

# English Heritage Battlefield Report: Lewes 1264

**Lewes (14 May 1264)**

**County:** East Sussex

**District:** Lewes

**Parishes:** Hamsey, Lewes, St Ann (Without)

**Grid Ref:** TQ 398109

## Historical Context

The movement towards an English monarchy controlled by law, which had begun with the Charter sealed at Runnymede in 1215, gathered fresh speed during the great crisis of 1258. A potent combination of difficulties for the Crown presaged an emergency of national proportions. Discontent over the conduct of local government, the extreme unpopularity of Henry III's half-brothers, military disaster in Wales, the decision to accept the crown of Sicily for the King's second son Edmund, and the failure of the harvest in 1257 provided an opportunity for those who wished to reform the government of the realm.

Henry III needed money to solve his difficulties and if he was to obtain it from his subjects he would have to address their grievances. The King thus had little choice but to agree to the election of a reforming committee composed of twelve barons and twelve members of his Council. The results of the committee's deliberations, issued in 1258, became known as the Provisions of Oxford and Henry and the barons swore an oath to uphold them. In reality Henry sought only to escape both the Provisions and his oath, and in January 1264 the Provisions of Oxford were formally annulled by the French king, Louis IX, in the Mise of Amiens.

This flagrant disregard of the Provisions, coupled with growing lawlessness throughout England, meant that civil war was almost inevitable; particularly as the baronial faction led by Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, preferred to take up arms against the King rather than acquiesce to the annulment. Early in April 1264 Henry made what amounted to a declaration of war on the barons when he raised his dragon standard at Oxford and set out for Northampton accompanied by the feudal host. Northampton, Leicester and Nottingham fell to the King before Simon could come to their aid, and the baronial army turned instead against Rochester. The town and the outer bailey of the castle were taken by the barons, but the keep, under the command of Earl Warenne, continued to hold out.

Simon was forced to draw most of his army away from Rochester when Henry feinted against London, and the royal army was able to effect the relief of the city. Henry moved on to capture Tonbridge and Winchelsea and by the time he arrived at Lewes on 11 May his troops were in need of a pause for rest and recuperation. Time was the very thing which Simon de Montfort sought to deny his royal enemy, for the barons had to strike against the King before he was substantially reinforced.

Simon marched from London in pursuit of the King and, ideally, a trial by battle and his army reached Fletching some 9 miles to the north of Lewes some time before 13 May. The barons made one last attempt at negotiation and compromise, but their overtures were insultingly rejected. There was now no alternative to a resolution of issues in battle.

## Location and Description of the Battlefield

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The location of the Battle of Lewes lies on the Downs to the immediate north-west of the town and within the town itself. The battle may be divided into three clear phases and there are as many interpretations of where the fighting took place. The phases were: first, an encounter between Prince Edward's division of the royal army and the left wing of the baronial army; second, the main clash between the remainder of the rival armies; third, fighting in the streets of Lewes and around the castle. To draw a boundary around the ground covered by the differing interpretations of where the first two phases occurred would require a battlefield area bounded by: in the south-west Lewes Prison, in the west Cuckoo Bottom, in the north-west Mount Harry, in the north Offham, in the north-east the crest of Offham Hill, in the east the River Ouse, and in the south-east Lewes Castle. A more precise boundary, however, can be determined by a reconsideration of the evidence.

The problem of locating the site of the fighting in phases one and two of the battle with any precision stems, of course, from the lack of a record which provides details of exactly where the clash of arms took place. Our knowledge of the battle depends principally upon chronicles produced in religious Houses, and a set of satirical songs, none of which solves the problem of where the first two phases of the fighting occurred within the general area already identified. Local tradition, in the form of the naming of 'Mount Harry' as symbolic of a link with Henry III and the existence of what has been taken to be an ancient memorial cross<sup>1</sup> patterned in the Downs on Plumpton Plain, is not seen as decisive since both Mount Harry and the cross are well over two miles away from the town itself. Both may have been to the rear of Simon's army but only one writer (Lieutenant Colonel H F L Dimmock) has seen them as being indicative of where the fighting took place.

The majority of the interpretations of the battle place the centre of the fighting either on the upper slopes of the Downs at the top of Offham Hill (e.g. Sir James Ramsey) or on the lower slopes (Sir Charles Oman) between Landport Bottom and the site of Lewes Prison. A third location, the area to the west of Offham Hill extending across Mount Harry to Buckland bank has been suggested by Colonel Dimmock.

Colonel Dimmock is the sole proponent, at least in print<sup>2</sup>, of the theory that the area around Mount Harry was the site of phases one and two of the battle. In his opinion the armies were deployed facing east (the Barons) and west (the King), rather than in the generally accepted orientation of north (the King) and South (the barons). Colonel Dimmock rejects the 'forward' school, which argues that the battle took place on the lower slopes of the Downs close to Lewes, because this would not have allowed the royal army sufficient area to deploy or have provided enough space for the cavalry to manoeuvre. He also looked for a battlefield that would allow 'a frontage of at least 2,000 yards' and 'a distance of about 1,000 yards to 2,000 yards....interposed between the armies to enable them to deploy unmolested'.<sup>3</sup>

Given these essential conditions, Colonel Dimmock was able to locate three positions for the possible deployment of the baronial army: 'The first we shall call "the Race Course Position" (see Map 1), being the ridge upon which the Grandstand of Lewes Race Course is situated, about one mile from the castle. The second is the Mount Harry position being a mile further west, and the third is the Black Cap position about another mile west of Mount Harry.' Colonel Dimmock presents a detailed case in regard to each position and there is merit in examining each in turn.

The 'Race Course Position', the one chosen by Colonels A H Burne and C H Lemmon in their respective works<sup>4</sup> on Lewes, is dismissed by Colonel Dimmock on the basis that Henry could have outflanked any deployment by Simon on this position by approaching along the spur of the Downs to the west of the race course (Balmer Down), and appearing behind the barons via Black Cap and Mount Harry. This presupposes, of course, that the royal army had time to contemplate and execute such a manoeuvre and that Simon would have been unaware that it was taking place. He also dislikes the position since the valley running between the race course and the spur of Balmer Down would make it difficult for Simon to reinforce his right flank. This objection again tends to credit the royal army with a tactical ability which, demonstrated by its performance in the battle, it did not possess, and also ignores the fact that if Simon's deployment was on the 'Race Course Position' Henry would have been able to see the baronial army clearly from the outset. In this situation it is difficult to believe that the royal army would have done anything

but make straight for the enemy by the shortest possible route. Simon, as an experienced soldier would predict that this would happen and he took steps to exploit it by creating a reserve.

Colonel Dimmock takes up the question of the baronial reserve force in his rejection of the 'Mount Harry Position', claiming that both here and in the 'Race Course Position' Simon could not have manoeuvred his reserve adequately or placed it anywhere other than behind the left flank. In the Colonel's opinion only from the left could Simon have seen what was occurring in front of his army. Since we do not know the size of either army except through the speculative estimates of modern commentators, it is difficult to form a judgement on this point except to say that Simon placed the weaker element of his Army (the Londoners) on his left flank. Given that he therefore saw his left flank as the one most likely to experience a crisis during the battle, it would be sensible for both the reserve and its commander to be in a position to take action there as soon as it became necessary.

Colonel Dimmock's chosen location for the armies and hence the battle is the 'Black Cap Position' well to the west of Offham Hill. In his opinion, the King would have deployed on Mount Harry while Simon would have deployed between Black Cap and Buckland Hole. The royal attack would thus have been launched along the top of the ridge towards the west, with Plumpton Plain possibly providing the site of the attack upon Simon's baggage train. Simon had established his camp around Fletching and his own manor of Sheffield some 9 miles to the north of Lewes. His approach march to Lewes could not be made from the east without crossing the tidal marshes along the Ouse or the single bridge in the town, and it is not unreasonable to assume that he reached the battlefield from the north, probably via the sunken track from Offham village. This would have brought the baronial army up the north slope of Offham Hill near to the modern reservoir and then onto the plateau above the town. For the army to have then marched away from the town westwards for a further two miles to Black Cap, turned round, and there stood to await the arrival of the royal army seems to represent an unusually complicated approach to battle for a thirteenth-century force.

Since the scouts and pickets of both armies had clashed in the days preceding the battle there is no doubt that the location of the baronial army was known to the King. What Simon wished to achieve on the morning of 14 May 1264 was a clear demonstration that he was now offering battle. He was in effect issuing a challenge to the royal army and deploying east to west between Mount Harry and Buckland Bank would have reduced the effectiveness of the challenge. However, with the baronial army sitting astride Offham Hill, Henry, Prince Edward, and their soldiers would have recognised this manoeuvre for exactly what it was - a direct challenge to battle. It had the desired effect. Prince Edward, a young man of wayward temperament, led his troops immediately into action without waiting for his father to deploy the infantry. At a stroke the royal army cut its offensive power by nearly a third as Edward's cavalry rapidly outdistanced the royal infantry. Moreover, it is difficult to accept that Simon would readily have surrendered the advantage of being able to look down into his enemy's camp and risk losing all the confidence and authority that such a deployment would bring to his troops. Thus while the 'Black Cap Position' could conceivably have been the site of the Battle of Lewes it does seem improbable.

A direct challenge to battle would have been achieved had the baronial army deployed closer to the town on the lower slopes, but here Simon would run the risk of losing tactical control of the battle at an early stage due to the proximity of the armies. The barons might also have lost the initiative as their approach would have been visible to the town for a longer period.

We know from the surviving chronicle accounts of the battle that the rival armies deployed before the action became general. We do not know, however, the numbers in each army and thus the area required for their deployment. Estimates of the troops involved in the battle vary in contemporary chronicles from 15,000 to over 100,000, and the casualty figures between 4,000 and 20,000. The lowest of these estimates, 15,000, is probably closest to the truth with perhaps a royal army of 10,000 men facing a baronial army of 5,000. Simon de Montfort deployed his troops in three divisions with a supporting reserve and in this formation 5,000 men could have been accommodated along the crest of Offham Hill stretching west to the Race Course. On the royal side, Prince Edward led his own division of perhaps 3,000 cavalry into action ahead of the other two divisions led by the King

and Cornwall. The battle frontage of the royal army had therefore shrunk considerably by the time it began to ascend the slope of the Downs. The royal army was probably further divided by the spurs running south-east from Downs, and it may have necessitated further re-alignment before the King's troops clashed with Simon's. Alternatively, confusion may have set in immediately after Edward launched his charge and the subsequent royal attack could well have arrived piecemeal.

Much of the debate concerning the extent of the battlefield has centred upon the location of grave pits on the Downs. The location of the initial clash between Edward's cavalry and the left flank of the baronial army seems to be confirmed as the crest of Offham Hill by the discovery of large numbers of skeletons in the Offham chalkpits. These were apparently buried in small pits containing six to nine bodies so there must be a possibility that they were plague victims. Three mass graves containing roughly 500 skeletons each were discovered near the east entrance to the modern prison in 1810, during work to lower the level of the Brighton turnpike. Such a heavy concentration of skeletons suggests a single process of burial of the victims of a event like a battle. Plague pits would not be left open for the period of weeks which would be needed to reach this total from victims of disease. In 1846 another mass grave was found by railway excavators in the grounds of the Priory. This produces a total of perhaps 2,000 skeletons which can be linked to the battle and all of which were located on the lower slopes of the Downs or in Lewes. The number killed during the fighting may have amounted to some 3,000 (chronicle estimates range from 2,700 to 20,000) and this would be consistent with the number of skeletons discovered. Graves have not been found on the higher area of the Downs beyond Mount Harry towards Black Cap.

### **Landscape Evolution**

Lewes was established as a Saxon strong hold with good natural defences, strategically located on the navigable river Ouse, where it cuts through the Downs. In medieval times it was a prosperous port and a market town. The Saxon street pattern of High street with alleys running off south still exists with suburbs east, south and west. The Priory, St Anne's Church and the Castle date from the 11th century. At the time of the battle the town and its suburbs had fourteen churches, a Merchant Guild and a market trading sheep, wool, barley from the South Downs, cattle, leather, iron and timber from the Weald, fish from the coast and wines from Aquitaine. Downland and river flood meadows - 'brooks' - would have extended as far as the town walls in the north.

The downland area would have changed little apart from some arable cultivation in dip slope valleys, planting on the northern scarp slope, parkland around Coombe House, and the development of the Race course in the mid 18th century. Windmills are shown on the 1st edition OS map on Offham Hill and above Spital, probably on long-used sites.

### **The Battle: its sources and interpretation**

We have no eyewitness records of the Battle of Lewes, or accounts by participants to support the course of events as they are reconstructed today, although it has been assumed that some at least of the chroniclers of the battle would have had an opportunity of speaking to soldiers who fought there. An interesting and comparatively straightforward account of the battle is provided by William of Rishanger. William was a monk of Saint Albans who continued the monastery annals at some point after the death of Matthew Paris in 1259. It is thus a contemporary source written at a place not far removed from Lewes by a monk with considerable historical skill:

Earl Simon passed that night without sleep, giving time, as was his habit, to divine offices and prayers and exhorting his men to make sincere confessions. Walter de Cantilupe, Bishop of Worcester, absolved them all, and commanded that for the remission of their sins they should manfully strive for justice on that day, promising to all who should die thus the entry into the heavenly kingdom.

Battle being therefore certain, at daybreak before the rising of the sun, they went out from the village of Fletching, where a great part of them had spent the night, and which was about ten miles from Lewes. Before the start earl Simon de Montfort girt Gilbert de Clare with a knight's sword.

When they had marched near the town of Lewes and were hardly two miles distant from it, Simon with his men ascended a hill and placed his chariot there in the middle of his baggage, and having purposely placed and firmly erected his standard upon it, he encircled it with many armed men. Then with his own forces he held the ground on either side and awaited the issue of events. In the chariot he set four London citizens, who a little before, when he passed the night in Southwark, had conspired to betray him. This he did as a warning.

When he had thus prudently arrayed his forces, he ordered white crosses to be sewn on their backs and breasts over their armour, so that they should be distinguished from their enemies, and to indicate that they were fighting for justice. At dawn the baronial army suddenly attacked the king's guards who had gone out to seek for food or fodder and killed many of them.

When the king therefore was sure of the coming of the barons, he soon advanced with his men, with his standards unfurled and preceded by the royal banner, portending the judgment of death, which they call the 'Dragon'. His army was divided into three parts: the first line was commanded by Edward, the king's eldest son, together with William de Valance, earl of Pembroke, and John de Warenne, earl of Surrey and Sussex; the second by the king of Germany with his son Henry; and the third by king Henry himself. The baronial forces were divided into four, of which the first line was given to Henry de Montfort, the second to Gilbert de Clare together with John FitzJohn, and William of Montchensy; in the third were the Londoners under Nicholas Segrave; while the earl himself with Thomas of Pelveston led the fourth.

Then Edward with his line rushed on his enemies with such violence that he compelled them to retreat, and many of them, to the number of sixty knights, it is said, were overwhelmed. Soon the Londoners were routed, for Edward thirsted for their blood because they had insulted his mother, and he chased them for four miles, slaughtering them most grievously. But through his absence the strength of the royalists was considerably diminished.

Meanwhile many of the might men of the royal army, seeing the earl's standard on the hill and thinking he was there, made their way thither and unexpectedly slew those London citizens, for they did not know that they were on their own side. In the meantime the earl and Gilbert de Clare were by no means inactive, for they smote, threw down and killed those who opposed them, endeavouring with the utmost eagerness to take the king alive. Therefore many of the king's supporters rushed together - John earl of Warenne, William de Valance, Guy de Lusignan, all the king's half brothers, Hugh Bigod and about three hundred warriors - and seeing the fierceness of the barons, fled. There were captured Richard, the king of Germany, Robert Bruce and John Comyn, who had led the Scots thither. Also King Henry had his horse wounded under him, and giving himself up to earl Simon was soon brought under guard to the priory.

There were killed on that day many Scottish barons, and a great number of the foot soldiers who came with them had their throats cut. Meanwhile Humphrey de Bohun earl of Hereford, John FitzAlan earl of Arundel, William Bardolf, Robert de Tateshale, Roger de Somery, Henry Percy and Philip Basset were taken prisoner. But on the king's side there fell the justiciar, William of Wilton and Fulk FitzWarin, the one slain by a sword, the other drowned in the river. On the barons' side fell Ralph Haringod, baron, and William Blund the earl's standard bearer. On both sides five thousand are said to have fallen.

When Edward and those fighting with him returned from the slaughter of the Londoners, not knowing

what had happened to his father, he went round the town and came to Lewes castle. When he did not find his father there, he went to Lewes priory, where he found his father and learned what had happened. Meanwhile the barons made an assault on the castle, but as those shut up in it defended themselves manfully, the barons withdrew. When Edward saw their boldness within the castle, he was greatly inspirited, and collecting his men again, he wished to continue the battle afresh. Discovering this the barons sent arbitrators of peace, promising that they wished to treat for an effectual peace the next day.<sup>5</sup>

The course of events which we can piece together from the historical record provides an outline of the progress of the battle. On the morning of 14 May 1264 the baronial army led by Simon de Montfort deployed on the Downs to the north-west of the town of Lewes. The royal cavalry, under the command of Henry III's son Prince Edward, was stationed close to Lewes Castle, while the royal infantry together with the King had camped further south around St. Pancras Priory.

On the raising of the alarm Edward apparently led his cavalry into the field ahead of the infantry, charged the left of the baronial line (where Simon had placed the London contingent), broke through the troops there, and pursued them beyond the battlefield in the direction of Offham village. The King thus had little option but to launch an immediate attack in an attempt to take advantage of this opening success. The centre and right divisions of the royal army, led respectively by the King and the Earl of Cornwall, climbed the slope of the Downs to close with Simon's troops. The baronial army either stood on the defensive and waited for them to reach the top of the slope, or launched its own charge as the enemy drew close. Cornwall's division gave ground almost immediately, but it needed the intervention of Simon de Montfort's reserve to push Henry's and Cornwall's troops down the hill.

The baronial advance now gathered momentum, assisted by the slope, and the royal troops were forced back into Lewes, fighting desperately as they fell back to the castle and the priory. Only now did Prince Edward return to the battlefield with his weary cavalry. The Prince, heartened by the sturdy resistance maintained by the royal troops in the castle, sought to launch another attack. Having failed to find his father in the castle, the Prince may have located him at the Priory and here wiser counsels prevailed. The royal army had suffered significant casualties, several of Henry's noble supporters had already taken flight and much of Lewes was by now ablaze. A decision to accept the suggestion of negotiation already made by Simon was taken and the fighting gradually died down.

An incident which may have been part of a tactical deception by Simon is seized upon by several chroniclers who recounted the story in detail and with gusto. According to this deception Prince Edward was diverted from the critical part of the battlefield by the belief that de Montfort was hiding to the rear of the battlefield in an iron cart:

A few days before this Simon set out against the king, with the army of the Londoners, whom he was about to lead to the battle which we have mentioned, he caused a cunningly-devised chariot to be built, the whole of the outside of which he had covered with iron, and into it he thrust two of the citizens of London: they were old men, of some influence, but they were opposed to him and to the whole city; for they frequently dissuaded the people from going out with Simon against the king. And therefore it was that when this came to the ears of Simon, he shut them up as I have described, as a punishment for this wicked, foolish, and obstinate advice. Now, when the said army was about to leave the city, Simon took with him, in their carriage, these crafty orators, in order that they might not cause the city to surrender to the royal interest while the army of the Londoners was employed in the expedition against the king. The chariot had a little narrow door, through which these aged persons could go out and in, but still under watchful custody, when the necessities of nature so required it. On the evening of the day previous to that upon which the battle was fought between the king and the barons, when it grew towards nightfall, the entrance to this chariot, through which victuals used to be conveyed to these burgesses, was so firmly closed up by Simon's orders, that from that time they had no longer any opportunity whatever of issuing forth. Round about that chariot Simon had caused to be hung those

standards which are called pennons, that by this means the king and his army might be deluded into the belief that Simon was in the chariot; in which, however, the true Simon was not: for at that very time he was lurking about in woods, which were surrounded by mountains and steep rocks, at some distance from the town of Lewes....

So, when the king went out to battle against the barons, those who were the more forward in the army noticed those pennons which I have mentioned as having been hung round about the chariot, and they pressed forward to reach it. The Londoners had already told the royal army that within the chariot sat Simon, whom they had appointed as their leader in the battle; and they added: 'He has resolved to keep behind us, and he refuses to go out with us to fight for us as he promised. We are very suspicious about him on this account, for he pretends that he is so ill that he cannot mount his horse. In truth, we were apprehensive that he would betray us to the king, his son-in-law, and that he would attack us on the rear, along with the royal army; and therefore we have caused this very strong chariot to be made, so that if we must needs die in battle, he shall die with us; for we will put plenty of fuel beneath this chariot in which he is, and burn him within it'. Emboldened by such words, those persons whom I have described as being the more forward in the royal army, pressed forward to reach this conveyance in which Simon was, as they believed. Whilst they were engaged with all their energies in attacking this fraudulent vehicle, and made no progress in their assault, they lost ground and courage at one and the same time. As for the chariot, it was of great assistance to the Londoners; for, whilst very many of the king's army were endeavouring with all their strength to break it open, the lives of those whom I have described as the Londoners, as well far off as near at hand, were saved; for the barons had not as yet come up and joined them, and therefore, during the delay occasioned by this interval of suspense, while the assault was being made upon this deceptive conveyance, many of the Londoners were not engaged in the action. So when the army of the barons came up, and assailed the king's army on the rear, a large proportion of the Londoners who had been drawn up in front of the king's army (such of them especially as were near the chariot) preserved their strength unabated; and they afterwards fought all the more effectively against the exhausted soldiers who were on the king's side. This deceptive piece of baggage had been constructed partly with the very intention that it might act as a device which should prove for the security of the inhabitants of the city of London; for though the royal troops were earnestly engaged in assailing it with all their energies, they entirely failed, and at the same time the Londoners continued fresh and vigorous, and ready for the battle. The effort was continued for nearly the whole day, almost to the eighth hour, by the royal troops, who attempted from every point of assault to make themselves masters of this chariot, in which, as they believed, Simon was cooped up; and in so doing they lost many men of undaunted courage, many others of their knights were grievously wounded, much labour was lost, and much anxiety bestowed upon it, as one troop followed another. The best of the king's forces seemed to have been seized with madness, and they rent the air with the wildest shouts, crying out, 'Come out, Simon; come out!' Their impression was that Simon had some device by which he could open the door from within, so as to be able to leave the carriage; and therefore they kept crying out continually, 'Come out, Simon, you devil! come out of the carriage!' Whilst they continued these shouts at the top of their voices, at last the two citizens of London, who were within, contrived to make them understand that Simon, whom they were seeking, was not there, but only two unfortunates, whom Simon had entrapped out of spite to the king; 'for he was apprehensive,' said they, 'that the city of London would have been surrendered to the king's service by our means, had we remained at home in our houses, whilst the others went out to fight against the royal troops'.<sup>6</sup>

This long and complex saga, whilst apparently holding great interest at the time is probably nothing more than a much embroidered account of an attack by Edward's cavalry upon the baronial baggage train. We are not told where the train was located, but it is probable that it was to the rear of Offham Hill.

It has a parallel on the royalist side in the story that after the defeat of his division, Richard of Cornwall sought refuge in a Windmill on the battlefield:

In this battle, Richard, earl of Cornwall, the brother of king Henry (who a few days previously had defied the barons to battle, styling them traitors to the king and the kingdom), being apprehensive of his life, took refuge in a windmill, and there he barred the door upon himself. When it was near eventide, on the day of the battle, the barons came up to it, and called out loudly to him, 'Come down, come down, you wretched miller! Come out of your mill - come out!' They upbraided him with his timidity and cowardice, and added, 'It is a great misfortune to you that you must be called a miller - you who so lately defied us poor barons to battle; and when you defied us, no less glorious title would serve you than that of the king of the Romans and perpetual Augustus!' For a short time previously he had been the king of Germany, in consequence of which he styled himself 'the perpetual Augustus and the king of the Romans'. So Richard at last did come out of the mill, and the barons carried him off, after they had put him in chains; and then they placed him in close confinement. But it happened that as he was exceedingly wealthy, he was liberated, about five months afterwards, by the payment of a large ransom, no less than seventeen thousand pounds of sterling and five thousand pounds of gold - a sum worth having.<sup>6</sup>

### **Indication of Importance**

The Battle of Lewes has often been cited as a landmark in the political evolution of the English monarchy and of parliamentary government. Nineteenth century historians regarded Simon de Monfort as the champion of Parliament and limited monarchy, and Lewes as a vital military factor in the progress to democratic government. The battle, and the negotiations which followed it, certainly allowed Simon to govern England in the name of Henry III for some fifteen months. Yet after Lewes, Simon was little more than a military dictator even though his object was to achieve government by consent through Parliament. Progress towards reform was constantly compromised by the military effort needed to guard against the return of the King's supporters, against intervention in England's affairs by other nations, and to deal with the rebellious and treacherous Marchers. Simon simply did not have sufficient support to succeed or to retain for long the power he gained at Lewes.

Yet if Simon failed in his immediate objective of government by consent the example of Lewes remained as a potent lesson that government is established for the good of the governed, and that future monarchs might disregard this principle at their peril. After Lewes absolute royal authority was never quite the same again for the battle demonstrated that a monarch who prejudiced good and fair government might well lose control of that government to his people, if only temporarily. For Simon de Monfort and Henry III, Lewes was not a decisive battle. The final decision as to whether the Baronial reform of government would hold sway in the middle of the thirteenth century was to await another trial of battle at Evesham in August 1265.

### **Battlefield Area**

The battlefield area boundary defines the outer reasonable limit of the battle, taking into account the positions of the combatants at the outset of fighting and the focal area of the battle itself. It does not include areas over which fighting took place subsequent to the main battle. Wherever possible, the boundary has been drawn so that it is easily appreciated on the ground.

The boundary has been drawn to encompass the initial clash of Edward and the Londoners on or near to the crest of Offham Hill, and the fighting on the lower slopes. The battle did extend through Lewes to the Priory and Castle but this area, being built up, is not included in the battlefield area. For illustrative purposes, the full extent of the battle is represented by a dashed line into modern Lewes.

The battlefield area does not accommodate the possibility of the battle stretching to Mount Harry or Black Cap.

## Notes

1. The cross is reputed to have been cut in the chalk of the Downs at Plumpton by the monks of St. Pancras Priory in memory of those killed in the Battle of Lewes. The cross is thirty yards by thirty yards and it would have been plainly visible to the north. In 1924 the Brighton and Hove Archaeological Club placed a memorial stone in the centre of the cross.
2. Dimmock, H.L.F.'Some Musings on the Battle of Lewes AD 1264'. *Journal of the Royal Artillery* Vol. LXI No. 2 (July 1934) pp258-267.
3. *ibid* pp260-261.
4. Burne, A.H. *More Battlefields of England* London 1952 pp100-114. Lemmon, C H 'The Field of Lewes' printed in *The Battle of Lewes 1264, Its place in English History*. Lewes 1964.
5. *Chronicle of William de Rishanger of the Barons' Wars* ed. J.O.Halliwell (Camden Society 1840).
6. *Chronica De Mailros* Bannatyne Club (Edinburgh 1835).
7. *ibid*