

GARDENS AND EARTHWORKS AT HARDINGTON AND LOW HAM, SOMERSET

BY M. ASTON

Recently attention has been drawn to areas of earthworks associated with ornamental gardens and formal landscaping adjacent to the site of large post-medieval houses. Hadrian Allcroft (1908) does not refer to such earthworks and we owe their recognition largely to Chris Taylor and his work for the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments. In the inventories on Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire a number of these sites are noted and some surveyed with maps included (RCHM, 1968-72). From these examples the characteristic features of such sites can be ascertained. The overall impression is of great regularity with rectangular enclosures and platforms, circular features and linear and rectilinear ditches and embankments. A glance at plans and descriptions of sites in Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire shows that they display any number of the following features: formal water gardens; regular, often rectangular ponds, moats, 'L' shaped ponds, ponds with round or square islands; wet ditches; rectilinear areas; rectangular terraces, linear banks, causeways, ramps between terraces, raised walkways and terraces; circular areas, often in rectangular enclosures, small round mounds and large mounds with spiral paths; walled gardens, brick and stone walls and avenues of trees or tree boles; frequently extensive areas of earthworks of buildings.

These earthworks of course represented a variety of features in the past but the accent was on formality and regularity of design as distinct from flowing 'natural' landscapes associated with the work at a later date of 'Capability' Brown and Humphrey Repton. Such features represent contemporary walled gardens, flower borders, geometrically laid out gardens, terraces, bowling greens and planned areas of water for fishponds, waterfowl and pleasurable vistas. Mounds provided vantage points and rest points punctuating walks around the grounds. Contemporary prints, descriptions and documents, and the work of the Garden History Society serve to clothe these bare earthworks with the more colourful pattern which once must have existed.

In Somerset, formal gardens like these have not been studied and their existence perhaps has not been suspected. In this article two examples will be described which have come to the writer's attention. Hardington, now in Hemington parish near Frome, is a deserted medieval village but its occupation by the Bampfylde family gave rise to some interesting landscape developments. In October 1977, after a survey had been made, the Norton Radstock branch of the Co-operative Society, who own Hardington, bulldozed and destroyed the remaining earthworks of the site. Hence, it was felt that some description of what had stood there should be committed to paper before the details were lost. At Low Ham the church stands alone in a field surrounded by great areas of earthworks, and air photographs show a complex picture which demands some sort of analysis. In both cases the majority of the earthworks seem to be associated with 17th- and 18th-century operations and an understanding of these mounds in each case reveals interesting pieces of Somerset's landscape history.

No attempt has been made to describe all such formal landscapes which do or have existed in the county. The author has come across possible or probable examples on a small scale at Manor Farm, Chilcompton and Stratton House, Stratton-on-the-Fosse. Others include possibilities at Spargrove Manor, Batcombe, associated with the deserted village, and an area probably associated with the Manor House, Pilton. No doubt a large number existed of which some remains must still be traceable. It is a main aim of this article to draw attention to the existence of such sites so that further historical and archaeological research may disclose other examples.

HARDINGTON

Hardington today consists of a church, disused but in the care of the Redundant Churches Fund, a large farm complex and several cottages. It lies 4 miles (6 km) north-east of Frome on the side of a shallow valley on slopes facing south-west over a stream which eventually joins the Mells river. Its altitude is 90–100 m above sea level and the underlying geology is largely composed of Fuller's Earth, derived from the Oolite series. Under much of the village, church and park is a band of Fuller's Earth rock. Below this in the valley is an area of Fuller's Earth clay and above around the top of the hill an outcrop of Forest Marble (Geological Survey, 1965). The general settlement of this area is in the form of small villages: Faulkland, Hemington, Laver-ton, with the larger centres of Mells, Buckland Dinham and Frome not far away. All of these settlements were in existence by the time of Domesday Book (1086) and were thriving medieval settlements. Little work has been done on the incidence of settlement desertion in this area but examples of deserted villages have been noted to the west at Walton, in Kilmersdon (ST 690517), Babington (ST 704510) and a lost Middlecote in Babington, and around Frome at Egford (ST 758485), Pikewell (ST 775502), Fair oak (ST 804490) and Standerwick (ST 815510).

Hardington also was once a deserted village. Collinson in 1791 refers to it as 'a parish almost depopulated', but it is to the earlier description of Sir Francis Hastings in 1583 that we owe our first help in understanding the landscape: '... Hardington, the which village is wholly enclosed and made pasture; and no house left but his (the Lord's) owne, and he pulleth down the churche, and it is scarce knowne where the parsonage house stode ...' (Cross, 1969, p. 30).

History


The Bampfylde family acquired Hardington in the 15th century and they may have been responsible for its depopulation. They acquired it through the marriage of John Bampfylde with Agnes, daughter and heir of John de Pederton of the former family who owned the medieval manor. The son, Peter, had inherited the manor by 1452 (Hylton, 1928). By 1694 when the will of Sir Coplestone Warwick Bampfylde was proved, it seems that the lords were not resident at Hardington and in the 18th century this absenteeism continued. In 1791 Collinson remarks that the manor was owned by Sir Charles Warwick Bampfylde (Collinson, 1791a). The family, through a series of mishaps, lost the land at Hardington in the 19th century. Sir Charles Bampfylde was killed by a pistol in 1823. His wife, Lady Catherine Bampfylde, died in 1832 and their son, the rector, died in 1855. At the time of the Tithe Map in 1840 (although it is stated on the map that it is a 'Map adopted by the land-owner for the purposes of the tithe commutation') (SRO, D/D/Rt 234) the whole parish of Hardington was owned by the Rt. Hon. George Warwick Bampfylde, Baron Poltimore but only a few woodlands were actually 'in hand'. The majority of the 852 acres were leased to three farmers, James Cradock, William Hellier and Thomas Clarence Hooper. The latter held what had evidently been the 'rump' of the house, outbuildings and gardens in the village (Fig. 1). Large parts of the estate were sold off in 1844 and with further sales of 2,500 acres in lots in 1859 the Bampfylde connection with the manor came to an end (Hylton, 1928).


Topographical development

The medieval church stands in a churchyard surrounded by modern farm buildings (Fig. 2). There is little trace of anything nearby earlier than the 19th and 20th centuries except for the fine 17th-century house at the western end of the buildings and the (?) late 17th or early 18th-century barn or stables on the north side. And yet the church must formerly have been surrounded by the crofts, platforms and house sites of the medieval village. The clearest evidence for these exists in the fields to the south and west of the farm complex where terraced platforms almost certainly indicate medieval house sites. Other earthworks in the park seem to relate to abandoned field and croft boundaries and disused holloways.


HARDINGTON PARISH in 1840

After SCRO D/D/Rt 234

Whole parish owned by G.W. Bampfylde but only lands outlined  in hand

 Land leased to Thomas Clarence Hooper
Manor House, Gardens and Home Ground
B manor house

• Land leased to James Gadock
C Home Ground House, Yards and
Gardens

 Land leased to
William Hellier

A The Church

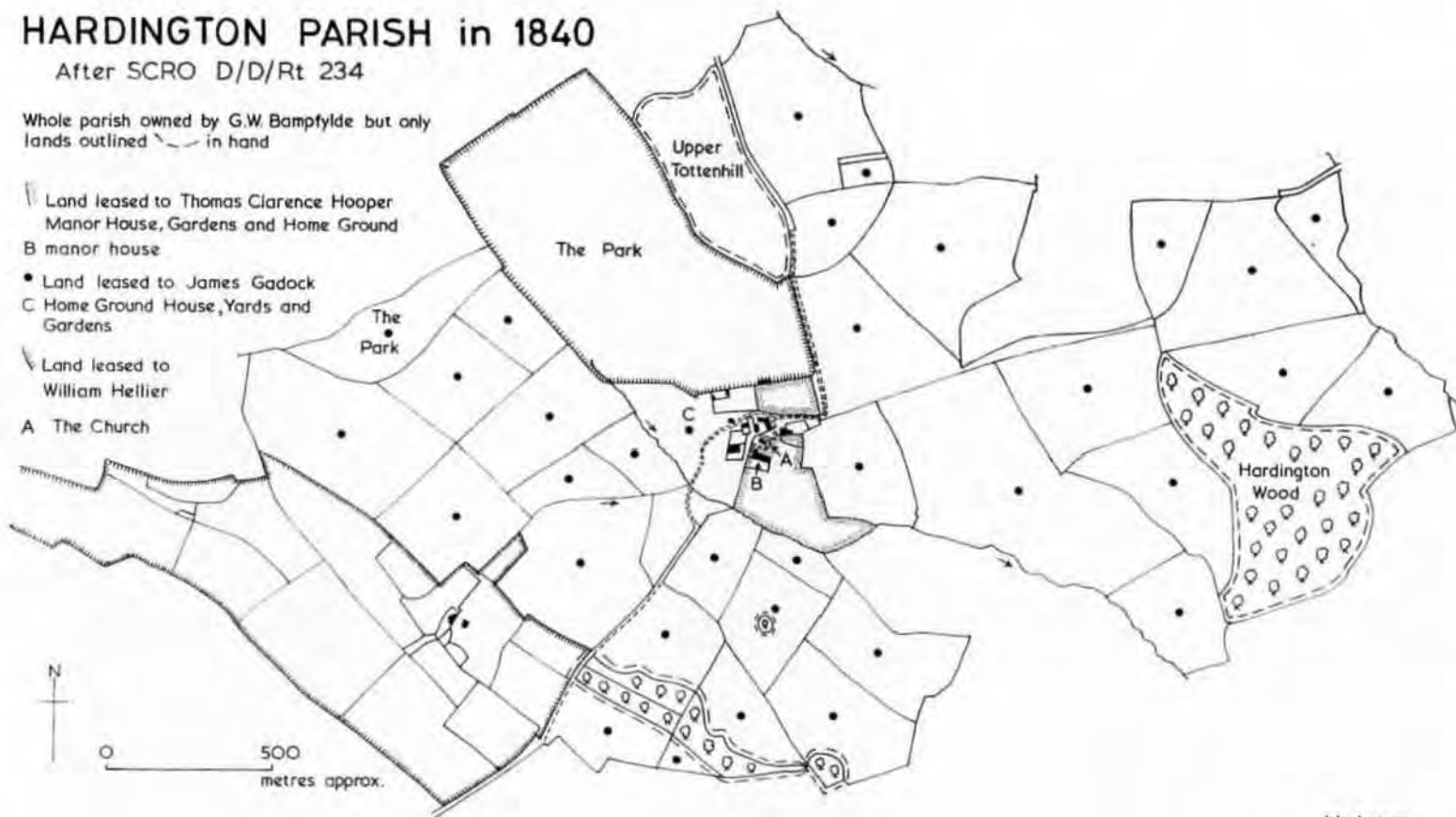


Fig. 1.

M Aston

There must have been a medieval manor house in the village at least from the 15th century when the Bampfylde took over the manor. In 1694 when Colonel Warwick Bampfylde died he left 'the ancient mansion house at Hardington' to any Bampfylde who would live in it (Hylton, 1928) and this house was referred to some time after 1724 by Sir Richard Bampfylde (quoting Lady Horner's manuscripts): 'the old part of Hardington House can give a tolerable idea of Gentlemen's Houses built before the beginning of the 16th century' (Hylton, 1928). Clearly by the 18th century the old house had been supplemented by larger additions. Collinson (1791a) remarks that 'the manor house, now in ruins, stood near the church'. It had become ruinous as the result of a fire between 1776 and 1791. The Gentleman's Magazine in 1802 published a small picture of the house with 'half at least of its buildings shown roofless'. The remaining part was evidently restored and in 1928 a photograph was included in the article in these *Proceedings* by Lord Hylton. There is now no trace of the building, but its site was south of the church. The manor house is shown on the Tithe Map (SRO, D/D/Rt 234, 1840). It was faced on the north by a forecourt bounded by an embattled wall, divided at intervals by lofty piers of dressed stone, and part of this wall remained in 1928: there now seems to be no trace. Beyond this forecourt a road ran through a second, larger enclosure shaded by double avenues of lime and chestnut trees, until it passed under a central passageway through the block of stabling into the park (Hylton, 1928). Traces of the walls of the manor house seem to survive in enclosure walls south of the church and parts of the enclosure walls may exist between and be incorporated into modern farm buildings. The stables or barn remain at the north end of the farmyard. Evidently to some extent this latter building acted as a gateway.

Beyond the church and the manor house and its courts lay an extensive park. This was referred to by Collinson in 1791: 'there was a fine park, stocked with deer, extending to the top of the hill from which there is an extensive and pleasing view'. In contrast, in 1776 after Sir Charles Bampfylde had sold timber from the park to pay off debts, there was less praise: the 'view from Hemington Down as cheerless as at sea' (Hylton, 1928). This park had been there since at least the 17th century. In 1694, on the death of Colonel Warwick Bampfylde, the estate was left to Sir Coplestone Warwick Bampfylde or any other Bampfylde who would 'live and inhabit in the ancient mansion house' and also should 'keep the said house, gardens, park and warren up and in good repair and employing the poor labourers ...'. The gazebo which stands in the park, although ruinous, has a number of early features. If the date 1581 carved over the doorway can be believed then the building may have stood in a 16th-century park. It must have been extensive since it is said to have swept up to the hillside towards High Church where a drive left the demesne between two pillars which in 1928 were in the garden of Ammerdown, and which were similar to the remaining pillars on the Frome road at ST 736515 (Hylton, 1928). In 1928 the park had been stripped of its old trees and most of the boundary walls had almost disappeared; the recent bulldozing and flattening of the remaining walls, buildings and earthworks completed a process which has been going on for the last 50 years. Only the gazebo now remains in its sorry state.

The development of the landscape

Before their destruction in October 1977 the earthworks to the north-west of Hardington (Fig. 2 and Plate 1), when taken in conjunction with the evidence of buildings and the church, clearly reflected the last 300-400 years of development on the estate. Only the earthworks south of the farm now remain. Fortunately the vertical air photograph (Plate 1) taken on 14th January, 1946 by the RAF (no. 3G/TUD/UK/24 Pt. 1 5081) was taken in ideal lighting conditions and itself provides a valuable record of the earthworks even before disturbance to the west end of the site in the 1960s. Fig. 2 is based on the 1946 air photograph and a survey by Jo Dowson of the County Surveyor's Department carried out in March 1977. It seems to represent two main phases of the history of Hardington.

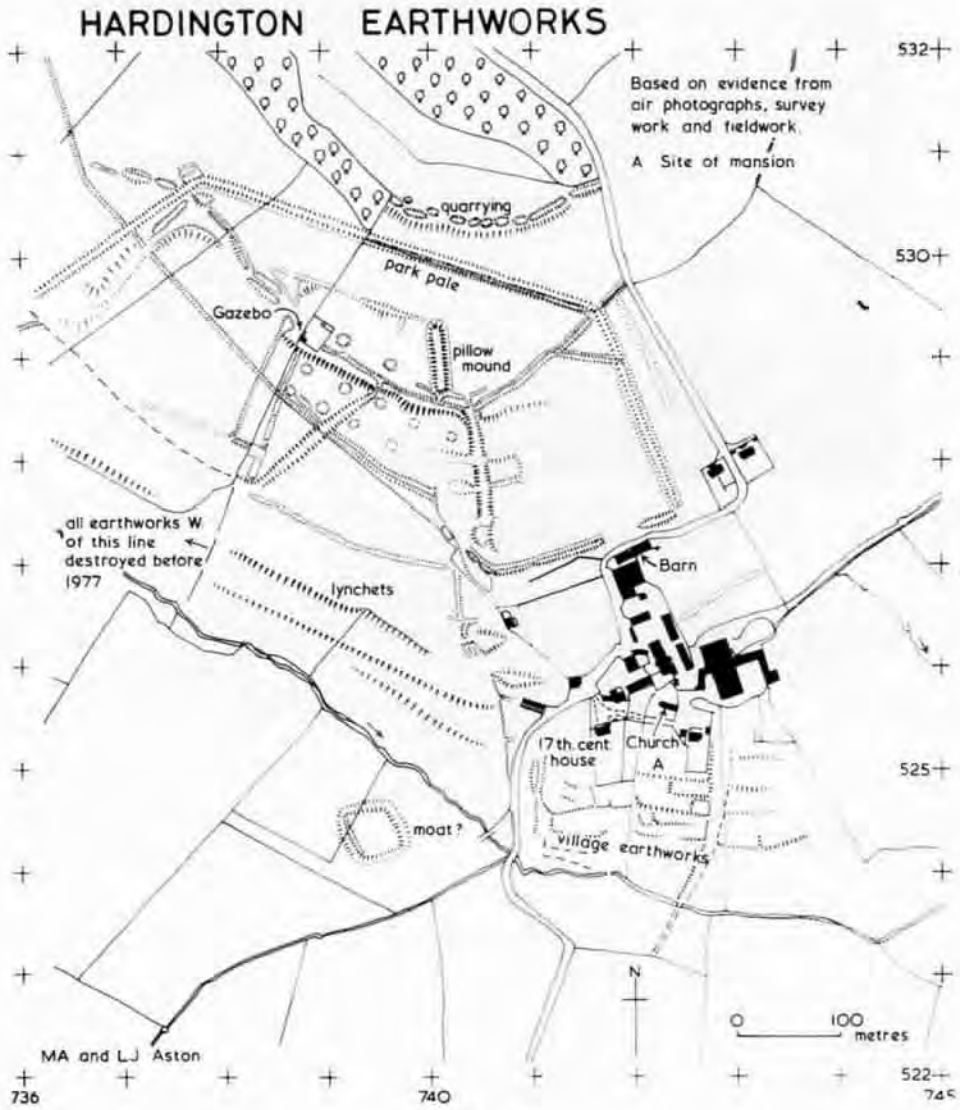


Fig. 2.



Plate 1. Vertical air photograph of Hardington showing earthworks of the village and park. (RAF 14th January, 1946 No. 3G/TUD/UK/24 Pt. 1 5081).

Firstly, to the south of the present farm, the earthworks are similar to those encountered on deserted medieval village sites and presumably belong to the village which was decayed by the 16th century (Cross, 1969). To the west of this and on the other side of the stream an enclosure, visible on the air pictures, could be a moated site and therefore possibly the earlier medieval manor house position, before replacement by the 16th-century buildings described above. Around this village there must have been fields and roads. Some of the earthworks in the park are clearly earlier than others. It would seem that the holloway running north-south and the more sinuous banks and ditches could well belong to an earlier phase before the more rectilinear banks were laid out. The terrace around which most of the garden earthworks are situated could represent a lynchet in the village's fields similar to others to the west of the farm buildings.

Before their recent destruction the most obvious features of the second landscape element, the park, were the linear banks and ditches and the pillow mound. The main earthworks running around the east, north and west sides, centering on the gazebo, was a large, prominent, regular bank with a ditch on the inside of the park (i.e. the south side of the bank). It was almost certainly the park pale. Within this, and again centred on the gazebo, was the clearest collection of 'garden' earthworks. These consisted of low round mounds laid out in two rows above and below the terrace, which may have been based on a lynchet, and a track to the south. These mounds were similar to the viewing or planting mounds seen on sites elsewhere in the country (Brown and Taylor, 1972). The most prominent mound, however, was the pillow mound, a regular rectangular mound with ditches on each side aligned up and down the slope and some 10 m × 70 m. In Somerset pillow mounds have not been studied but elsewhere they are clearly associated with rabbit warrens of the 16th and 17th centuries (Lineham, 1966). In this respect the mention of a warren in 1693 is entirely consistent (see Appendix).

An analysis of how the landscape has developed at Hardington is less fruitful than at Low Ham. The earthworks of the village (Fig. 2) together with the Tithe Map (1840, Fig. 1) suggest roads approaching from the south (mainly along the present road) and the north, on a different course, i.e. west of the present road, in the park. Much of the area of the park would probably have been fields in the medieval period. The boundaries around the site of the post-medieval manor house and the alignment of the roads around the farm, the barn and the road to the north all seem to reflect an alteration of the layout of the estate, presumably as the house and its outbuildings developed. The park features are also rectilinear but in some cases related to seemingly earlier pieces of the landscape. Around the top of the hill are undated quarry pits cutting into the Forest Marble.

LOW HAM

Low Ham, a hamlet of High Ham parish, today consists of a small village with a farm at the south end. A few of the buildings of this farm are of late 17th or early 18th-century date. Adjacent to the farm stands the chapel, isolated in a field with no graveyard, churchyard wall or marked burials and until recently no churchyard path up to the door, a fact remarked upon by most authors writing about Low Ham in the past.

The village is 2 miles north-east of Langport on a level area just above the floodlands of an 'inlet' from the levels to the east but overlooked by a prominent stepped slope rising to Hext Hill to the south. The earthworks to be described lie on a watershed between the stream to the west, flowing south to the Parrett at Langport, and another to the east flowing north across Leazemoor to the River Cary and the levels. The chapel stands at about 30 m above sea level and Hext Hill rises to 55 m at its highest point. The underlying geology is made up of Triassic and Jurassic deposits. The village, extending to and including the chapel, is situated on undifferentiated river terrace deposits of gravel of Pleistocene (recent) date but the slopes of the hills are largely composed of lower lias clays with some limestones of Jurassic date. On top of the hill there is a thin layer of limestone which has been extensively quarried (see Fig. 3 and Plate 2) (Geological Survey, 1966-67).

Soil information, which was not available for Hardington, tends to reflect the geological base at Low Ham (Soil Survey, 1955). Most of the hill and the area of earthworks as far north as the church are on the Somerton Calcareous group of soils—largely 'thirsty stonebrash' but with some silty clay. The natural drainage is generally free but sometimes hampered by underlying Rhaetic shale beds which are relatively impervious. Usually such land is put down to permanent pasture and, as at Low Ham, the soils 'are often of poor quality and burn in times of drought', the latter conditions being clearly seen on Plate 3. The church and the later manor site nearby are on soils of the Hurcot complex—a variety of soils from sandy loam to clay but usually 'agriculturally unproductive' (Avery, 1955).

Around Low Ham the main settlement elements are villages and hamlets. In the immediate vicinity between Langport and Somerton are Pitney, Long Sutton and High Ham, all villages with parish churches; there are also nucleated hamlets at Wearne, Upton, Little Load, Westcombe and Pibsbury. There is little evidence of settlement desertion either on the ground in the form of earthworks or from documents. Beyond Long Sutton is the well-known deserted village of Bineham City (ST 499248); on the other side of Langport is Littleney (ST 418256), the precursor to Huish Episcopi; Melbury (ST 479275) is smaller than it was formerly and there are abandoned crofts at Long Sutton (Dunning, 1973).

A number of these settlements are described in Domesday Book and all were in existence by the medieval period. A number of the modern and medieval settlements are closely related to pre-existing Romano-British centres and there may be a close relationship or even continuity of settlement through to the present day (Leech, 1977). There are for example a number of Roman settlements around Pitney and in the area from Low Ham stretching across to Somerton. Roman buildings and burials have been found at Wearne (Leech, 1976). There is a Roman villa under Melbury and at Low Ham itself a Roman villa was excavated in 1946 (Raleigh Radford, 1947).

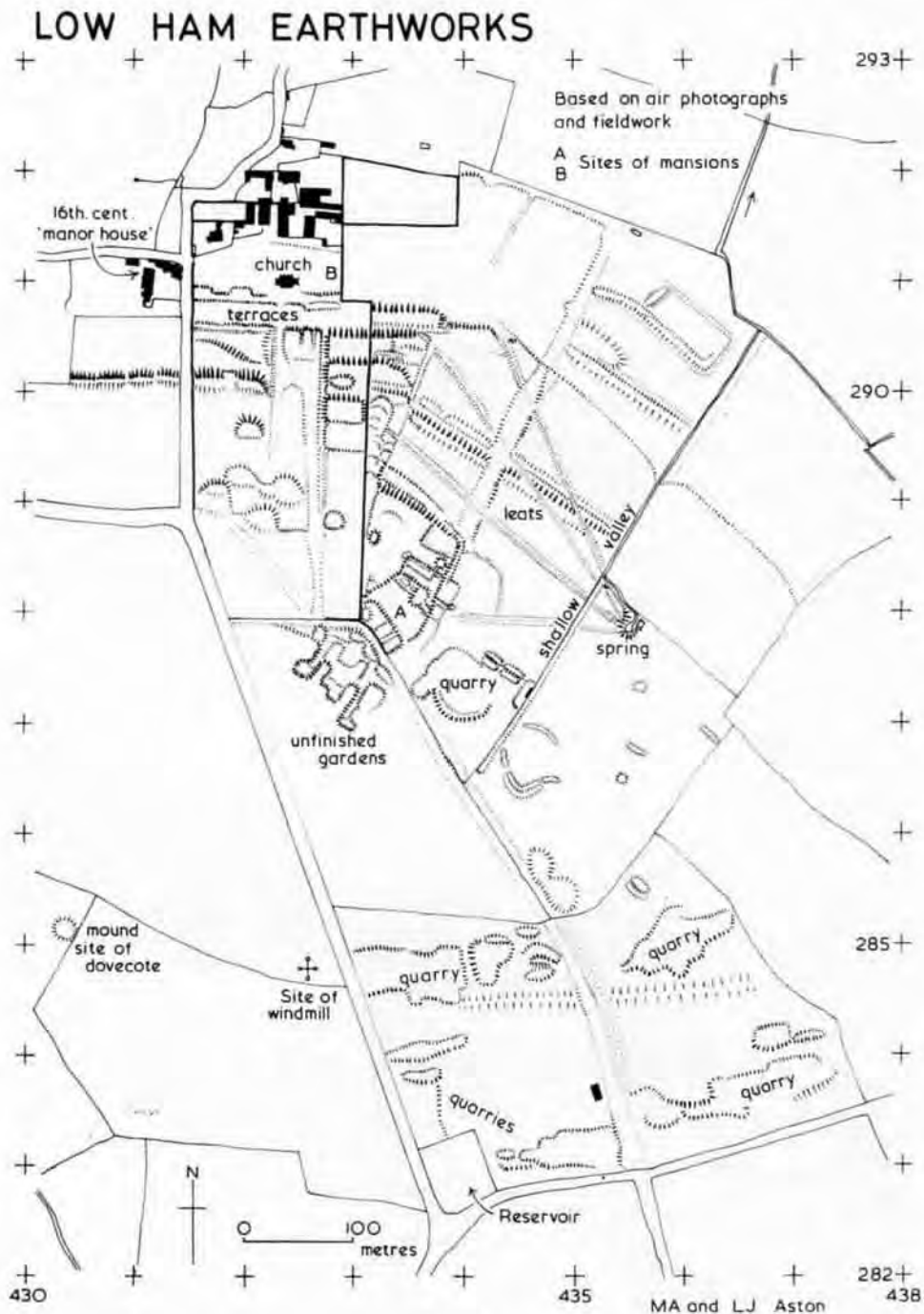


Fig. 3.



Plate 2. Vertical air photograph of Low Ham showing earthworks of garden terraces, platforms and quarrying. (Hunting Surveys Limited, Somerset County Council Planning Department 12th November, 1971. Run 43 2237 HSL UK 71 218).



Plate 3. Oblique air photograph of the earthworks of the gardens and earlier mansion site at Low Ham (National Monuments Record, Air Photographs Unit 16th June, 1970, ST 4328/2).
By permission, National Monuments Record Air Photograph, Crown Copyright Reserved.

History

Apart from the known Roman villa site there may well have been other Roman buildings near to Low Ham. Raleigh Radford (1951) remarks on the possibility of early wooden Roman buildings near to Manor Farm and of other stone foundations in Ashwell field.

The Hext family, who carried out much of the work at Low Ham, acquired the manor when Edward Hext bought Low Ham from Henry, Lord Compton, the heir of the Berkeleys, in 1588. This Sir Edward Hext had built or refurbished a house by 1592 when he is described as 'of Low Ham'. Collinson states that this house, which was still standing at the death of the first Lord Stawell (see below), was considered one of the best houses in the west of England (Collinson, 1791b). In 1925 it was thought that 'the manor house of the Berkeleys, Waltons and Hexts was represented by the farm house some distance to the west of the church, which contained much XVI century work and a fine panelled room' (Anon, 1925), but clearly this building, which still stands west of the church, is not pretentious enough for a large house of a major family of the 16th-17th centuries. Below, it will be suggested that the remains of this 16th/17th-century mansion can be recognised in earthworks on Hext Hill.

The same Sir Edward Hext began building the church in 1620, or more likely rebuilding since there had been a medieval chapel at Low Ham in the Middle Ages. He died on 22nd February, 1625 and was buried in the north aisle of the new church. His tomb, also of his wife Dionysia who died on 30th July, 1633, can still be seen there (Collinson, 1975, and Stawell, 1910). In style this church was an anachronism, being built in the 17th century in gothic rather than the new classical style, and it has been suggested, almost certainly erroneously, (Anon, 1861) that it was built in that fashion 'indicating the tendency of the High Church and Royalist party, as contrasted with the opposite leaning of the Puritan element in the National Church at that time'.

Sir Edward Hext and his wife Dionysia had only one heir, a daughter Elizabeth. She married John Stawell in 1617. Her eldest son was Colonel George Stawell who died in 1669 having restored the church in 1668 after the Civil War. The manor descended to his young brother Ralph who was created first Lord Stawell; he died on 8th August 1689 and was buried in Low Ham Church where there is still a splendid monument to his memory in the south aisle (Stawell, 1910).

His son, John, the second Lord Stawell, 'pulled down a great part of the old seat built by Sir Edward Hext, and begun a most sumptuous and expensive edifice, 400 feet in length and 1 hundred in breadth' (Collinson, 1791b) 'in a very low and bad situation' (Stawell, 1910). This was never completed on account of his early decease on 30th November, 1692, at the age of 24. By that time it had already cost him over £100,000 and he had sold off most of his manors (Stawell, 1910). Collinson (1791b) says that '3 state rooms at the end were finished in the most elegant style, the ceilings decorated with very superb paintings'. He goes on to say that the trustees after the death of Sir John Stawell allowed this great house to fall into ruin but it, or a large part of it, is clearly shown (Fig. 4) on a map of 1779 (SRO, DD/MKG/Bx4). Then it consisted of a 3-storey building of 5 bays facing west with a pedimented entrance. The present church stood in front of it and to the west there were ornamental gate pillars each side of a gateway. The whole arrangement must have looked very similar to the present west view of Brympton House near Yeovil. To the north were walled gardens and a range of buildings with a bell tower or dovecote. The 1779 map also shows a dovecote and windmill on Hext Hill; they are described as 'in decay' at that date.

A letter, partly defaced, from Ja. Bobert of 26th July, 1690, presumably to Sir John Stawell, mentions preparations for planting in the gardens of the house and the laying out of terraces and landscape features including a canal (Stawell 1910, pp. 424-425):

'... pleased to present my humble duty to ... and let his Lordship know that by Mr. Hactors ... tells me that within few dayes he designes to .. to Ham I hope to have a good oppertunitie of .. ing my full propositions cercerning your

Gardens . . . the meane time by your late letter I learne your desire . . some dimensions of some parts which I take to be these following

First we suppose the Tarras walke to be the basis of the whole thence a perpendicular to arise to take the middle of the passage out of the house and from this line all the side walls to run parallel

The Tarras to be about 90 f broad which may imperceptibly rise 6 or 8 inches from thence a paire of staires of 10 steps rising 70 inches which carries up to the first plot 262 f square ascending 168 inches

Then arising 5 steps or 35 inches up to the plot where the Canall is to be the plot 74 feet with the Canall in the middle of the same 40 f broad and 80 long (if it be concluded to be a parallelogram or whither an Octagonall figure would not keep cleaner considering there is noe great flux of water).

From this plot arises another paire of staires of 10 steps 70 inches which deliver you up to a plot of 260 f square ascending 192 inches.

Then 10 steps more 70 inches high carrying up to the Wilderness 260 f square ascending alsoe 192 inches

The lenth of the whole with what the steps take up is about 980 feet ascending 848 inches.

All which I shall hope to make plainer to you very speedily and if any alterations are made that these dimensions will not correspond with let me speedily heare from you, and I shall endeavour to answer his Lordships expectation and gladly performe any farther service in the power of

Your Friend and servant to command

Ja. Bobert'

This large house was in ruins (Fig. 4) by 1823 (SRO, DD/SAS c/212) and had completely disappeared by the time of the Tithe Map (SRO, D/D/Rt./25 1838).

John, second Lord Stawell was buried in Low Ham church and his memorial is combined with that of his father, Ralph, Lord Stawell, in the south aisle. Thirty years later the house and manor were purchased by Lady Phelips (wife of Sir Edward Phelips of Montacute) who gave the estate to her youngest daughter. Later, about 1750, the manor came by marriage of this daughter to Carew Hervey Mildmay of Hazlegrove (Collinson, 1975). It was he who removed the arch, which spans the entrance road to the Hazlegrove Estate, from Low Ham in the early 19th century. At the time of the tithe map (1838) the whole of the Low Ham area under discussion was owned by Paulet St. John Mildmay. It was leased, as part of a holding of 523 acres, to William Reynolds (SRO, D/D/Rt. 25 1838). The Mildmays' Low Ham estate was sold in 1860 (Anon, 1925).

Topographical development

From the above account, the series of early maps, the earthworks shown on the air photographs, and fieldwork an attempt can be made to understand the development of the present landscape south of the present Low Ham village. The convenient starting point is the map of 1779 (Fig. 4); there are no earlier large scale maps of this area available. This map shows the mansion built by Sir John Stawell next to the church. It faces west and is aligned at right angles to the church. Immediately adjacent are 3 enclosures. These are shown with thicker boundary lines than those depicted for other enclosures and presumably are meant to represent stone walls; these are the only substantial walls in the area today. These enclose the 'Hare and Rabbit Warren' to the south, the 'Kitchen Garden' to the north-east and 'Cherry Orchard' to the north-west. Each of these enclosures is aligned on the mansion and it is perhaps not unreasonable to suppose that they were all built at the same time or at least all belong to the same plan.

It is perhaps worth noting that the warren in this case has no evidence of pillow mounds although the abundant mounds and terraces in the walled enclosure would have provided numberless sites for rabbit burrows. Clearly also the stone walls must

have been intended to enclose the warren and they almost certainly date therefore from the 17th century. This may seem a strange practice but a parallel exists in Swaffham Bulbeck, Cambridgeshire, where a royal warren was walled in about 1605 (RCHM, 1972, p. 113).

The 1779 map also shows the road pattern as it is at present and three avenues of trees approaching the house from the south and south-east. A dovehouse and windmill to the south are described as 'in decay'; the appearance of the dovecote, at least, suggests that it was built or adapted as a folly or 'eyecatcher' although it would not have been visible from the house. It certainly appears to be of post-medieval date. Today the windmill has completely disappeared but the site of the dovecote is marked by a large earthwork mound (Fig. 3) with a trench around the top, 9.7 metres in diameter, marking its foundation wall.

LOW HAM, HIGH HAM PARISH

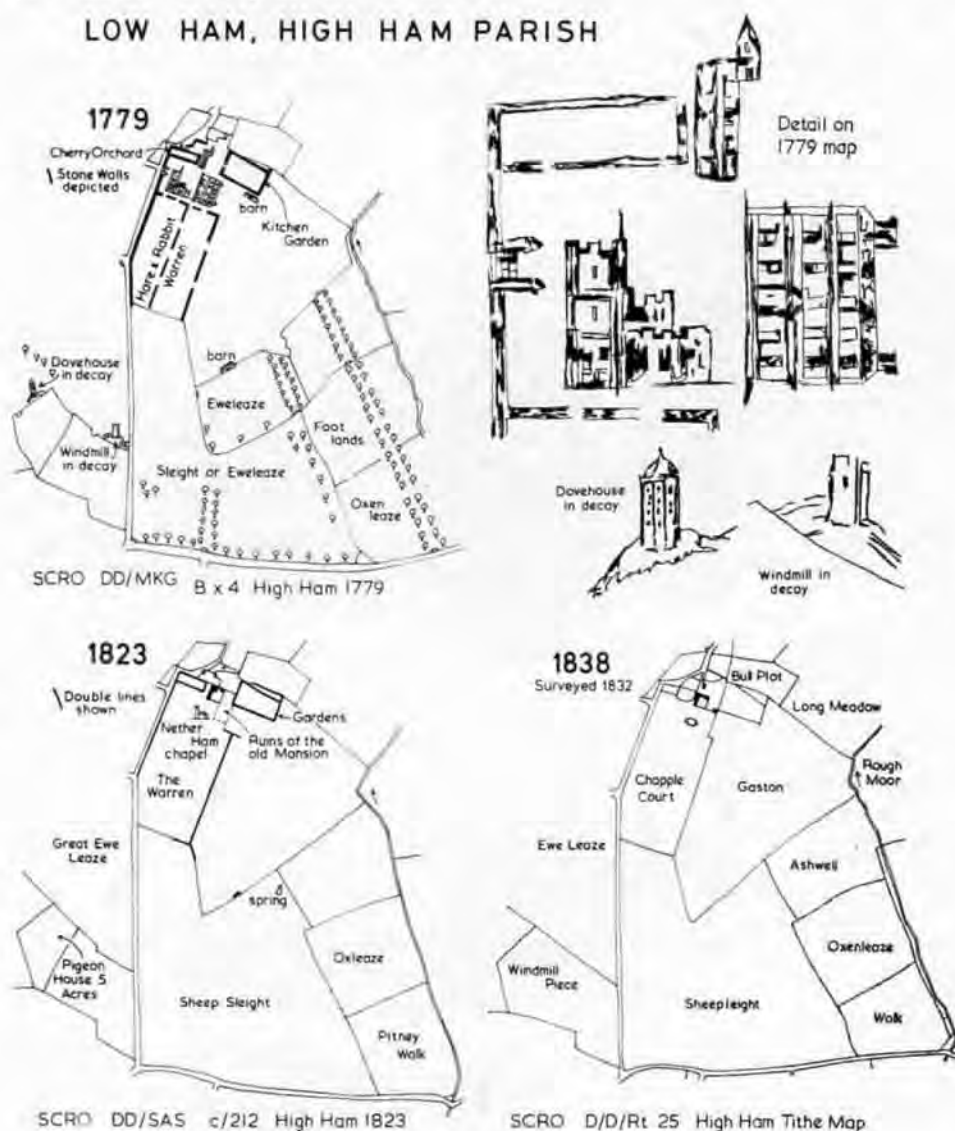


Fig. 4. Low Ham Maps 1779, 1823 & 1838.

Earthworks on Fig. 3 show a number of features cut by the stone-walled warren enclosure to the south of the house. Firstly, at least three terraces are cut by the wall on the east side, and one terrace at least is cut by the road and the wall on the west side. Clearly these terraces are earlier than the stone wall and the road. Their general appearance suggests that they are in fact lynchets or terraces supporting strips of former open fields. There are still numerous flights of lynchets in this part of Somerset including a group north-east of Low Ham; these terraces could therefore have been part of the open fields of Low Ham immediately to the south of the chapel and village.

At the north end, these terraces appear very regular with sharp corners and well-defined profile. The lowest level still displays angular projections, visible on Plate 2 and shown on Fig. 3, west of the church. By analogy with sites elsewhere in the country it would seem that these lowest terraces were either modified from lynchets or deliberately built as garden terraces. This accords well with the contents of the letter of 1690 (see above) and presumably means that there must have been a dividing wall at the north end of the hare and rabbit warren enclosure to separate the gardens adjacent to the house from the warren itself.

There is only one gap in the terraces now providing access for a road to the south. This is immediately south of the chapel where there is a gentle slope, still with a right of way through to Hext Hill. If there was a southerly road this would be its easiest and most convenient course.

The second feature which seems to be overlain by the boundary wall of the warren enclosure lies off its south-east corner. Here on the ground there are extensive terraces, platforms and overgrown building foundations (Fig. 3). An oblique air photograph (Plate 3) taken on 16th June, 1970 (National Monuments Record, Air Photographs Unit ST 4328/2) shows clear signs of walls, showing as parchmarks, just below ground surface. The whole complex is enclosed with a boundary wall also evident as parchmarks. This site itself is clearly related to earthworks running at a different alignment from the warren walls and the mansion on the 1779 map. The platforms are delimited by a holloway on the south-west side, continuous banks and ditches on the north-west side probably representing old field boundaries and, on the south-east, by a holloway running down the slope towards the east side of the village enclosures. Furthermore, to the south-west of the platform, there is another area of earthworks on the same alignment. These are less clear on the oblique air photograph (Plate 3) but they can be seen clearly on the vertical air photograph (Plate 2); on the ground they are very prominent. At first it was felt that this area represented the remains of surface quarrying but the general alignment and regularity of the earthworks suggests that the feature was deliberately constructed. Its general form, of several terraces and platforms, is very like terraced formal gardens on sites elsewhere in the country (cf. for example Salford in Oxfordshire; Aston and Rowley, 1974, p. 163) but the generally rounded appearance and slight irregularities might suggest that in this case the gardens were never finished.

The historical account above clearly refers to two mansions. The one near the church, shown on the map of 1779, was built by John, Lord Stawell before his death in 1692 but there was another, dismantled by him, which had been built by Sir Edward Hext some time before 1625 and which had served its purpose as the capital manor house, indeed one of the best in the west country, through the 17th century. This complex of earthworks and parchmarks on Hext Hill represents a very good candidate for the earlier house, with its gardens overlooking extensive views to the north, down the valley, and linked to a road pattern abandoned in the later schemes of Lord Stawell.

No clear plan of the mansion of 1588-92 can be made out from the 1970 air photograph (Plate 3) but its general alignment seems to have been north-west/south-east with its front facing south-west, perhaps with gardens beyond. Other parchmarks would then indicate buildings at the rear such as stables and barns.

Finally mention should be made of the spring situated above the Roman villa

LOW HAM Stages of Development

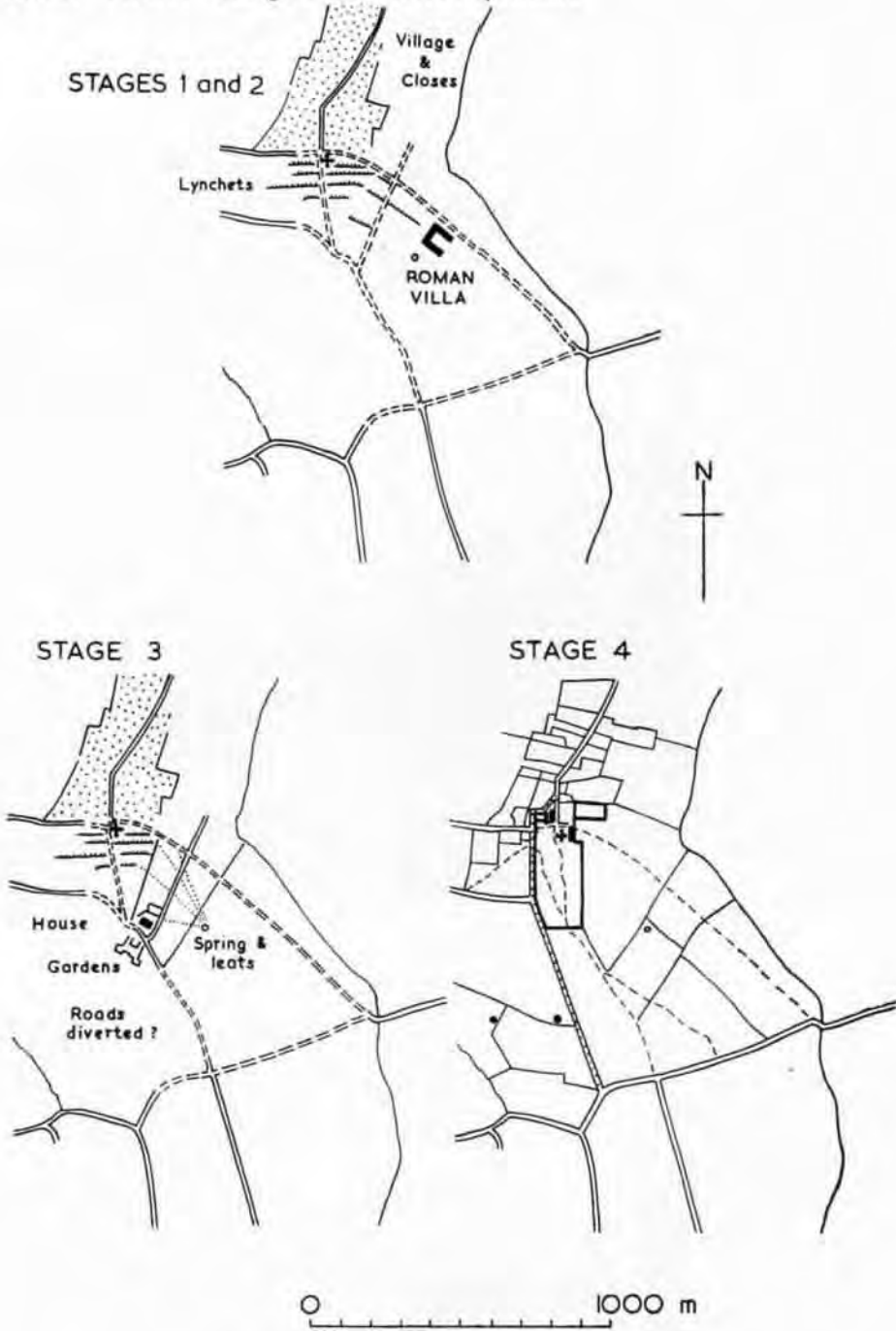


Fig. 5.

in a field called Ashwell (Fig. 4). At some stage four canals or leats were dug from this and they are still very apparent both on the ground (Fig. 3) and on air photographs (Plate 2) although they are now dry. One of these, the southern-most, seems to have brought water to this earlier mansion site while other leats convey water across to the later mansion and the terraces.

The development of the landscape

On the basis of the above account Fig. 5 is an attempt to depict the landscape development up to the time of the 1779 map (Fig. 4). Stage 1 is the Roman landscape, as yet little understood except for the existence of the villa and possible use of the spring as a shrine, as at a number of other villa sites (cf. Chedworth, Gloucestershire). Stage 2 is the medieval village and its closes with the chapel to the south. On the map it is suggested that the terraces are lynchets forming part of the open fields of Low Ham. The road pattern as suggested is based on surviving holloways and other traces of earlier roads. Some of the rights of way are shown where they seem either to reinforce holloway and earthwork routes or where they link villages or lead to bridges. Stage 3 represents the late 16th and 17th centuries with the mansion on the hill, significantly Hext Hill still marked on the map today, with its gardens and the leats conveying water across to the house and terraces. At this stage it is not clear whether any road diversions had been engineered to remove traffic from the proximity of the house. Stage 4 represents the late 17th- and 18th-century situation with the new mansion built by John, Lord Stawell, with its stone walled enclosures and warren. Clearly, to construct this complex the north-south road at least had to be diverted westwards and it is likely that others were blocked off or reduced to footpaths at the same time. Some of the leats may have been constructed or maintained to supply the house and its gardens which were themselves partly converted from pre-existing terraces. There remains the possibility of course that Lord Stawell intended the whole of the south walled enclosure to be terrace gardens. His early death precluded the scheme ever being finished but the 1690 letter does show the sort of work intended. If this was the case then the use of the enclosure for a hare and rabbit warren could have come about as a result of the abandonment of Lord Stawell's schemes including the gardens; this would then explain the reference on the 1779 map.

This account represents a general and, of course, a hypothetical statement of events at Low Ham over two centuries or so. But in the absence of large scale excavation and in advance of further extensive and detailed documentary research it may perhaps be taken as at least a plausible explanation of what appears on the ground today at Low Ham.

CONCLUSION

It is perhaps obvious from the above account that a study of gardens alone, or indeed deserted villages, churches or Roman villas will only ever give part of the historical picture of a place. While detailed analysis of individual sites by historical research or archaeological excavation can usually produce new and useful information, it is only with an overall view that the evaluation of a particular piece of landscape can be understood.

At Low Ham and Hardington attention which was focussed on landscaping in the post-medieval period developed inevitably into an appreciation of the part played by gardens in an overall evolution of each locality. While the location of such gardens is of considerable interest, it is perhaps their context locally as part of a changing scene and the possibility of using a variety of sources, documentary, cartographic, air photographs and fieldwork, to unravel the story that should provide the stimulus for further landscape archaeology work in Somerset in the future.

APPENDIX

Pillow Mounds in Somerset.

The following is a list of pillow mounds catalogued in the Sites and Structures Record of the County Planning Department up to December 1977. Documentary evidence, where known, is appended.

| Parish | Names | No. of Mounds | Grid Ref. | S. & S. Record Nos. | |
|------------------|---------------------------|---------------|---|----------------------|--------------|
| Axbridge | Shute Shelve Hill | 1 or ?3 | ST 42475532 ST 42565535 ST 42635540 | 1/02/108 | 1004 |
| Batcombe | near Spargrove | 1 | ST 67453745 | 2/03/028 | 9482 |
| Brean | Brean Down | 1 | ST 29635885 | 1/06/019 | 1045 |
| Bruton | near Priory site | 1 | ST 68483442 | 5/015/13 | 6468 |
| Cothelstone | Cothelstone Beacon | 1 | ST 19133266 | 4/13/14 | 7194 |
| Exmoor | Warren Farm ¹ | 4+ | SS 794407 SS 79414068 | 3/14/074 3/14/075 | 3423 3405 |
| Hemington | Hardington Park | 1 | ST 74005288 | 2/25/15 | 7947 |
| Montacute | ?Priory Park ² | 1 | ST 489167 | 5/80/20 | 7434 |
| Priddy | Ubley Warren Farm | 1 | ST 50955532 | 2/40/288 | 9454 |
| Staple Fitzpaine | Neroche Castle | 1 | ST 271158 | 4/33/15 | 4803 |

1. See these *Proceedings*, p. 139.

2. See VCH (Somerset), Vol. 3 (1974), pp. 210 and 242.

There may have been pillow mounds at a number of the warrens on the Mendips. In general these areas have usually been extensively quarried, making the identification of mounds difficult, or developed as forestry plantations where it is very difficult to record features in such dense woodlands. Ann Everton reports probable pillow mounds in Rowberrow Warren, Shipham (ST 460581 1/44/043 9680). Other warrens, including Ubley (now Priddy), Compton Martin (ST 525555) (now Priddy), East Harptree (ST 568540) (now Priddy), Stoberry Warren, Wells, and Warren Hill, Cheddar, are reported by Frances Neale ('Saxon and Medieval Landscapes' in R. Atthill (ed.), *Mendip A New Study* (Newton Abbot, David and Charles, 1976), p. 92). The extensive Dolebury Warren, with a number of pillow mounds in the prehistoric hill fort, is now in Avon County.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Jo Dowson for his detailed contour and hachure plan of Hardington, to Alan Wilson for work on the photographs and to Dr. R. W. Dunning for reading and commenting on this paper. Figs. 2 and 3 are based on Ordnance Survey maps with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Crown Copyright Reserved.

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