverse is possible though. It was very common in medieval times, and still is in many parts of the world, to physically separate smelly stevedores and loutish sailors from refined businessmen and artisans. We guess that *Hæstingaport* was divided, such that the mercantile part of the port - businessmen, mint, financiers, and artisans – was at *Hæstingaceastre*. If *Hæstingaceastre* was at modern Winchelsea, the docks, warehouses and fisheries were at *Winchelse* (Old Winchelsea), an island located a mile or so offshore that is recorded as a '*portus*' in Saxon charters, Pipe Rolls and De Viis Maris (see below).

We are not the first to suggest that *Hæstingaport* was not at modern Hastings. The other candidates are Bulverhythe at the mouth of Combe Haven, and Northeye at the mouth of Hooe Haven and the Ash Bourne. But Old Winchelsea is the only *Hæstingaport* candidate that is consistent with the numismatics and De Viis Maris:

1. Two King Edgar coins minted at *Hæstingaceastre* were stamped 'WENCLES' which Ruding, Lindsay and others believe to be an abbreviation of '*Winchelse*', the island port adjacent to modern Winchelsea.
2. De Viis Maris lists the international 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* (Old Winchelsea), *Peneness* (*pefenes ea*) and *La Crumbie* (probably Hydney, now in Eastbourne). One of these was surely *Hæstingaport* in Saxon times, which was the only well-known Saxon era international port between Dover and Southampton. No ports are listed between Old Winchelsea and *pefenes ea*. This gap includes Bulverhythe and Northeye, implying they did not have international ports in the 12th century. They cannot have silted up

during the intervening 130 years because they were active ports in the 13th century. De Viis Maris therefore implies that *Hæstingaport* was at Old Winchelsea.

Old Winchelsea is also the only *Hæstingaport* candidate that is consistent what is known about the Norman landing:

3. Carmen says that the English and Norman battle camps were linked by a Roman road, and a Roman road would have been ideal for easy movement, plundering and foraging. The Brede estuary was crossed by the only metalled Roman road in the region. The other landing candidates were close to ancient trackways or metalled mining tracks which might have been adequate if they were well maintained, but there is no evidence that they were maintained after the Romans left.
4. Carmen and Wace say that the landing site was overlooked by a sea-cliff. The Brede estuary is the only landing site candidate overlooked by sea-cliffs, those at Cadborough.
5. The Norman invasion was probably devised and planned, as Jo Kirkham proposed in the 1990s, by monks from the Abbey of Fécamp. They were Norman and therefore probably loyal to their patron William. They may well have resented Harold for having dispossessed and banished Normans from England. Some of them lived near to the Hastings Peninsula long enough to learn the language - Wace says that William brought some monks from Fécamp Abbey to act as interpreters - so they would have known the local terrain intimately. William would surely have tapped their local knowledge. The Fécamp cell was in Rameslie manor which lined the Brede estuary.
6. Carmen says that the Norman fleet arrived at ‘safe landing grounds’ at the third hour of the day. It is not referring to the actual landing ground because they expected it 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 Ash Bourne 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 somewhere between *pefenes ea* and the Royal Sovereign Shoals, and that the Norman fleet left at dawn, three hours would be about right for the 20-mile reach to Old Winchelsea on a southerly breeze against the tide. It seems improbably long for a ten-mile run on a southerly breeze to Bulverhythe, let alone a six-mile run downwind to The Crumbles.

7. 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 perfectly adequate for a Channel crossing. Moreover, the weather was fine and warm at the Battle of Stamford Bridge two days before they sailed, which means it was probably 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, as we explain in our main text.
8. The Brede estuary was the only landing site candidate that is likely to have been lined with a flat plain that was long enough to accommodate the entire Norman fleet, firm enough underfoot to support mounted horses, and level enough to assemble a kit-fortress without first digging a motte, all as described by Wace. That flat plain was made by Rameslie's 100 saltpans, as listed in Domesday. Over the centuries, the ground would get levelled by repeated flooding. By the end of September, the last of the concentrated brine would have been harvested to leave a wide flat straight-edged dry plain just above the

estuary bank, ideal for the simultaneous mass landing described by Wace.

9. 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 *Hæstingaport* cognate using the Norman convention, so it is saying that the Normans built their fortress and made their camp at *Hæstingaport.* It cannot have been at Bulverhythe or Northeye because nine Roman miles from either of them would take the battle out into the Andredsweald. The only port that fits the description is Old Winchelsea.

Hæstingaport's location can be verified by two more methods. The Hastings Peninsula and its surrounds were too small, too sparsely populated and too short of hinterland to have had more than one major international port, so its only international port was *Hæstingaport.* The local population was too small to generate a significant volume of imports, so *Hæstingaport* must have been export oriented, shipping a prodigious volume of natural resources. Its location can therefore be corroborated: 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. Bulk products like salt and timber would not have been hauled up and over the Hastings ridge to a port at Bulverhythe or Northeye. They would have been processed or shipped from a port at the mouth of the Brede's estuary, which means from 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 Old Winchelsea. 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 sea fish all year around, augmented by huge herring shoals at certain times of year. Some fish would be landed for gutting, salting and packing. Others would be gutted and salted at sea. In both cases they would be brought to a source of salt. Hooe is the only other manor on the Hastings Peninsula that is listed with salt-pans in Domesday, but it only had 35. At least three-quarters of the Hastings Peninsula's fish would have been processed at Old Winchelsea.

Timber was another rich natural resource in the region. 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 just 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 summary, the Brede basin produced 70% of the region's salt, 70% of the region's salted fish and probably close to 100% of the region's timber. 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 small, making Old Winchelsea the most likely *Hæstingaport* candidate.

The other way to validate *Hæstingaport's* location is through references to the major port in the region. We have said that Old Winchelsea must have shipped an order of magnitude more natural resources than any of the other *Hæstingaport* candidates. This should be reflected in the figures.

Domesday shows that 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 (and most of those would have been occupied on its huge farmland).

The 1204 Pipe Rolls records that *Winchelse* (Old Winchelsea) was the biggest port between London and Southampton. The other *Hæstingaport* candidates at Bulverhythe and Northeye are listed but negligible in comparison.

The relative importance of Old Winchelsea can be corroborated from 'Ship Service' records. They are an interminable source of confusion, often interpreted to mean the biggest port in the region was at modern Hastings. We will try to explain what they are saying.

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, as reproduced by Jeake, defines the following 'Head Ports': *Hastyng*, *Doverr*, *Romone*, *Hethe* and Sandwich – Hastings, Dover, Romney, Hithe and Sandwich - the original Cinque Ports. They were 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, had 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.

The 1227 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 *Winchelse*. 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 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 old name for part of modern Winchelsea, so the Brede estuary (Old Winchelsea, Rye and Iham) provided more than 15 ships. Each of the other *Hæstingaport* candidates provided less than one. Exactly as expected, the combined ports at the mouth of the Brede were more than ten times bigger than any other *Hæstingaport* candidate.

These figures show that Old Winchelsea was the major port in the region a hundred years after the Conquest. It does not necessarily follow that it was the region's major port at the time of the Conquest. But nothing significant had changed. Doubtless England's new masters imported enormously more wine and olive oil, 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. Fishing, salt, timber and iron 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.*

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 63).

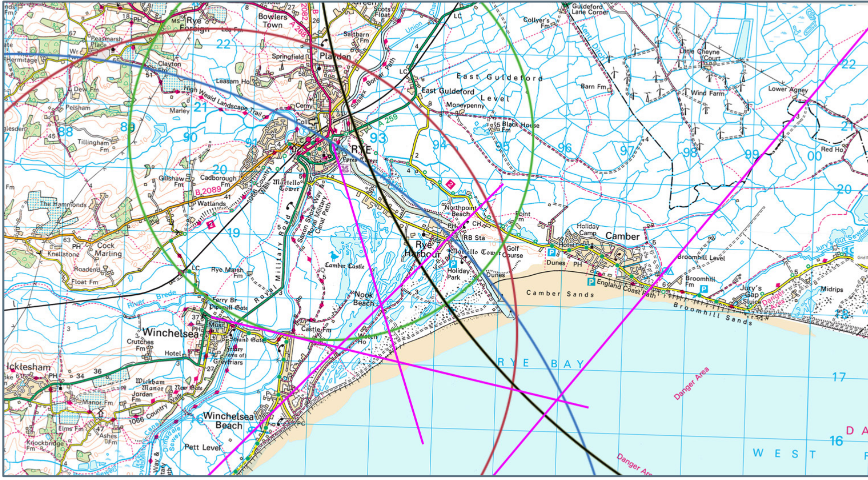

Figure 63: *Cooper's coordinates for Old Winchelsea*

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.

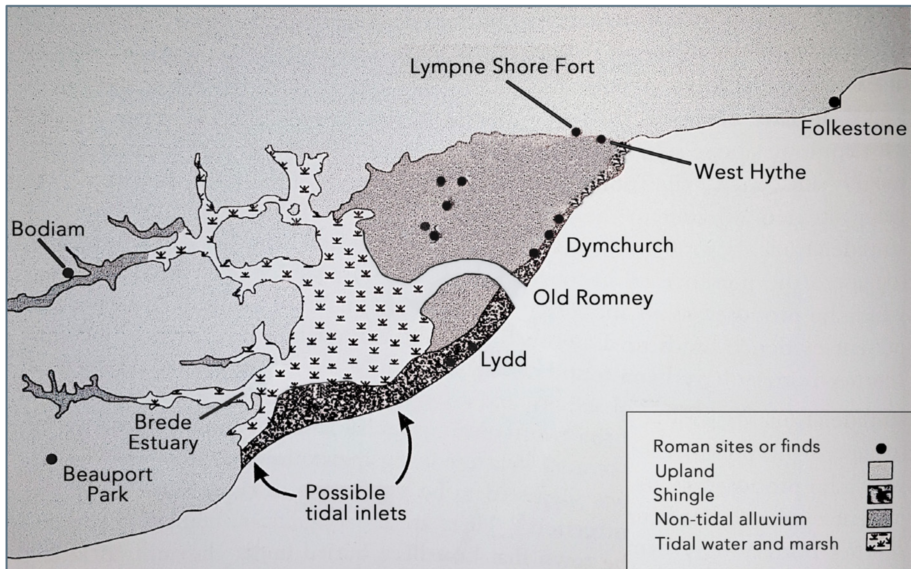

Figure 64: Romney Marsh in medieval times; after Andrew Pearson

Pearson hints at Old Winchelsea's secret in Figure 64, 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.

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. It is almost universally accepted as where the Normans landed. Both notions are wrong.

The former can be worked out from modern Pevensey's founding charter issued in 1207: "… *we have granted to the barons of Pevensel and confirmed by this our present charter that they may build a town on the headland between the 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.*" It is saying that modern Pevensey was established in 1207 between *'pefenes ea'* and *'Langeney'*. In other words, pre-13th century references to *pefenes ea*, *Pefenesea* and cognates, including all the Norman invasion references, referred to this *pefenes ea* not to modern Pevensey.

We interpret the founding charter to mean that Pevensey was analogous to Winchelsea and Romney: A coastal port or harbour that was threatened and eventually destroyed by storms, and that like Winchelsea and Romney, its population moved inland taking the name of their former home with them. We will therefore refer to *pefenes ea* in this document as Old Pevensey, analogous with Old Winchelsea and Old Romney.

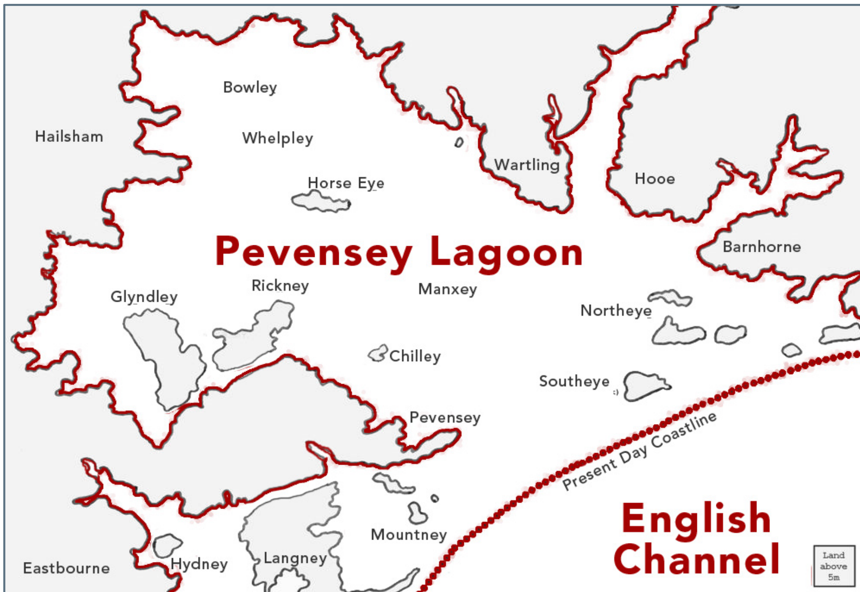

Figure 65: Pevensey lagoon in medieval times, based on map by Tom Chivers

The founding charter gives enough information to work out *pefenes ea's* location. First, in this vicinity, and perhaps everywhere, Old English '*ea*', means island, other than occasionally when inland and preceded by 'l' or 'd'. The modern spelling might be 'ea', 'ey' or 'eye'. There are a dozen or more in the Pevensey Lagoon alone (Langney, Mountney, Rickney, Southeye, etc - see Figure 65 for those depicted by Tom Chivers). Second, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (1049 in C, 1050 in D, 1052 in E) and a series of Anglo-Saxon Charters (S133, S1186, S318 and S686), *pefenes ea* was a refuge and harbour. So, *pefenes ea* was an island harbour.

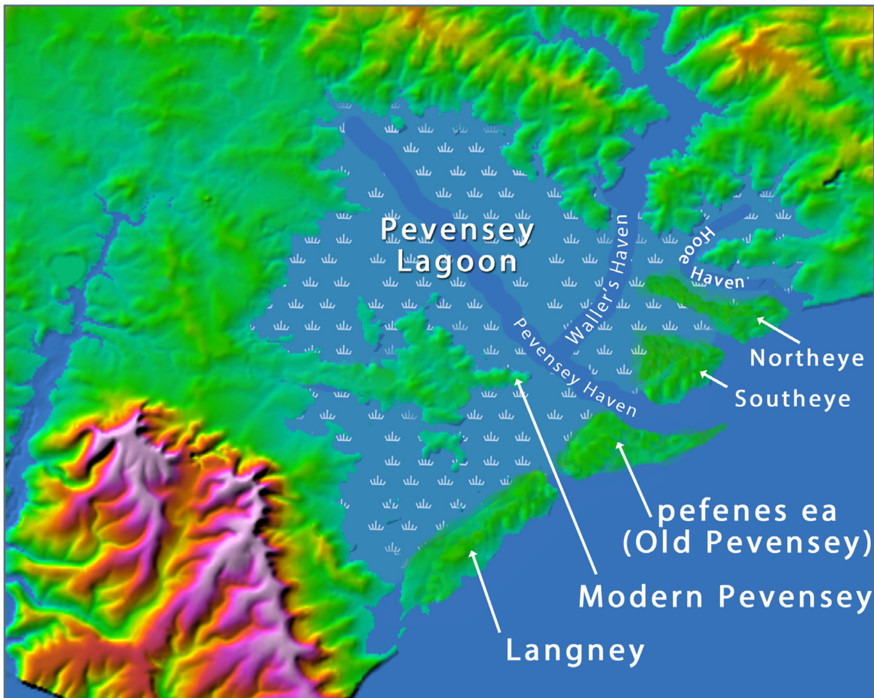

Figure 66: Pevensey Lagoon in 1066

In the 11th century, Pevensey Lagoon was retained behind a shingle bar known as the 'Crumbles'. It is analogous with the Camber shingle bar that retained Romney Marshes and it was also divided into islands. Modern Pevensey's founding charter says that it was located between *pefenes ea* and Langney. *pefenes ea* was a harbour, so the charter cannot mean 'flanked by'. We interpret the charter to mean that modern Pevensey was between

Langney and *pefenes ea* when viewed from the sea. This means *pefenes ea* was as depicted on Figure 66, some 2km southeast of modern Pevensey.

Norman accounts refer to *pefenes ea* as *'Pevenesel'*. R G Roberts explains how the name was probably coined in his 1914 book 'The Place-Names of Sussex'. Roberts says that the *'el'* at the end of *Pevenesel* is the Frankish root for the modern French word *île* meaning 'island'. Bar place names that end 'del', e.g. Arundel, the only other known Saxon, Latin or Norman place name ending *'el'* is *'Wincenesel'*, the Frankish and/or Norman name for *Winchelse*. The most likely explanation, we think, is that *pefenes ea* and *Winchelse* were part of Bertoald's 8th century gift (attested in Charter S133 and S318) to the Frankish Abbey of St Denys. In their own records, they would transliterate *pefenes* to *Pevenes*, and translate *'ea'* to *'el'*, to make the name *'Pevenesel'*. The Normans presumably adopted the name when they were gifted Rameslie manor by Cnut.

So, even if the contemporary accounts are saying that the Normans landed at *Pefenesea*, *pefenes ea, Pevenesel* or cognate, they would not be landing at modern Pevensey but on the island harbour of *pefenes ea*. It is even less plausible than a landing at modern Pevensey. *pefenes ea* had a mill according to Domesday but was otherwise a barren shingle island with no running fresh water and no farmland according to Domesday. No farmland means no fodder for horses. Even if this were not so, the Normans could not have landed on an island because Tapestry panel 40 says that the Norman knights ride from the landing site to *'Hestinga'*.

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 think *Penevesellum* is not a cognate). The Tapestry says that they: *"came to Pevenesæ"*. ASC-D says that: *"Earl William came from Normandy to pefnes ea"*. Benoît says the Normans: *"Arrived at Pevenesel"*. Brevis Relatio is sometimes translated to be saying that the Normans *"landed at Pevenesel"* but it uses the Latin verb *'appelit'* which usually means 'to bring' but which - according to the OLD - can mean *"to bring (ships) to shore"*. This is different from 'landing', for which Latin has other words. If the Normans arrived at

pefenes ea but did not land, they must have moored in the offshore shallows, which is exactly what Poitiers says: *"having reached shallow water off the English coast, William drops anchor to wait for the rest of the fleet to catch up"*. Carmen confirms that they moored offshore: *"On the open sea you moor offshore"*. John of Worcester ties all these accounts together, saying that William: *"moored his fleet at a place named Pefnesea"*.

Our proposed *pefenes ea* location is consistent with all the clues. We will run through them, noting where modern Pevensey is inconsistent.

1. Old English 'ea', in this area at least, means 'island'. To get a name, it was probably inhabited in Saxon times. *pefenes ea* was therefore an inhabited island. Modern Pevensey was never an island and was not inhabited by civilians before the 13th century according to Dulley's archaeological excavations in the 1960s.
2. Domesday lists the manor of *Pevenesel* with 110 burgesses and a mill in 1086. There is no reason they might not have been at *pefenes ea* but they were not at modern Pevensey where there is no archaeological evidence of civilian inhabitants before the 13th century.
3. Kathleen Tyson resolves the name '*pefenes ea*' to mean 'near-the-ness island'. Modern Pevensey was the only ness around the Pevensey Lagoon. Our proposed location for *pefenes ea* was 'near the ness' of modern Pevensey, whereas modern Pevensey was not 'near the ness' of itself.
4. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (1049 in C, 1050 in D, 1052 in E) refers to *pefenes ea* as a maritime refuge, which is likely for the location we propose but unlikely at modern Pevensey because it was too far from the coast.
5. Anglo-Saxon Charters S133, S1186, S318 and S686 refer to *pefenes ea* as a harbour, which is likely for the location we propose but unlikely at modern Pevensey because it had no pre-13th century civilian population.
6. The only pre-invasion Saxon reference that almost certainly refers to modern Pevensey names it *Andredesceaster*. There is no obvious reason

its name would change to *Hæstingaceastre*, but it would not need to if *pefenes ea* was where we propose.

7. Saxon Charter S527, dated 963, gifts a *saltearn* opposite *'pefenes ea'* and land at *'hanecan'* (later named *'hacanan hamme'*) near *'glindlea'*. Glindley and Hankham survive, not far from modern Pevensey. This is consistent with our proposed location for *pefenes ea* but less so for modern Pevensey because it was an enclosed loop which would not have had an opposite.

The only contra-argument against *pefenes ea* being an island harbour is that there are a number of 10th, 11th and 12th century references Anderitum where it is named *"Castrum Pevenesel"*, *"Castelli Pevenesel"* or *"castele a Pefenesea"* in Latin, Old French and Old English respectively. Some people have contacted us to say this proves that modern Pevensey was named *Pefenesea* and *Pevenesel* before the 13th century. We think not. Domesday's listings are to manors. Modern Pevensey was less than 2km from our proposed location for *pefenes ea*, so it was probably in *Pevenesel* manor. Anderitum would therefore be *"Castrum Pevenesel"*, *"Castelli Pevenesel"* and *"castele a Pefenesea"* even though it was not on the island of *pefenes ea*. This would make it analogous to *Castelli Windelesores*, which took its name from its nearest named settlement *Windelesores* (now Old Windsor), four miles away. And, also like Windsor, its inhabitants eventually moved to the castle, taking the name of their former settlement with them.

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 Pevenisel"*, "the coastal port of *Hastingas* and *Pevenisel"*. Note 'port' singular. It is ambiguous. It could be trying to say: "*the coastal port of Hastingas et Pevenisel*", with '*Hastingas et Pevenisel'* as a compound noun, or "*the coastal port of Hastingas, and Pevenisel*", with *Pevenisel* 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 *Pevenisel*, as if they are separate places.

Kathleen Tyson has an alternative theory that *Pefenesea* was somewhere on the Camber shingle bar near Lydd. We think it unlikely. It would contradict *De Viis Maris* and S527, both of which specifically say that *pefenes ea* was near where we propose. It would also contradict Benoît's description of William *"arriving below a fortress handsome and strong"*.

There are a few puzzles about the Norman Channel crossing and *Pefenesea* that we would like to tidy up.

ASC-D, the Tapestry and John of Worcester immediately pass from the Norman arrival at Old Pevensey to the construction of a fortress or, in the case of John of Worcester, to the battle. Historians read into this an implication that the Normans landed at *Pefenesea* even though the sources do not specifically say so. We think the journey from the mooring place to the landing place and the landing were redacted from these accounts. All three of them are heavily abridged, covering the invasion in a few paragraphs. They had to redact uneventful details, and according to the other accounts, the journey to the landing site and the landing were eventless.

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*. We suspect the reason was that they had to drift into the port at Old Winchelsea on the flood tide and that is the direction the tide flows. The only unmissable shallows off the Hastings Peninsula 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 for a month – as Carmen, Poitiers and Wace describe – 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. Poitiers says that they were born to St Valery on a westerly breeze. But they could easily have made the Channel crossing 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 main Battle of Hastings at Sedlescombe book that William needed a Brede estuary landing required a southerly breeze.

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 each with a church.

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 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 30km^2 footprint is implausibly gigantic for somewhere with only seven acres of meadowland. No one would haul bulk freight like salt or timber 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. Moreover, 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 Old Winchelsea, modern Winchelsea and Rye 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 67.

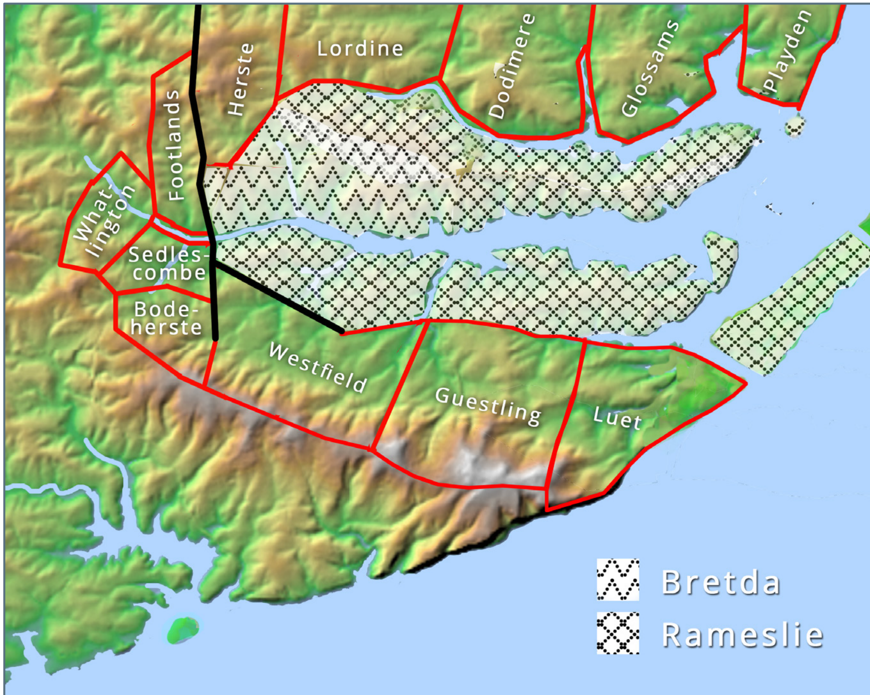

Figure 67: Brede side manors

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 Old Winchelsea. There would have been wharfs and jetties all along the north bank, for shipping salt and timber. If iron was being produced, there would have been wharfs and jetties all along the south bank too. Kathleen Tyson has found evidence there was once a low-tide Romano-British canal from Sedlescombe to modern Winchelsea, which presumably took timber, salt and iron on barges to the docks at the place that became Old Winchelsea.

Jetties, wharfs, barges, warehouses, ferries, metalled 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' and it is feasible that there was a Middle English etymological

transition from ‘Hedge’ 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 in the Priory Valley below modern Hastings, and thereby the only evidence that *Hæstingaport* was near modern Hastings. Indirectly, then, it is the only evidence that the Normans camped at modern Hastings, which is the only evidence that they advanced to the battlefield from modern Hastings.

There are reasons to be sceptical. One is that CBA claims that *Hechelande* is the name of a wood, but it means ‘heath land’ so it was not a wood. 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 a place named *‘Hothlands’*, the Middle English equivalent of *Hechelande*, is mentioned in a 1483 indenture[12] which describes it as *“on either side of a lane from Alkysford to ‘le Galowes de Horn’ ”* in Sedlescombe. There are no other clues about the locations of these places, but there is no reason to doubt that *Hothlands* was a later name for *Hechelande* and that its lane became Cottage Lane, whereas it could not have been at Telham because Telham was not in Sedlescombe and there are no fords on the Hastings Ridge. A fourth is that CBA was written by the monks of Battle Abbey who,

[12] Report on the manuscripts of Lord De l’Isle & Dudley preserved at Penhurst Place

as Nicholas Vincent says, cannot be trusted about any uncorroborated evidence that says or implies 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, might have been that *Hechelande* was in the wrong distance and/or wrong direction for the battle to have happened at Battle Abbey. If so, another contemporary account might have mentioned the Norman battle camp at *Hechelande*, thereby refuting 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 think that the translation is culpable. 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

Rye could jeopardise much of what we say above. Its name was originally spelled 'Rie' which looks like it might have been pronounced 'Rea'. The implication, as we explain about 'ea' names above, is that it looks like Old English for 'island', and Rye might have been an island at high tide. Phillimore's Domesday translation changes Rameslie manor's name to Rye, as if Rye was its main settlement and mercantile centre. Most subsequent analyses take his lead. Rameslie manor dates to 1005 at the latest, when it was gifted to Eynesham Abbey under the name *'Rameslege'* (S911). If Phillimore is right and if Rye was a Saxon era settlement and the manor's mercantile centre before the Conquest, it is unlikely that *Hæstingaceastre* was at modern Winchelsea, so much of what we say above might be wrong. We think Phillimore is wrong and stand by what we say above.

Rye was a major port before 1227 when it was charged to provide five ships as its share of the Ship Service, as many as established ports like Romney and Hythe, half as many as Old Winchelsea, and five times more than any other port around the Hastings Peninsula. Working backwards, it is listed in half a dozen of Ballard's 12th century charters together with Old Winchelsea as if it had become the port's mercantile centre. According to De Viis Maris collated in the mid-12th century, it was the major port in the region to equip men for the second crusade and to transport them to France. It seems unlikely that it grew to half the size of Old Winchelsea in less than 100 years, so it was probably established in the 11th century, but that does not mean it existed at the time of the Conquest.

We guess that Rye was not Old English at all, but Norman. There are no 11th century references to Rye, and it has been subject to dozens of excavations without finding any evidence of Saxon era occupation. It was originally spelled *'Rai'* or *'Rie'* which, as far as we know, would be a unique

structure for an Old English place name. It was usually referred to as *'La Rie'* which implies the name was coined by Normans. It is listed as 'Rai' or 'Rie' in a dozen or so 11th century Norman writs. It was in the Abbey of Fécamp's manor of Rameslie. We suspect they named it after *Rai,* a town in Normandy some 60 miles south of Fécamp.

Gillian Draper, in her 2009 book 'Rye - A History of a Sussex Cinque Ports to 1660', says that Rye was probably formed by the Abbey of Fécamp soon after the Conquest and that it was the place referred to in Domesday's Rameslie entry as *'novus burgus'*. We think she is right. Domesday's boroughs generally refer to somewhere that has liberties and/or rights to toll, typically a port or harbour which is also consistent with what is known about Rye and described by Gillian Draper. Therefore, Rye was probably established within 10 years of the Conquest and was already a substantial settlement by Domesday.

Why? We guess that the Abbey of Fécamp established Rye because *Hæstingaceastre*, *Hæstingaport's* Saxon mercantile centre, was being turned into a Norman military garrison. By the early 12th century, it looks like Rye had become *Hæstingaport's* main mercantile centre, as well as an important ship building hub.

Appendix B – Nick Austin's Combe Haven landing theory

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.

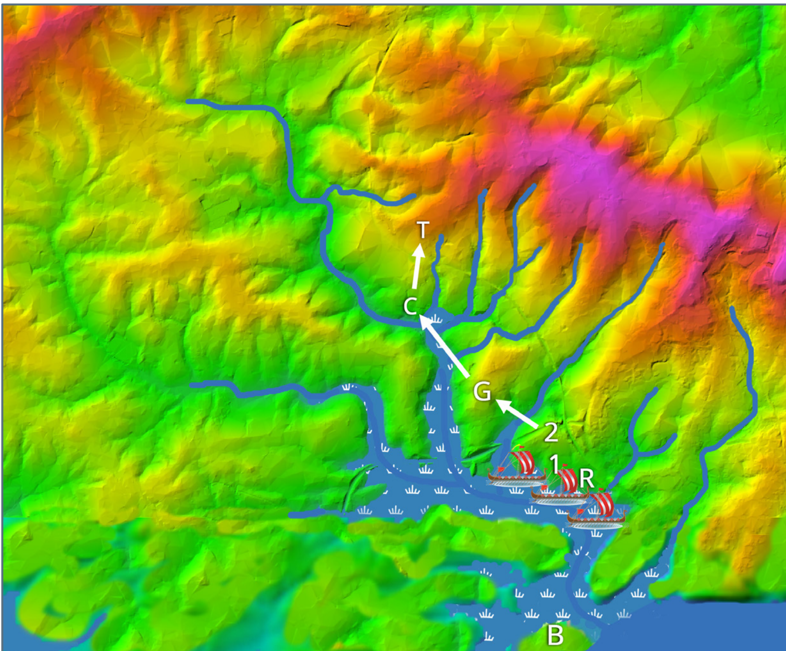

Figure 68: Nick Austin's landing and engagement scenario

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 68). 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 69: 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 69) 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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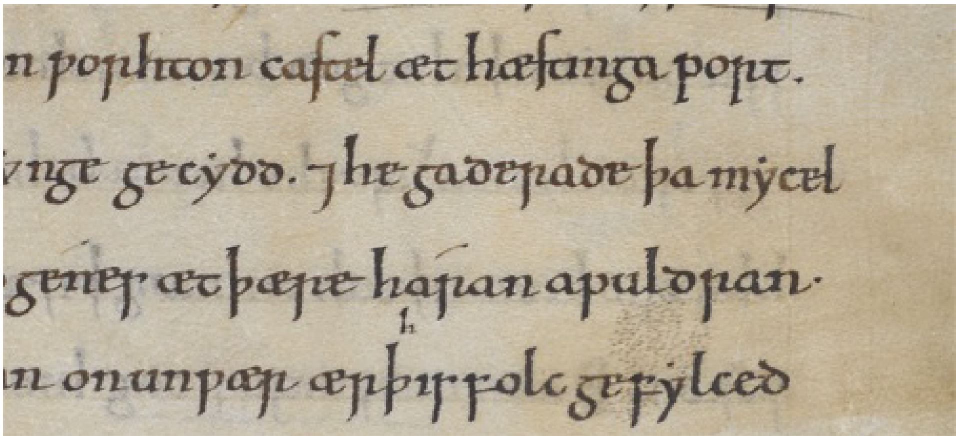
Endnote

'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 worhton castel æt hæstinga port.
unge gecydd. 7 he gaderade þa mycel
genes æt þære haran apuldran.
an on unwær ær his folc gefylced