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**Tracing the Pale  
of the  
Ashdown Forest Deer Park**

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## Summary

*Documentary research and field surveying took place during 2011/2012 to carry out a study of the Pale of Ashdown Forest. The Pale was a physical boundary around that part of Ashdown Forest that had been enclosed to make a deer park in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century. The most distinctive feature of a deer park was its boundary, generally a fence (called a pale) which was made from tall, cleft oak stakes set on a broad, high earth bank with an internal ditch. However, it must be emphasised that whilst park pales are a deterrent to the passage of deer, they are not proof against it. Deer do not spend their entire lives trying to escape from an area that had been specifically designed with deer in mind.*

*The topography over which this physical boundary was built varied from flat, open common land through woodland to steep sided gill valleys and marshy, flat valley bottoms. Into the boundary were inserted a number of gates or hatches to allow the passage of people and animals.*

*It is likely that this boundary was not a consistent one in shape and form along its length as it had to take into account the very varying terrain. The perceived image of a 23-mile long regular ditch and bank with a fence on top would have been impossible to build and variations in the size of the bank and ditch would have occurred along its length. In some places, for example along valley bottoms, there may only have been a fence. There would also have been internal boundaries, pales within pales, to keep the deer from entering certain areas, which were used for other purposes, or to enclose them within smaller enclosures.*

*In short sections, parts of the much eroded and modified earthwork remains of the pale can be found. There is just enough field evidence to support the theory that the bank and ditch changed its size and shape according to the topography. The remaining earthworks survive in those corners of the ancient deer park that were unfit for any building or agricultural purpose, in the roadside wastes and re-used as property boundaries today.*

*In many places abundant stands of straggly holly were found where the earthworks of the pale survived. It is not possible to say whether holly likes the environment and has successfully colonised these outer, unmanaged reaches of the Forest or whether it was once planted, either as a stock-proof hedge or a source of fodder. Documentary evidence suggests that holly was used in Sussex as a stock-proof fence, and it is still found today, used as a barrier and boundary to those properties that have been built along the line of the pale.*

*The shape of the deer park boundary has had a lasting effect on the landscape as it has dictated the course of some of the minor roads and footpaths and defined the line of property boundaries. In this busy corner of the south-east of England we have much to thank the creator, possibly Peter de Savoy, for first enclosing part of the wider forest to create his deer park, for within that old boundary lies contained the rich and varied legacy of the protected area that we have come to know and value today as Ashdown Forest.*

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## 1 Introduction

Chris Butler Archaeological Services Ltd (CBAS) was commissioned and funded by East Sussex County Council's Historic Environment Awareness Project (WFR LPS) to carry out a study of the Pale of Ashdown Forest. This was a physical boundary around that part of Ashdown Forest which had been enclosed to make a deer park. The reason for this study was to ascertain, if possible, whether any of that physical boundary still exists, where it exists and in what form, and what historical documents could be found that relate to it. The information will be made available to the local community, land managers and researchers.

The most distinctive feature of a deer park was its boundary, generally a fence called a pale which was made from tall, cleft oak stakes set on a broad, high earth bank with an internal ditch<sup>1</sup>. Sometimes, between the bank and ditch, there was an open strip of ground, known as the freeboard, which allowed access to the pale so that repairs could be made. To allow access into and out from the park, at regular intervals, gates or hatches were set into the boundary. The word hatch is derived from the Sussex dialect variation 'haecc'<sup>2, 3</sup> and is a half gate or non-vehicular one. A reconstruction picture of the Pale gives some idea of what this barrier may have looked like (front cover - © James Cope).

A good deal of advice was proffered as to the whereabouts of the Pale of Ashdown, and in many instances it proved to be incredibly elusive. However, remnants, consisting of the much degraded bank and ditch, can be still found in the more inaccessible outer reaches of the Ashdown Forest of today and beyond in roadside wastes and private property boundaries.

Three questions were posed to help locate that once large boundary that formed the Pale of Ashdown:

- When was it built?
- Why was the Pale built where it was in the first place?
- Was it possible to prove, or disprove, that this boundary, first recorded in any meaningful detail in 1564, some three hundred years after it was first built, follows the same line as the original one?

The study area sits within the heart of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, in East Sussex. Small parts of it lie just beyond the current boundaries of Ashdown Forest. It is bounded to the south by Maresfield, to the east by Crowborough, to the north by Forest Row and to the west by West Hoathly.

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<sup>1</sup> Miles, S. 2009 'Parks in Medieval England' OUP.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sussexhistory.co.uk/sussex-dialect/sussex-dialect%20-%200154.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924027322613/cu31924027322613\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/cu31924027322613/cu31924027322613_djvu.txt)

## 2 How the Survey was carried out

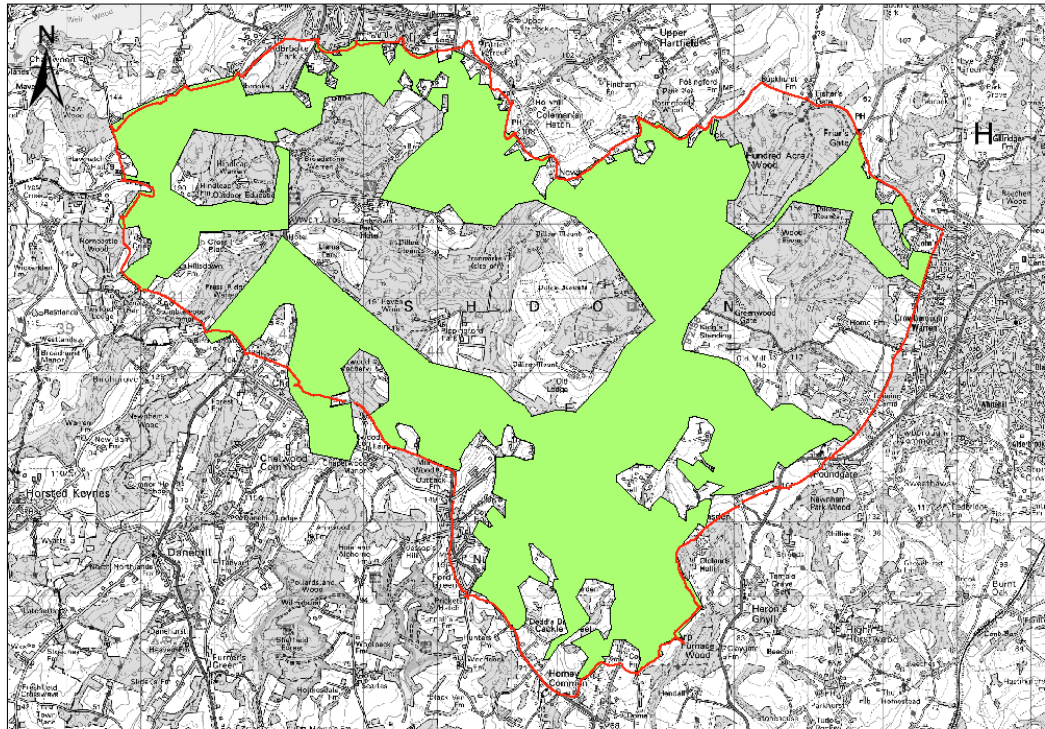
### 2.1 Desk-based work

Initially historical and documentary research into the Pale was carried out. Archives of documentary and written evidence at the Ashdown Forest Centre, East Sussex Record Office, the University of Sussex and the Sussex Archaeological Society were consulted. Early estate maps, the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Surveyors draft and various editions of early Ordnance Survey mapping were studied along with lidar images of the Weald Forest Ridge Area. Aerial photographs were also investigated but these, as was the case with lidar images, proved to be of little help as will be discussed later. A list of sources is included at the end of this report.

A great amount of valuable information was gained from the Raper Papers, documentation taken from records of the Duchy of Lancaster, used by modern researchers and historians, in preparing the case for the Ashdown Forest Dispute in 1878. These also included transcriptions from the Commissioner's surveys in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and extracts from the Court Rolls of Duddleswell. However, the spellings of the various places vary widely and it was reported that although the Commissioners were geographically accurate they could not spell and used many phonetical spellings, resulting in a range of gate names for the same gate. It is the earlier survey by the Commissioners in 1539 that provides the best description of the pale boundary and condition at that point in time.

From research in the archives of the Sussex Archaeological Society, a detailed outline of the Pale, traced onto a 1911 map, was found, that had probably been extrapolated from these Parliamentary surveys. This map is likely to have provided the basis for the general outline of the historical boundaries of Ashdown Forest. Using modern mapping this was modified and mapped into ArcGIS for use in the field, which provided a detailed and accurate representation of the boundary (Fig. 1). This line was called the documentary boundary.

To understand why Ashdown Park was created, it was necessary to consider and study the reason for the creation of deer parks, the countryside in which they were created and the geographical and topographical location of those parks.



**Legend**

- Documented pale
- Ashdown Forest current boundary

**Figure 1: Documented boundaries of Ashdown Forest Deer Park and the extent of Ashdown Forest today**

## 2.2 Topography

The topography of the land would not only influence where the Pale was situated but must have influenced the shape and form of the banks and boundary ditches. The boundary was often placed along the break of slope where the need for the ditch and bank may not always have been necessary, and use would have been made of natural features like water-courses, valleys and natural high points<sup>4</sup>. From field work it seems likely that when the land sloped steeply downwards to without the pale, the ditch may have been bigger and wider. The bank was thus bigger as it was made with the spoil from the ditch. Otherwise it would have been easier for the deer to jump out, over the pale, downhill, although it is equally possible that the height of the fence might have varied with the topography.

A key factor in understanding the development of the pale would be to ascertain land ownership in the medieval period and thus what the interplay was between the land available

<sup>4</sup> Mileson, S. 2009 *Parks in Medieval England* OUP.

and the topography of that land. This is outside the scope of this report, but would provide valuable information through future research.

### 3 The Creation of Deer Parks

#### 3.1 Forest, Chase or Park?

##### **Forest**

The word Forest may have originally meant a land covered with trees, but it came to mean a region subjected by the king to special laws with the aim of preserving the game within it. Throughout the medieval period a Forest was a place of deer, not necessarily a place of trees. The word Forest was a legal term within which the Forest law operated and the area covered by this legal term referred to the wider landscape outside the physical boundaries of the place where the deer were confined. A forest was not always wooded and could be heathland, with or without scattered woods, or in upland areas such as moorland.

Many Forests were also commons and specified commoners had rights to grazing, collecting small wood and turfs; all of these rights had special names in Forest law. These included the rights of pasturage (grazing), estovers (collection of underwood such as birch willow and underwood for firewood), turbary (turf cutting) and litter (cutting of bracken or heather for thatching or stock bedding)<sup>5</sup>. These rights were an important part of the pastoral system of land management.

In the 11<sup>th</sup> century there were a few Forests whose rights belonged to very great magnates and were sometimes known as, but not always consistently, chases; a Forest was an extreme status symbol. No known record survives relating to the setting up of a Forest which would have involved defining the legal bounds<sup>6</sup>.

Forests included settlements and fields, deer park pasture, woods and waste and were administered by a hierarchy of officials. Special courts were used to fine those caught poaching deer or felling trees illegally within the forest bounds<sup>7</sup>.

##### **Chase**

A chase was a private forest or hunting ground which a few great nobles and ecclesiastical lords were allowed to create within their own estates.

##### **Park**

The park was a more common feature of the medieval landscape and was often part of the demense lands of the lord of the manor. Parks differed from forests and chases in being fully enclosed, and to enter (or 'break in') without permission was an act of trespass. A park in this

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ashdownforest.org/living/past/development.php>

<sup>6</sup> Rackham O. 1998 *Trees and Woodland in the British Landscape* Butler and Tanner. Frome

<sup>7</sup> Miles, S. 2009 *Parks in Medieval England* OUP.

sense means a deer park, a piece of private land surrounded by a deer-proof fence called a park pale, within which the deer are captive.

The locations of parks in the landscape, at a general level, were located in areas of high medieval woodland cover, and were less common where woods were scarce. They could be located on higher or more sloping ground, near the boundaries of manors, parishes and townships in the earlier period. The larger parks were owned by kings or nobles and a fairly typical size extended from 200 acres to several thousand.

### 3.2 Why Deer Parks?

#### *Introduction*

It is not possible within the limits of this study to closely cover the various discussions surrounding the reasons for imparking, but the questioning of the older assertions about forests and parks as a hunting ground for deer has had a mixed impact and is briefly mentioned here.

#### *Deer Larders*

Amongst others, Moorhouse in 'The Medieval Park' and Mileson in 'Parks in Medieval England', suggest that the main purpose of the deer park, especially for small parks, was to breed deer to provide fresh meat, and that they provided a type of storage and collection point. Live deer could also be offered as gifts or to stock or re-stock other parks. Deer were only available for both breeding and consumption from stock enclosed within a park and venison was a high status food offering which was a valuable commodity<sup>8</sup>. They could not be bought or sold anywhere else<sup>9</sup>.

#### *Conservation*

It is possible that enclosing an area for a park could have been an early attempt to conserve and control woods and grassland for economic purposes rather than just for the thrill of hunting. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century there was a decline in the native red deer, and fallow deer were introduced. Deer hunting would not have been feasible in most areas by the later 13<sup>th</sup> century without parks to protect deer stocks and provide space for undisturbed hunting, in what was becoming an incredibly busy landscape. In Ashdown Forest perhaps we are looking at a really early 'conservation' area, a kind of fenced-in wilderness, predicting, from its very early

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<sup>8</sup> Mileson, S. 2009 'Parks in Medieval England' OUP.

<sup>9</sup> Creighton, O.H. 2009 *Designs Upon The Land*, The Boydell Press



history, what it was to become in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, when the way we understand conservation is quite different.

### *Hunting*

Hunting emerges as a prominent common interest amongst the English aristocracy<sup>10</sup>. It not only provided both the thrill of the chase, the kill, and potential training for warfare in engaging in these activities, but was also a sociable activity. It would have also provided venison for the ensuing feasts and gifts of venison to demonstrate the largesse and power of the aristocrat able to partake in this activity. The area available to be enclosed would have played an important part in the function of parks<sup>11</sup>. Some parks would appear to have been too small to provide sufficient space to hunt.



Figure 2: Stag Hunt  
([ripleyonline.com](http://ripleyonline.com))

### *Statement in the Landscape*

Many of the parks in England were close to great residences which possibly already had established hunting grounds. The larger Ashdown Forest was already an established hunting ground in the later 13<sup>th</sup> /early 14<sup>th</sup> century, but was there a suitably established residence commensurate with creating a very large deer park? One possibility is that any royal residence would have been in Maresfield, less than a mile from the southern boundary of the enclosed Forest<sup>12</sup>. It is also likely that Maresfield had a separate park and the two could have shared a common boundary. In the Duchy of Lancaster archives there is a record for making

<sup>10</sup> Mileson, S. 2009 'Parks in Medieval England' OUP.

<sup>11</sup> Mileson, S. 2009 *Parks in Medieval England* OUP

<sup>12</sup> Whittick, C. *Pers. Com.*

the new park pale of Maresfield in 1282. In 1381 a Warrant to the Warden of the Chace of Ashedon requests 12 bucks alive for the stocking of his park (Maresfield) by the Archbishop

of Canterbury. This confirms the theory that, not only was venison a valued gift, but also that live deer were a valuable commodity.

Enclosing an area meant that the landowner had greater freedom to manipulate the land to accommodate all aspects of hunting. This would have included coppices and undergrowth, woods, open launds (lawns) for deer grazing and hay meadows for winter feeds. There would also have to have been stock and breeding enclosures. Exploitation of other resources, timber and mineral rights, were also an important source of revenue and such ventures would have been easy to integrate within a hunting landscape. Parks, therefore, were constructed with care within or at the edges of forests and chases and integrated into a holistic system of land management.

The most visible element in the landscape would have been the park pale which was costly to build and maintain. It would have been a very dominant statement of power and ownership. The costs of maintenance and upkeep ensured that park-making was only ever a realistic opportunity for the really wealthy.

Parks served to advertise royal and seigniorial power to the surrounding communities. The manipulated hunting landscape meant that such parks would have been read as an expression of status by all those sections of society gaining access to them including the huntsmen, foresters, wardens, local people with common rights and even that thorny issue, the common poacher.

## *Conclusion*

The reasons why, when and how Ashdown was first enclosed, are complex, and deserve further research and interpretation at a later date. The contrasting explanations leave an apparent paradox as to the creation of a deer park within Ashdown Forest. It was an attempt to preserve and exploit valuable resources, but at the same time took this land effectively out of agriculture, even though the land was probably thought too poor to cultivate at this time. Large well-run parks could be fairly efficient producers of venison and park-based herds would have been important as the natural forest population dwindled. The sheer length of the prominent park boundaries must have provoked contemporary comment and the effect on local populations should not be underestimated. Ashdown deer park was a large one, 14,000 acres, and given the size enclosed, the wonderful variations in topography and ground cover would have presented a challenging and exciting terrain over which hunting and the chase could properly take place. It may well have been a very prestigious place in which to be



invited to hunt. Perhaps a mix of all of the above reasons contributed as to why and when it was enclosed, from conservation to hunting and a statement of power in the landscape.

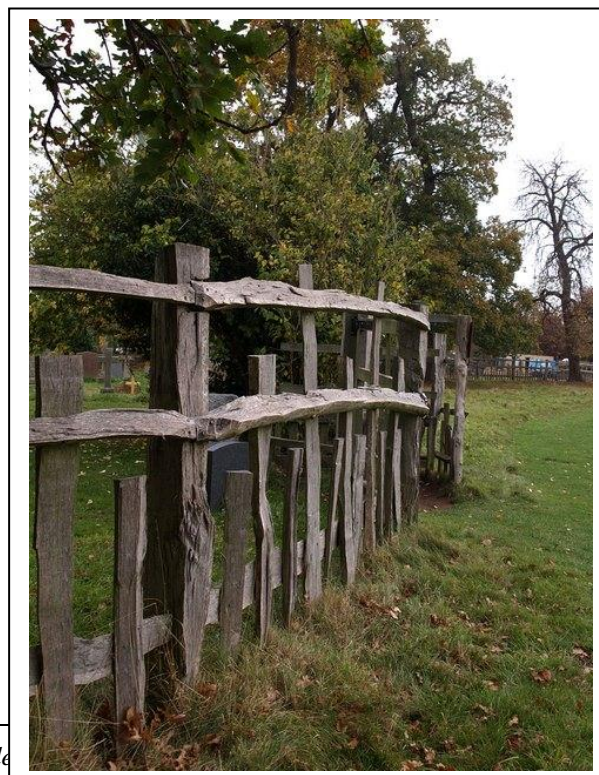
## 4 Defences

### 4.1 Park Pale

#### *Ditch, bank and fence*

The most obvious feature of a medieval park was that which defined its shape, the park pale. The initial construction of the park was extremely expensive and the layout necessitated careful planning. The basic requirements of the park designed with deer in mind, were shelter, fodder and drinking water, with a barrier to keep them within the park.

However, it must be emphasised that park pales are a deterrent to the passage of deer but not proof against it. At Charlecote in Warwickshire, where it is said that one of the most authentic park pales still exist, stags used to jump out for the rut and in again when they had had their fill of wild hinds. Pales were the most important feature of the park and were usually constructed of excavation ditches with the spoil from the ditch thrown up to create a bank. Along the top of the bank was a live, *i.e.* 'quick' hedge or a dead hedge. The former was made from quick growing hedge species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, etc. and the dead one was constructed from wood<sup>13</sup> (Fig. 3).



**Figure 3: Reconstruction of park pale at Charlecote**

(<http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/1568928>)

<sup>13</sup> Fletcher, J. 2011 *Garden*

Deer are able to jump up to six metres horizontally and three metres vertically, so the barrier to contain deer within the park had to be a formidable one<sup>14</sup>. This consists of a high bank to the outside and a deep ditch on the inside from which came the material to build the bank, which also acted as a further deterrent. Placed on top of the high bank was a palisade of cleft oak stakes which were closely spaced together; the word pale is derived from 'palisade' which is a fence made from wooden pointed stakes driven into the ground. From the documentary evidence found during this piece of research these timber palisades appear to have been composed of a number of different features, each having its own terminology; posts, rails and shores.

In some cases, an area of up to 5m - 7m outside the bank, called a free-board, was used to gain access to repair the pale fence. This had a dual purpose as deer that escaped from a park often tried to get back in and would be more clearly seen, or their tracks noted, on a clear free-board outside the fence<sup>15</sup>.

Enclosing a park was a costly undertaking and all early maps show deer parks as a simple continuous oval or circular area, e.g. Speed and Norden. It would have been easier to dig a bank and ditch that curved and the circumference would have been less than a rectangular or square park. A simple diagrammatic representation of a pointed wooden fence is shown in the map of Rotherfield, East Sussex (Fig. 4).



Figure 4 : Rotherfield Park Palings 1597  
(ESRO ACC 363/11 Reproduced with permission from East Sussex Record Office)

<sup>14</sup> Rackham, O. 1986 *The History of the Countryside* 1998 Phoenix

<sup>15</sup> Fletcher, J. 2011 *Gardens of Earthly Delight: The history of deer parks*. Windgather Press

Given the diverse nature of the terrain which an enclosed area such as Ashdown covered, the pale would have followed natural features and those who emparked such areas would have made good use of natural barriers. Steep slopes would have made it more difficult to run up

and then jump out. Boundaries included streams, where possible just within the park pale, providing a dual function as a water source for the animals but also as a further barrier to prevent them getting close enough to the boundary to get out. The incorporation of the water source and use of natural features are two important factors in park location, and therefore in locating the park pale<sup>16</sup>. This will be discussed later when tracing the pale of Ashdown.

When siting the pale boundary just below the crest of a steep slope, or at the break of slope, a fence may have proved to be the only necessary barrier<sup>17</sup>. A number of features pierced the boundary to provide access, into, and out of, the park. The most common were gates, the numbers of which varied. There would normally have been one or two main points of access with others providing access to those with rights for grazing, collecting firewood etc. On Ashdown Forest there were also hatches, a hatch being a high half-wicket gate with an open space above, crossed by a high bar to keep the deer from leaping out. The word hatch, a local Sussex name, is from the O.E. *haecc*, itself from an old Germanic word<sup>18</sup>. A hatch was generally used for access on foot, whereas a gate gave access for horses and carts.

The enclosure may also have been broken by 'deer-leaps', which enabled deer to enter the park but not escape from it. These varied in construction from a raised gap in the earth bank with a corresponding pit or hollow inside the bank, to stop deer from jumping out, to some kind of stone or wooden barrier. Deer leaps were more likely to be set up for enticing those deer that had escaped from the park back into it, rather than encouraging wild ones in. The leap may have incorporated some kind of fencing to funnel the deer walking round the fence line, trying to get back in<sup>19</sup>.

The setting up of this barrier would have been formidably expensive and also time consuming. In making a palisade, pales were driven into the ground and when an individual post rotted it could be replaced. There are references at Needwood Park to one officer who went daily round the park with hatchet and pale pins to replace pales that had blown down in the night<sup>20</sup>. So the maintenance was a constant factor in park management. However, no record has been found during the course of this study that details construction or repair to the ditch and bank; all records refer only to the mending or 'setting up' of the palisade fence. Although not a common Sussex name, the derivation of the name 'Palliser or Pallister', and other variations, is said to come from this occupation<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Moorhouse, S, 2007 ed Liddiard. *The Medieval Park* Windgather Press

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.le.ac.uk/lahs/downloads/cantorSmPagesfromvolumeXLVI-3.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Penn, R. 1984 *Portrait of Ashdown Forest*, Hale, London

<sup>19</sup> Fletcher, J. 2011 *Gardens of Earthly Delight: the history of deer parks*. Windgather Press

<sup>20</sup> [www.bahs.org.uk/40n2a2.pdf](http://www.bahs.org.uk/40n2a2.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.palliser.co.uk/origins.htm>

### *Living fences*

Occasionally the wooden fence was replaced by a living hedge, holly or a quickset hedge (planting live shoots of hawthorn, holly etc), or by a stone wall. In John Evelyn's 'Sylva'<sup>22</sup> he talks about holly '*Of this, might there living pales and enclosures be made, (such as the Right Honourable my Lord Dacre's, somewhere in Sussex, has a park almost environ'd with, able to keep in any game, as I am credibly inform'd) and cut into square hedges, it becomes impenetrable, and will thrive in hottest, as well as the coldest places*'. The park he refers to has been attributed to both Herstmonceux and Heathfield Park. It is interesting to note that Lord Dacre, George Neville, was Keeper of Ashdown Forest in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and perhaps he was responsible for planting some of the many holly hedges that still exist along the line where the pale once may have stood. It is said that deer prefer to be able to see where they are jumping to and an evergreen barrier would also act as a visual deterrent. The prevalence of holly that has colonised, in many places where the Ashdown Pale once may have stood, will be discussed later within this report.

Parks were of two kinds, uncompartmented, and accessible to the deer at all times and compartmented, with some separation between trees and grazing areas<sup>23</sup>. Some of these compartmented areas would have been used for stock raising, rabbit warrens and other types of land management. There is documentary evidence that Ashdown was divided early on its history into three separate areas, called wards. In the Duchy of Lancaster records for 1282 there is an entry for newly-erecting Pale in an area called Costley Ward. This may have been partly administrative as Ashdown was a large park with a very varied terrain. Within the park would be internal pales to either exclude the deer from certain areas, i.e. coppiced woodland, or to keep them within an area, e.g. for breeding purposes. Other internal features, including banks and hedges, may have been built into the landscape of the park to create managed spaces for hunting and different visual experiences<sup>24</sup>. As surviving earthworks the remnants of the pale normally appear as banks with an internal ditch.

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<sup>22</sup> Evelyn, J. Sylva vol. 1 (of 2) <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20778/20778-h/20778-h.htm>

<sup>23</sup> Rackham, O. 1986 *The History of the Countryside* 1998 Phoenix

<sup>24</sup> Creighton, O.H. 2009 *Designs Upon The Land*, The Boydell Press



## 5 Ashdown Forest Deer Park

### 5.1 Introduction

The name ‘Ashdown Forest’ can lead to some confusion. For this study ‘The Pale of Ashdown Forest’ refers to the park pale or boundary which enclosed that area which was essentially a deer park. This enclosed park was carved out of the wider area that was also known as Ashdown Forest, with variations on the spelling of the word Ashdown, namely Essendoun, Essendon, Asshedoune and others. What is thought of today as Ashdown Forest is the remains of the deer park of medieval times.

Early maps show it to be a roughly oval shape with a fence surrounding it. The Norden map of 1595 and Speed’s map of 1600 show three other parks, Buckhurst and Newnd (Newenham), which have a common boundary with Ashdown, whilst the third, Maresfield, is a separate park a little to the south of Ashdown<sup>25</sup>(Figs 5-6).



Figure 5: Norden 1595



Figure 6: Speed 1610

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.envf.port.ac.uk/geo/research/historical/webmap/sussexmap/sussex.html>

## 5.2 Geology, Soils and Topography

Ashdown Forest lies in the High Weald AONB astride the main watershed of the central weald, with the northern slopes draining into the tributaries of the Medway and the southern slopes draining into the tributaries of the Ouse. The high ground of Ashdown Forest is underlain by the relatively less resistant Ashdown Beds of silts and clays, interbedded with harder siltstones and mudstones. In places, outcrops of Wadhurst Clay consist of mudstones, shale, shelly limestone and nodular and tabular ironstones. A band of Lower Tunbridge Wells sandstone is overlain by massive and hard sandstone<sup>26</sup>.

The underlying geology led to the formation of poorer quality soils generally unfit for any intensive agricultural purpose. Put simply, soil derived from a sandstone rock is free draining, acidic, warm and very infertile. Soils derived from Wadhurst Clays are colder, wetter and more fertile. Sandstone supports heathland and the clay supports mixed woodland<sup>27</sup>.

The underlying geology gives rise to a very varied landscape of steeply sloping land, river valleys, and high ground, some of the highest in Sussex. The roughly heart-shaped deer park of Ashdown was strongly influenced by the underlying geology.

## 5.3 Geographical limits of the Forest

### *Early origins*

The area known as Ashdown Forest today was once part of a much larger area of forest, of which the Venerable Bede wrote in 793, as being '*thick and inaccessible; a place of retreat for large herds of deer and swine*'. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, in AD 893, described the area as extending 120 miles from east to west and 30 miles from north to south. This was the great forest of Anderida or Andred's Weald<sup>28</sup>. This has always led to the popular perception that the area was heavily forested. It is more likely though, that there were some open areas where wild animals had cleared the ground through grazing and that there was a mixture of open heathland, mixed scrub woodland and denser beech and oak woodland on the clay soils.

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<sup>26</sup> Robinson, D & Williams, R. 1984 *Classic Landforms of the Weald*. Geographical Association

<sup>27</sup> Marrable, C & Muggeridge, N. 1998 *Information on Ashdown Forest* Danewood Press

<sup>28</sup> Christian, G. 1967 *Ashdown Forest*. Farncombe and Co.

## Medieval

After the Norman Conquest the Forest, known then as Pevensey Forest, came within the Rape of Pevensey and was granted to the Earl of Mortain. It is obvious that at this time various surrounding manors had certain rights within the Forest which included herbage for cattle, pannage for hogs and the removal of timber and stone for building materials. Some of these manors existed on the better quality land which surrounded the Forest. Their location would have been an important factor in defining the limits of the land which was to become impaled and which was to become known as the historic Ashdown Forest before the late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

A survey carried out for the Crown in 1273<sup>29</sup> listed 208 customary tenants living on the edge of the Forest entitled to take all windfall wood within their 'communia', except where the wind had torn it up by the roots. In this case, it belonged to the king. Commoners could also let all the swine they could support themselves in winter, forage in the Forest. There are also many records of pannage and grazing rights for the land within the enclosed park. This included such important landowners as Michelham Priory, which had the right to run 60 cows and a bull in the Forest. Whether these activities took place within the deer park is not clear.

### 5.4 Limits of the Deer Park

The area of the Forest that was enclosed to make the deer park was a large one, estimated to be about 14,000 - 15,000 acres. There has been some discussion as to whether the original boundary of the pale was different to that which we perceive today. This perception of the boundary has come from several sources; The Books of Commission in 1539<sup>30</sup> and a survey by Edmund Tynhoe in 1564<sup>31</sup>, in which he delineates the ward and walk divisions from which later maps were drawn. Very detailed information was provided for the geographical limits and the state and condition of the pale, hatches, gates and lodges in the Commissioner's Surveys of 1650 and 1658 which were subject to an article in SAC<sup>32</sup>. Further details are provided by the Whitpaine and Shoebridge map of 1693<sup>33</sup> (Fig. 7) and Kelton's map of 1744<sup>34</sup> (Fig. 8). Variations on these maps provided the illustrations for later works on Forest boundaries such as The Parliamentary Surveys of Ashdown Forest - Topographical Details, by Ivan Margary (Fig. 9). Not all gates or hatches were marked on the maps, the reason for which is unknown.

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<sup>29</sup> Brandon, P. 1963 *The Common Wastes of Sussex*. Unpublished thesis held by Sussex Archaeological Society

<sup>30</sup> Raper Case Notes, volume 1 (1234-1609)

<sup>31</sup> Survey of Ashdown Forest by Edmund Twynhoe, 1564, PRO DL/42/122

<sup>32</sup> Commissioner's Surveys, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 23 & 24

<sup>33</sup> Whitpaine and Shoebridge 1683, ESRO AMS4084/1

<sup>34</sup> Kelton, 1747, Ashdown Forest Centre





**Map attached to Decree of 1694  
derived from Commissioners report**

(ESRO AMS 4084)

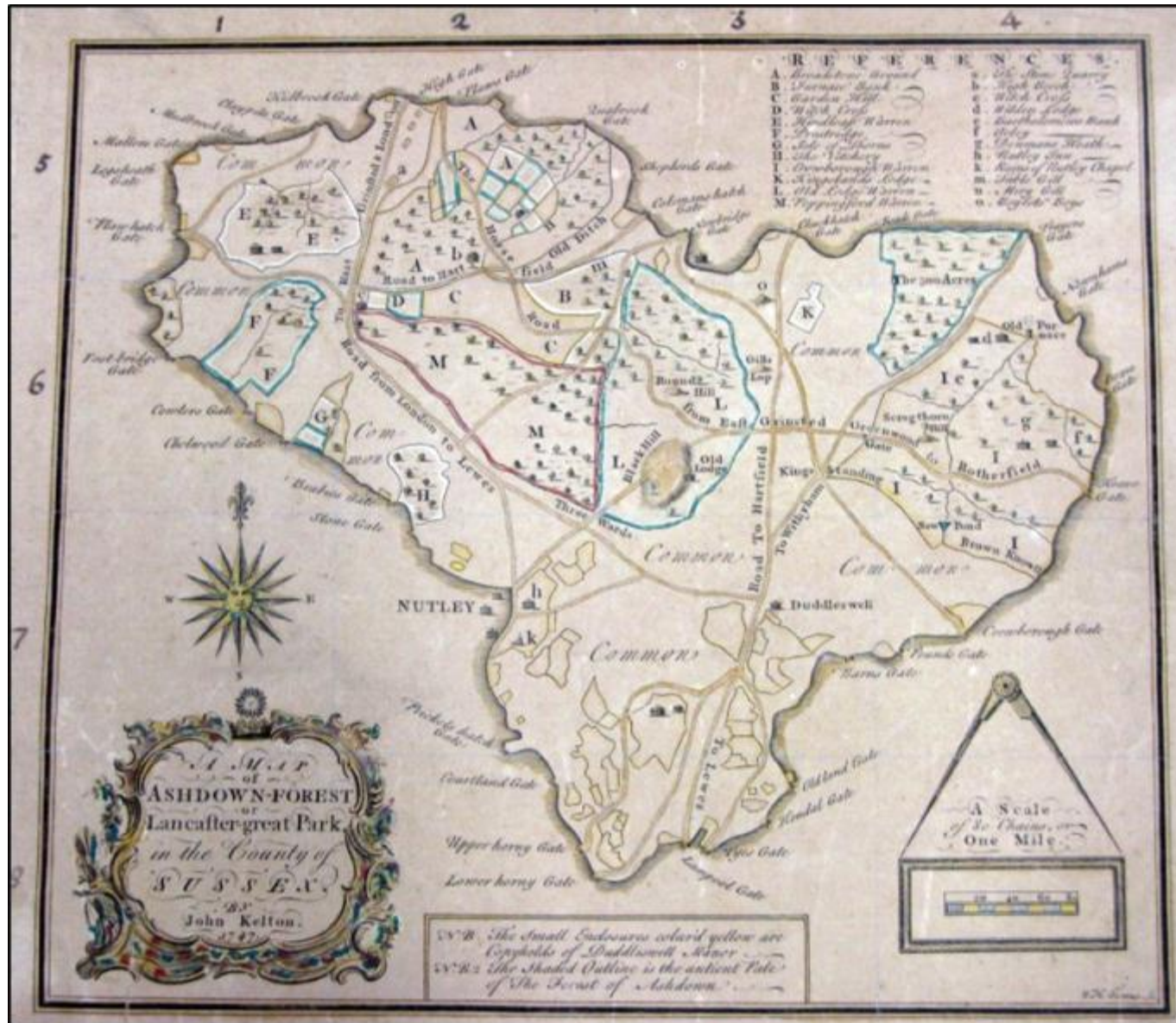


Figure 8:

Map after Kelton's 1744  
Map of Ashdown Forest

AMS/4084

This map copy for  
reproduction dated 1747

Reproduced by kind  
permission of Ashdown  
Forest



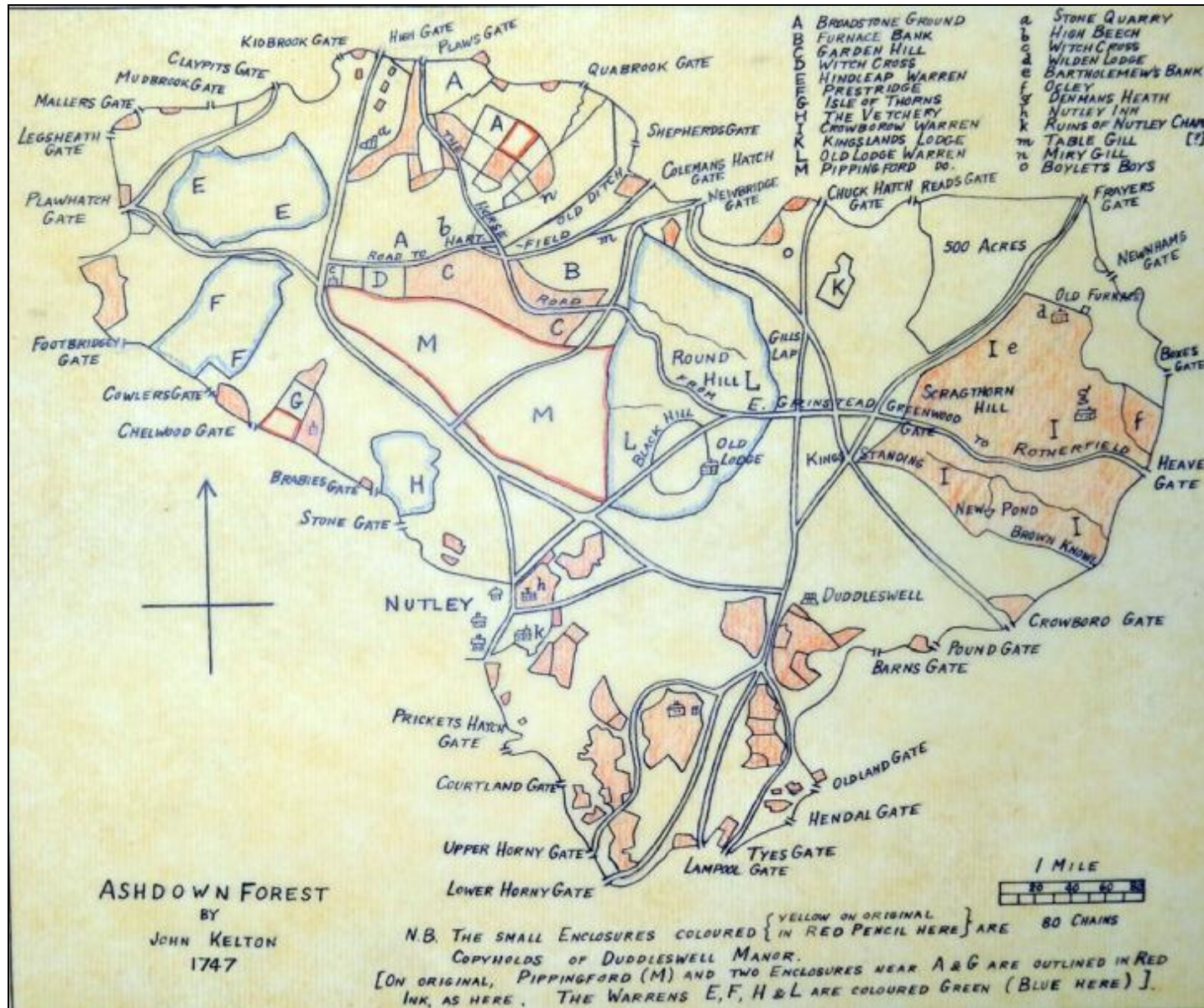


Figure 9:  
Amended map originally by  
Kelton

Map from SAS archives  
probably for article in  
Sussex Archaeological  
Collections by Ivan Margary

## 5.5 When was it built?

It is not clear when Ashdown Forest became a defined entity within the larger Forest of Andred and became known as Essessdone. The name was referred to in the period II00-II30 when Henry I granted monks a right to use a road crossing the area, a right which had been in place since the reign of William the Conqueror. Although periodically held by the king, Ashdown was a chase at this time, an unenclosed area of woodland and open pasture, subject to common law<sup>35</sup>. A key future research question would be the examination of this unenclosed chase, which appears to date back to at least the early post-conquest period. The chase was granted to various noble families, with periodic reversions to the king in times of forfeiture, until it passed in 1362 to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and was subsequently called the 'Great Park of Lancaster'. Prior to this, it was held by Gilbert de Aquila, the lord of Pevensey Rape and founder of Michelham Priory, who died between 1230 and 1235. In 1246 the land was transferred to Peter of Savoy, uncle of Queen Eleanor, wife of Henry III. Peter of Savoy died in 1268<sup>36</sup>. It may have been he who first enclosed the smaller area within the Forest which became known later as Lancaster Great Park under John of Gaunt's ownership. This is a reasonable assumption, as the first reference to enclosure comes in 1273 and repair to the 'old Pale' in 1282.

This first record of an enclosed park appeared in 1273 when the service of 'claustra' or enclosure was recorded in the custumal of that year<sup>37</sup>. In 1283 the Forest was described as the 'free chase and warren of Essendon'<sup>38</sup>. When it was granted to John of Gaunt in 1372 it was also called a chase, but in the same year he spoke of it as 'nostre park de Asshedoune'<sup>39</sup>. John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, was the greatest landowner after the king and in the 1370's possessed at least 46 parks<sup>40</sup>. Ashdown Forest was only one of his many park possessions. It was also known as 'Great Park of Lancaster' or 'Lancaster Great Park'. In summary, despite an apparently inconsistent use of nomenclature, an enclosed park was created around or by 1273.

Early on, the park was divided into three wards, Westwarde, Costley and South Ward, originally called Waldhatch, Heselwolde and Lampole. Later on these were further subdivided into more wards. In 1282 there is a record of newly erecting a Pale in what was Costley Ward. It has not been possible to ascertain whether these wards had physical internal boundaries that also acted as deer proof fences. They may have been administrative only, as the area was too large to effectively manage as one entity. The ward boundaries have been traced on the ground from the written evidence of the parliamentary surveys. They largely followed the internal streams within the Forest, on low ground (Fig. 10).

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<sup>35</sup> Irons, J. Unpublished Thesis held by Sussex Archaeological Society

<sup>36</sup> C. Whittick *Pers.com*.

<sup>37</sup> P.R.O. SC 12/1546

<sup>38</sup> P.R.O. Cal.Pat.R. 1283,96

<sup>39</sup> Brandon, P. 1963, *The Common Wastes of Sussex*. Unpublished thesis held by Sussex Archaeological Society

<sup>40</sup> Mileson, S. 2007 *The Medieval Park* ed. Liddiard, R. Windgather





**Figure 10: Ward divisions and some gates in Ashdown Forest**  
(Reproduced by kind permission of Sussex Archaeological Society)

## 5.6 Location of the Pale

The area known as Essendon Forest was, in early medieval times, largely forested, albeit with some clearings, over which hunting took place. However, some of the land on the lower lying areas, and better quality land, had already been enclosed and cleared for cultivation. This is an important point, given that enclosing ‘negative space’, i.e. land left over from previous claimants, created the park, unlike the act of primarily enclosing an area of choice. Certain people had been given the right to live in the area and had common rights in the Forest. This area included the principal royal manors of Duddleswell and Maresfield, Buckhurst Park, Oldlands in the east, and land belonging to Michelham Priory which included Chelwood Vachery and Dalingridge lands.

The pale therefore had to respect those early enclosed areas and this may be one important reason for its meandering physical boundary. There is potential for historic landscape and archaeological evidence to contribute to this debate. The other important consideration would be topographical, taking into account the hilly nature of the terrain and the various watercourses. It would also have to respect some of the already well-established routeways, and possibly also some existing administrative boundaries. There was an outer ring of commons, adjacent to but beyond the pale, which, working clockwise, were the commons of

Forest Row, Quabrook Common, Coleman's Hatch and Chuckhatch Greens, Crowborough, Five Ash, Horney, Pilt Down, Mallingdown, Lampole, and Bunts, Grove Commons and the northern side of Chelwood Common and Stumble Common<sup>41</sup>. It is impossible to tell, however, whether these were commons at the time of enclosure or were created as a result of it. It might be the case that the commons were left unenclosed for use by local people who had common rights over the Forest but weren't necessarily welcome within the enclosed areas.. This would have determined the course of the Pale over large areas of its length.

## 5.7 Original boundary

Is the boundary recorded some three hundred years after its creation the same as the original boundary? This is a difficult question to answer, but given the enormous amount of effort taken to build the ditch and bank in the first place, is it likely that it changed much over time? If it did, it has left no physical evidence on the ground that has yet been found. From an extensive study of a variety of maps over a long period of time there is no good map evidence to suggest another, earlier park boundary.

However, the exceptions to this could be 9 acres at Newbridge Furnace and 14 acres of Newenham Park (opposite Poundgate) in the east, where land that had been taken and inclosed out of the Great Park of Lancaster was recorded in the Commissioner's Surveys of 1650<sup>42</sup>. In these instances it could be assumed that the park pale once included the land on which Newbridge Furnace and Newenham Park once stood. It was inferred that there was a separate park at Newenham, in which case there may be a common boundary between the two parks.

## 5.8 Physical properties of the Pale of Ashdown

### *Length and Size*

The area of the enclosed Forest within the pale of Ashdown is a large one, estimated to be around 14,000 acres or 5,665 hectares in the lengthy surveys undertaken in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Using GIS mapping today, the area of the enclosed park is around 13,477 acres, with a perimeter length of 37,540 metres (around 23 miles).

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<sup>41</sup> Brandon, P. 1963, *The Common Wastes of Sussex*. Unpublished thesis held by Sussex Archaeological Society

<sup>42</sup> Daniel-Tyssen, 1923, 'The Parliamentary Surveys of the County of Sussex', *Sussex Archaeological Collections* **23** pp216-313

From written detail taken from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century surveys, there are many gates and hatches which are approximately between 1-2 miles apart. The number of gates, and their names, do vary between the surveys. Some of this was due to inconsistent and probably phonetical spelling differences and the fact that some gates went out of use and, sometimes, new ones were inserted.

### *Cost*

Accounts from the Archbishop of Canterbury's park at Mayfield in 1394 mention that 10 carpenters were paid 8s 4d (*£201 in 21<sup>st</sup> century currency*) to repair a damaged part of the park paling (pailicci) and another 14 men paid 10s 6d (*£253 in 21<sup>st</sup> century currency*) for working 3 days to raise many palings blown down by the wind. In a very understandable form of Latin, the contemporary terms for post and rail fencing in 1456 was **paliciis postis et railiis** and at this time it cost 6s (*£157 in 21<sup>st</sup> century currency*) for 2,200 posts and rails<sup>43</sup>. Currency conversion is calculated using the National Archives currency converter, current figures in brackets and italics<sup>44</sup>.

These accounts nicely confirm that the fencing atop the pale was post and rail; from a map of Rotherfield the fencing is shown to be closely set and pointed. However, no record of actually digging or maintaining the ditch and bank has been found, but presumably once dug these needed less maintenance than the post and rail fencing. The majority of the cost of repairs was to the fencing.

In the historical records relating to Ashdown Forest and its pale there are accounts for costing the work on the pale and the need for post, rails, and shores and to the setting up of the pale. It is from these Duchy of Lancaster records, transcribed for, or by, William Augustus Raper during the Ashdown Forest Dispute of 1878, that we get find the first records of the Pale existing, of repairs to it and the costs involved, as well as many other records of activities within the Forest.

In 1282 the cost of newly erecting pale in Costell ward was 21s (£531) for three quarentena, equivalent to one furlong. The cost of repairing the pale, in different places, was 5s (*£126*) and for 5 poundfold to be repaired cost 4s (*£101*). Presumably a poundfold was an enclosure in which to keep animals<sup>45</sup>. It was customary to meet the costs of impaling by selling the dead wood and birch as firewood to meet the costs of impaling. In 1282 £1,520 was raised to meet those costs.

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<sup>43</sup> ED 695 1394 & ED1302 1498-5-6 Lambeth Palace Library

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency/results.asp#mid>

<sup>45</sup> Raper Papers



This period, of the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, seems a busy one for repairs to the pale but may reflect both what Raper translated at the time he was looking through the records and how he translated them. He probably did not translate everything. (During the Ashdown Forest dispute in 1876-1872, Raper investigated the rights of common claimed by the inhabitants of certain tenements round the forest, which conflicted with the interests of the owners of the land who wished to enclose their lands. He was therefore primarily concentrating more on these rights in the Duchy of Lancaster documents). In 1283-84 there is a record for the cost of Wall and Pale which seems to imply that a wall was built at a cost of £2,233 and seven miles of pale made around the Forest at a cost of £1,771. There is a separate entry for the old pale of the park to be repaired at a cost of £303 and for three gates to be repaired, as well as reference to one mile of new pale made in the park of Maresfield, obviously a separate park, which cost £151 for only little over 100 yards.

## 5.9 State of repair and effectiveness of boundary

The Duchy of Lancaster records list, at times, the condition of the pale and whether it needed repairing, and once again, wood from the Forest was sold to provide towards the cost of repair. In 1401 a sum of £40.00-worth of wood was sold out of the 'Chace of Ashendon and expend the same in the repair of the fence of that Chace and of the ponds of Maresfield'. £40.00 is equivalent to £17,890 today; maintaining this park did not get cheaper with time. It is from these records that we find that there a separate park existed at Maresfield.

In 1419 the pale in Westwardes was broken down and totally decayed, as were five wooded gates, to the extent that 'all the Kings beasts' escaped. In 1521, in the reign of Henry VIII, a warrant was issued for the 'Forest of Ashdown to be new enclosed with Pale'. It is likely that the new palisade fence just replaced the line of the old one, along the top of the bank. The records also list forester's wages, the cost of building, repairing and sometimes removing the lodges.

The first known surveys of Ashdown Forest by the (King's) Commissioners took place in 1539. They obviously took a perambulation of the boundary of the Forest, and therefore the line of the Pale, giving detailed reports of its effectiveness as a boundary. The surveys go from gate to gate; often giving the mileage between these gates and thus giving us a geographical fix and location for the gates set within the boundary. From these records we can tell that in 1539 some oaks were felled, the bodies of which went to repair the pale and the tops to make charcoal.

The survey gives detailed descriptions of whose land it passes by and in some cases important landmarks. At Nutley the pale ‘passes by the lands of one Anthony Hamlen to Milbrooke towards the west by the lands in the tenure of John Hamblenden and by Nutley Mill...Stonegate and to Chelwood Common’. The reference to Milbrooke and Nutley Mill is interesting as any physical evidence today for the pale is totally lacking from Nutley to the Vachery.

## 5.10 Gates

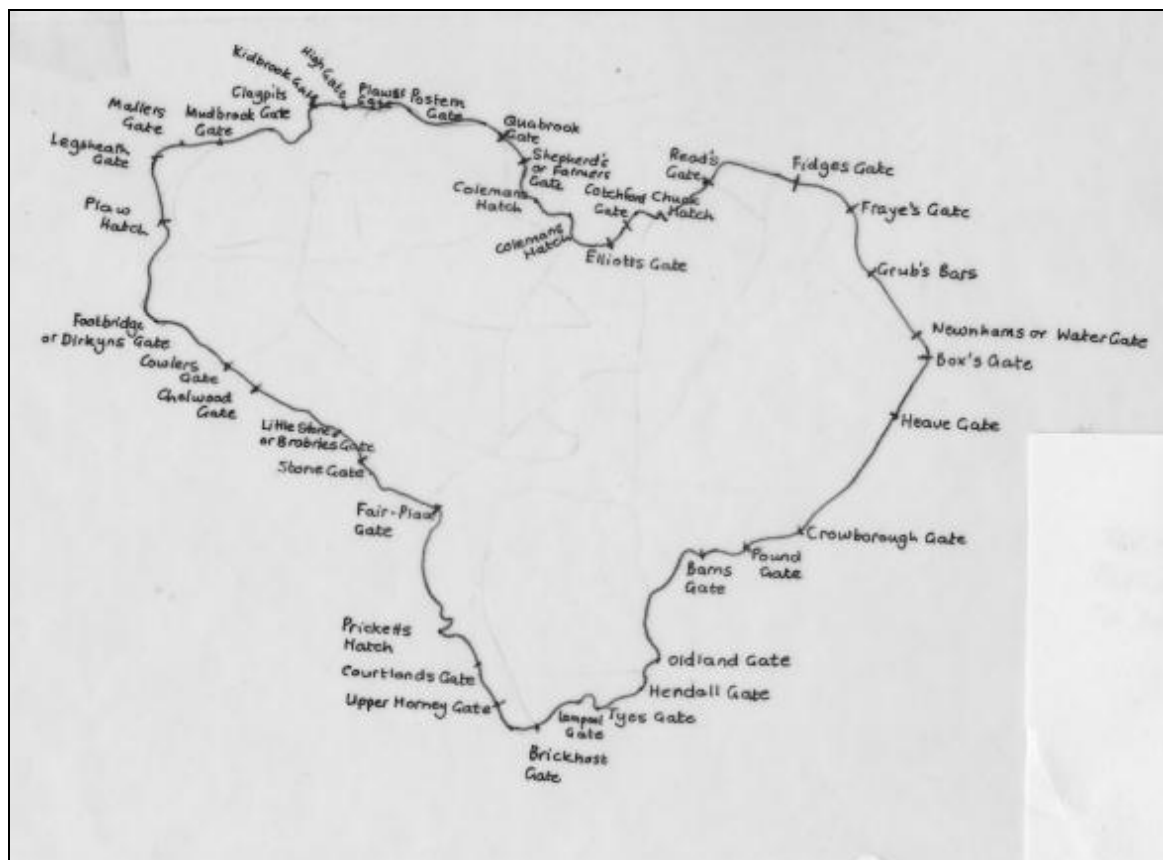


Figure 11: Gate and Hatch locations

The following table lists the Information taken from Books of Commission, Duchy of Lancaster Class III & IV 20/05/1539 (transcribed by E. Raper 1878).

**Table 1 Gates, distances and state of repair of Pale in 1539**  
(Anti-clockwise round the Forest starting from the southern entrance to the Forest)

From	To	Distance	State of repair /comment
Nutley Strete	Hervey Gate	About a mile	Great decay
Hervey Gate	Brykhorst Gate	About a mile	Fairly good repair in some places to be amended
Brykhorst Gate	Maresfield Gate	Space of a mile	Layed to the ground, must be newly set up with new posts and rails
Maresfield Gate	Crowborough Gate <sup>1</sup>	Estimation 2 miles	For lack of posts and rails is laid to the ground in great decay and the deer escape never to return
Fysshepen Brook	Newnham Gate	2 miles	Reasonable state except for a few pales to be replaced
Newenham Gate Or Watergate	Friar's Gate	1 mile	Pale laid to the ground for lack of posts, rails and shores but those on ground could be re used but elsewhere newly mended
Friar's Gate	Redes Gate to Chuckhatch Gate	2 miles +	New gate and pales or mended
Chuck Hatch	? Herse Gate		Gate clearly decayed
? Herse Gate	Newbridge brook	1 mile	New set railed and in places to be new paled
Newbridge to Hartfield Gate	Coleman's Hatch	1 mile	Newly set, paled, posted, railed and both gates to be repaired
Coleman's Hatch	Quabrook/Plaws Hatch	2 miles	Reasonably good repair save for 20-30 rods to be new paled, set up and other places to be repaired
Plaws Hatch	High Gate		
High Gate	Kydbrook Gate- Legge Gate		In these last three sections the pale is in great ruin and decay. The red and fallow deer break out of this ward, into the surrounding wood pastures. <sup>2</sup>
Legge Gate	Plaws Hatch	½ mile+	Almost lain to ground for lack of post , rails and shores, some new pales but some older ones can be re used <sup>3</sup>
Plaws Hatch	Paynes Corner	1 mile	Deer house next to Plaw Hatch must be new sett and more post and rails <sup>4</sup>
Paynes Corner	Calkett Gate	1 mile	New set and pale for the safeguard of the King's deer there
Calkett Gate	Chelworth Gate	1 good mile	Must be new sett <sup>5</sup> and in some places newly paled
Chelworth Gate	Vachery	1 mile	Reasonable and newly repaired
Vachery	Nutley	1 ½ mile	In diverse and sundry places new paled

1. This account seems to miss out a few gates here (see maps).
2. This is interesting because it gives an indication that at this time, 1539, the Forest was divided, not only into wards but those wards contained deer pastures.
3. The records indicate that the pales (cleft oak stakes) were not always rotted but were in re-useable condition and in good enough condition to be used again. In the documentary records there are accounts of the pale being deliberately pulled out of the ground. Perhaps it was a step too far to carry off the stakes for other purposes.
4. A deer house next to the gate had its own fencing and gives some indication of deer management. A deer house supplied a place in which the deer could be fed and sheltered and in some parks a deer house provided accommodation for hunting parties.
5. The word set or sett is here used to indicate the physical setting up of the entire fence. The posts would have had to be 'set' in the ground to at least a third of their length and packed with stabilising materials, possibly gravel or small stones. Today concrete would be used. The shores must have been the angled pieces of wood that provided greater stability.

## 5.11 Table 2 Boundary of Pale, Gate and Hatch Location

Taken from surveys and maps

(Clockwise round the Forest perimeter starting in the west)

1564 (survey)	1656-8 (survey)	1693 Map (Fig. 6)	1744 Map (Fig. 7)	2011 (place name)	Meaning
Plawhatch Gate	Plawhatch Gate	Plawhatch Gate	Plawhatch Gate	Plaw Hatch Lane	O.E plega to Play name Leggy or Legge
Legsheath Gate	Legsheath	Lagsheath Gate	Legsheath Gate	Legsheath Lane	
Mallers Gate		Malles Gate	Mallers Gate	See map 26	
Mudbrooks Gate <sup>1</sup>	Mudbrooke	Mudbrooks Gate	Mudbrook Gate	See map 26 <b>Priors Hatch Farm</b>	
Claypits Gate		Claypits Gate	Clay-Pits Gate		Large quarries
Kidbrook Gate	Kittbrooke	Kidsbrooke Gate	Kidbrook Gate	Kidbrook	Keterbrokebregge later Kid Brook
High Gate	Highgate	High Gate	High Gate	Highgate	High point, exit north end
Plaws Gate		Plaws Gate	Plaws Gate	(not found)	
Postern	Postern			(not found)	
					bog baulk or plank over boggy ground
Quabrook Farmers or Shepherds Gate		Qwabrook Gate	Quabrook Gate	Quabrook	
		Shepherds Gate	Shepherds Gate	(not found)	
					? Derivation from making charcoal='coles'
Coleman's Hatch Gate	Coleman's Hatch	Coleman's Hatch Gate	Coleman's Hatch Gate	<b>Coleman's Hatch</b>	
Newbridge Gate	Newbridge Gate	Newbridge Gate	Newbridge Gate	Newbridge	
Elliot's Gate <sup>2</sup>				See map 25	
Cotchford Gate				(See map 25	
Chuck Hatch Gate	Chuckhatch Gate	Chuck Hatch Gate	Chuck Hatch Gate	<b>Chuck Hatch</b>	form of self- closing gate
Reades Gate	Reades Gate	Reades Gate	Reads Gate	See map 25	
	Buckhurst Parke				
Frayers Gate	Ffrayes Gate	Frayers Gate	Frayers Gate	<b>Friars Gate</b>	corruption of Fray
Grubbs Gate	Grubbs				
Boxes	Boxes	Boxes Gate	Boxes Gate	(not found)	
Heave Gate	Heave	Heave Gate	Heave Gate	Heavegate Road	
Crowburrough Gate	Crowborrow Gate To Newnham Pike	Crowburrough Gate	Crowburrough Gate	Crow and Gate Pub	
					originally animal enclosure here
Pound Gate	Pound Gate	Pound Gate	Pound Gate	Poundgate	
Barns Gate	Barnsgate	Barns Gate	Barns Gate	Barnsgate	
Oldlands Gate	Oldlands	Oldlands Gate	Oldlands Gate	Oldlands Lane	Eldelond in 1219
Hendal Gate	Hendal	Hendale Gate	Hendal Gate	Hendall Wood	Hinds valley
				location today Nursery Lane	
Tyes Gate <sup>3</sup>	Tyes Gate	Tyes Gate	Tyes Gate		
Lampool Gate <sup>4</sup>	Lampert Gate Lampert Gate to White Horse Pond	Lam pool Gate	Lampool Gate	Lampool Farm	loamy pool
Brikhouse Gate				Not found	

1564 (survey)	1656-8 (survey)	1693 Map (Fig. 6)	1744 Map (Fig. 7)	2011 (place name)	Meaning
Lower Horney Gate	White Horse Pond to Harney Common	Lower Horney Gate	Lower Horny Gate	Horney Common	Forest enclosure
Upper Horney Gate	(Horney Gate)	Upper Horney Gate	Upper Horny Gate	Horney Common	in corner of land
Courtland Gate	Courtland’s Gate	Courtland Gate	Courtland Gate	Courtland Wood	Courtelande
Pricketts Hatch Gate	Pricketts Hatch to Millbrooke	Pricketts Hatch Gate	Pricketts Hatch Gate	Pricketts Hatch	young deer or forester
Stone Gate	Millbrook to Nutley Mill to Stonegate to Little Stonegate	Stone Gate	not finished on map	<i>either side of Chelwood Vachery</i> <i>either side of Chelwood Vachery</i>	large stone quarry nearby
Brabies Gate		Brabeshatch	Brabies		
Chelwood	Chelwood Gate Pikehurst Church Gill to Coolers	Churwood Gate	Chelwood Gate	Chelwood Gate	Ceola's enclosure possible
Cowlers or Collyers Gate	Gate	Gowlers Gate		(not found)	reference to charcoal making
Footbridge, Fudbridge or Dirkyens	Coolers to Stumbutt Common	Fudbridge Gate	Footbridge Gate	Tudbridge Gate	
	Dallingridge Gate to Plaw Hatch			Dallingridge	Dallingridge family name
<i>Hatch from haece</i>	<i>Hatches had an upper and lower division lower for passage of people on foot, upper to prevent deer escaping</i>				
<sup>1</sup> Mudbrookes now a footbridge over stream in woodland with hollow way leading down to it					
<sup>2</sup> Good example of forgotten gate and stretch of pale found in Steppey Lane, between Newbridge and Chuck Hatch					
<sup>3</sup> Forgotten gate on Nursery Lane, Maresfield, minor road, pale extant either side of road					

The variation in place names is sometimes down to mistakes in transcription by the Commissioners and just a change in spelling over time. Some gates went out of use early, as in Brikhouse/Brikhost gate at or near the southern entrance to the Forest, and Stonegate near Chelwood Vachery. Some of the hatches and gates are reflected in place-name locations today, as in Chuck Hatch, Pricketts Hatch, Chelwood Gate and Coleman's Hatch.

From these detailed records there are a few tantalising glimpses of how the large enclosed area within the park was managed. The Forest was divided into wards with many sub-divisions, walks and lodges, the detailed explanation of which is beyond the scope of this study. We know that there were separate deer pastures because the deer were recorded as having escaped into the surrounding wood pasture. There were deer houses next to gates and the Commissioners record that domesticated beasts found illegally within the pale were rounded up and impounded before being taken out of the park. There must have been pounds into which these beasts were rounded up and held. Some of the surviving place names, Prickett's Hatch, Poundgate and Hindleap Warren, may indicate this use of land.

## 5.12 Deliberate damage and eventual failure of the Pale of Ashdown

Later in the Court Rolls of Duddleswell (1588-1592, transcribed in the Raper Papers), the misdemeanours of individuals are recorded as deliberately damaging the pale. This gives an indication that the pales were fixed into panels rather than individually set, which is different to early accounts whereby the pales were individual stakes just set into the ground. One Thomas Johnson not only pulled up various pales in the southernmost part of the park, by Brickhouse gate, which was also in ruins, but he also felled beeches in the forest for his own use. Others cut their own access points into the pale, where there had been none before. '*John Finculle made a new gate out of Dalingridge, where there was none*'. This goes some way to explaining the additions, and losses, of the various gates over time.

In 1607 the pales of the Forest in various places were once again reported to be in ruins and that the '*king ought to repair them*'. A John Langworth had even managed to '*stop up the king's highway*' next to Brickest Gate, by pulling up the pales there.

Finally, Ashdown Forest was no longer able to exist as an enclosed deer park. In 1662-1663 '*Ashdown and Broyle Park have been laid waste, the deer and other beasts killed and the fences pulled down in the late distractions (the Civil War) and the king has disafforested Ashdown Forest*'<sup>46</sup>.

## 5.13 Conclusion

Together, these accounts can give us a good picture of not only the location of the pale but of how, and from what, it was built and its component parts, the posts and shores of oaks, with rails, sometime of oak, but latterly maybe of beech. Whilst the main trunk of the oak was used for the fence construction, nothing was wasted and the tops were sometimes used in the making of charcoal. Later, in 1559, beeches were being felled for both the rails and firewood and oaks were felled for posts and shores. Little mention is ever made of the ditch and bank but we have to assume that it needed less maintenance, or the repair to this was not recorded as much as the need for expensive wood to replace the palisade fence atop the bank. The deer park eventually came to a sad end during the English Civil War (1642-1651) when the physical fences were broken down either deliberately or through natural decay and were no longer repaired. Afterwards, economic change was afoot and fashion for this type of deer park was no longer in favour; concerted efforts to enclose smaller parcels of land within the deer park, for agricultural improvements, were made.

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<sup>46</sup> ESRO GLY/3162 1662-1663



## 6 How Desktop Research Related to Fieldwork

### 6.1 Early OS Maps

In some areas it was difficult to see where the pale still might exist today, or where it once ran, especially in the more built up areas. The 1<sup>st</sup> Edition surveyor's drafts (circa 1813) were consulted and in some areas, for example around Crowborough, it was evident that some very strong physical boundaries still existed at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which had later been largely built over in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This boundary could be traced northwards through the army camp at Crowborough and through the suburbs of Crowborough over part of what used to be Crowborough Common. This evidence was used to back up the boundary drawn from documentary evidence (Fig. 12).

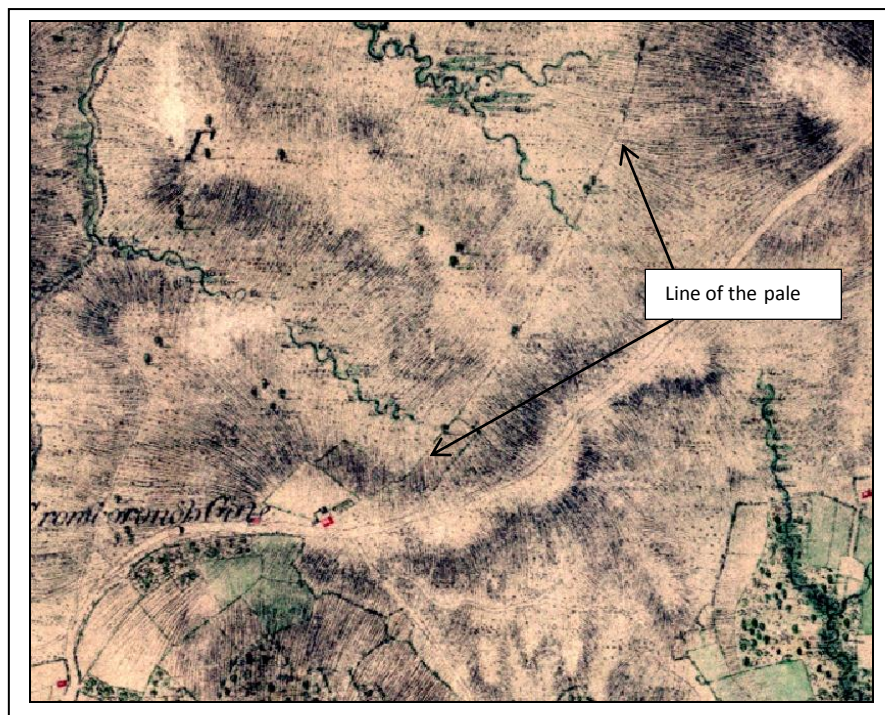
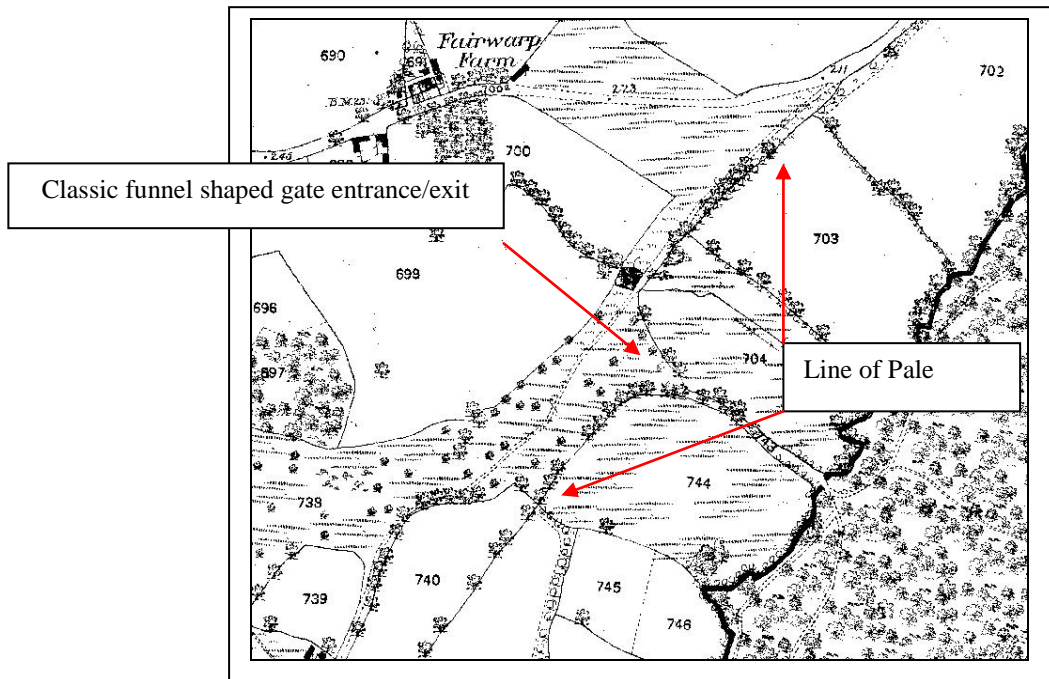


Figure 12: 1813 map of Crowborough Common area

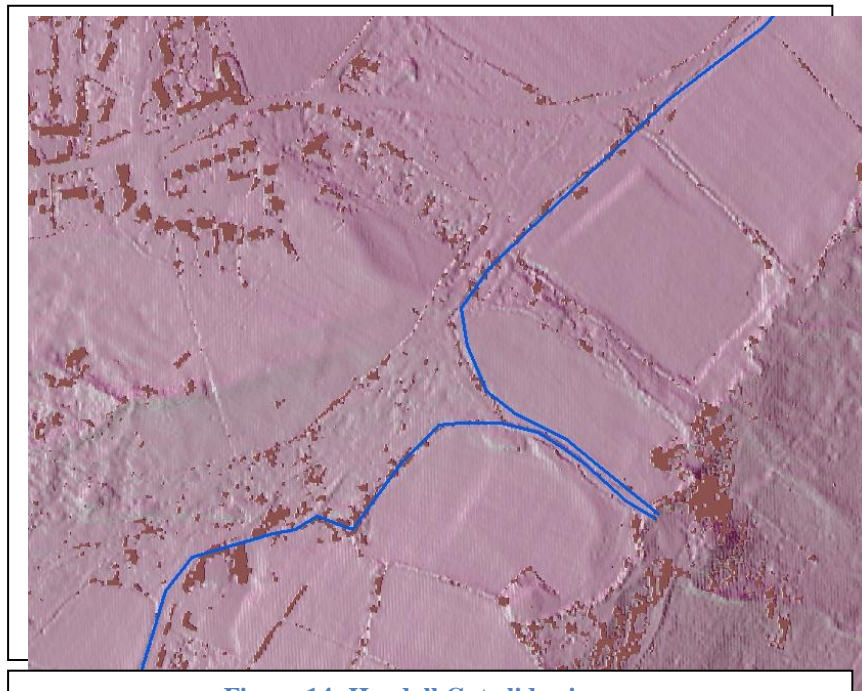
Some of the named hatches or gates, now no longer mapped, were located during the field survey, for example, Hendall Gate (Fairwarp) and Mudbrookes (Legsheat), in woodland with hollow ways leading to or from them. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition OS map, although Hendall Gate is not marked as such, it can be seen on the map with a classic 'funnel shape' at the entrance to the Forest. This is still evident in many other places around the Forest at some of the more minor road junctions. This widening-out of the entrance could not only be due to herding animals, funnelling them out of the Forest, but also as a result of increased footfall at this



point. Locating these gates was very important as it verified that even small remnants of ditch and bank in these locations were likely to part of the pale (Fig. 13-14).



**Figure 13: Hendall Gate 1st Edition OS Map**



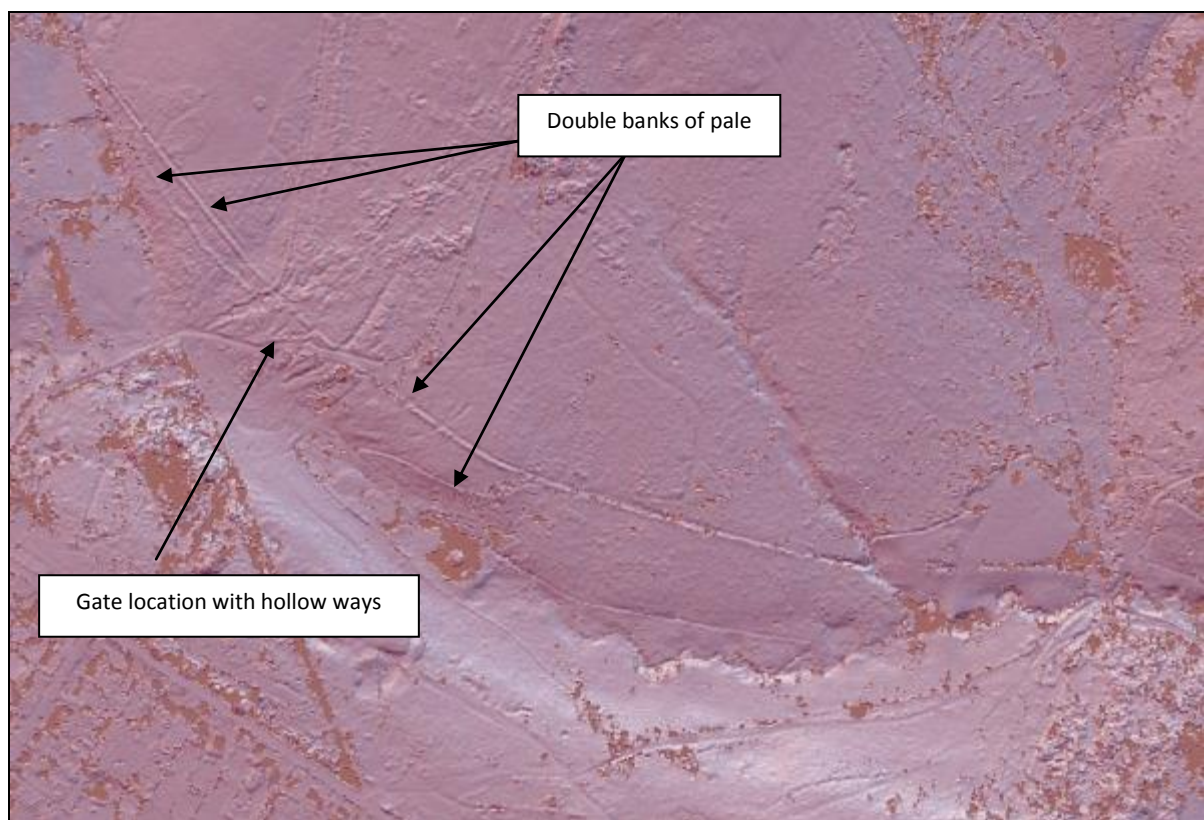
**Figure 14: Hendall Gate lidar image**

(Copyright - Forest Research based on data collected by the Cambridge Unit for  
Landscape Modelling for ESCC HER)

## 6.2 Lidar Images

A lidar image, in simple terms, is an image of the ground surface with most of the vegetation stripped away, often revealing archaeological linear features, such as banks and ditches, well.

The lidar images from the Weald Forest Ridge were interrogated and it became disappointingly evident that from the Desk Top Research it was not possible to trace the line of the pale, except in a very few places as at Tyes Hatch, where a former gate could be traced on the ground (Fig. 13). At Chelwood Common, either side of the known gate entrance, a potential double bank of the Pale could be detected on the lidar images (Fig. 15). Once out in the field it was very difficult to see the line of the pale in places as a result of heavy bracken cover, but the extent of the existing pale can be clearly visualised using these lidar images.

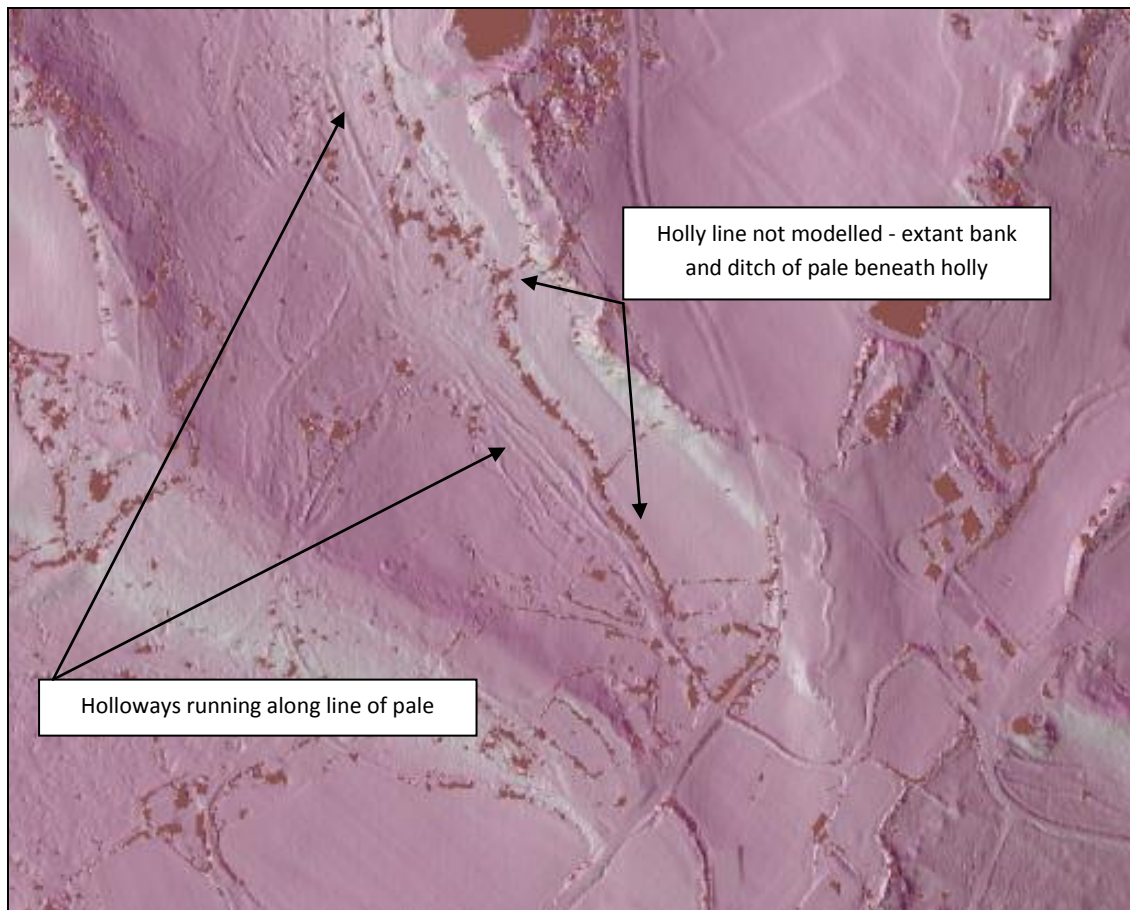


**Figure 15: Lidar images of pale at Chelwood Common**

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However, once in the field it became more apparent that the line of the pale could be traced by what was **not** mapped on the lidar images. In many places holly has colonised the bank of the pale, but not the ditches; the laser beam was not able to penetrate the dense holly and therefore nothing was modelled. The section around Oldlands is a good example of this. Where the holly cover was extremely dense, the bank and ditch of the pale was often found beneath it, which made surveying difficult and any photography impossible. Following the dense line of holly, however, did help in locating the line of the pale. Where the holly was at its densest the ditch and bank of the pale had survived in reasonably good condition, probably because the land was not fit for any other purposes and often formed part of the roadside waste (Fig. 16).

Whilst using lidar images could be useful in tracing a lengthy stretch of a potential prominent boundary, validating it on the ground is imperative.

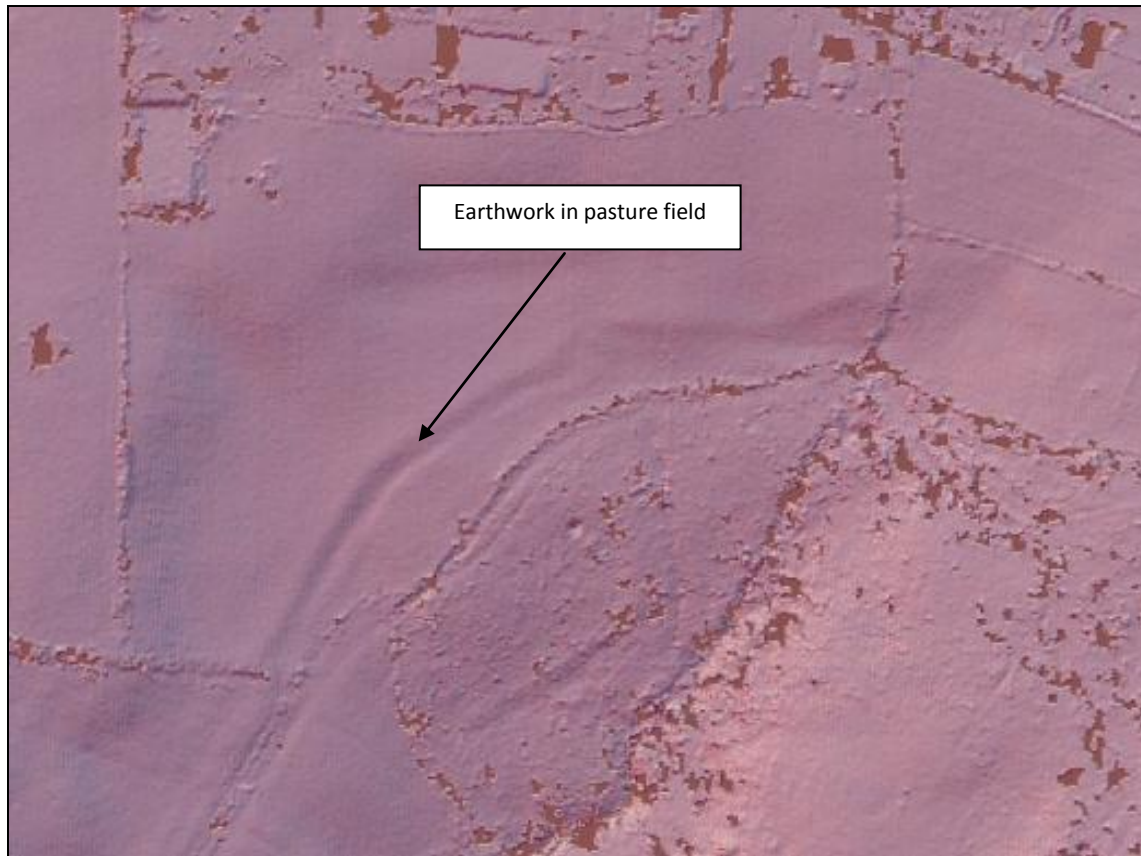


**Figure 16: Lidar image of holly obscuring pale and hollow ways near Oldlands**

(Copyright-Forest Research based on data collected by the Cambridge Unit for Landscape Modelling for ESCC HER)



In one instance the lidar revealed an earthwork in a field near to Plaw Hatch at Goat Cross Roads. This mainly ploughed-out earthwork was once probably part of the pale in this location and is an unusual surviving feature in land which has been ploughed. It can be seen to continue into a wooded boundary which runs along the adjacent field (Fig. 17).



**Figure 17: Possible line of the pale surviving as earthwork in field**

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### 6.3 Aerial Photographs

Aerial photographs were of little use as most examples of the pale surviving were found in woodland or were covered in holly.

### 6.4 Historic Landscape Characterisation

A detailed analysis of the Sussex HLC for the Weald Forest Ridge (WFR) area was commissioned by the Historic Environment Awareness Project and undertaken by Dr Nicola Bannister. The analysis aimed to illustrate the key processes of landscape change, integrating the findings of the ground-truthing assessment of the lidar survey for Ashdown Forest, which is placed centrally within the WFR.

The HLC provided limited additional evidence for the line of the pale, due largely to the significant amount of land use change. When the documented line of the Pale was overlaid on the HLC it showed that the historic landscape characteristics had been mapped as a mixture of early modern to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was probably as a result of encroachments on the edges to the Forest lands and in many cases, when roads were built, advantage was taken of the cleared land of the ditch and bank, the ditch was filled in and the road ran along the line of the ditch. These roads are either private tracks to a group of small houses or the more minor ones that cross the Forest.

### 6.5 Field Work

A series of locations were chosen along the pale to make observations. Field visits were undertaken during which a recording form was filled in which recorded the location, form and condition of the bank and ditch, where they existed. Sketches of the dimensions, shape and form of the existing banks and ditches were taken in some locations. Also noted were the land use and type of vegetative cover in the vicinity of the bank and ditch and on the surrounding land. Other considerations were taken into account, such as any enclosures near the pale, hatches or gates (entrances or exits) hollow ways and trackways or roads, other boundaries and relevant topographical features. In some areas it was noted that, although documented, there is no remaining physical evidence of the pale. It was not possible to cover the entire length of the pale so in these instances a conjectured line of the pale was mapped between the points where it had been found on the ground, also using the documented line of the pale to help determine its most likely route.

## 6.6 Community Archaeology

A study day for volunteers was carried out which consisted of:

- Introduction-outline of project
- Brief run down on deer parks and early history of the deer park or chase of Ashdown
- Surveying techniques
- Possible areas to be surveyed (in groups)
- Gathering knowledge from the participants
- Field trip to Fairwarp area to show examples of existing remains of pale
- Another meeting to discuss field work carried out

Twelve people participated in the event, each provided with field maps and equipment to undertake field surveying. The areas included targeted parts of the following: Nutley, Barnsgate, areas in and around Crowborough and Chuck Hatch to Coleman's Hatch.

The Nutley group set out to find that elusive part of the pale that followed the course of the Millbrook stream from Braberry Hatch, Chelwood Vachery, to where the stream crosses the A22 just south of Nutley. This is one area where any physical evidence of the pale remaining appears to be totally lacking and the possibility of just a high fence built alongside the stream location was discussed, as a barrier to keep the deer within the park. Also considered was the pale perhaps not located along the stream but following a line, higher up the valley side, along the break of slope. Although no physical evidence was found to corroborate this theory, it ties in with the research that use was made of natural features to create barriers to prevent deer escaping.

Two separate groups covered the areas which included part of Barnsgate, Poundgate and some of the more built up areas of Crowborough and beyond to Chuck Hatch. These groups were successful in locating some substantial extant remnants of the pale in some of their targeted areas. It was also helpful to have different sets of surveyors corroborating the existence of the pale in both these areas and those that had been previously surveyed were checked for verification.

## Results from Field Work

### 6.7 Lower Horney Common to Lampool Gate (B2026)

In the roadside waste on the left of the A22, heading north, there is a bank which varies between 0.75 metres to 2 metres in height, with a near-perpendicular slope to the front of the bank that fronts the properties here. The verge of the A22 runs along the line where the ditch would have been and the bank is roughly in line with the break of slope in this location.

This is the southern boundary of the pale and the access point, into the Forest, from the south at Horney, Brikhost and Lampool Gate. The pale would have crossed the line of the A22 at TQ45892577 where there is a turning on the right, Old Forge Lane, which leads in a looping, indirect manner roughly eastwards to Lampool Farm. There is no evidence of the pale left along most of Forge Lane, but from the topography it is likely to have followed the south side of the lane with the road roughly being the line of the ditch. This road very likely owes its existence to the location of the ditch of the pale that was filled in and used for the line of the road. Somewhere south of this road was the boundary for the deer park at Maresfield.

Further eastwards, up Forge Lane, the roadside waste increases at TQ46182610. There is evidence of a substantial bank and ditch to the front boundary of Lower Lampool Farm where the pale turned sharply east away from the road. Evidence of a bank with a ditch to the front can be found either side of the B2026, fronting the property called Forest Gate (Lampool Gate) on Nursery Lane and in the field to the east. The B2026 was once the main route south across the Forest and part of the London to Lewes Roman road would have passed nearby (Fig. 18).



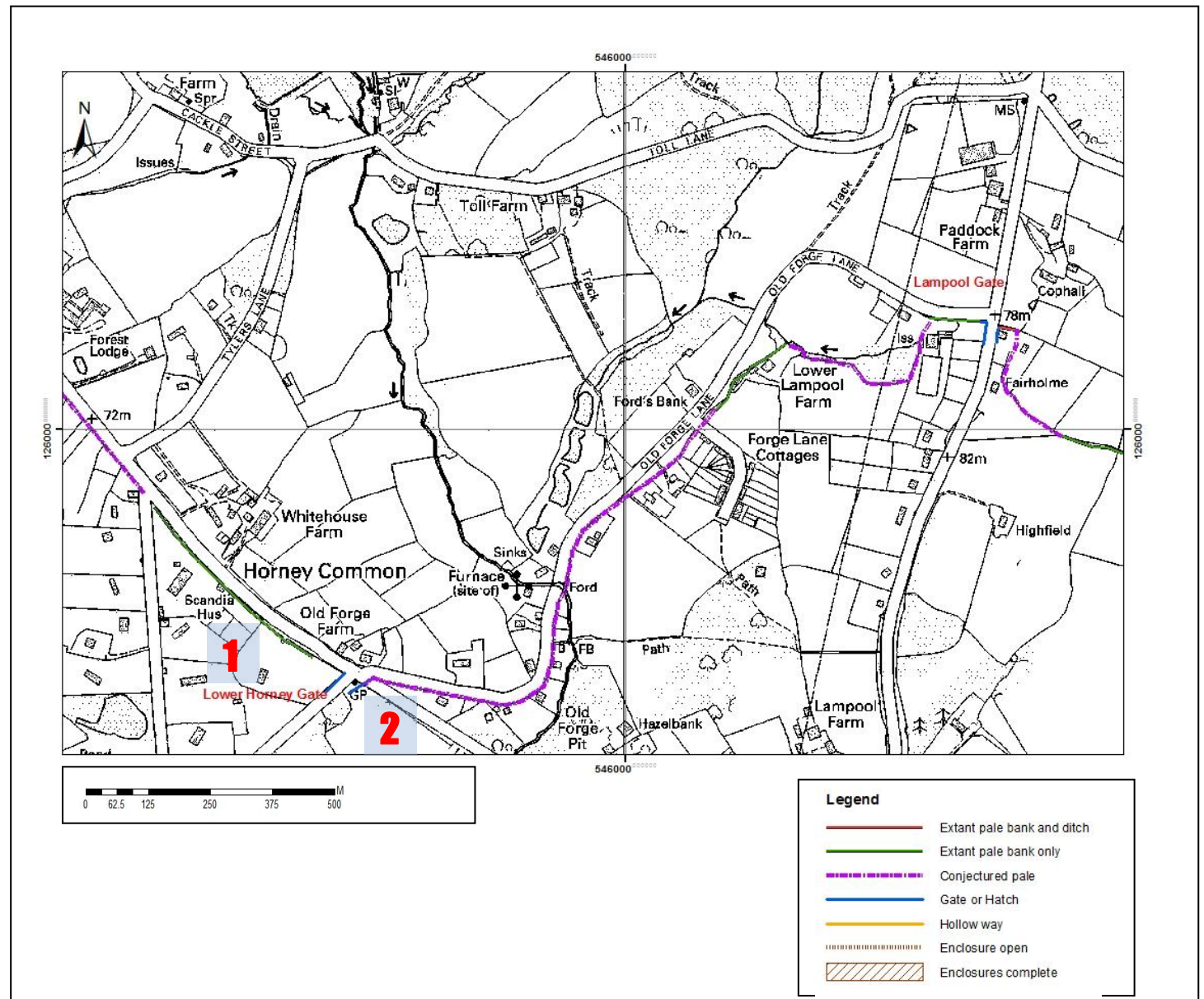
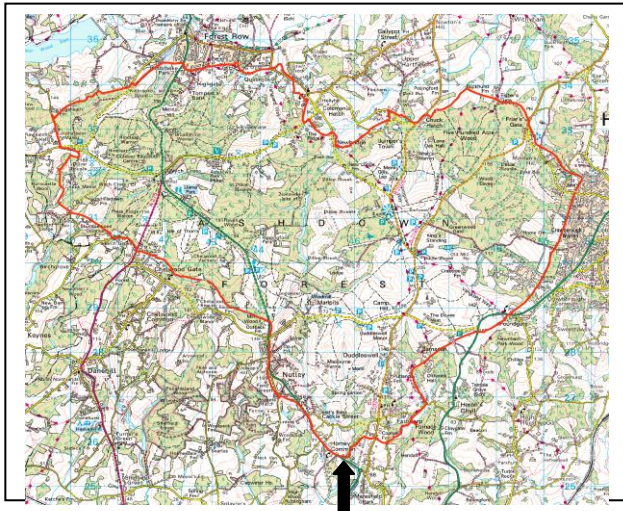


Figure 18: Lower Horney to Lampool Gate

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## 6.8 Tyes Hatch (Nursery Lane) to Oldlands Gate

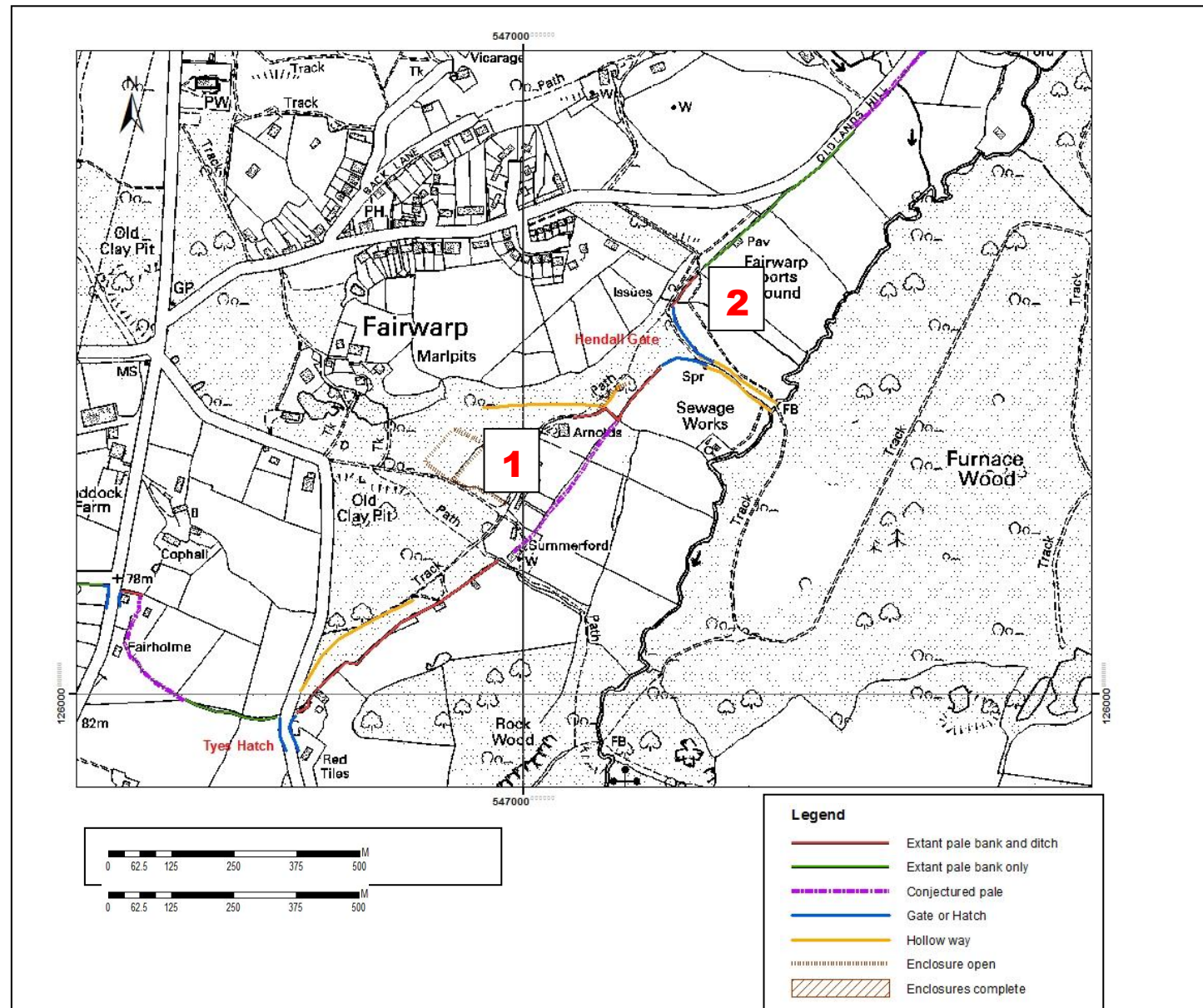
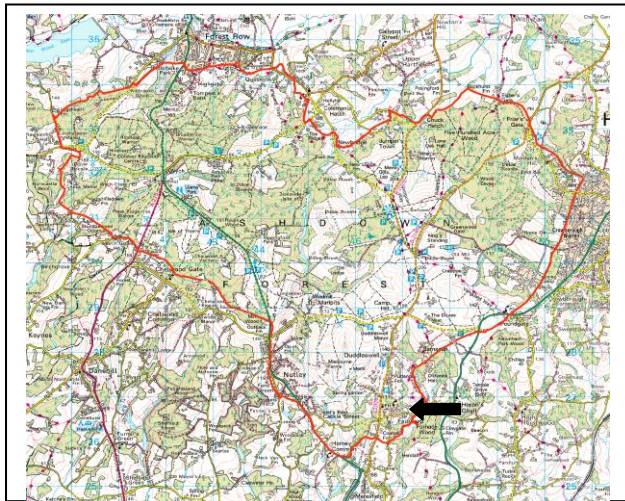
Nursery Lane, Maresfield, by a property called Red Tiles, is the route into the Forest by a hatch, once called Tyes Hatch. To the west, between two fields, is a short section of a curving boundary bank aligned slightly off E-W. The ground here slopes downhill NNE-SSW and NNW-SSE. This boundary between two fields has a straggly grown-out hedge atop it and there is a drop of 1.25 metres to the south. This bank is likely to be a much eroded remnant of the pale and an unusual survivor in a fieldscape, as most evidence of the pale has been ploughed out in open ground.

Eastwards there is a gap through which Nursery Lane now runs. This is the location of Tyes Hatch, where a wooded bank aligned SW-NE marks the boundary of Ashdown Forest today. This boundary is marked by a more typical woodland boundary bank which ranges between 0.5 and 0.75 metres high, with a rounded profile of about up to 1m wide. There is evidence of an in-filled ditch to the inside of the bank, which survives as a shallow depression, in places 2-3 metres wide in the woodland. In other places the ditch is narrower but about 1.25 metres deep and has large beeches growing on top; elsewhere there is fairly dense cover of holly with some oak, hazel and beech.

Two properties have been built in this area with the front building line directly on the top of the bank of the pale with no frontage to their property. The bank continues either side of the properties within their gardens.

There is some evidence of a much eroded enclosure near to what is probably an entrance to the Forest. At TQ46972617 a funnel-shape exit/entrance leads to a hollow way which drops down to a stream crossing, which is the location of Hendl Gate (Fig. 16). This is all within a wooded area, with dense holly in places, on the outer reaches of the south-east corner of Ashdown Forest. A trackway runs alongside the boundary and emerges on a minor road through Fairwarp which connects the B2026 with the A22 by Oldlands (Fig. 19).

On the south east boundary of this road is a hedge with a deep ditch to its inside and evidence of a bank in a pasture field, on the top of which the farmer has placed a wire fence.. This is likely to be the much reduced pale. This minor road turns east and sharply right at Oldlands Hall, which is the location for Oldlands Gate. The line of the Pale then continues in a north-westerly direction and running parallel with it is a deep hollow way. The Wealdway follows the line of the pale at this point.



**Figure 19: Tyes Hatch to Hendall Gate**

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## 6.9 Oldlands

The Weald Way and a small access road to some properties turn sharply right, northwards, along the boundary of Oldlands Hall. This road used to be the ditch to the Pale. The bank exists as the property boundary to a house at this point. The bank has been truncated on its inward facing edge but is approximately 1.5 metres high with a thick, neatly cut, holly hedge along the top.

Continuing north-east, hidden in the roadside waste, is the ditch and bank of the Pale (TQ47472696). It takes the form of a much eroded, asymmetrical bank, up to 0.75 metres high with a deep litter-filled ditch some 2 metres wide. Dense thickets of small stemmed holly trees have colonised the area between the track and the edge of the ditch. The ditch is clear of any growing trees but is often infilled by dead brash. The Weald Way runs roughly parallel to the pale approximately 6 metres from it, but there is evidence of an older hollow way, braided in places, running alongside the newer, gravelled access road.

At TQ47332718 the ground slopes steeply away to the west to a stream and the pale runs along the break of slope at this point. The ditch is 1 metre wide and the bank up to 1 metre high and asymmetrical. Beyond the pale the outside of the bank spreads out down the slope for up 7 metres. This cleared area outside the pale may be an example of where a free-board existed, but it may just reflect the eroded spread of the bank, giving some indication of how large a feature this once was. High fencing along the top of the bank would have been essential due to the downward slope of the land, to keep deer from jumping out in this location (Fig. 20).

At TQ47272730 the pale has been largely destroyed by a modern property but remains survive in the dense holly hedge which runs along the back of the property. The ditch has been completely infilled. The owner of this property commented that she had cut back the overgrown holly severely and had managed to form a perfect dense stock-proof fence about one metre wide. This gives some indication of how living holly hedges may have been managed in the past to form impenetrable barriers.

A short way further on, the ground to the east slopes more steeply downhill, beyond the pale. Here the ditch is of considerable size, 1.5 metres to 1.75 metres deep, and 3 metres wide with a nearly perpendicular face to the inside of the ditch. The bank is a sloping asymmetrical bank about 1 metre high and slopes 5m downhill to beyond the pale (Fig. 20). There is evidence of coppiced or managed beech trees, now grown out, atop the bank, with oak standards, rhododendron and holly scrub on and around the bank.

In this location the pale is only visible on the lidar by its absence, a long line of data that was not modelled due to the dense cover of holly which the laser was unable to penetrate. That the pale can be mapped by its absence from the lidar images proved useful in other locations when trying to locate where it might have been (Fig. 16).

At TQ47212751 the pale appears to have been built along the break of slope. Here the ditch is about 2.5 metres deep and 3 metres wide. The bank of the pale, sloping and asymmetrical, is up to 2 metres high, with holly, oak and beech growing up the bank and in the surrounding woodland. Nothing is growing in the ditch. It seems that the ditch bank is steeper and the ditch larger when there is a sharp downhill slope. At this spot, where the ditch is deep, it is visible on the lidar as a substantial feature.

At TQ47252763 the ditch becomes less deep, but is still a steep slope at about 1.25 metres high and 2.5 metres wide. The bank of the pale is about 1.25 metres high. At this point the bank of the pale is broken to allow a hollow way to pass through. The holly cover here is very dense and fairly impenetrable. The pale appears to end here, but the banks terminate at the junction with a couple of tributaries. It was not possible to investigate further as there was no access to the land at this location. The documented line of the pale follows the stream from this point as its heads northeast to Barnsgate and no visible boundaries were apparent on either side of the stream (Fig. 20).

What is obvious in this location is that the pale has been much modified by subsequent property boundary modifications over a long period of time. In a few places, however, some reasonable evidence remains to suggest that this boundary was part of the pale of Ashdown Forest. The boundary changed its shape and form according to the topography, with a deeper and wider ditch where the ground sloped out downhill of the enclosed park. The evidence has survived because the land was unfit for any other purpose.



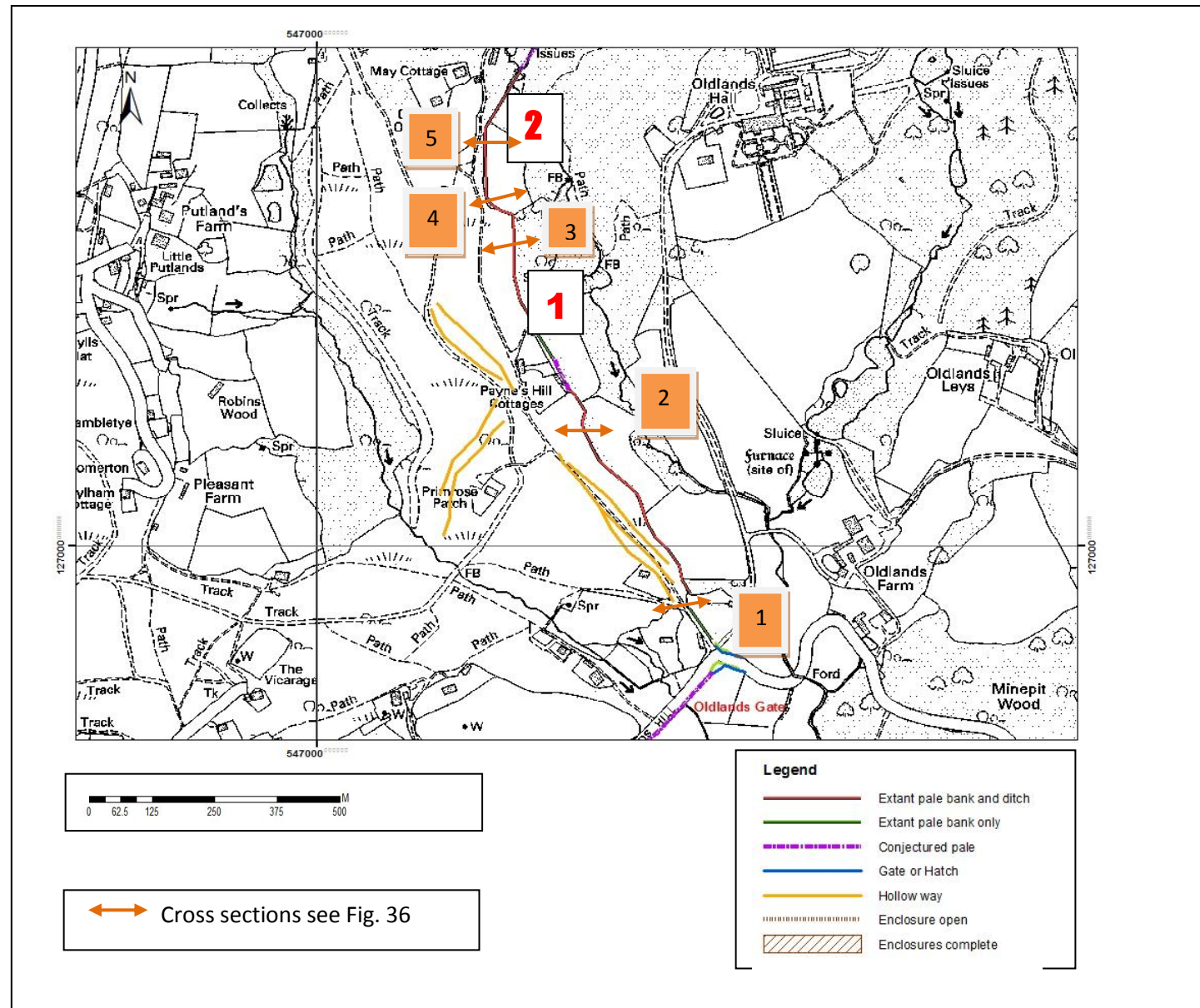


Figure 20: Oldlands

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## 6.10 Barnsgate, Poundgate, Crow and Gate

A good section of the pale surviving on the ground can be found from TQ47632793 to TQ48492847, a fairly long stretch to the north of Barnsgate Manor. This is the one example found where the surviving boundary deviated from that of the documented boundary. For most of this section both the bank and ditch of the pale survive, better preserved in the more westerly section, with the bank of the pale up to 1.90 metres high and the ditch up to 1 metre deep and 1.5 metres wide. The land, for the most part, is only gently sloping and in some places almost level. There were no very deep ditches as found elsewhere when the land sloped steeply downhill, beyond the pale (Fig. 23).

At TQ47662820 is an excellent example of a thick managed holly hedge atop the pale giving a good indication of how holly may have been used to form an impenetrable barrier (Figs. 21-22). Hedges such as these may have been used as a form of stock control. When the pale was first set up during the later 13<sup>th</sup> century there would have been a lack of vegetation, but in later years it is difficult to see how, or understand why, the pale would have been kept clear of vegetation. It seems that holly, once introduced, colonises these growing conditions successfully.

At Poundgate it is possible that the line of the pale changed when the area of Newnham was taken and enclosed out of the Forest to provide a small private deer park as previously mentioned.



Figure 21: Managed holly hedge within the pale



Figure 22: Managed holly hedge beyond the pale



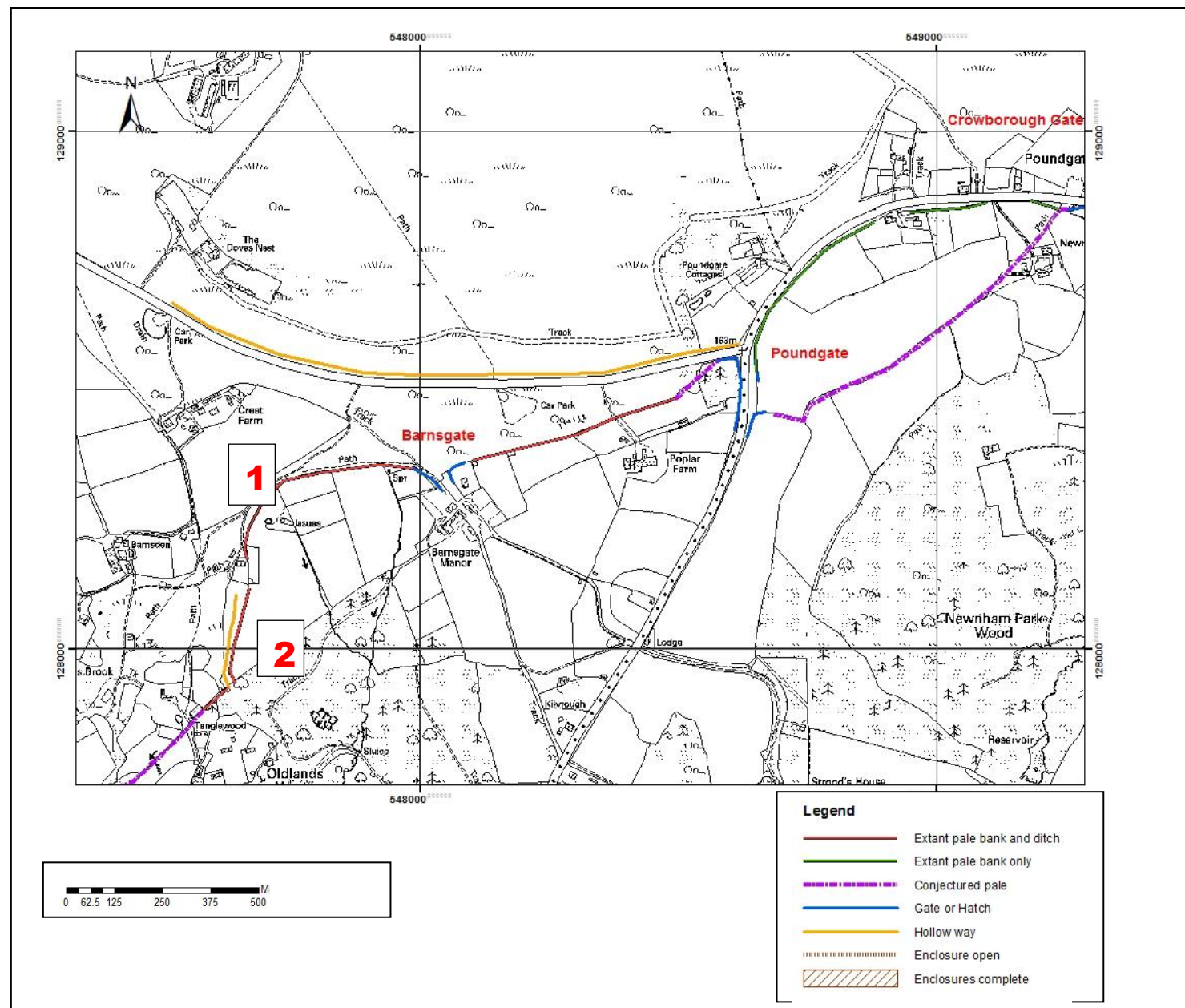
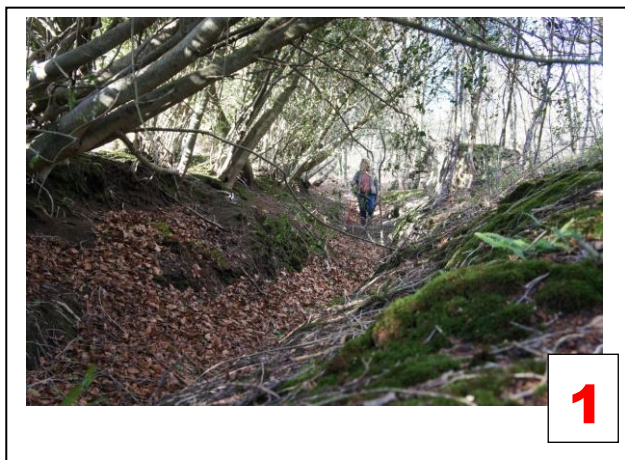
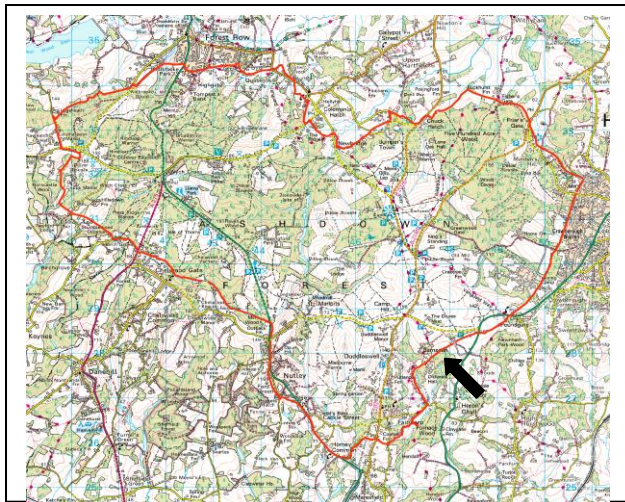


Figure 23: Barnsgate to Crow and Gate

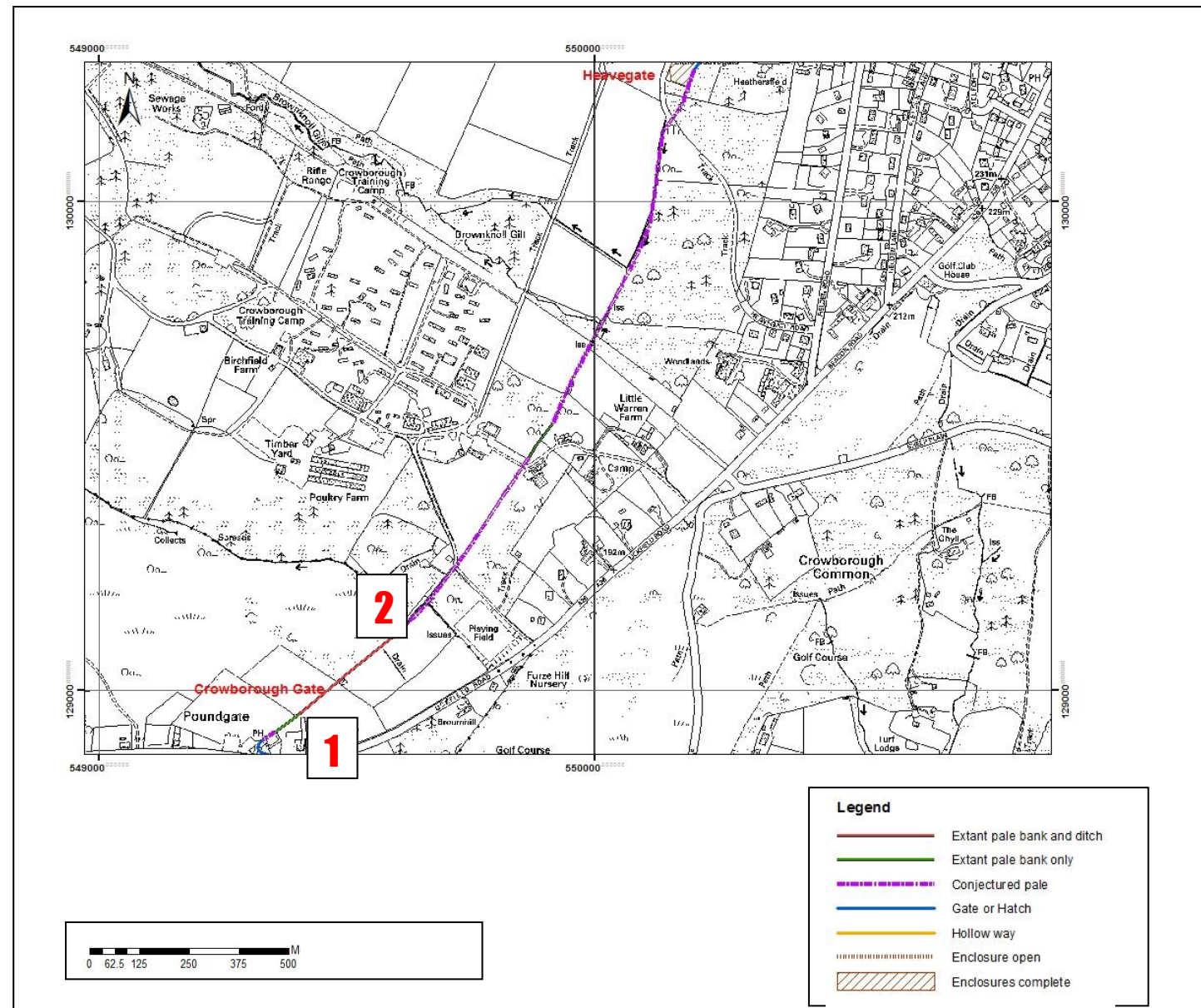
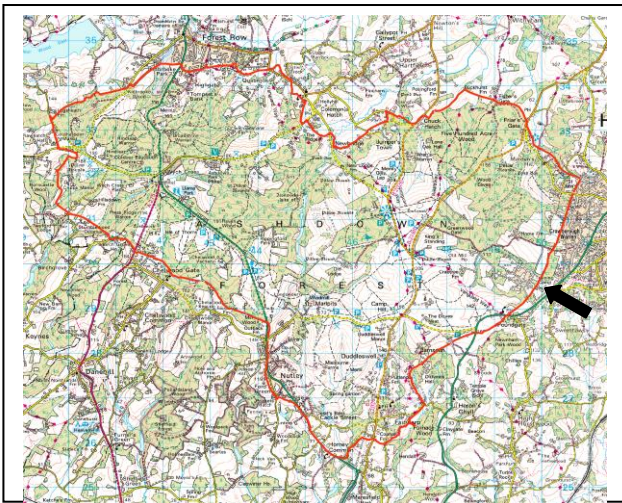
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## 6.11 Poundgate

Along the back boundary of the pub garden of the Crow and Gate the pale bank survives as step-like feature, out of the garden onto the Forest at about 0.25 metres high. Just 50 metres north-east, an asymmetrical bank survives, as a property boundary to the back gardens, to about 1.25 metres high in places (TQ49382896), with the steep side of the bank facing the inside ditch. From the A26 the Crow and Gate building is oddly aligned in relation to the road and is a good example of how the line of the pale dictated what can be seen in the landscape today. The back line of this property runs along the bank of the pale, as do all the properties in this stretch of the pale. The later road and any dwellings later built in this location had to fit in with a boundary which was already well established (Fig. 24).

Through the south-eastern suburbs of Crowborough little of the original pale survives. The documented line of the pale runs through the Army Camp and other properties in this area which were not able to be surveyed. A short section was probably found between TQ50573127 and TQ50563153, but very much modified, damaged and eroded. This section follows the parish boundary (Fig. 35).





**Figure 24: Crowborough Gate to Heavegate**

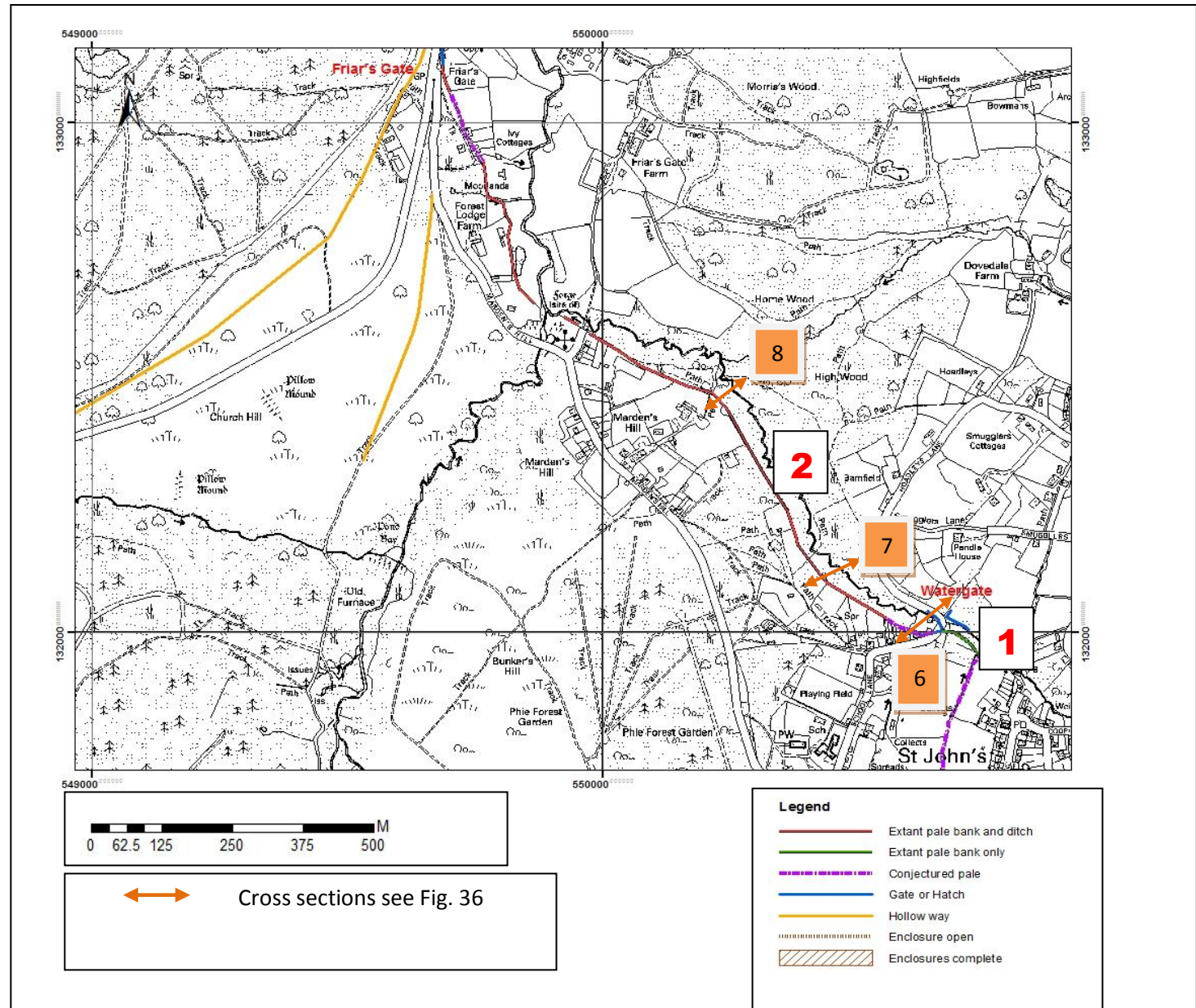
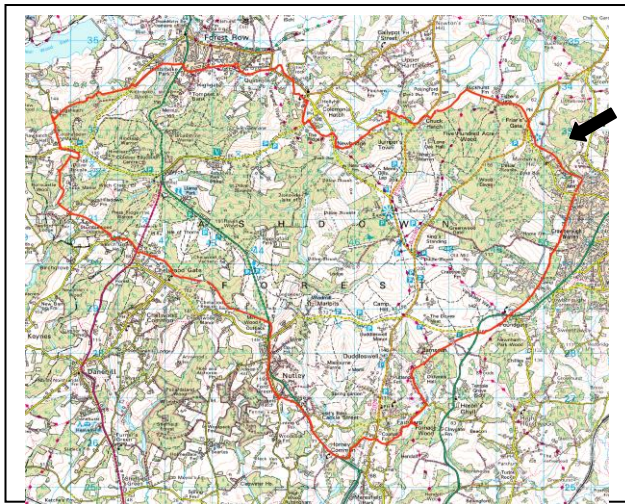
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## 6.12 St John's Common to Friar's Gate

To the north-east of Marden's Hill is a steeply incised gill valley with the stream running north-west to south east in a very deep valley. At TQ50663200 a short section of footpath heads eastwards off School Lane where a good section of the Pale survives and gives a good demonstration of the judicious use of the topography. On the southern side of the footpath the natural slope has been cut back to provide an almost perpendicular face varying between 2-3 metres high. A 1.5 metre path runs alongside this 'wall' and then the ground drops precipitously to the valley floor some 15-20 metres below. It would have been a suicidal deer that tried to leap over the fence built along the top of this drop. The pale continues on the other side of School Lane where the valley sides are much less steep. It runs approximately 25 metres above the stream in a mixture of very scrubby, dense holly woodland and also provides the back property boundary to some of the houses that have been built in the area that was once St John's Common. The pale survives here, in a reasonably consistent form, for approximately 600 meters. In this location there is a good example of the now much-eroded bank of the pale stretching some 5 metres wide, beyond the pale, perhaps indicating the collapse of a once much higher, but less wide, bank. The inner ditch has a steep interior profile (*Figs 25*).

This is another example of a stream and a bank and ditch providing a double deterrent. Where School Lane cuts through the pale the stream also crosses through; this is the probable location for the aptly named Watergate.





### 6.13 Friars Gate to Fishers Gate

Surviving evidence for the pale is tenuous along this stretch. Perhaps the later modifications to the boundary when Five Hundred Acre Wood was enclosed out of the Forest have removed most of the evidence for it, although there is a section of ditch and bank at TQ49413358. Slightly further north may be the boundary to Buckhurst Park, which can be seen on the lidar images as faint earthworks in the field and more positive ones in a stretch of woodland. Also visible on lidar images, westwards the pale may be present as a faint earthwork in the field and as a more visible boundary to a stretch of woodland (Fig. 35).

### 6.14 Chuck Hatch, Elliots to Newbridge

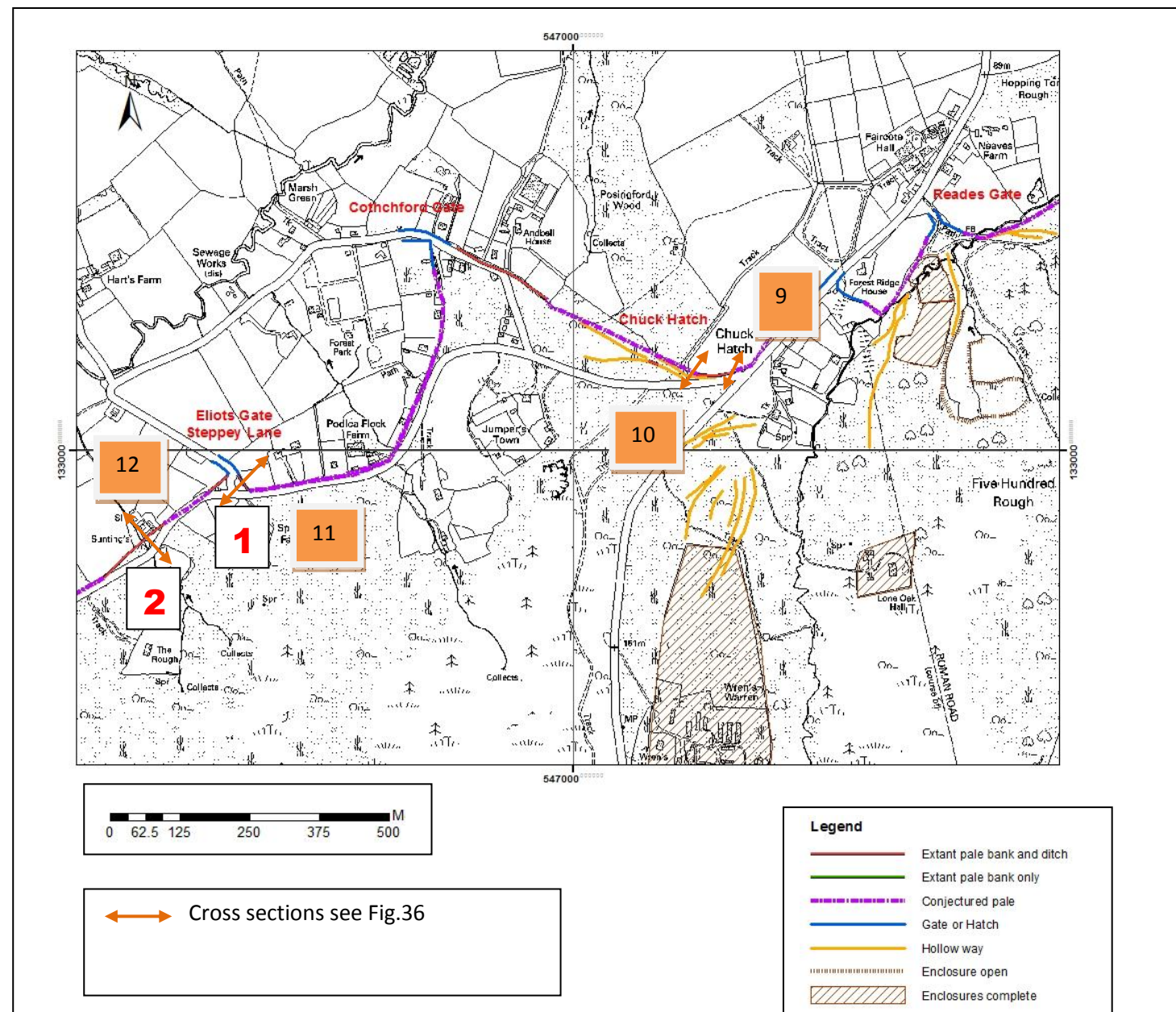
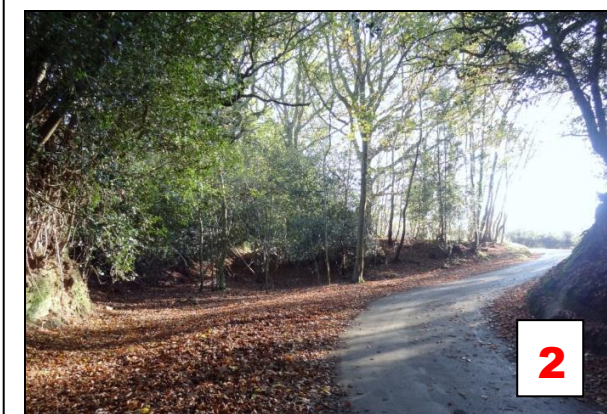
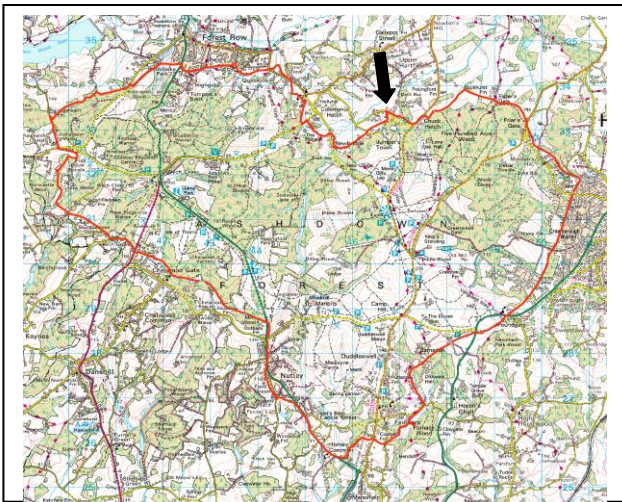
At the junction of the B2026 with the road that leads to Newbridge, near Pooh Sticks car park, a short section of the pale survives in the roadside waste amidst thickets of young holly with young oak and birch. Where the line of the pale passes a property boundary the ditch has been grassed over. The ditch and bank have also been destroyed at the entrance to the car park. A short section of the pale survives on the west side of the car park; after this it has been largely destroyed as it passes through a section of mixed deciduous young woodland.

The documented pale passes through this woodland, in a roughly NW-SE direction, and in front of Andbell House where the bank of the pale probably survives at the front of the property in a thick holly hedge. After five hundred metres the pale would probably have swung almost due south for two hundred metres before turning sharply west. Four hundred metres south-west, at the junction of Steppey Lane with Watersplash road, a good example of the pale survives in roadside waste and thickets of holly. The junction with Steppey Lane provides a good example of a gate (Elliot's Gate) into the Forest, which may have gone out of use fairly early on. The hollow lane, now Steppey Road, leads out downhill from the Forest (Fig. 26). The ditch here is up to 2 metres deep and 1.5-2 metres wide, with the bank over 2 metres high with a near-perpendicular side.

The pale can be traced again, at Suntings Sluice/Gill where there is a 2 metre high bank in the waste beside the road, which rises steeply uphill in a short section (Fig. 26). The bank has slumped on the inside but drops down to the ditch of the pale, where the ditch is up to two metres wide. The opposite bank is up to 2 metres high, which then turns into a bank with a flat top 5 metres wide, possibly another example of a free-board, before it reaches a smaller ditch and bank field boundary.



The depth of the ditch and the corresponding steepness of the slope suggests that in these circumstances the ditch was deeper to provide a greater deterrent to deer from jumping out. The pale survives again in a short section of roadside waste, some 200 metres before the ford or splash at Newbridge. After this the pale is not traceable as it turns due north towards Newbridge Mill, neither can it be found 300 metres further north where it supposedly turns sharply west through some woodland (Fig. 35).



### Figure 26: Chuck Hatch

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### 6.15 Newbridge to Forest Row

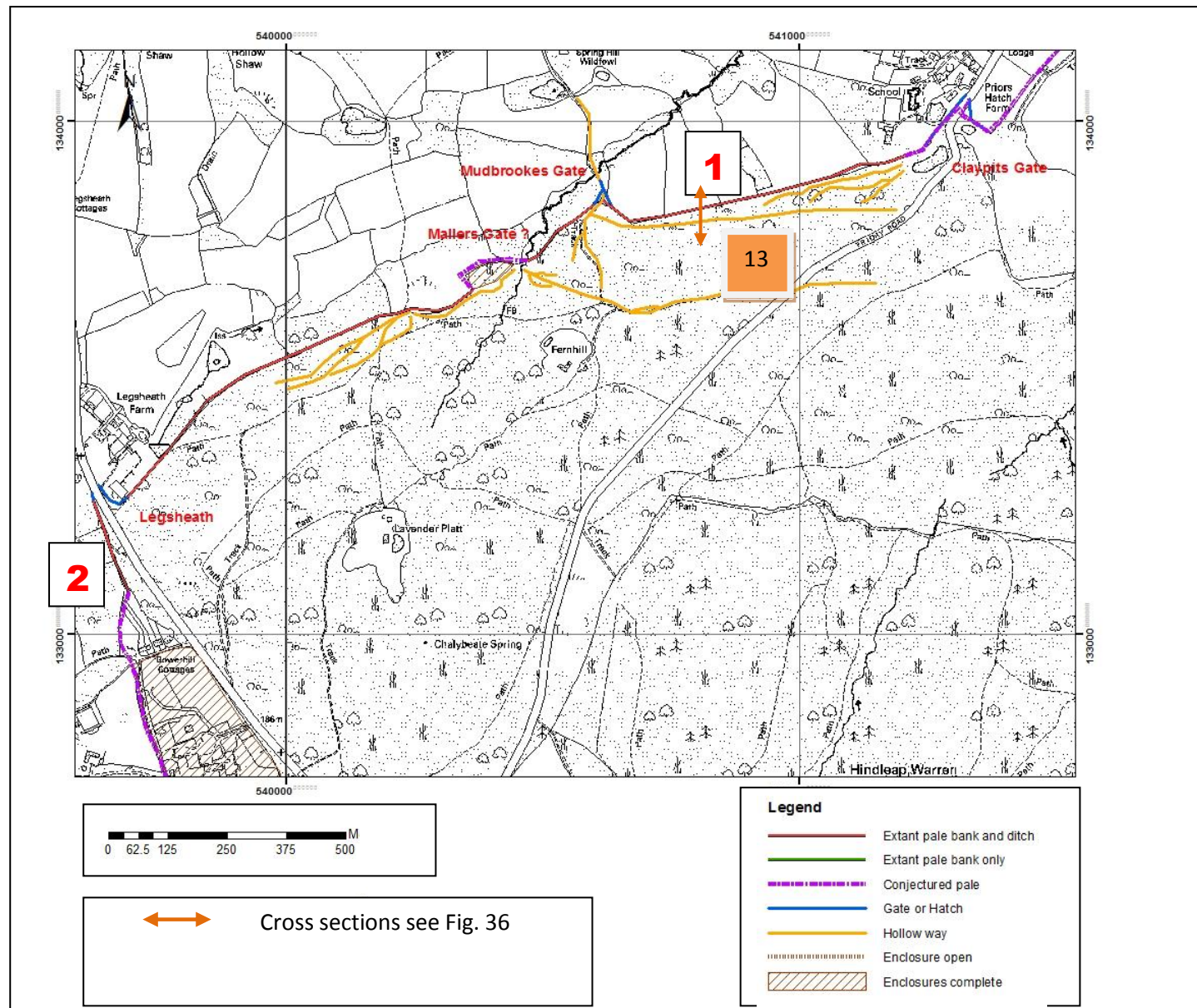
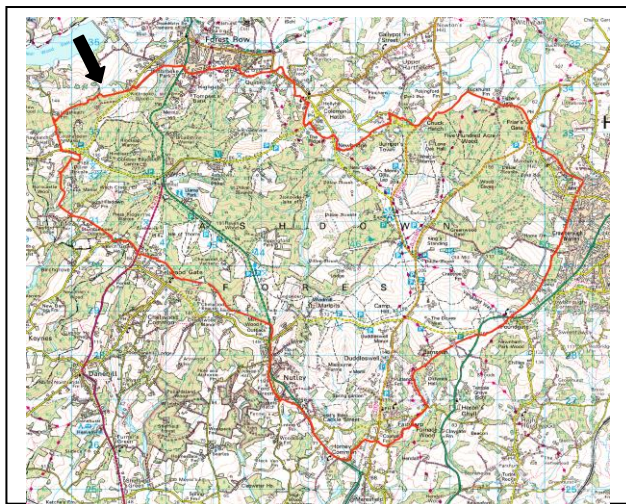
After Newbridge the documented line of the pale heads north-west and no conclusive evidence of its survival was found through to Coleman's Hatch. Most of the evidence of the pale surviving in the northern section of the Forest has been destroyed by later changes in the landscape and the development of Forest Row. This section contains the least woodland or heathland of the survey area. A short section of ditch and bank survives in the roadside waste of Shalesbrook Lane, opposite the Royal Ashdown Forest Golf Course, fronting the properties there. The asymmetrical bank is up to 1.75 metres high and has a steep perpendicular face with the remains of a ditch in front. In places the bank is high and narrow, but in others is raked back more gently to about 2 metres outside the pale (Fig. 33).

### 6.16 Kidbrooke, Priors Hatch, Mudbrooks and Legsheath

In the grounds of Michael Hall School, Forest Row, which were once the landscaped grounds of Kidbrooke Park, there is little definite evidence of the pale still existing except for one interesting feature. This is a bank and ditch with the inward-facing side of the bank having been dressed with dry stone sandstone walling. This looks like it could have been part of a ha-ha adapted from an earlier boundary, but so many later changes in this designed landscape have removed any conclusive evidence for the pale existing in this location.

South-west from Priors Hatch, following along the current boundary of the Forest, the pale still exists in varying states of preservation in a quarried woodland landscape containing deep water-filled pits. This gate was historically known as Claypits gate, Priors Hatch being a much later name. These pits are likely to be clay extraction quarries. An asymmetrical bank exists up to 1 metre high and slopes back into the fields up to 3 metres in width, but is much eroded for most of its length (Fig. 26). However, at TQ40543381 this low bank is up to 4 metres wide and the ditch up to 5 metres wide. At this point a hollow way, long since fallen out of use, runs parallel and close to the bank, which makes the ditch appear wider. Out of the way and deep in the woods is the location of Mudbrooks Gate, with numerous hollow ways leading to a stream and a crossing point. From here to Legsheath Farm the ditch and bank of the pale survives in varying degrees of preservation and size and, in places, a fence has been erected along the top of the bank, making it difficult to ascertain the shape and form of the entire bank. However, in places it exhibits a steep perpendicular face up to over 1 metre high with a ditch in front. The woodland cover here is dense, with large amounts of holly making it difficult to survey along the pale. At Legsheath Gate the pale can be traced across the road as it turns sharply south. Hidden in the roadside waste, which has a cover of dense holly and rhododendron, the pale takes the form of a bank up to 2 metres high with a slight, in filled depression of up to 3 metres wide in front of the bank. The bank is not continuous as quarrying has taken place at this location (Fig. 27).





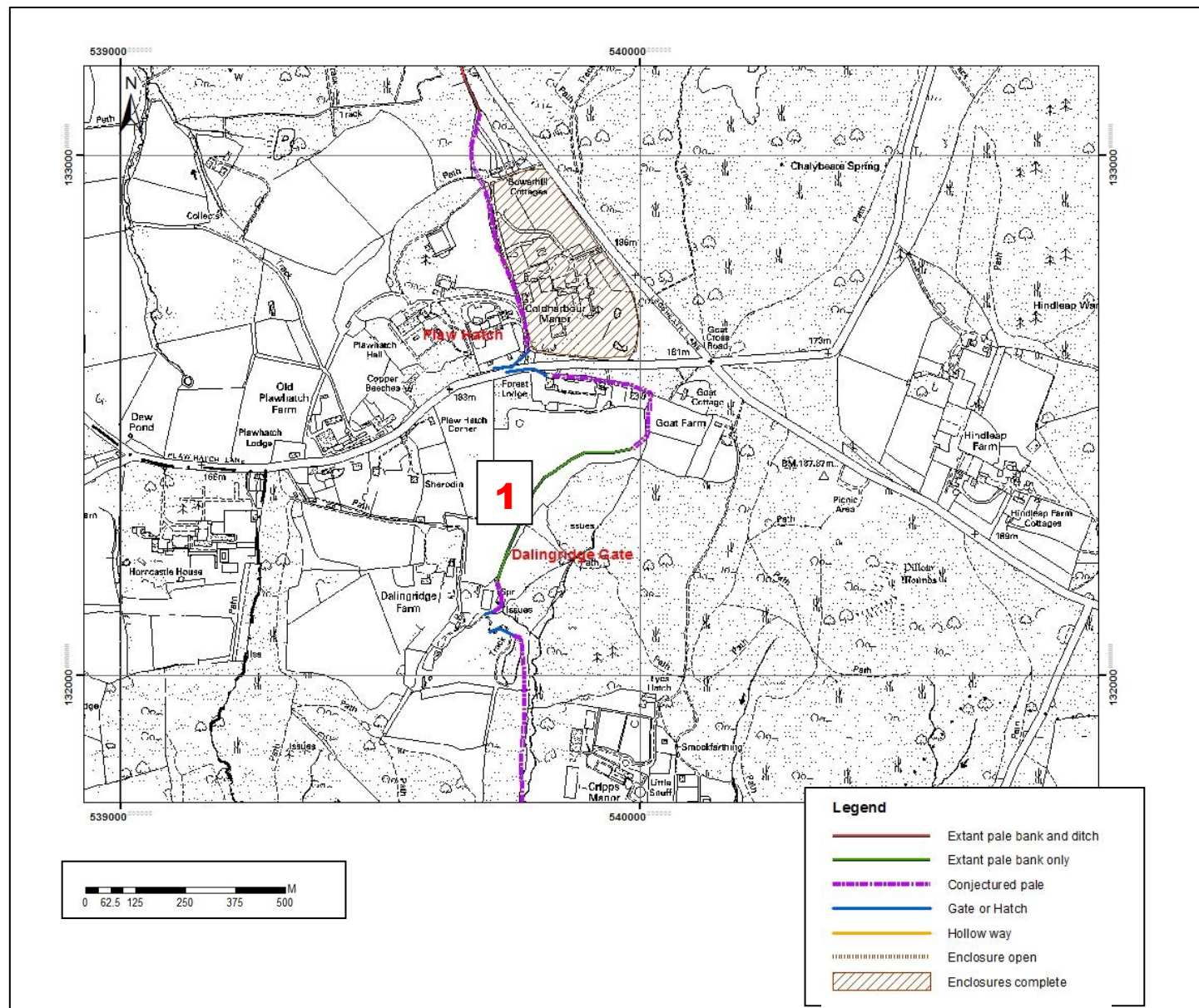
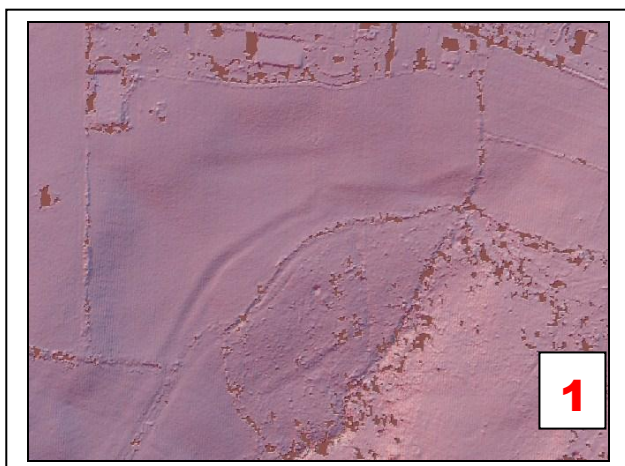
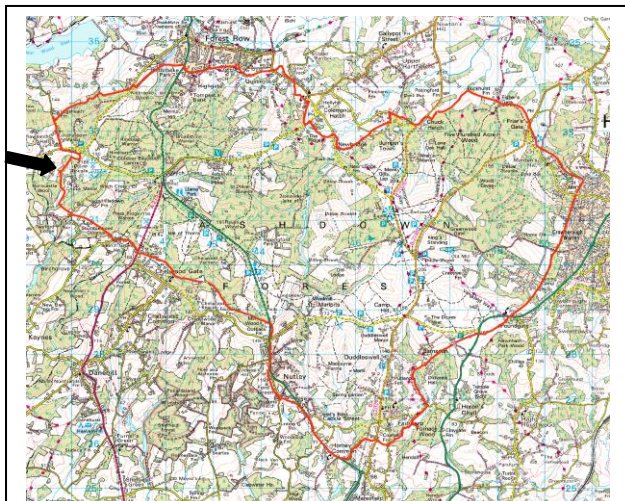
**Figure 27: Claypits to Legsheath**

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### 6.17 Goat Cross Roads at Plaw Hatch to Dallingridge

An earthwork visible on lidar (Fig. 17), just south of Goat Cross roads near Legs Heath, is visible on the ground as a ploughed-out earthwork consisting of a bank aligned roughly NNE-SSW. The ditch is on the inside of the bank and there is a difference of approximately 2 metres in height in places, although this field slopes steeply towards the south. A much degraded bank continues due south in a strip of woodland between two fields, but most evidence of the pale has been ploughed out at sometime in the past. In the woodland at the southern end of the field there is a 5 metre-steep drop forming a formidable barrier. This is a good example of how the natural lie of the land was used to form an impassable barrier to keep the deer within the pale. It is also another example of how the pale did not run along the stream but followed the break of land slightly higher up the slope (Fig. 28).



**Figure 28: Plaw Hatch to Dalingridge**

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## 6.18 Tudbridge to Stumblewood Common

At Tudbridge Gate on Twyford Lane, on the western side of the road where the pale changes its westward direction and turns north-west, is a large and ancient yew tree on the remnants of a bank. It has a girth of more than 4 metres and may have been a marker tree at the gate (Fig. 29). The pale can be found further north, starting at TQ39932120, and can be followed through scrubby woodland down to a stream valley where it crosses the stream and is nicely preserved between two field boundaries. The height of the bank varies between 0.75 metres and 1.5 metres high, asymmetrical in profile with a fairly steep inward face (Fig. 29).

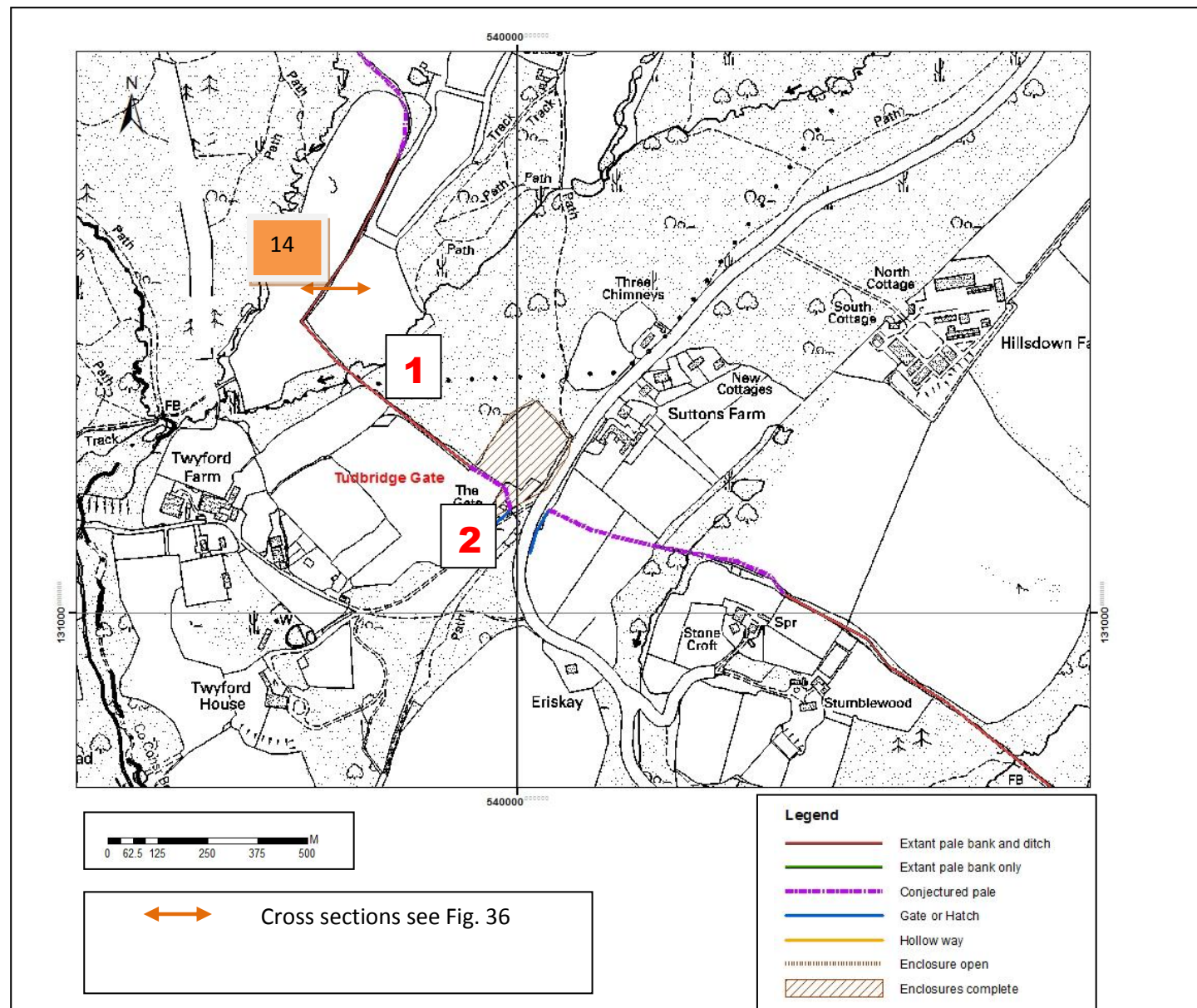
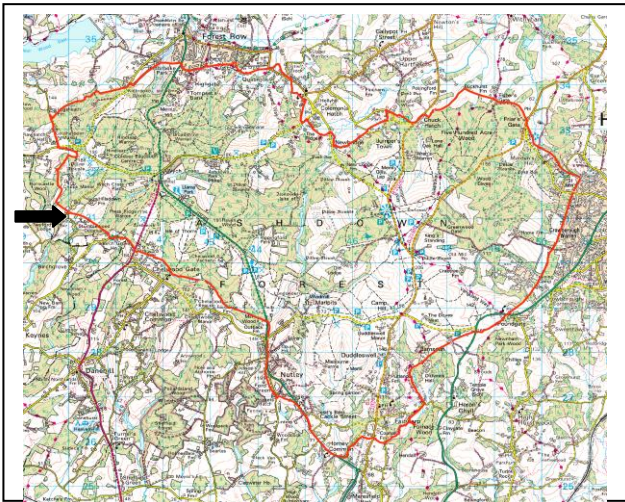
## 6.19 Stumblewood Common to Cowlers Gate

Remnants of the pale probably exist alongside a short section of Birch Grove Road which goes north-west from the Lewes Road at Chelwood Gate in the direction of Birch Grove House. There are traces of a bank up to 0.75 metres high, but the ditch has been completely in filled from TQ41353042 to TQ40963050. There are signs that there may have been a double bank in this location.

At TQ40863957 the pale turns sharply right in a north-westerly direction. From here to TQ40533089 a section of the bank of the pale survives in good condition with, in places, evidence of a much reduced, in-filled ditch (Fig. 30). It survives in a piece of woodland which drops precipitously to a small stream. At TQ40863057 the bank is up to 1.75 metres high and the ditch largely in-filled with a fence running through it. At TQ40653080 the bank is fairly perpendicular and up to 1.5 high and 1 metre wide with a ditch of about a 1 metre wide.

At TQ40533089 the ditch survives well between two field boundaries with fences running along the top of the higher ground on either side. The degraded bank of the pale survives to about 1 metre high, but the ditch was never totally filled in and survives today on the ground, showing as a thin line between two field boundaries (Fig. 30).

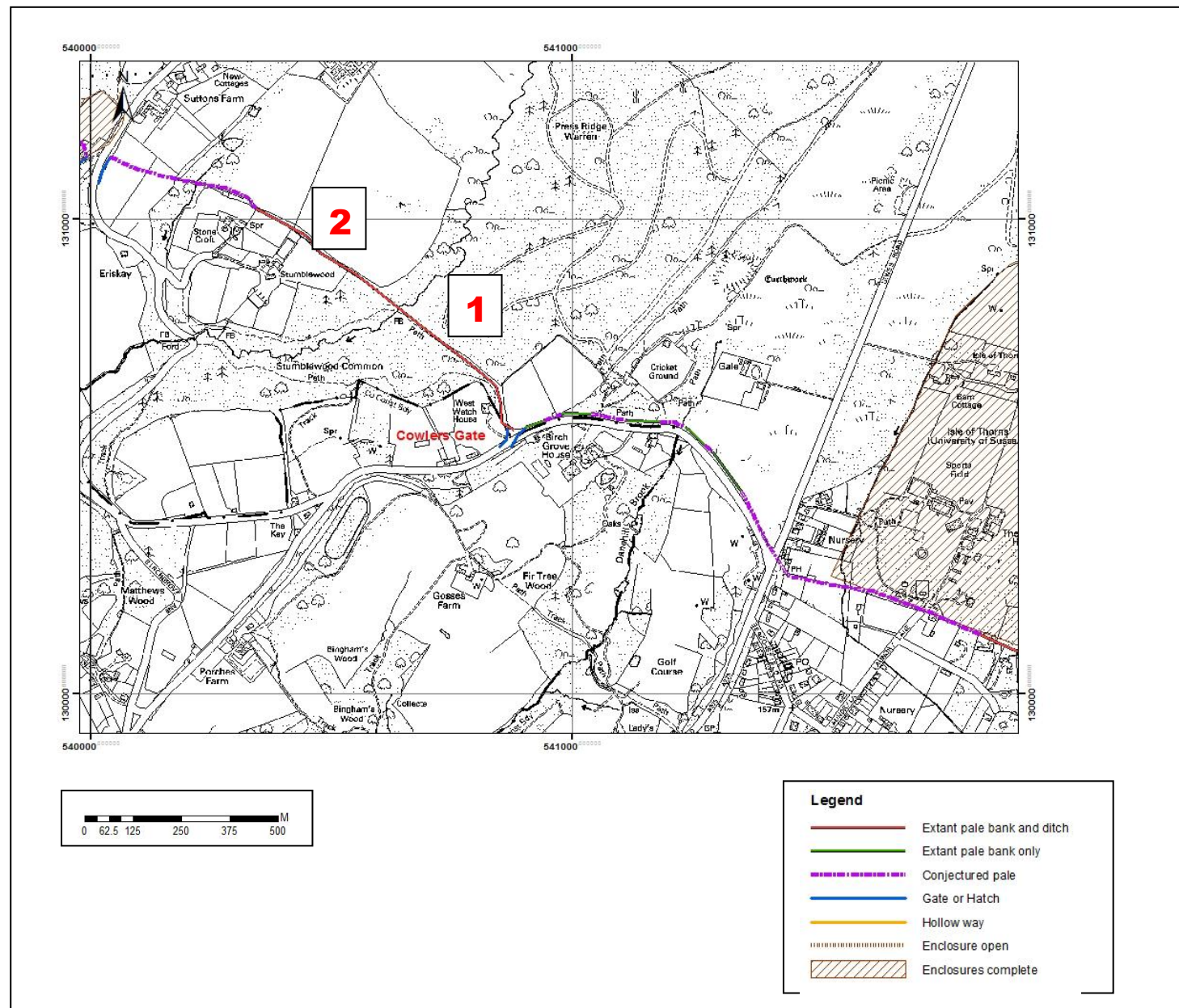
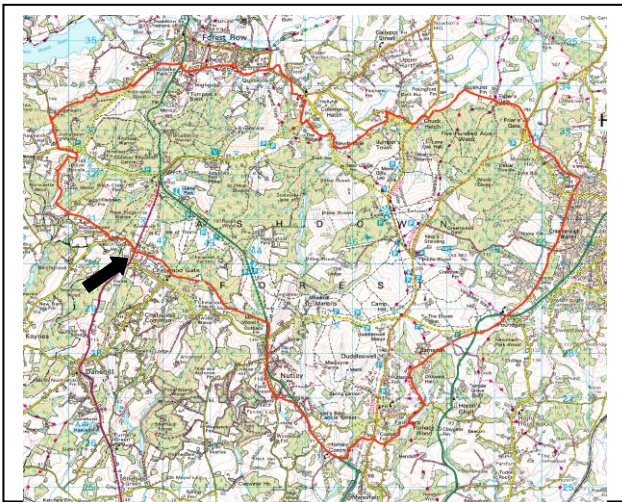




**Figure 29: Tudbridge to Stumblewood Common**

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**Figure 30: Stumblewood Common to Chelwood Common**

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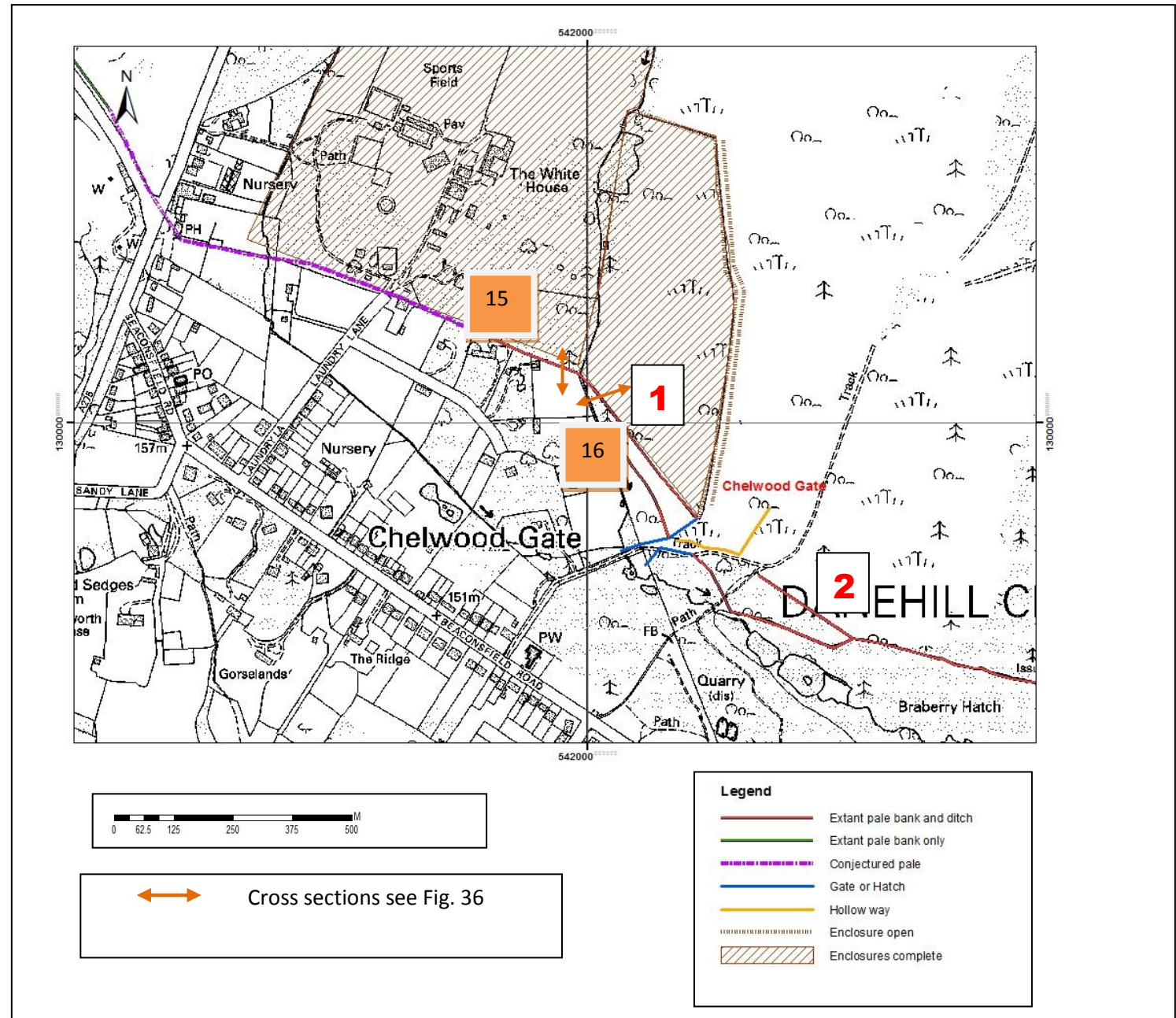
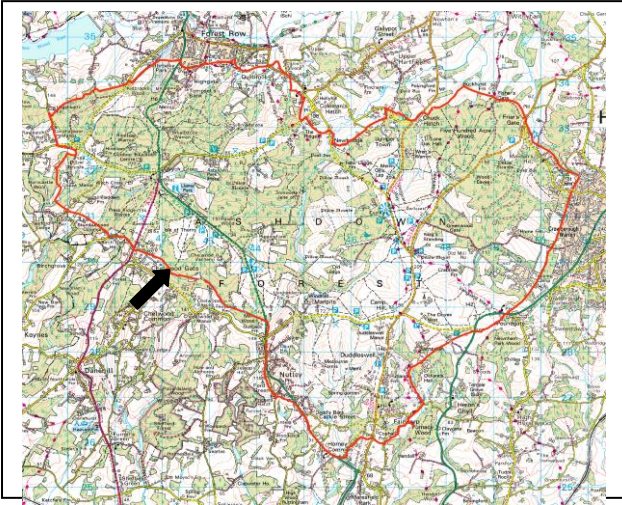
## 6.20 Chelwood Gate to Brabies Gate

The pale can be found either side of the track that leads onto the Forest near Chelwood Gate church and, in places, survives in excellent condition. There is a double boundary here, a smaller one, which although a substantial bank in places today looks more like a woodland boundary but could well be an earlier line of the pale or an extra boundary for stock management purposes. The cover here, on virtually flat land, is a mixture of common land and open heathland, with no trees and no holly. However the banks are largely obscured by vigorous stands of bracken with some brambles. This is one of the best surviving, and more accessible, sections of the pale that also shows clearly on the lidar images, without which it would probably not be easily traceable in places.

It is at this location that the Pale forms the southern boundary of a roughly rectangular enclosure in which three pillow mounds have been recorded. It seems likely that the pillow mounds were inserted into a previously ready made enclosure, one side of which is bordered by a stream in artificially deep channel. This is marked on Kelton's 1744 map as being the Isle of Thorns Warren and is part of the bigger enclosure, to the west, known as the Isle of Thorns. The pale here has a ditch up to 1.5 metres high on the inside, 1-1.5 metres wide with a steeply sided fairly narrow bank up to 1 metre wide and a sharp drop of up to 2 metres (Fig. 31). The pale can be traced further north- west in the grounds of the National Cat Centre heading towards Birch Grove Road.

Above Braberry Ponds the dual banks can be seen again. The larger bank is a low wide flat bank up to 3 metres wide and 1 -1.25 metres high covered in bracken with some pines planted on top of it. In places the ditch is more discernible than in others but this has the appearance of a slightly later bank than other examples of the pale found during the survey (Fig. 31). Further east, along the same line of the bank, it reverts to a more typical has asymmetrical bank with an inward facing ditch.





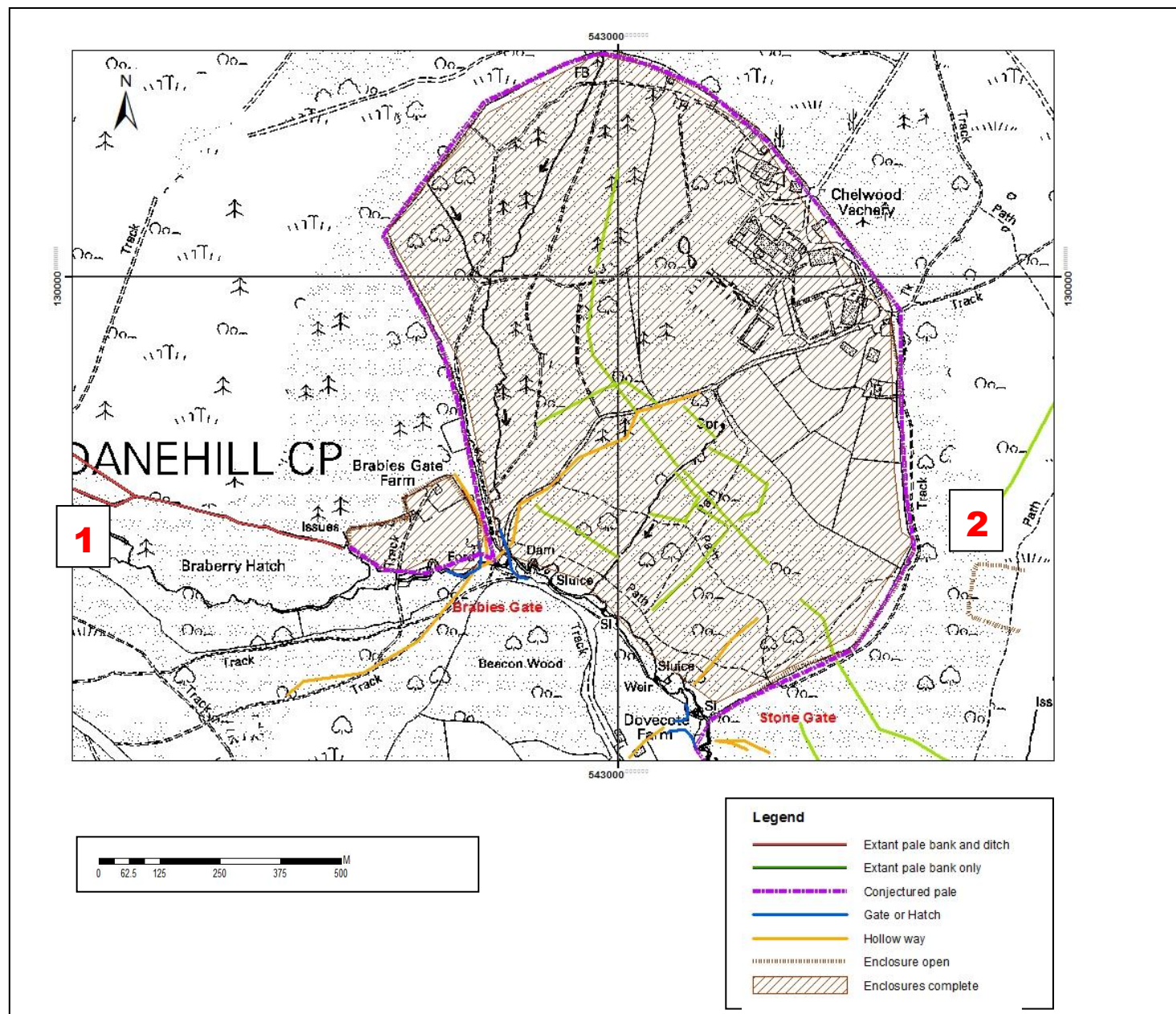
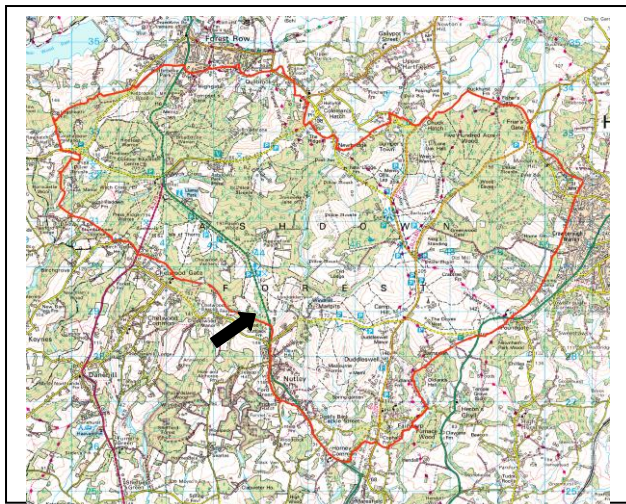
**Figure 31: Chelwood Gate**

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## 6.21 Brabies Gate to Stonegate round Chelwood Vachery

As already mentioned, Chelwood Vachery was a very early enclosure belonging to Michelham Priory and would have had its own ditch and bank enclosure to keep it separate from the deer park. The park boundary would therefore have deviated around the outside of the Vachery and not continued along the Millbrook. There is possible evidence, from the lidar images, of a field system (shown in light green on the map) within the Vachery grounds and outside. To the east of the Vachery is a large rectangular enclosure which has been cut by a substantial stone quarry. This is one area that would benefit from further investigation as there is evidence, from the lidar images, for a substantial ditch and boundary bank around part of the perimeter of the Vachery. However, this is another area that has been subject to later landscape garden modification and some of the possible field boundaries within the Vachery maybe later landscape features (Fig. 32).





**Figure 32: Chelwood Vachery**

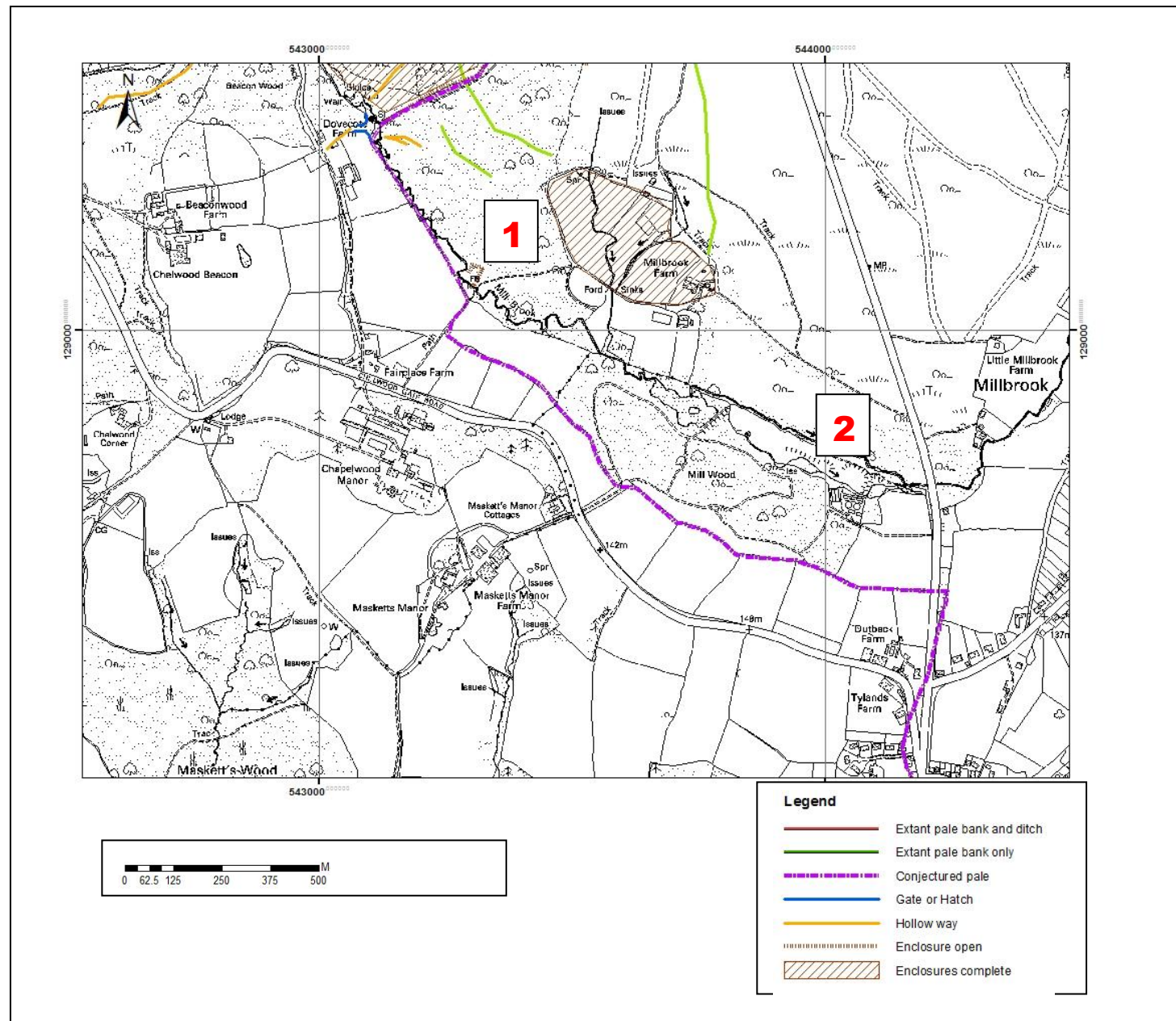
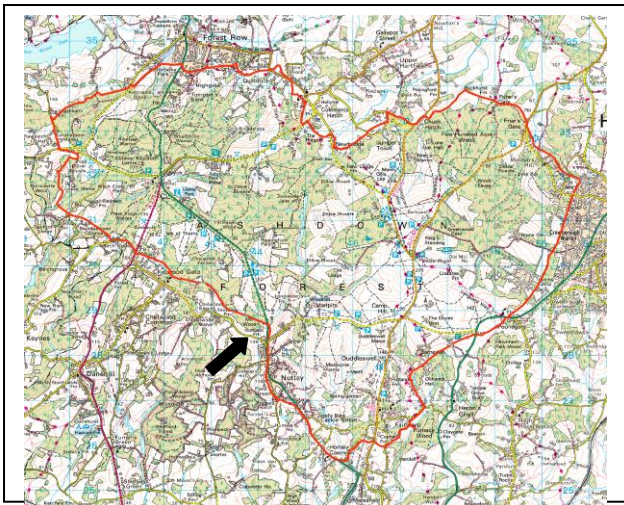
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## 7 Stonegate to Nutley

The Parliamentary surveys state that the pale passes by Nutley Mill to Stonegate. Although there are signs of a boundary bank along the north side of the Millbrook, this looks more like a typical woodland boundary bank. The eroded remains of a rectangular enclosure are visible in woodland on the north side of Millbrook stream. Three sides are formed by 1 metre to 1.5 metre-high boundary banks; the fourth side is formed by an embankment, up to 1 metre in height immediately above the stream, forming a crude type of levee. This enclosure is near to one of the old entrances onto the Forest, Fairplace Gate, and may suggest that this is where the deer park boundary was located and is perhaps a stock enclosure near to a gate.

There are substantial earthworks in Mill Wood which consist of several pond bays and a very large leat, but nothing that would suggest the remnants of the pale (Fig. 33). The lack of any existing evidence of a pale is also apparent on a short stretch of stream between Oldlands and Barnsgate. One reason could be that at stream locations a different form of keeping the deer within the park was used and no ditch and bank was dug at the bottom of a stream valley. The Millbrook valley is fairly wide and, in the past, would have been subject to flooding and could have formed a natural barrier. The deer may have had access to the water at this point, but the water formed a physical barrier and possibly just a high fence was used to contain them within the park. In a wet wooded situation where the earthwork evidence of Nutley Mill, of which there is little documentary evidence, survives well, it is surprising no earthwork remains of the pale were found. So it is reasonable to surmise either that there was no pale at this point or that the boundary was located higher up the slope, as happened in other places where the pale was close to a stream. However, no obvious trace can be found of the pale uphill of the Millbrook. This was one location where a group of community volunteers surveyed and came to similar conclusions.







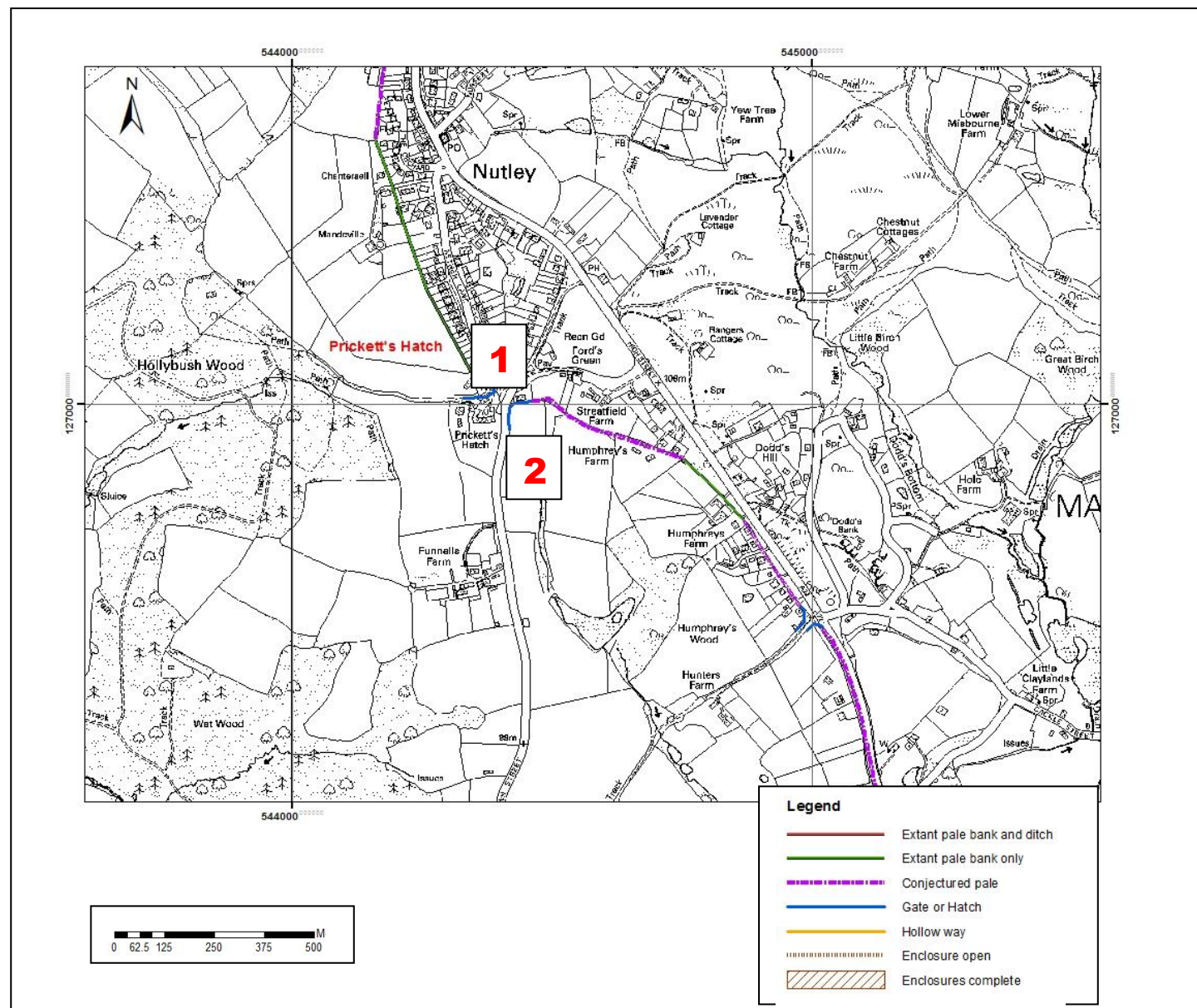
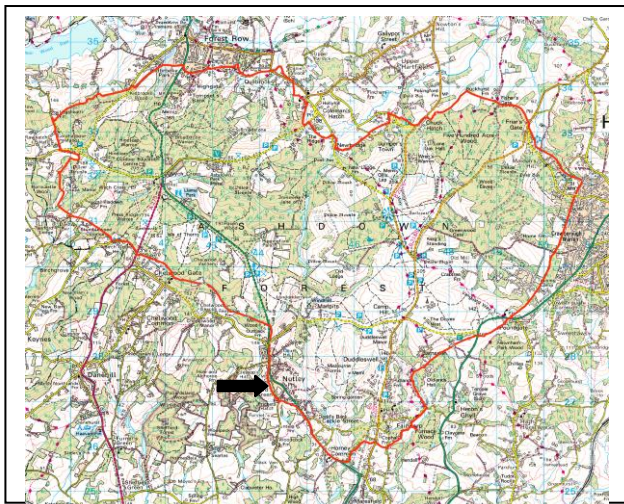
## 7.1 Nutley, Pricketts Hatch to Horney Common

In the middle of Nutley village is a strong curving boundary line, very obvious on modern mapping, which follows the back gardens of houses in Nether Lane. A bank up to 3 metres wide, with a drop to the inside of up to 1.25 metres, is visible. The bank has been flattened and the ditch in-filled, but this is likely to be a much modified form of the pale surviving in modern day Nutley.

This boundary runs south to Downe Street, which is the line of the old N-S road to Pricketts Hatch, to where the bank is breached. There is a hollow way running south and evidence of deep quarrying at this point although the site is very overgrown and difficult to survey. The name Prickett's Hatch survives as a small settlement near the gate. The land drops away steeply here with the pale having been built at the top of the slope. At this point the pale turns slightly east towards the A22 where the bank can be seen in the roadside waste as a property boundary. There is evidence of a shallow depression of up to 3 metres wide and then a low wide bank fronting the property (Fig. 34).

## 7.2 All boundaries

The final map (Fig. 35) shows the entire area that was the enclosed deer park of Ashdown with any surviving banks and ditches of the pale shown. Where evidence was lacking on the ground, or it had not been possible to survey, a conjectured line was drawn between where evidence for the pale had been found. Documentary evidence was also used to corroborate this line.



**Figure 34: Pickett's Hatch to Horney Common**

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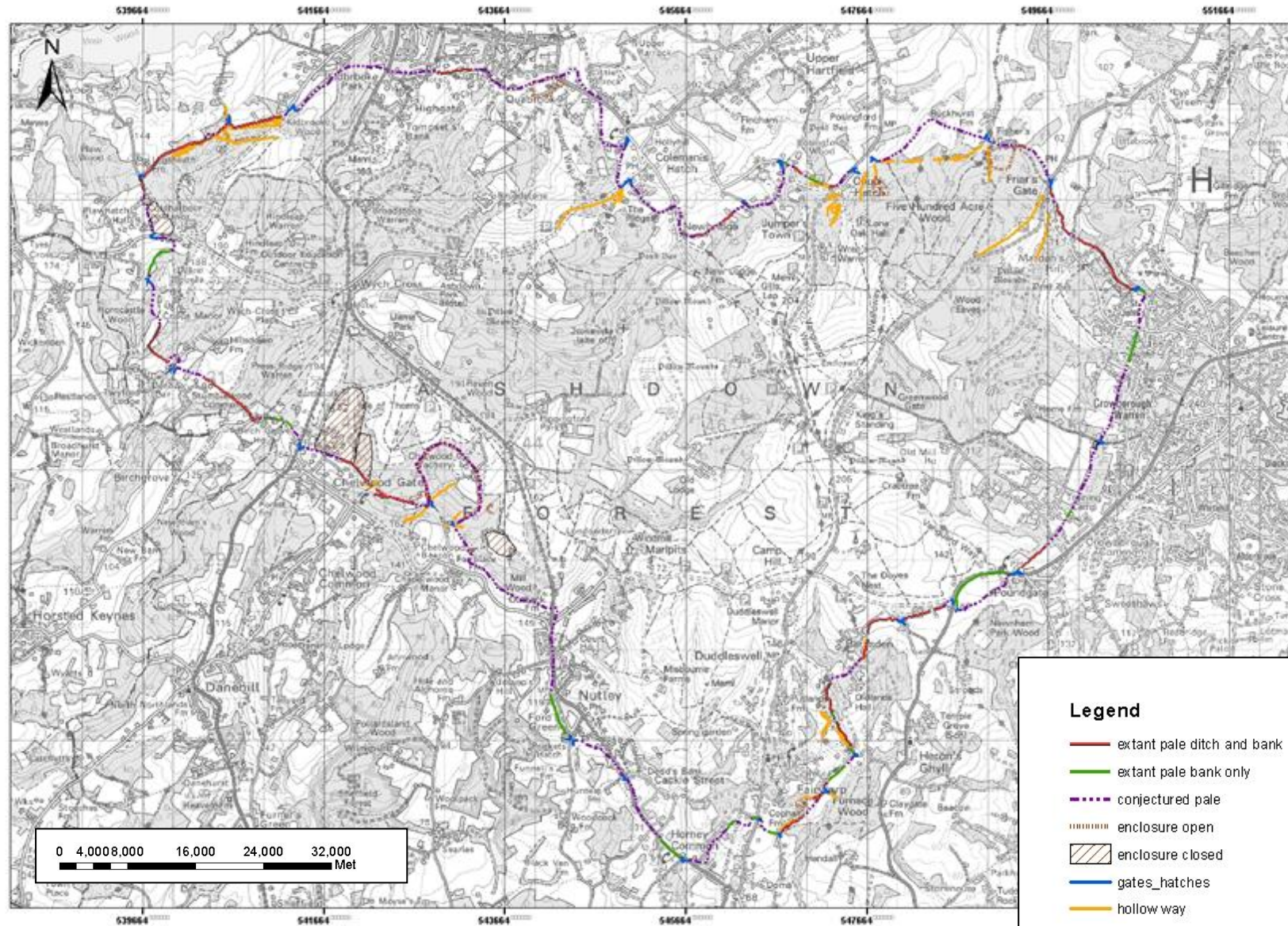


Figure 35: Surviving Evidence and Conjectured Pale



## 8 Sketches of banks and ditches

### 8.1 Introduction

A series of profiles of the ditch and bank were drawn in locations where it was possible to see a reasonable section of the boundary and when enough of the ditch and bank survived to make it worthwhile recording. The numbers in brackets refer to the profiles in Fig. 36.

#### 8.1.1 Oldlands 1-6

A number of profiles were taken quite closely together along a fairly accessible stretch of the existing ditch and bank of the pale. This demonstrated just how quickly the profiles change over a short stretch of the feature. This could be due to a number of factors, including:

- Roads or trackways built into the ditch of the pale (1)
- Field or property boundaries (2)
- The slope of the land (2-6)

It is likely that the pale survived along this stretch because the entire boundary to the east was that of Oldlands Hall and to the west (ex-Forest) was mostly in the roadside waste of the trackway leading to properties further along the track. In addition, this is also a long distance path, the Weald Way.

Where the land fell away sharply beyond the pale the ditch was wider and deeper, (3-5) which may indicate that the topography influenced the size of the earthwork construction. Where there was a steep slope leading out of the pale the defences were necessarily bigger to prevent the deer from jumping out more easily downhill.

The asymmetrical spread of the bank beyond the pale could be seen stretching for some 5 to 7 metres into the adjoining field downslope. As previously suggested, this could be an example of a surviving free-board, or perhaps it reflects the collapsed spread of a once much higher bank?

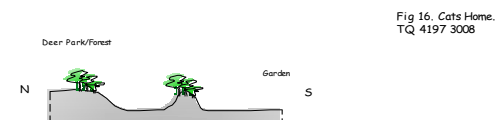
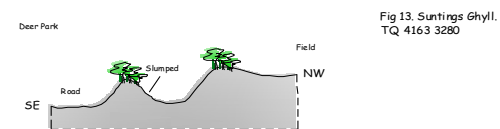
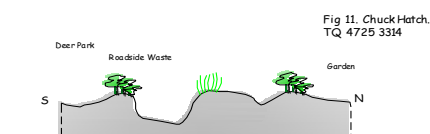
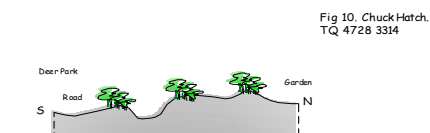
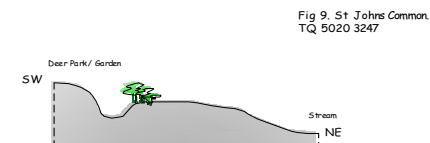
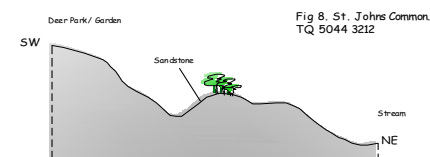
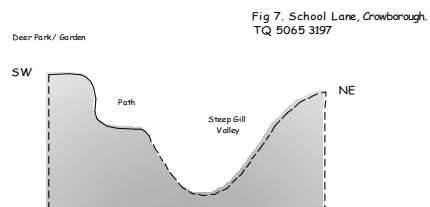
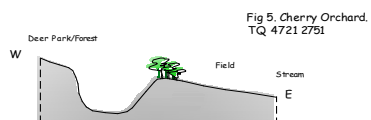
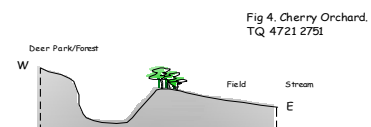
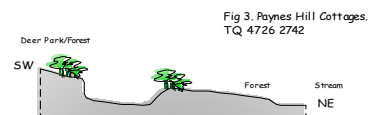
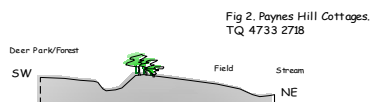
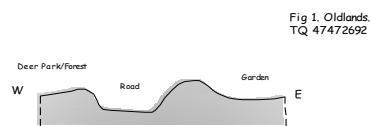


Fig.36 (1-17) Field Sketches.

Topographic Sections Not to  
Scale.

### **8.1.2 St John's Common, School Lane, Crowborough 7-9**

The land drops precipitously here, to a deeply incised gill valley. A short section of footpath runs below what was the edge of the enclosed deer park. (7). There is no evidence of a ditch and it is unlikely that one would be needed here; the sudden and steep drop would be barrier enough, especially since, as previously noted, deer prefer to be able to see where they are jumping.

A short distance further on the stream runs through a shallow valley and the ditch and asymmetrical bank of the pale are placed some 30-40 metres westwards up the valley sides (8). The topography of the land changes radically in 150 metres and the profile of the ditch and bank changes accordingly (8-9).

### **8.1.3 Chuck Hatch to Steppey Lane (Elliot's Gate) 10-13**

Once again a reasonable, but very short, section of the pale survives at the junction of the B2026 to Hartfield and the road to Newbridge (10-11), with a once-deep ditch where the land slopes uphill out of the deer-park, making an easy and effective barrier.

Steppey Lane (12) is probably the location for Elliot's Gate, which seems to have only been recorded in the earliest surveys. The pale survives in reasonable condition as a deep 'u'-shaped ditch, much bigger than the surviving bank which is now incorporated into a field boundary hedge. The earthwork remains here are probably a good example of the ditch and bank adjacent to a gate and were helpful in locating the line of the pale, which deviated slightly from the documented boundary.

At Suntings Ghyll (13) the land from within to without the pale slopes very steeply uphill. At this location there is more evidence of a very deep ditch which would have made it more difficult for deer to escape. Again, the earthworks of the pale survive in a steep section of roadside waste.

### **8.1.4 Mudbrookes 14**

A fairly long length of the ditch and bank of the pale survive from today's Prior Hatch (ex Claypits Gate) to Legsheath. The boundary has a remarkably consistent appearance along its length where the surrounding landscape is fairly level. The bank is much eroded and the



remaining ditches shallow, but the similar elongated profile, seen elsewhere, of the bank extends into the adjoining field beyond the pale.

### 8.1.5 Tudbridge 15

A good section of the pale survives here, on fairly flat ground, on what was once open common land. The profiles of the bank are fairly typical, steeply cut, with a more pronounced symmetrical standing bank than the asymmetrical profiles often found on more steeply sloping land. In locations such as these maybe the pale would have looked as it does in the reconstruction image on the front cover of this report. A similar section of the pale can be found in the Barnsgate area, also on fairly level ground.

### 8.1.6 Chelwood Gate 16-17

A good section of the pale survives here, on fairly flat ground, on what was once open common land. The profiles of the bank are fairly typical, steeply cut, with a more pronounced symmetrical standing bank than the asymmetrical profiles often found on more steeply sloping land.

### 8.1.7 Summary

The sketches demonstrate how much the extant ditch and bank varies in shape and form over a relatively short distance. This is sometimes due to subsequent alterations over a long period of time. For example, boundary changes from old enclosures to more modern property boundaries, whether the fields adjacent to the pale were ploughed or left in woodland, and whether roads were built along what may once have been footpaths following the line of the pale. They also shows how the depth and width of the ditch varied with the topography, being deeper and steeper on sloping ground.

This is true for nearly all the instances along the entire parts of the existing pale. It is very doubtful that anywhere has survived unchanged. The least changed parts of the existing pale survive between field boundaries, in roadside waste that has reverted to woodland and on those few slopes where it was impossible to use the land for any other later purpose.

## 9 Conclusion

What became obvious during the course of this survey was the sheer effort and ingenuity involved in the creation of this boundary. The terrain over which this barrier had to transverse included steep inward-facing slopes, steep outward-facing slopes, deeply incised gill valleys and their streams and flatter, more open common land and valley bottoms. In these outer regions of Ashdown Forest the lie of the land is constantly changing and this must have had an effect on the physical shape and form of the bank and ditch and even possibly the height to which the palisade was built. It is even possible that in some places there was no ditch and bank, only a fence. Ashdown Forest deer park was one of the largest of its kind and covered an area up to 14,000 acres, with a perimeter of roughly 23 miles. Maintaining the palisade fence, once it had been built, would have been time consuming and costly. This could be one of the reasons that the deer park, early on in its history, was divided into wards for maintenance purposes.

However, it is interesting to note that a deer park pale was a deterrent but was not necessarily fool proof, or in this case, deer proof. Deer probably did not spend their entire life trying to escape when they were well fed and used to an area. They may well have been contained in areas inside the pale, in a 'pale within the pale'.

Given the large size of the deer park, its varied terrain and the variety of landscapes, from common land, heathland, and pasture to woodland, it would have made for exciting and challenging hunting. In contrast to other, much smaller parks, this was not just a deer larder. There may have been conscious efforts to provide areas which deer could be driven towards, where they could be more easily killed. The early division into wards may have separated off hunting areas from those areas of the deer park used for other purposes, such as raising stock, providing feed for the deer, grazing for other animals, rabbit warrens and woodland management. Conversely, the divisions may have been for purely administrative and other management purposes.

The first reference found to enclosure of the deer park comes in 1273, followed shortly after by a record of repair to the pale in 1282. In 1564, and later in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, the physical boundary was clearly documented and this boundary can be traced on modern maps. Enough mostly small and eroded sections of this documented boundary were found during the field survey to suggest that this is the same boundary that was first built towards the end of the 13th century. It is highly unlikely, given the difficult terrain, that the pale would have changed its course much over the years as it was cleverly engineered in the first place. Obviously there would have been some alterations and the gates and hatches onto the Forest

did change, sometimes when an illicit gate was made into the pale, or the neighbouring landowner had enough influence to construct a new entrance.

Where the pale survives today is almost always in the dark corners of the Ashdown Forest and just beyond it, where the land was never fit for building or any form of agriculture, often because the gradients were so steep. The location of these awkward property boundaries probably have changed little since the area was dis-emparked at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and thus something of the ditch and bank of the pale still survives, although much modified. Over time, a succession of road builders have utilised the ditch of the pale to build minor roads and footpaths and even part of the A22, as at Horney Common. The remnants of the pale survive in odd corners of the roadside waste as at Suntings Ghyll, Chuck Hatch and Steppey Lane.

The pale has been eroded and modified by later enclosure, but today's Forest boundary and the old deer park boundary coincide in several places; Fairwarp, Oldlands and Prior's Hatch to Legsheath. Some sections of the pale survived better where deer park met common land as at Chelwood Gate, Stumblewood and St John's Commons.

Often the land surrounding the pale was colonised by dense stands of straggly holly. It rarely grew in the ditch itself but was abundant on both the bank and the surrounding land. It is not possible to say whether holly likes the environment and has successfully colonised these outer, unmanaged reaches of the Forest or whether it was once planted, either as a stock proof hedge or a source of fodder. It was used in the past as a stock proof fence and is extensively found today, forming an effective boundary hedge to those properties that have been built along the line of the pale.

In this busy corner of the south-east of England we have much to thank the creator, possibly Peter de Savoy, for first enclosing part of the wider forest to create his deer park, for within that boundary is contained the rich and varied legacy of the still-protected area that we know as Ashdown Forest.

The shape of the deer park boundary has had a lasting effect on the landscape as it has dictated the course of some of the minor roads and footpaths and defined the line of property boundaries. The southernmost entrance to the Forest along Forge Lane is the ditch of the Pale. The Crow and Gate public house on the A26 is set at an odd angle to the road, but it is the buildings that line up parallel to the line of the old pale, which also acts as the boundary of the Forest today.



This study took advantage of a variety of sources to map the pale, from records belonging to the Duchy of Lancaster, a whole range of maps over a long period of time, to the very modern technology of lidar. Used in conjunction with field work, it was possible to map the boundary that enclosed the deer park. Without the documentary evidence it would have been very difficult to say with any certainty that the boundaries found in the landscape today were that of the deer park. The newly defined mapped layer can be used in the future if any development work takes place and may present opportunities to undertake targeted excavations.

Undoubtedly there are still sections of the pale yet to be found and this study has raised many further questions as to the use of the land within the pale. It has also shown how one man's vision for an exclusive deer park has given us the legacy of precious open access land in East Sussex and how much this has dictated the look of the modern landscape today.

## 10 Further work

Whilst there has been much work done on the ecology and history of the Forest, having mapped the extent of the deer park it would be interesting to try to locate and more accurately map those activities that went on inside the enclosed area. The lidar images do show, in the areas away from the dense holly that has colonised so much of the pale bank, some intriguing, long linear boundaries which may be associated with some or any of the following:

- Wards
- Forest Lodges
- Deer pasture
- Deer drives
- Coppiced woodlands
- Pounds or enclosures
- Rabbit warrens

How much of the park was used for hunting and just why did someone go to so much trouble to enclose such a large area? Was it for exploitation of the natural resources within the park? Recent publications, Liddiard in the *Medieval Park*, Fletcher in *Gardens of Earthly Delight* and Miles on in *Parks in Medieval England* have questioned how much hunting actually went on in the parks. Fletcher suggests that where the topography was appropriate, hedges and banks were constructed to provide a method to force the deer to be driven towards nets or enclosures. Venison was a valued gift, but so were live deer, and deer from one park were used to stock, or restock, another one. Some of the long linear features, clearly shown on

some LiDAR images, may have something to do with hunting activities and further investigation and possibly excavation of some of these features may give us more information as to their use.

Chelwood Vachery is an interesting area which may have been outside the pale but could have been used as a larger enclosure for holding animals. The lidar shows some intriguing possible field boundaries and nearby enclosures, perhaps an example of a 'pale within a pale'.

It has been suggested that activity relating to deer parks, such as hay fields, can also be found outside, but adjacent to, the pale<sup>47</sup>. Therefore any future survey work should also be looking for this external evidence, perhaps through place name and field survey.

Having set up a model for finding the extant remains of a deer park on the ground, the method could be used to find out how much of the other deer parks of Sussex are extant. A good starting place would be Maresfield Park, which obviously had close connections with Ashdown. There are many other ex-deer parks within Sussex that may still have associated earthworks surviving.

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<sup>47</sup> Liddiard, R. 2007 *The Medieval Park: New Perspectives*, Windgather Press

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Front cover illustration of deer park pale by James Cope



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