THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE AROUND WOOTTON MANOR

CONTENTS

1. Introduction 2
2. Evolution of the landscape 2
   2.1. The Roman Road 2
   2.2. The prehistoric and Roman landscape 3
   2.3. The post-Roman landscape 4
   2.4. The emergence of Wootton 5
   2.5. Later development 6
3. Significance of the historic landscape 7
   3.1. Introduction 7
   3.2. Surviving pre-medieval landscape features and their settings 8
   3.3. The early medieval landscape around Wootton Manor 8
4. Conclusions 9

FIGURES *(attached)*

Fig 1 The principal features of the historic landscape in the vicinity of Wootton Manor, Polegate

Fig 2 Extract from Yeakell and Gardner's map of Sussex, 1778-83

Fig 3 Hollow of former north-south route, south of E on Fig 1, between hedge to left and standard oak (to right) marking its eastern boundary, 2010

Fig 4 Roman road, looking east to the former A22, 2010

Fig 5 Extract from Tithe Map of Folkington, 1839, showing the Wootton Manor medieval enclosure in the northern part of Folkington parish.

Panoramic photographs EVP 3 and EVP13, referred to here, constitute Appendix 4 to the Matter 8 Statement by the Folkington Estate

Drury McPherson Partnership
114 Shacklegate Lane
Teddington
TW11 8SH
tel: 020 8977 8980
fax: 020 8977 8990
e-mail: pdrury@pdpartnership.com

1. Introduction

1.1.1 This paper for the Wealden Core Strategy Examination, Matter 8, Polegate Area Strategy, has been prepared at the request of the Folkington Estate. It draws on research and investigation undertaken in 2010 in connection with a public inquiry into proposals to develop land at Honey Farm, Polegate, primarily for residential use[1]. The site lay north of the A27, between the grade II registered landscape of Wootton Manor (itself listed grade II*) to the west, and the urban edge of Polegate, defined by the former A22 (Polegate western bypass, now part of the A27) to the east.

1.1.2 The note is primarily concerned with the nature and significance of the 'ancient countryside' which survives westwards from the former A22 along the foot of the escarpment, and which historically complemented human exploitation both of the chalk downland to the south (now within the South Downs National Park) and the heavy clay land to the north. The designated heritage assets - the house, outbuildings and park - represent particular periods of the area's history, but the ancient countryside 'matrix' tells a bigger and longer story.

2. Evolution of the landscape

2.1. The Roman Road

2.1.1 Ivan Margary first traced the route of the Roman road leading westwards from the Saxon Shore Fort at Pevensey towards modern Lewes, in a paper published in 1939[2]. The fort was established *c*AD290, and lasted until the end of the Roman occupation of Britain at the beginning of the fifth century, But excavation of a Roman roadside settlement and cemetery adjacent to the crossing of the River Cuckmere south of Arlington (D on Fig 1) has shown that the road from Pevensey (and thus exploitation of its harbour) originated in the first century AD[3], in the wake of the Roman conquest of Britain.

2.1.2 The road inland from Pevensey of necessity followed a long spit of land flanked by (now drained) marshes, whose limit is shown on Fig 1, before continuing westwards along a ridge, reaching a high point at Hide Cottage, (B) before descending to cross the Cuckmere further west at Chilver Bridge (D).

2.1.3 The Roman road remained the principal east-west route through the area until replaced by the present A27, a turnpike created *c*1828: it so appears on Yeakell and Gardner's map of Sussex, surveyed 1778-83 (Fig 2). During that long life, its route was locally diverted, but its Roman origin is not in doubt. Its latest route, now a green lane, deviates slightly from a straight course just

[1] Planning Inspectorate Ref: APP/C1435/A/10/2130580/NWF
[2] Margary, I D, 'Roman Roads from Pevensey', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **80** (1939), 29-61
[3] Chuter, G, 'Arlington excavations 2004-2009', *Sussex Past and Present* (December 2009), 10

before it is cut by the A27 (formerly A22) Polegate western bypass, during the construction of which in 1937 Margary observed the Roman structure in section in the cutting, on the original line (Fig 1, A). Further west, at B, a resistivity survey has shown that it continued on the line still extant further west, but was displaced southwards by a medieval enclosure. The final route between C and D has been established as a diversion southwards from a direct approach through the Roman roadside settlement to the river crossing.

2.1.4 The Roman road provides a convenient starting point for considering the historic landscape at the foot of the downs in this vicinity, as the oldest attested man-made feature clearly visible in the lowland landscape, both on the ground and from the grandstand provided by the downland scarp (photo EVP 3) to which, thanks to topography and geology, it here runs parallel.

2.2. The prehistoric and Roman landscape

2.2.1 The importance of the relict prehistoric landscape of the South Downs has long been acknowledged, not least because so many elements of it survive as visible earthworks, in contrast to the lower, heavier lands at the foot of the downs. The impression that prehistoric use of the landscape was concentrated on the downs, however, owes much to the divergent medieval and modern history of those landscapes. The downs have been predominantly maintained as pasture, while the heavier soils at the foot of the downs, on the Gault Clay and Lower Greensand, have been the focus of arable cultivation, obliterating the visible traces of earlier exploitation. Evidence from buried soils in valley bottoms indicates that it was progressively cleared of woodland millennia before the Roman conquest.

2.2.2 Only the less tractable Wealden Clay further north (extending north of the Roman road line) is likely to have retained extensive woodland through prehistoric and historic times, as it still does. Apart from a scatter of worked flints probably of Bronze Age date, no remains predating the twelfth century were found in archaeological investigations of the Polegate (A27, northern) bypass which runs wholly across Wealden clay.

2.2.3 Indirect evidence of early utilisation of the more tractable land at the foot of the scarp comes from the location of communal sites of the Neolithic period[4] (the causewayed camp on Combe Hill and the Hunter's Burgh long barrow), as well as the string of Bronze Age round barrows, sited on the very edge of the scarp (Fig 1, emphasised in blue). Their location, often on 'false crests', implies that they were oriented towards, and meant to be seen from, the lowland below, against the skyline, as well as offering commanding views over it (photo, EVP 13). That would only be possible if the landscape below were relatively open.

[4] Fourth-third millennia BC

2.2.4 In the early Neolithic, at least, the focus of settlement appears to have been the Cuckmere valley[5] rather than the downs, with Hunter's Burgh facing north-east across the vale at the foot of the scarp, where clearance for agriculture led to rapid soil erosion. Much has been written about the location of barrows in the Bronze Age landscape, but the pattern of their distribution on the downs has been explained in terms of 'the creation of a vast sacred landscape extending from Beachy Head to the Meon valley [Hants], in which activities were deliberately kept separate from areas of settlement and resource procurement on the coastal plain (ie well-watered, fertile and sheltered areas). Rather than a landscape of continuous settlement and associated clusters of round barrows, the downland escarpment is seen as marginal and sacred domain forming a physical and spiritual boundary'[6].

2.2.5 This is not the context for a detailed exploration of the organisation of earlier prehistoric landscapes. The key point is that the location of the monuments on the top of the scarp indicates an intended relationship to the landscape below it, the fertile zone between the scarp foot and the Wealden Clay landscape to the north. This seems particularly likely from the ridge followed by the Roman road running west-north-west from A on Fig 1, towards and then across a small plateau. It has the required elevation and distance (not too low or too close) for the monuments originally to be seen, and directly addresses Combe Hill and Folkington Down (photo EVP 13). This part of the road line may indeed rationalise an earlier route through the lowland landscape, taking a logical, well-drained path along the ridge, which also approximately corresponds with the change in geology and agricultural potential of the landscape.

2.3. The post-Roman landscape

2.3.1 It is clear that the Roman road survived through the centuries after the Roman withdrawal, being described as "old" (*vetus*) in 1252; it was called *Farnestreet*[7]. We know little of how the surrounding lowland landscape context was exploited during the post-Roman period, but settlement and arable cultivation are likely to have been reduced from a Romano-British peak, with some consequent woodland regeneration.

2.3.2 In the local post-Roman landscape, one route (in addition to the Roman road) stands out as being recognisably early, primarily because it takes a long, sinuous, but unobstructed, course through the landscape, from Hailsham (Fig 1, F), where it marks the east side of the common on the Yeakell and Gardner map of 1778-83 (Fig 2), crossing the Roman road at E, taking an easy route onto the saddle of the downs and passing through Jevington (beyond

[5]Peter Drewett, 'Taming the Wild: The first farming communities in Sussex', in David Rudling (ed), *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD 2000* (2003), 39-46, at p45 and fig 4.6

[6] Paul Garwood, 'Round barrows and funerary traditions in Late Neolithic and Bronze Age Sussex', in David Rudling (ed), *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD 2000* (2003):, 47-68, at p57

[7] Margary, I D, 'Roman Roads from Pevensey', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **80** (1939), 35

G) towards the coast. This route is still marked by a wide hedge, which in places diminishes to reveal the hollow of the former road (photograph, Fig 3) along a length where it is clearly shown as a route on Yeakell and Gardner's map. Further north, it is continued by what is now a shaw, but which again is clearly shown as a route by Yeakell and Gardner. This route and the Roman road form the principal early man-made routes through the landscape, a framework within which a complex pattern of colonisation and enclosure then play out.

2.3.3 On the clay, the pattern of arable land management did not follow the predominantly Midland tradition of large open fields farmed communally in strips. Some rather small-scale communal fields existed, and can be identified on early estate maps, but predominantly the landscape consisted of "old enclosures", or, to use Oliver Rackham's term, "ancient countryside". Only in limited areas (for example east of Folkington Manor) has this been subject to local re-planning through "enclosure".

2.4. The emergence of Wootton

2.4.1 Wootton first emerges into the historical record in Domesday Book (1086). By that time, the later medieval manorial pattern is recognisable, including references to manors characteristically located at the scarp foot, like Wilmington and Folkington, whose names ('Wilma's farm'; 'Folca's farm'[8]) indicate their origins as agricultural settlements at the interface of the downs and the most versatile arable land. While held separately before the Norman conquest, both Wootton and Folkington manors were subsequently granted to Robert, Count of Mortain.

2.4.2 As is easily visible from Folkington Down (EVP 3 and Fig 1), Wootton Manor occupies a singular position in the landscape, set into the west side of a small plateau which projects southwards from the ridge line followed by the Roman road. The plateau, largely on the Lower Greensand, forms the watershed between streams draining westwards to the River Cuckmere, northwards through the woodland (and ultimately to the Cuckmere), and north-eastwards and eastwards, either side of the ridge, towards the Pevensey and Willingdon levels.

2.4.3 Almost concentric with the central enclosure of the settlement core of Wootton, surrounding the plateau, is an elongated polygonal enclosure attached to the Roman road on the north side, and itself defined by a route, Wootton Lane, on the west (Fig 1; for larger scale see Fig 5). The division into fields is internal to the polygon, rather than a continuation of external patterns. Some of these boundaries are documented as being in place before 1459, others pre-1617[9]. Beyond this (shown green on Fig 1) are field boundaries to the west, concentric with the inner enclosure, staggered either

[8] Mawer, A and Stenton, F M, *The Place Names of Sussex* (1929), pp.409-13.

[9] Dr Nicola Bannister, *Wootton Manor Estate: Heritage Landscape Assessment* unpublished draft report, 2010, at p60

side of a stream. There is one similar line to the east, which came to form the parish boundary. The westernmost of the fields within these concentric additions to the original core, *Clophenfield*, is first documented in 1459[10]. On the east, the southern part (Leylands or Chambers Piece) was granted (as part of the adjacent manor of Wilmington) by Count Robert to the Abbey of Grestaein in Normandy, and the northern to Bayham Abbey around 1200[11].

2.4.4 The name Wootton derives from Old English *wudu* + *tun* – "farmstead within or near woodland", and there can be no real doubt that the polygonal enclosure represents the original enclosure (hedge or fence) around the farmstead, and the concentric lines beyond represent its subsequent expansion, seemingly without constraint save for the Roman road. The pattern is a familiar one, the land of a Saxon farmstead becoming the demesne land of the manor of Wootton, separated from that of Folkington on the south by Wootton Common. Dating the origin of Wootton is difficult, but it probably lay in the ninth or tenth century, and the eastern and western expansion pre-conquest, long before the recorded pious grants out of the eastern part. Theydon Mount in Essex provides a parallel example.[12]

2.4.5 Wootton occupies a different position in the landscape from the scarp foot settlements, with their manor house and church located together at the foot of the downs. The form of the parishes as they appear on the early modern maps indicates that they would typically enjoy access to a cross-section of the resources provided by the landscape, with sheep pasture on the downs to the south, arable land at the foot of the downland scarp, meadows in the lower parts of the vale and woodland on the Low Weald clay to the north. However, more distant parishes had interests in seasonal pasture on the downs, so there are north-south droveways, and a complicated pattern of detached parts of parishes, reflecting former rights of common, and the symbiotic relationship between down and vale.

2.5. Later development

2.5.1 In 1252, a grant of free warren to Peter of Savoy notes that the "old road" (ie the Roman road) ran "through the middle of the demesne of *Wodinton* on the north side of the Court (*curie*) of Godfrey Falconer"[13]. It is thus highly likely that, by then, the enclosed area also extended to the north of the road. Two main elements of the early landscape are visible here, an enclosure to the west of a small watercourse, whose creation had displaced the Roman road line slightly southwards (Fig 1), and one to the east, associated with 'hide' fieldnames, whose eastern edge ultimately formed the parish boundary. The western enclosure is early, but part of the adjacent manor of

[10] Dr Nicola Bannister, *Wootton Manor Estate: Heritage Landscape Assessment* unpublished draft report, 2010, at pp15, 45)
[11] Ibid, pp12, 15
[12] Paul Drury with Richard Simpson, *Hill Hall: A singular house devised by a Tudor intellectual* (Society of Antiquaries of London, 2009), pp 9-13
[13] *Margary op cit*

Wilmington; its origin seems quite separate from that of Wootton. The hide, by contrast, represents medieval enclosure from Wootton, whose progress is suggested by the field boundaries.

2.5.2 The core of the Wootton estate was certainly established in something like its modern form by 1320, when it was described as a capital messuage with 306 acres, and seems to have remained stable through until the seventeenth century, when, in 1617, there were 319 acres and in 1653, 321 acres. The present house was built in the third quarter of the seventeenth century, a substantial farmhouse of red brick with a clay-tile roof.

2.5.3 The house was altered and improved during the early nineteenth century, by about 1840, which almost certainly coincided with the development of the park-like landscape to the east of the house. The east front, with its view across the new park, was firmly established as the polite entrance to the house, and the west front, facing the farmyard, originally the main front, became the rear, service side. There was substantial investment in new and rebuilt farm buildings at the same time.

2.5.4 The estate was acquired by the Gwynne family in 1876, and in 1915 Rupert Gwynne commissioned the arts and crafts architect Detmar Blow, a family friend, to extend the house.[14] He effectively doubled the size of the old house by adding an almost detached, boldly articulated three-storey block with a high pitched roof, to the south west of the seventeenth century block. A new entrance forecourt was created to the west, incorporating early outbuildings, and a series of gardens comprising informal compartments formed on the east front in place of the drive, with a ha-ha emphasising the view across the park.

3. Significance of the historic landscape

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1 PPS 5 defines "significance" as "The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic." The national significance of the prehistoric earthworks on the downs (scheduled), Wootton Manor (II*), its principal outbuildings (II) and its registered park (II) is recognised by their inclusion in the schedule of monuments, statutory lists and (non-statutory) register respectively.

3.1.2 Such discrete and conspicuous features can easily be defined and designated as heritage assets, but they form part of the 'ancient countryside' which extends for many miles along the foot of the downs. Its pattern of lanes, field

[14] 'Wootton Manor, Sussex', *Country Life*, April 7, 1955, 920-923

boundaries, woods and other features has evolved incrementally over centuries, with conspicuous features surviving from the Roman period. Its landscape scale makes statutory designation impractical, but not only does it provide the context and setting of designated assets, it is also an important part of the national heritage in its own right. It is certainly a factor to be weighed in allocating essentially green field sites for development.

3.2. Surviving pre-medieval landscape features and their settings

3.2.1 The prehistoric earthwork monuments tend to be set on the top of the scarp, or, tellingly, on false crests, with views of an agricultural landscape at the scarp foot and the substantially wooded Low Weald beyond (photo EVP 3). It is a setting which, in its fundamentals, reflects a pattern of land utilisation likely to have originated as the earliest of these monuments were erected. They have a defining relationship to their topographical setting, whose full range of meanings we are beginning to discern (2.2.5 above).

3.2.2 The opposite view, from the lowland to the monuments near the top of the scarp, was evidently important to their builders, but now depends, because of their reduction to eroded, grassed earthworks, on some knowledge of their existence and location. But, with that knowledge, the view across fields from the ridge route of the Roman road, more or less perpendicular to the downland scarp, with no visual intrusion of modern development, is a powerful evocation of their relationship to the lowland landscape (photo EVP 13). The ability to perceive their relationship to the fundamentally different landscapes and agricultural resources of the downs and the vale contributes to their exceptional significance as scheduled monuments.

3.2.3 Recent work on the line and form of the Roman road[15] has shown it to be a formally engineered road, presumably of military origin, connecting the harbour and later the Saxon Shore Fort at Pevensey to the provincial road network. While not a scheduled monument, it is of considerable significance for its evidential and historical values, on a par with grade II listed buildings, and particularly well-preserved west of the former A22 (Fig 4). It also has communal and associative value as an example of the "Roman road" as a favourite image of Kipling, the great poet and mythologiser of the Sussex landscape[16]. With the north-south route through the hollow in the downs, it forms a key element in the framework of the surviving ancient countryside.

3.3. The early medieval landscape around Wootton Manor

3.3.1 This landscape of Wootton itself is inseparable from the Low Weald and the downs that bound it to the north and south respectively. The history of the landscape is defined by the relationships between woodland, pasture and

[15] Chuter, *op cit.*

[16] Kipling lived at Burwash near Pevensey; see in particular *Puck of Pooks Hill, and* e.g. *A Pict Song*, *The Roman Centurion's Song* and *The Church that was at Antioch*

arable land, by the routes that linked them (north to south) and the former Roman road, which before the nineteenth century provided east-west communication through the corridor between downs and weald, along the grain of the landscape.

3.3.2 The landscape west of Polegate represents a palimpsest of incremental enclosure, addition and change, stretching back over a millennium, and including some much older inherited features. It is firstly, an important source of primary evidence about the past, which has, as yet, been studied only in small areas[17], which here stands as an example of the antiquity of the man-made component of the landscape, the ancient countryside, of this part of Sussex. As such, the landscape has important evidential value.

3.3.3 The immediate landscape of Wootton has illustrative historical value as a particularly clear example of an early manor and its demesne, reclaimed from secondary woodland. Its primary core (boundary and internal division) and early expansion are still clearly defined (rather than, as is much more common, complicated and obscured by complex change), set in the angle of two long distance early routes through the landscape. This illustrative value is greatly enhanced by being expressed not only on maps, but also very clearly in the public view available from Folkington Down (photo, EVP 3). The promotion of "opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of those areas"[18] is central to the purpose of the National Park.

3.3.4 For its evidential and historical values, and their accessibility, the early medieval landscape centred on Wootton Manor, particularly the identified early manorial core, can be considered as a heritage asset of considerable significance. In the wider context, it represents the eastern limit of survival (truncated by the former A22) of complex and varied ancient countryside which extends westwards along the foot of the downs.

4. Conclusions

4.1.1 The existing line of the former A22 Polegate western bypass provides a clearly-defined edge to the built-up area of Polegate. Intrusion into the essentially rural, agricultural character of the landscape to its west, and to the north of the A27 is limited (a transport depot and the highways depot between the A27 and the railway).

4.1.2 Major urban encroachment into this area of ancient countryside at the foot of the downland escarpment would not only (obviously) reduce its surviving area, but also affect the ability to perceive focal elements of it, like the early medieval core of Wootton, in their historic setting. The wider setting of the

[17] Including, fortunately, the Wootton Estate, by Dr Nicola Bannister, in *Wootton Manor Estate: Heritage Landscape Assessment* unpublished draft report, 2010.
[18] Environment Act 1995

prehistoric monuments on the brow would be affected by the extension of urbanisation. Specifically, and within this landscape framework, development west of the former A22 would (depending on its form and location) harm the setting of two sets of nationally designated heritage assets: first, Wootton Manor house, outbuildings, park and garden; and second, the prehistoric monuments on Combe Down and Folkington Down. It is not merely a matter of visual harm to views to and from them, but of harm to attributes of their setting that contribute to their significance.

4.1.3 The decision in the Honey Farm inquiry[19] effectively established that to achieve satisfactory linkage of development west of the former A22 to the existing urban area would require moving the line of the trunk road westwards, beyond any such development. The additional impact of such infrastructure was not specifically addressed, but it would increase the harm, not just proportionately in terms of area urbanized, but particularly because of the scale and nature of the earthworks, bridges and junctions of a new section of trunk road.

December 2011

[19] Planning Inspectorate Ref: APP/C1435/A/10/2130580/NWF