

Lewes Priory, Sussex
The post-Dissolution
mansion and gardens of
Lords Place

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ENGLISH HERITAGE

LEWES PRIORY, SUSSEX

The post-Dissolution mansion and gardens of Lords Place

ISSN 1478-7008

Archaeological Investigation Report Series AI/7/2005

County: East Sussex
District: Lewes
Parish: Southover
NGR: TQ 416 095
NMR No: TQ 40 NW 54
SAM/RSM No:
SMR No:
Date of survey: April 1993
Surveyed by: Paul Everson
Report author: Paul Everson
Illustrations by: Philip Sinton and Paul Everson

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1 Introduction

The Cluniac priory of Lewes has a number of claims to fame that have absorbed the attention of scholars:

- its early post-Conquest foundation by William of Warenne and his wife Gundrada, close on the heels of the king's own creation of St Martin *de Bello* at Battle;
- with that goes the founders' enthusiasm to attract and support a community from Cluny, which might bring reformed and developed liturgical practices fully in line with those that Lanfranc sought to introduce at Canterbury through his *Monastic Constitutions* (Knowles 1963, ch 8 esp 151-3; Anderson in Lyne 1997, 5-6; for the king's contemporary interest in developing relations with Cluny, see Cowdrey 1990);
- the architectural expression of the connexion with Cluny in the plan and elevations of the 12th-century monastic church (eg Smith 1964; Anderson 1988; Lyne 1997, 7-11; and sceptically Fernie 2000, 186);
- contemporary Romanesque sculptural material of exceptional quality, most notably the Tournai marble grave cover of Gundrada herself (Anderson 1992);
- the deployment of gunpowder and undermining by the Italian Giovanni Portinari and his demolition gang to bring about the expeditious and conspicuously complete destruction of the ritually important elements of the priory's conventual buildings in preparation for the site's secular occupation by Thomas Cromwell's son, Gregory (Knowles 1979, 267).

The agenda for study has been set by the priory's medieval fame, albeit that a detailed understanding of the monastic buildings – and notably of the main monastic church – is quite rudimentary and to a large extent archaeologically uncertain (St John Hope 1886 and 1906). The after-life of the monastic precinct following the Dissolution, beyond Portinari's demolition contract, has not been part of that agenda. Nor indeed have the actual physical remains now occupying the precinct – except as excavated and displayed elements of the great monastery. Yet the most substantial physical features on the site actually belong to that after-life, as elements of the layout of formal gardens and the associated great house of the later 16th and 17th centuries, known as 'The Lords Place' and belonging to no less a family than the Sackville earls of Dorset. They constitute a significant phase of the site's history in their own right. But additionally the earthworks that make up parts of the formal gardens have acted as the main factor in the inaccessibility and (as a corollary) the state of preservation of the principal conventual structures of the priory. Also, as usual in such circumstances, the post-Dissolution use will inevitably have mediated the form and differential survival of medieval remains, so that they cannot be properly understood without a clear grasp on the manipulation inherent in the later stages of the site's use

This report derives from a minimum of fieldwork undertaken under the auspices of the former Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England by Paul Everson on 15-16 April 1993. This resulted from a request by the Lewes Priory Trust, following a site visit by Paul Everson with members of the Trust in 1991 that suggested that the major earthworks, the Mount and the Dripping Pan, are residual features from a formal garden of late 16th or early 17th-century date and high pretension. Their mis-categorisation within the NMR was a further justification, together with the relevance of the interpretation to local documentary research and to parts of the lapidary collection held in store at the Anne of Cleve's House Museum.

The fieldwork produced an RCHME level 2 site survey at 1:1250 scale. Archaeological detail was surveyed within the cartographical framework supplied by the OS 1:1250 basic scale sheets, TQ 4109 NW & NE: normal graphical methods were employed, using fibron tapes and an optical square. While led by the field remains and the insights that they bring forward, this report draws in some source material supplied at the time by two individual scholars, Dr Colin Brent and the late Dr Freda Anderson, who were party to the initial site visit and enthusiastic about the topic it raised. Though in an unfinished state, it is included as Appendices A and B below, so that its value is not lost but might act as a starting point and springboard for those who might wish to carry the investigation further.

2 Context

The generally rectangular shape and area of the medieval precinct of Lewes Priory are well understood and its imprint is well preserved in the topography of this part of the town (Fig 1; Bowden 1999, fig 39). Its N, W, part of the S and part of the E boundary are fossilised in the alignments of streets that skirt the former precinct: Southover High Street, Priory Street and Mountfield Road on the N, Cockshut Road on the W and S, Ham Lane on the E. There are extant stretches of the precinct wall at the SW and SE angles and on the W side leading up to the NW corner; the church of St John the Baptist is believed to be a converted monastic building and the alignment of its N wall is understood to mark the course of the precinct wall (Nairn & Pevsner 1970, 552-3; Ordnance Survey record card TQ 40 NW 51 in NMR). Immediately to the E of the church lie the remains of the gatehouse and main entrance to the priory, of 13th-century date as they survive. This forms a short N-S stretch of the precinct boundary since it is set facing W along Southover High Street. The resultant minor dog-leg in the boundary means that there was a much broader, linear open space – actually the culmination of a very gradual continuous broadening of the High Street - in front of the priory gate, with the building that became St John's the most prominent feature on its S side. In effect this kink in the precinct boundary marks the point of transition from the main part of

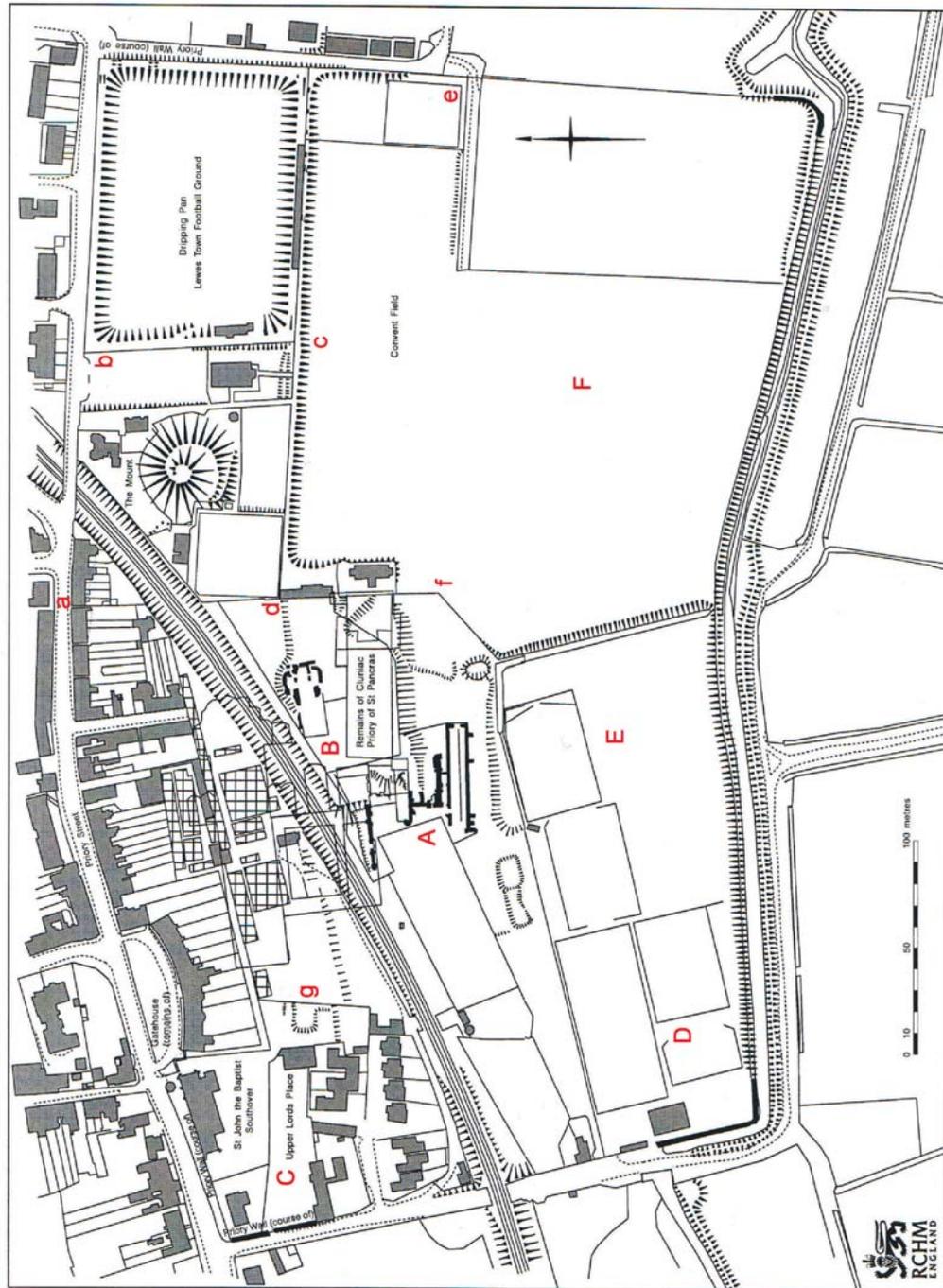


Figure 1.
 The precinct of Lewes Priory, with earthwork features including the Mount and the Dripping Pan
 (based on Ordnance Survey mapping with permission from Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown
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Southover High Street to the W and its continuation, however named, to the E. St James Street joins at right angles from the N just at this point; and early maps of the town show that there was formerly a through route via St James Street across the valley of the Winterbourne Stream to the W suburb of the town of Lewes. That is now blocked and lost, and its function superseded and subsumed by another cross-valley road – latterly also called Southover High Street – 50m further E. The stone precinct wall, whose partial survival today is noted above, is shown in the ‘South Prospect of Lewes’ inset into Richard Budgen’s 1724 Map of Sussex as surviving as a continuous feature, apparently substantially intact except for a fenced section in the E part of the S boundary (Fig 2).

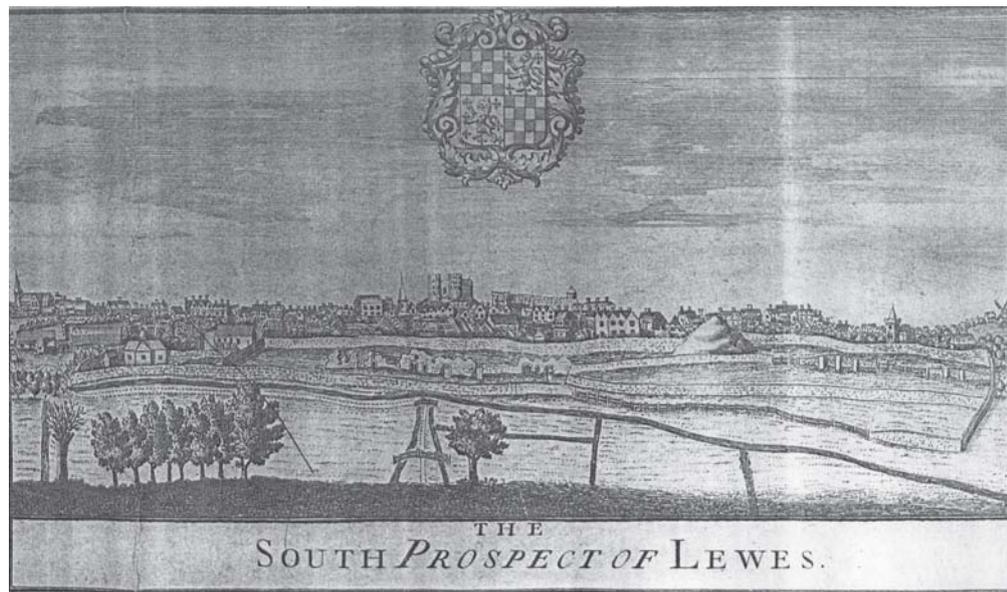


Figure 2.
‘South Prospect of Lewes’, inset from Budgen’s Map of Sussex, 1724

Bites into this clearly defined precinct by development largely of the period from 1800 onwards, and including the grandly formal Priory Crescent of c1835-45 immediately next to the gatehouse, can be quite readily recognised as discrete episodes, though their sequence and impact have not been analysed systematically in that way.

There are physical remains of the conventual buildings of the priory on display, located fairly centrally in the W half of the precinct, S of the railway cutting and now within the public park (‘A’ on Fig 1). Within the monastic layout they form the S wall of the refectory range and the extreme S end of the E claustral range as it extended S beyond the refectory, including successive reredorter blocks. Close by to the NE are remains interpreted as the infirmary chapel, but whose origin is thought to have been as the first church of the Cluniac foundation (‘B’ on Fig 1). These remains have been the subject of extensive archaeological investigations, with results and interpretation now reported in Lyne 1997. Among other results, Lyne also

reports evidence to show that these remains continued in secular use after the Dissolution and through the 17th century, with the S part – formerly the 13th-century reredorter – in use for malting (Lyne 1997, 66-8, 180).

The location within the site of the post-Dissolution mansion, Lords House, is a problem. It is certainly – from an archaeological perspective – not as clear-cut a matter as has been assumed by previous writers and local tradition in the published literature (including Dr Brent in Appendix A below). That received opinion identifies it as an L-shaped building of fairly modest scale, located a short distance to the SE of St John's church, on the E side of the later parish graveyard (see Fig 13 in Appendix A illustrating Dr Brent's understanding) and close to the building known as 'Upper Lords Place'. That would place it quite closely adjacent to the W end and great west door of the main conventual church of the priory. The mansion included or was formed out of the medieval Prior's House, as the documentary evidence rehearses, though with extensions and modifications (Appendix A).

Archaeologically and architecturally this does not stack up. A location for the Prior's House at Lewes as a separate household immediately outside and to the W of the W door of the conventual church is unlikely to the point of implausibility; and its proximity to the main gatehouse and the public and accessible interface of the monastery is also improbable. As a suggestion it seems to be driven by that part of the documentary record that refers to a flight of steps descending from a chapel in the post-Dissolution house 'downwards through the west door of the church' – presumed to be the main monastic church (quoted in Appendix A). But this makes sense neither in the monastic context nor in the post-Dissolution scenario. In the former case, the prior would in practice have accessed the conventual church in the same way and in the company of his brethren, that is from the cloistral layout and the S. In the latter, complete erasure of the monastic church was the primary and necessary objective of Portinari's contract; so a flight of steps presumed to access that church from the W would have been irrelevant and unintelligible as part of a description of the property after 1538.

It is the case that received interpretation of the layout at the Cluniac priory of Castle Acre in Norfolk, also a Warenne foundation and offshoot of Lewes, locates the late-medieval prior's accommodation in the first floor of the W claustral range and therefore adjacent to the W door of the conventual church there (Raby and Baillie Reynolds 1986). But more often in the medieval layout the Prior's House is likely rather to have lain deep within the monastic complex. Though there is no standard location, quite commonly such separate accommodation for the head of house was engineered as part of, or closely adjacent to, the E claustral range – to retain a technical and symbolic connexion with the community – rather than standing wholly separately (Gilyard-Beer 1959, 31-4). A good example of this in

the Benedictine tradition is at Tynemouth Priory (Saunders 1993), and the frequent position of an abbot's house S or SE of the dormer in the Cistercian tradition – as at Jervaulx or Rievaulx - is a further manifestation of the desire for this linkage, however nominal. The finest surviving prior's lodging of the Cluniac order in England lies, at Wenlock, E of the dormitory range and formed – in its late 15th-century form if not earlier – part of the infirmary cloister attached to it; and its 13th-century predecessor seems to have been at the S end of the dormer range itself (Morley 1985; Cranage 1922, 118-21, 122-8).

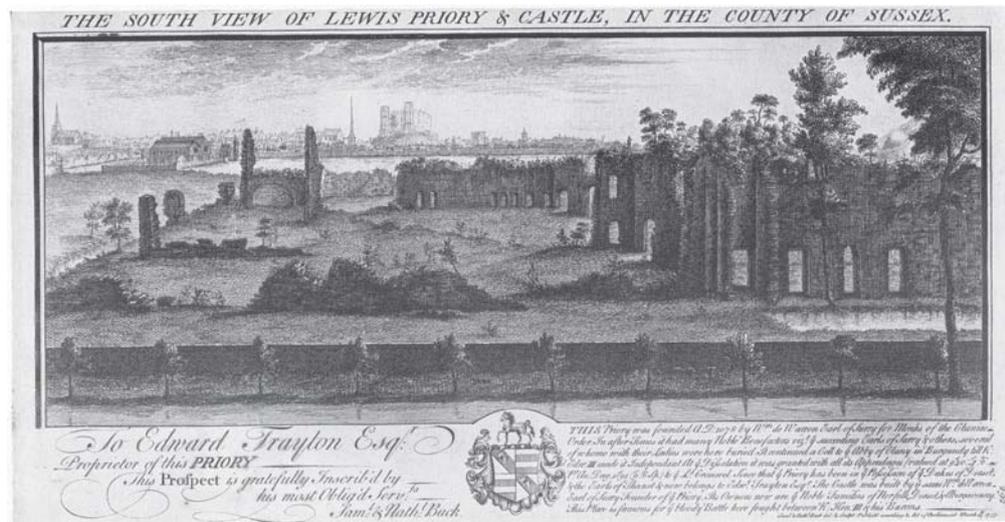


Figure 3.
Prospect of the site of Lewes Priory from the S; S and N Buck 1737

Significantly, it is precisely in this area of the monastic layout that standing fabric survives, having manifestly been retained and transformed into continuing secular uses, and through precisely the period of the post-Dissolution mansion's known life. Walls in this area – ruined but standing above ground-floor level – dominate the Bucks' engraved view of the site in the 1730s, too (Fig 3). This matter needs a sensible archaeological review of the evidence of finds and architectural fabric that is beyond the limited scope of this report. But even on present considerations it seems a possibility – to put it no more strongly – that the post-Dissolution mansion of Lords Place occupied the area of the present ruins rather than a spot immediately adjacent to St John's church, and that essentially the ruins are the remains of that mansion, and provide its footprint, albeit that the house's main rooms lay at a first-floor level and above and perhaps extended westwards. It is this heap of buildings that are shown schematically, viewed from the S and from the E, in estate maps of 1618 and 1620 (Figs 4a & b). And a map of 1762 post-dating the demolition of the mansion actually labels the residual walls as 'Ruins of the MONASTERY or LORDS PLACE' (ESRO, SAS Acc 1244). Perhaps, too, it would be worth considering that the 'church' involved in the documented description might have been the first priory church, later its infirmary chapel, rather than the main conventual church. In short, this particular aspect of the site deserves review, for which the archaeological evidence ought to exist in the standing fabric and through the work over many years of Richard Lewis (see Lyne 1997).

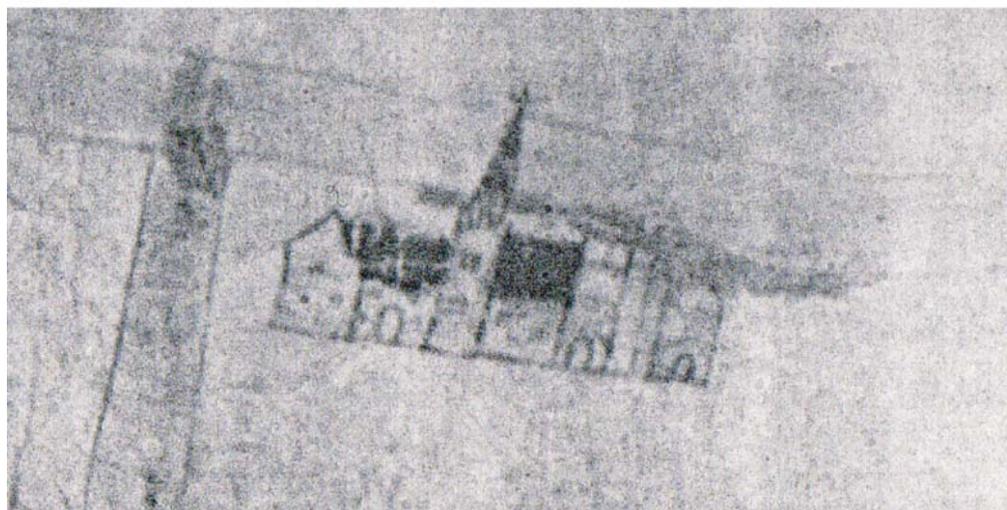
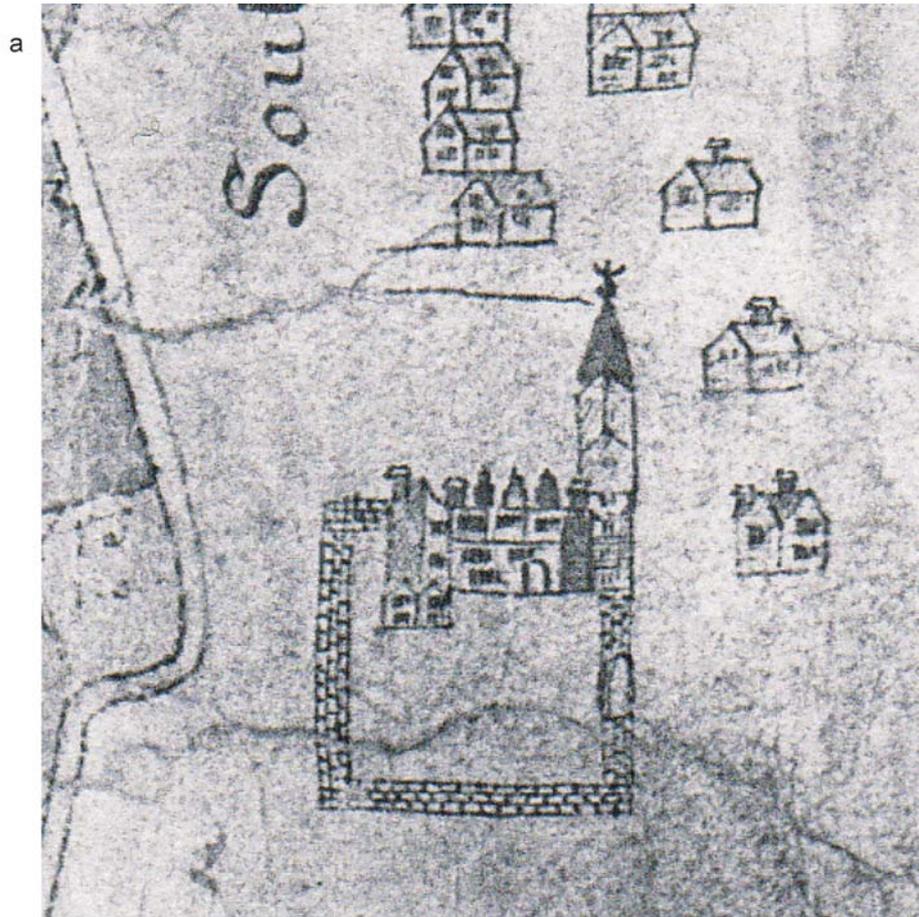


Figure 4.

Early map depictions of Lords Place

[a] Lords Place as shown on a map of 1618; viewed from the E (ESRO, A2187)

[b] Lords Place as shown on Randall's map, 1620; viewed from the S (ESRO, SAS/SRS 61)

3 Surviving earthworks of the post-Dissolution house and gardens

The principal earthwork features – striking in their scale and prominent survival - are those known as ‘The Mount’ and ‘The Dripping Pan’. The former (Fig 5) is a large earthen mound of a size that has occasioned its identification as the motte of a timber and earthwork castle (King 1983, 472); the latter a flat, almost rectangular, sunken area of a size to accommodate a modern football pitch, with raised terraces on all four sides made up of sloping risers and a flat peripheral walk – altogether giving the overall form of one type of kitchen pan or oven dish. They are centred respectively at TQ 4156 0966 and TQ 4170 0965, immediately adjacent to each other and occupying the NE sector of the precinct of Lewes Priory (TQ 40 NW 51). They lie at about 10-13m above OD on the E-W gravel terrace that forms the narrow ridge along which the settlement of Southover extends. The E end of Southover High Street – now called Priory Street and Mountfield Road - running along the apex of the ridge follows the N boundary of the medieval monastic precinct, which extends southwards downslope to the Cockshut stream at about 2m above OD. The Mount is positioned significantly near to the locally highest point of this eastern end of the ridge, with the ground falling away both E slightly to the Dripping Pan and W to the western end of the precinct near the church of St John the Baptist.

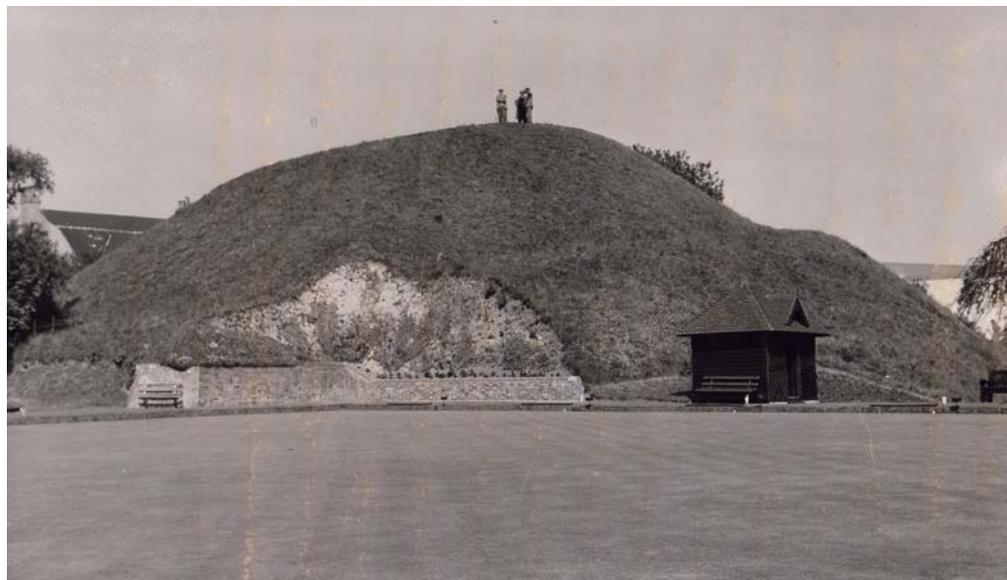


Figure 5.
The Mount from the SW, 13 May 1949 (NMR A502/6, Crown copyright)

Local tradition recorded by the town’s historian TW Horsfield (1824, 250-1) reported that the Mount was erected by one of the earls of Dorset, post-Dissolution owners of the manor of Southover and of the site of the priory through the last quarter of the 16th century and the

first half of the 17th century (Midgley 1940, 48), in succession to Thomas Cromwell and Anne of Cleves. The earls of Dorset had a mansion house on the site, known as The Place or Lords Place, the problem of whose precise location is discussed in the previous section. First specific direct reference to the Mount indeed occurs not in the immediate decades after the Dissolution but in 1604 in the context of its being mowed (see notes on documentary research undertaken by Dr Colin Brent, Appendix A). Certainly, both the Mount and the Dripping Pan existed in very much their present form at the end of the 18th century, when they were depicted as a single complex but separately named on James Edwards's town map of 1799 and similarly on the earlier town map of c1775 (Figs 6 & 7); though by then they were residual features and had no context. The spiral pathway on the Mount was portrayed as having an extra turn compared with now, but perhaps only as a matter of cartographic convenience rather than accurate recording. There is a glimpse of a spiral path on the Mount in the Bucks' engraved prospect of the Priory of 1737 (Fig 3; ESRO, PDA/L1a) and in the slightly earlier 'South Prospect of Lewes' of 1724 (Fig 2) and in the background of the 'West View of Lewes Priory Gateway' of 1793 (Fig 8b). In the 18th century the close containing the Mount and the Dripping Pan was called *Mount Field*, extending to 6 acres, and the feature itself was labelled *Calvary*, but there seems no evidence that there was ever a calvary on its top. In 1925-6, after it had been taken into a public park, a cut was made into its SW quadrant to accommodate the corner of a new bowling green (Marsden 1983). Whatever its original or immediately subsequent function, the Dripping Pan was the scene of cricket matches from the early 19th century (Burstow 1963-67; Middleton 1990, 81); and this sporting connexion has been perpetuated latterly by its occupation by the pitch and facilities of Lewes Town Football Club.

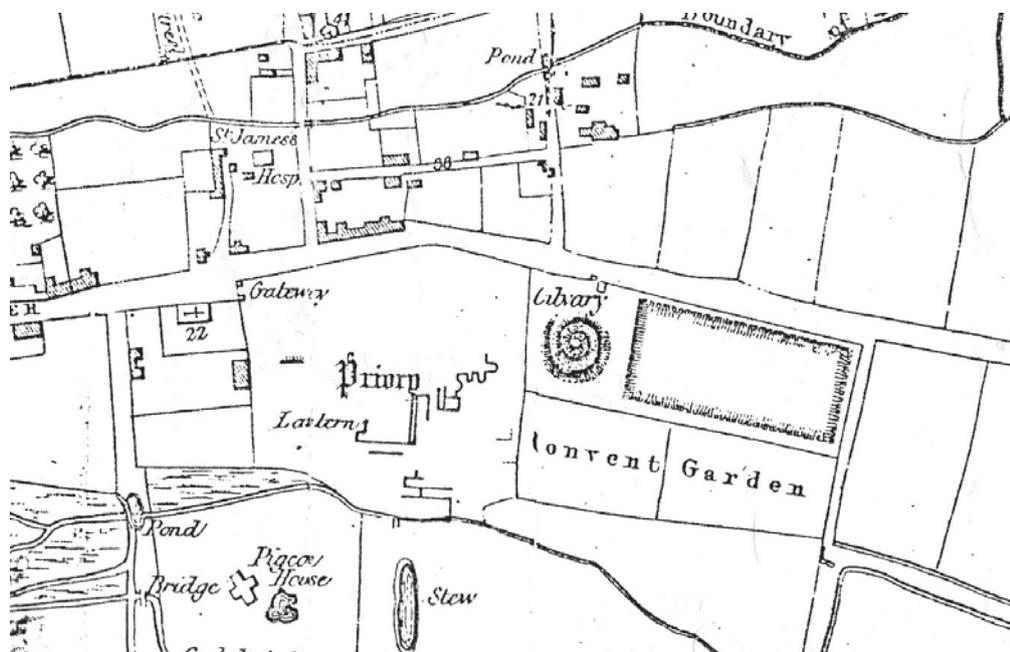


Figure 6.
Lewes Priory, as depicted on town map of c1775

Early archaeological assessment has offered very varied categorisation of these two features. The Mount has been classified as a motte, salt-working site or calvary mound (conveniently summarised in Marsden 1983; and see King 1983, 472); the Dripping Pan, typically in association with the Mount, as a saltpan or pit. Observations of the sections of the Mount exposed by the creation of the bowling green and finds collected from that context have undermined several of these traditional proposals (Marsden 1983). The body of the Mount is reportedly composed of chalk and soil and is not, therefore, derived from movement of material from the Dripping Pan, which has hitherto been supposed by some to be the basis of their close connexion. Glass and pottery from the body of the mound of generally late medieval date, however, make it certain that it is of rather late medieval or early post-medieval construction at earliest. A distinction reported by some observers that the spiral path is a later construction than the body of the mound might indicate refurbishment of the path to secure improved access to the top in the 18th century, for example. The additional evidence that there was no surrounding ditch is perhaps a further consideration in contradicting the interpretation of the Mount as a motte.

But actually the telling non-excavational evidence is the way that both Mount and Dripping Pan are fitted into the NE sector of the former monastic precinct, whose boundary forms their N and E sides. In other words, they post-date rather than pre-date that precinct. The ground level, too, places the Mount markedly above the levels of the monastic buildings.

The earthworks of this pair of features are on a grand scale. **The Mount** is a perfectly circular earthen mound with a surviving base diameter of 50m. It stands 13m-14m in height. A steep spiral path winds up in a single anti-clockwise turn to a small slightly sloping platform on its top of approximately 7m diameter. The grass-surfaced spiral path was truncated by the construction of the bowling green through the SW quadrant in 1925-6 and its lower section replaced by a narrower, surfaced access way that dog-legs back SE. A residual trace of the former path survives in fragmentary scarping to the N of the cut section caused by the bowling green (Fig 5). It is uncertain whether a row of five well-established yews and hollies that stand clear of the modern property boundaries and appear to pick up the line of the path immediately beyond the NE quadrant of the mound are residual planting from a phase of ornamental garden layout. The lower parts of the mound are generally irregularly cut into and dumped over, especially around the N side.

Most strikingly of all, the Mount sits centrally to a plot of land whose boundaries are fossilised in modern boundaries, though it has been sliced through by the railway and internally subdivided into a diversity of modern occupation. These include numbers 1-7 Priory Street, Mountfield House, The Lodge, the bowling green and its pavilion plus car park, pavilion and other facilities of the public park. This plot is sub-square in shape, measuring 118-120m E-

W and 97-98m N-S: it is defined by the S side of Priory Street and Mountfield Road from 'a' to 'b' on plan on the N (ie the medieval precinct boundary); the boundary with the Dripping Pan on the E, 'b-c', now marked by a modern fence; a flint wall in part of old fabric on the S, with a terraced walk beyond (see below); and a boundary on the W, 'a-d', which in plan is clearly sliced through by the railway cutting and N of the railway forms a division in the groups of 19th-century housing that developed along the S side of Priory Street. Where it is easily inspected S of the railway this boundary is a flint wall, perhaps of early origin. These N, S and W boundaries clearly correspond to those shown on Edwards's map of 1799 (Fig 7): there appears to be no such hard division on the E between the 'Mound Piece' and the Dripping Pan. The diagonals of this plot ('a-c' and 'b-d') cross in plan precisely within the platform of the Mount's top. In the 18th century, there was an entrance from Mountfield Road – apparently for foot traffic only – in the N side of this compartment, with a small square building internally on its E side, perhaps a lodge; but this arrangement may have post-dated the disappearance of the great house and was in turn obliterated by the railway (Lewes town map of c1775; Fig 6).

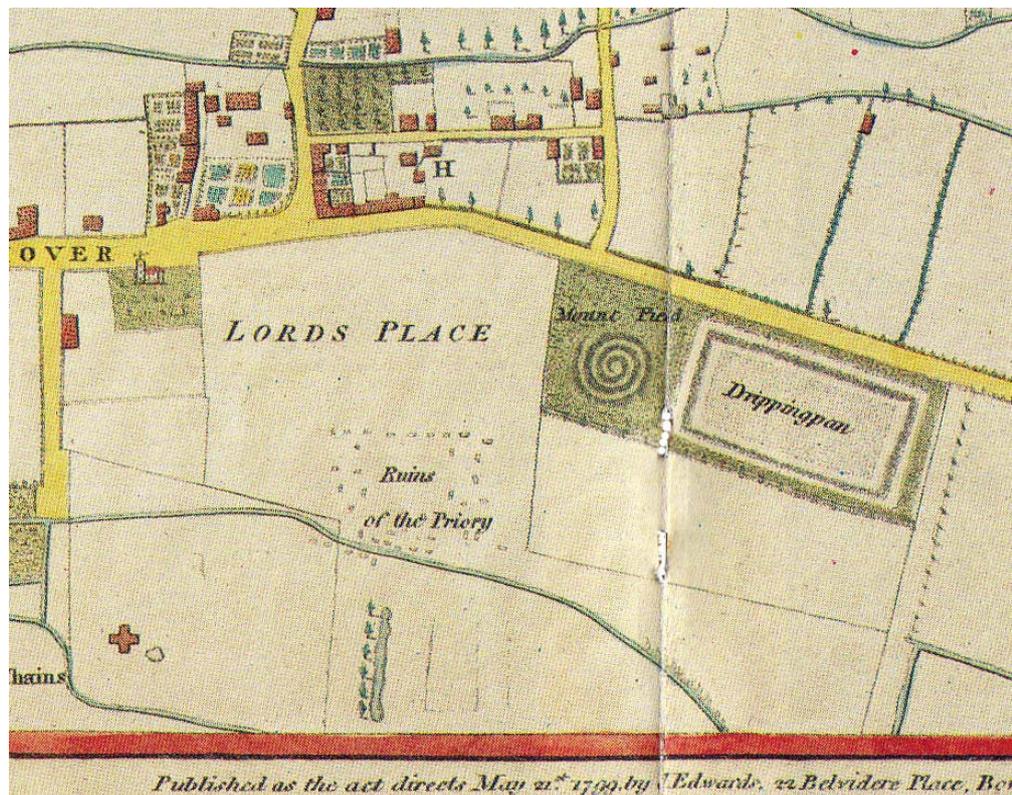


Figure 7.
Lewes Priory, as depicted on James Edwards's map of 1799 (ESRO, AMS 6008/1/1/29)

The **Dripping Pan** is a no less massively impressive and finely finished earthwork construction. It occupies a plot contiguous to the E of the Mount. This is of rectangular or slightly sub-rectangular plan, its E and W sides measuring 98m, its N side along Mountfield Road 140m, its S side 130m. The boundaries on the N and E sides are the precinct wall of the

medieval priory, which is not uniform in construction but probably forms the foundation or lower parts throughout and the full surviving height in parts, notably a section 2m thick along the frontage to Mountfield Road. Externally this wall stands up to 5m above the external roads. On the S side another flint wall, evidently in origin continuous with that bounding the S side of the Mount plot as shown on Edwards's map of 1799 (Fig 7), stands 3-3.5m high externally. At its E end there are the remains of four small irregular buttresses set at approximately 10m intervals but apparently not structurally bonded into the wall fabric. This arrangement may be reflected in Edwards's depiction of the S boundary of the combined plots of the Mount and Dripping Pan, and possibly served as an ornamental embellishment rather than structural utility.

Internally, the Dripping Pan comprises massive earthen terrace on all four sides that are effectively revetted externally by the boundary walls on the N, E and S sides. They now serve for football spectators: their upper surfaces are covered with modern hard surfacing but the steeply pitched terrace scarps remain grass-covered on all sides. The only obvious intrusion is a pavilion and changing rooms set into the inner face of the S end of the W terrace, with a diagonal access path to its N cutting down to the front of it. Otherwise these terraces are well preserved and of very regular form. The N side stands up to 5m above the internal surface, the E and W sides approximately 4m centrally above the interior, and the S side is the lowest at 2.5-3m above the interior. The boundary walls on the N, E and S then protrude 1-1.5m high above the level of the walks, therefore allowing views out in all those directions. The walk on the N side is practically level, but those on both E and W sides fall gently southwards. The S side seems to have slight but distinctive slopes down from E and W at either end, and there appears to be a level change at the NE corner defining a high point or feature there. There are no signs anywhere in the profiles of the terrace scarps of former means of access from them down to the interior.

The interior of the plot is level and is currently totally occupied by a football pitch. There are some formless and unportrayable scarps generally less than 0.1m high visible within this interior, especially in the corners and in the centres at the ends (present goal mouths). Given the relative levels (which were not formally measured in this fieldwork), it appears that the interior must represent a dug and levelled surface created as one with the surrounding terraces. Edwards's map (Fig 6) suggests that there was a continuous walk or path on the raised terraces, and a second path mirroring it around the perimeter of the levelled interior at the base of the grassy scarps, leaving a large rectangular plot within that. This detail is not now traceable on the ground, and whether this was any reflection of the original layout is uncertain; but it adds a little information to what otherwise already has the characteristic aspects of formal garden remains.

Along the S side of both the plots or compartments described above, outside their flint boundary wall and parallel to it, there runs an E-W terraced scarp that sets them above the flat area of Convent Field to the S. Along the Mount plot, the scarp stands 2.5-3m high above the sports pitches on Convent Field and creates a level walk 2.5-3m wide against the wall, at a level lower than the interior of the compartment. This is occupied by the modern path and is shaved off at its W end to form a modern hard surfaced vehicle ramp with the public park. The scarp is broken by two sets of modern steps. At 'c' on plan the modern surfacing stops and the terrace narrows to 2m and less. It continues eastwards, nevertheless, with the scarp diminishing in elevation to 1.5m at its E end. At two points in this stretch the surface of the terrace falls slightly eastwards: stones protruding from the base of the wall at both locations raise the possibility of there formerly having been steps at these points. At the E end, as it reaches the N-S precinct wall the scarp turns S parallel with it and extends for some 45m, reducing in elevation, before it ends by turning into the wall.

The flint wall that stretches W at right angles from the precinct wall from 'e' on plan and now forms the N side of an access track is evidently what remains of the S boundary of a close shown by Edwards's map lying along the combined length of the Mount Piece and the Dripping Pan. The boundary is depicted as a stone wall on the 'South Prospect of Lewes' from Budgen's Map of Sussex of 1724 (Fig 2). The wall now is shadowed by a low scarp on its N side, but the former course of this wall W to the point, 'f', where the southern continuation of the flint wall 'a-d' forms a dog-leg cannot be traced as a surface feature. This single walled close measuring approximately 250 x 75m is probably that named as 'Convent Field' in 1604 alongside the Mount. It was named *Convent Garden*, extending to 4 acres, in the 18th century. Though it was divided in two at that date, there are now no depictable internal features. However, in the wall that forms the W side of the Convent Field there is a blocked doorway, which contains stonework possibly of early modern date.

The substantial scarp along the N side of Convent Field, above which the Mount and the Dripping Pan are constructed, is continued westwards from 'd' on plan by a scarp 2m high that has been dug into to expose the northern part of the foundations of the building interpreted as the monastic Infirmary Chapel and early priory church ('B' on Fig 1; Lyne 1997). But this takes up a slightly altered alignment a few degrees southwards that reflects the similarly angled alignment of Priory Street and the N precinct boundary. A stub of flint walling going W from 'd' suggests that a revetting wall may have been present in a similar manner to the surviving arrangement to the E. The general alignment is continued by a slight and very spread scarp observable in cultivated soil of the plant nursery to the W the railway cutting. It, too, lies parallel with and at about 95m distant from Priory Street.

4 The rest of the layout

Though the Mount and the Dripping Pan are the principal visible remains, the post-Dissolution mansion and its grounds undoubtedly occupied the totality of the medieval precinct, as was typically the case with such conversions to substantial secular residences. Here, as in many similar instances, it was this factor that ensured the survival of the footprint or outline of the monastic precinct in the modern topography and the selective survival of sections of the boundary walling.

Quite a lot of that layout can be identified at least in general terms. And, though its investigation did not form part of the fieldwork lying behind this report, there are clearly a number of aspects on which further work could be undertaken to improve understanding of the site and its physical remains in this phase.

A key issue is the proposal, sketched out above, that the post-Dissolution mansion called Lords Place – contrary to received opinion - is most likely to have been a conversion and extension of monastic buildings at and around the S end of the E cloistral range, and that the surviving ruins therefore are not only monastic remains but also the remains of the sequence of post-Dissolution houses. This proposal may be capable of testing through the evidence of the surviving fabric and excavated material; but for the present account it is taken as the working hypothesis insofar as it impacts on our understanding of the overall arrangement of the mansion house and its gardens. The evidence of architectural fragments that may relate to this phase is usefully brought together by the late Freda Anderson's notes, included here as Appendix B. While only a first, and perhaps fallible, attempt at addressing this issue, it parades a group of items that seem in general terms to belong to a later Elizabethan to early Jacobean 'country house' architectural milieu rather than anything that might be assigned to the mid 16th century. That is, it points to architectural initiatives and expenditure of resources on the part of the Sackville earls of Dorset rather than by Gregory Cromwell or Anne of Cleves. No doubt there is scope for revisiting this material, in the confidence now that it exists for study and can contribute significantly to understanding of the site.

On this interpretation the Dorsets' mansion stood quite centrally within the site defined as the former monastic precinct, rather than peripherally. It stood below an E-W raised terrace that ran across the whole northern span of the precinct. This was occupied essentially by a series of compartments; only the two at the E end of the run survive in a form that is at all easily intelligible and were occupied by the garden variations of the Mount and the Dripping

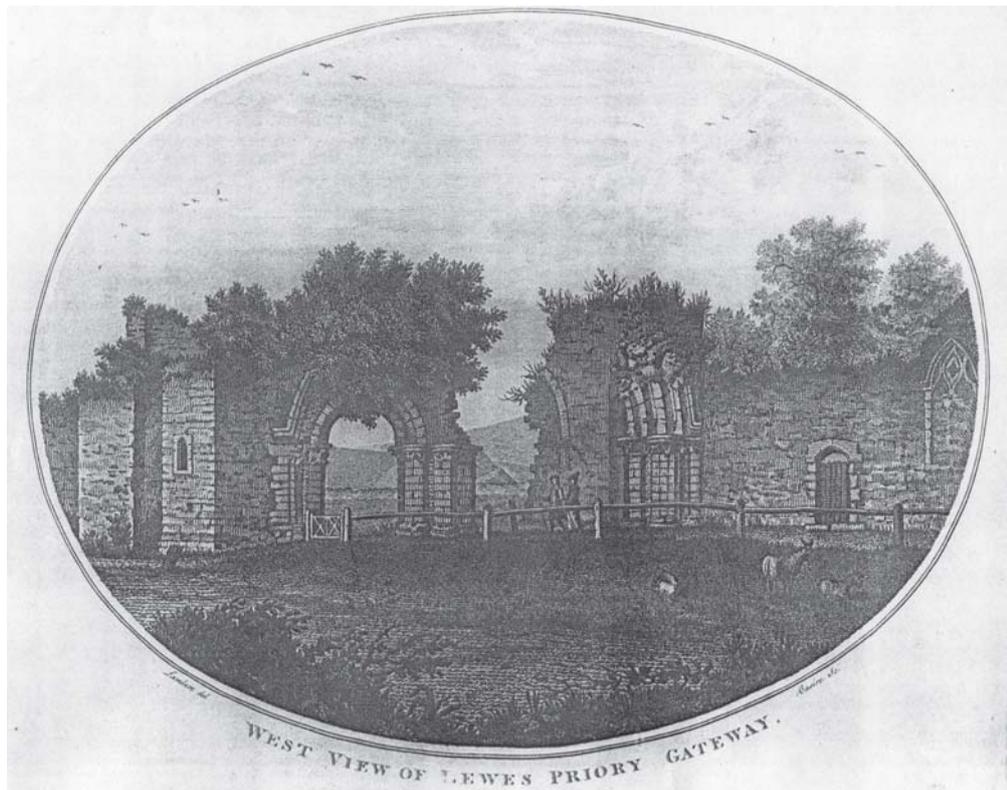
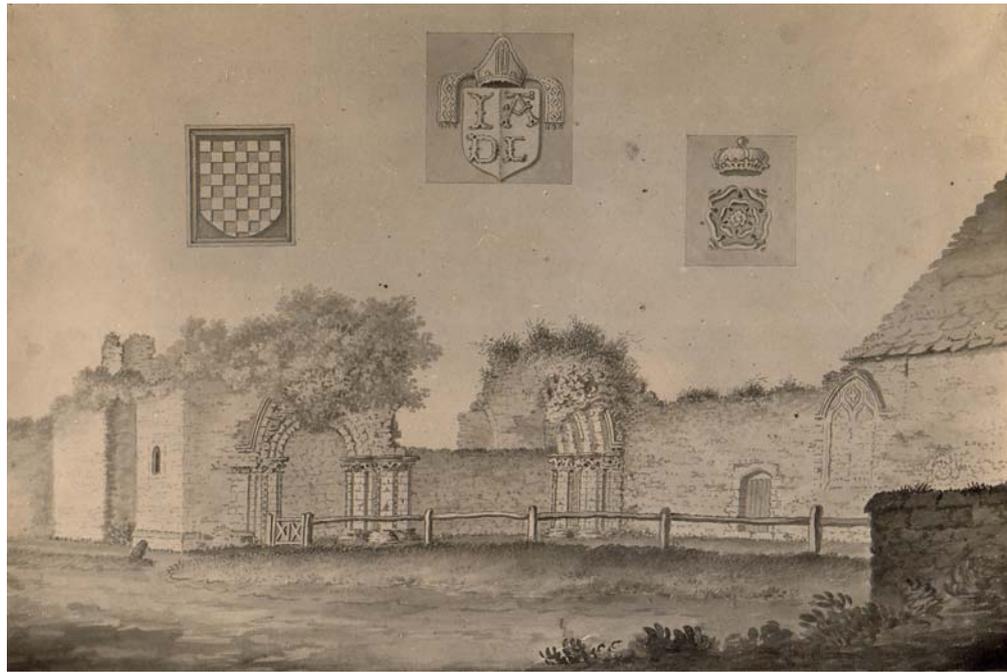


Figure 8.
 Entrance gateway
 [a] Engraved view of the Priory's former 'Great gate', c1780
 [b] Engraved 'West View of Lewes Priory Gateway', 1793

Pan. There was at least a third compartment lying to the W of the Mount. It seems to have been called 'The Court' and extended to 5 acres. If it was a single undivided space, the mansion house would have stood roughly centrally in its S side. If it was subdivided, then the house may have been seen across the court, in its SE corner. Certainly, at its NW corner the main entrance lay off Southover High Street via the Priory's great gate (Fig 8a & b), remains of which survive through this continuing post-Dissolution usage. 'The Court' therefore functioned as a form of formal forecourt. Within the modern churchyard extension immediately to the E of the building named Upper Lords Place, stony scarps can be identified at TQ 4130 0960 into which modern graves are dug. They form a series of approximately right-angled alignments ('g' on plan Fig 1). These might indicate the foundations of a building, which would perhaps have occupied the SW corner of 'The Court'. The state of field evidence and amount of disturbance – both recent and historically - preclude any certainty about the evidence now visible. However, a plan deposited in the NMR (Fig 9) seems to show excavated foundations in precisely this area, which make up a coherent plan of a building of several rooms. On the plan this forms a component within a larger rectangular layout that links northwards, via a form of corridor, to the S chamber of the gatehouse and includes, to the SE, the surviving walls of the frater and reredorter. Though there is no interpretation in respect of dates of the features planned, the rectangular, compartmentalised, overall configuration of the remains portrayed – evidently overlying the site of the conventual church – strongly suggests a post-Dissolution context, albeit with some elements surviving from the monastic phase. An annotation of the plan referring to 'Horsfield's Lewes Vol 2 Supplement page 1' makes it likely that this plan records discoveries during the late 18th- and early 19th-century investigations by contemporary owners, which Dr Brent refers to in

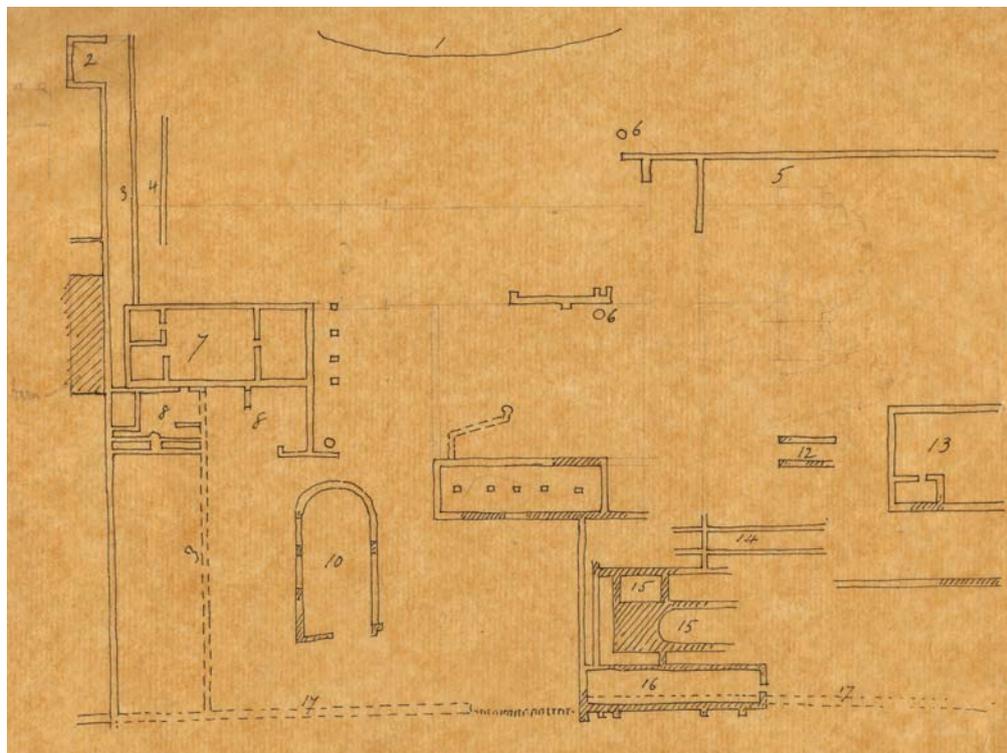


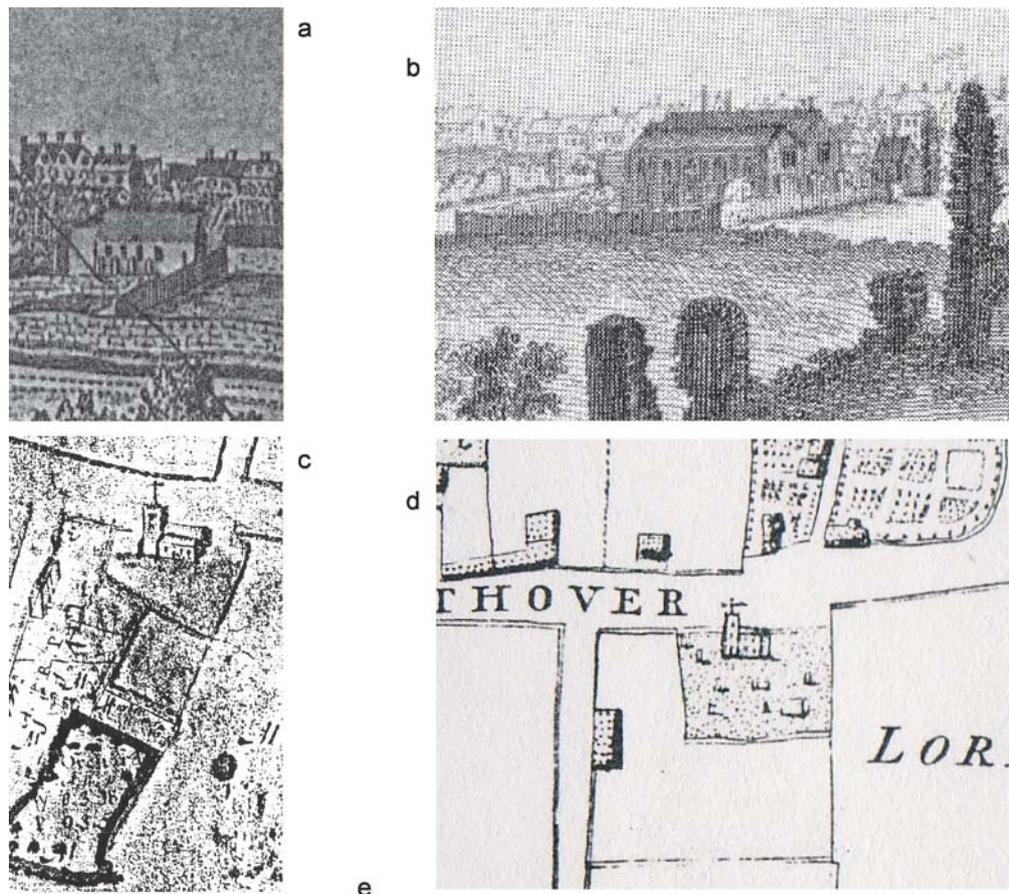
Figure 9.
MS plan of excavated remains at Lewes Priory (WH Godfrey deposit in NMR)

Appendix A. It may indeed be precisely this evidence that underpins the presumption that the mansion house of Lords Place lay, with modest extent, in a limited area near to St John's church and against the churchyard.

A final, much smaller, compartment ('C' on plan Fig 1) lay W of 'The Court'. St John's church at Southover now occupies much of its N side and its graveyard part of the area. St John's itself reuses the medieval fabric of what is understood to have been the medieval *hospitium* at the priory's gates (Midgley 1940, 48; Nairn and Pevsner 1965, 552-3), but its transition to a parish church, though reported to have taken place before the Dissolution and requiring a study beyond the scope of this fieldwork, is of relevance to the arrangements of the post-Dissolution mansion (Fig 10). For in other respects the block of land contained barns and stables around its NW and W sides, a wellhead and other service facilities. Its subsequent development was extremely complicated (as portrayed in Colin Brent's documentary and cartographical notes in Appendix A), and characterised by fragmentation into closes with barns, gardens and orchards etc. In all it has the appearance of a stable and service court to the great house, full of useful and re-usable buildings, and it may have had a western entrance – forming another entrance to Lords Place - through building ranges from the W off Cockshut Lane.

The slope southwards down to the millpond seems from later documentary and cartographic evidence (Appendix A) to have been divided into several small orchard closes. To their E there may have been a small garden at this lower level against the W side of the house, the edge of which was perhaps encountered by the excavations as dumped layers and levelling up (Lyne 1997, eg 40, 178).

Beyond the former millpond and course of the Upper Cockshut stream, a large close occupying the SW corner of the precinct had a big cruciform Pigeon House or dovecote situated centrally within it (located at about TQ 4128 0949; 'D' on plan Fig 1; see Appendix A for documentation). This interesting building is cut out of the Bucks' prospect of the priory where it might have been a prominent feature in the left foreground (Fig 3), but it survived into the 19th century and is depicted in a number of plans and views (Fig 11). These depictions give the impression that it may have been oriented on the cardinal points of the compass. It had a very large capacity – reputedly 3328 nesting boxes – and its form is paralleled by only one other cruciform building of this function catalogued in the standard literature, namely an example at Brightwell Baldwin in Oxfordshire, probably of early or mid 17th-century date (Beacham 1990; DoE 1987, 3; Sherwood and Pevsner 1974, 485). But more importantly its equal-armed cruciform plan was much more clearly marked than the Oxfordshire example, and obvious from a distance. In that respect, the distinctive plan-form is most reminiscent of a garden structure such as the banqueting house that is the New Bield at Lyveden in



PARISH CHURCH of ST. JOHN *the* BAPTIST
SOUTHOVER

10 0 20 40 60 Feet

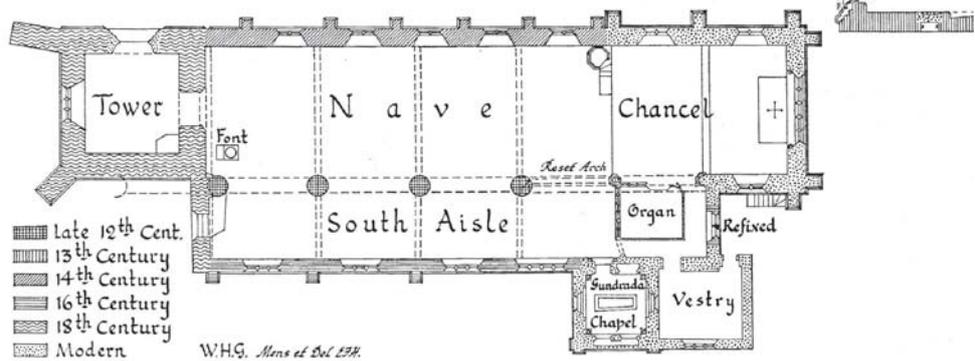


Figure 10.

Church of St John the Baptist, Southover

[a] Extract from the 'South Prospect of Lewes', 1724

[b] Extract from the Bucks' engraving, 1737 (ESRO, PDAL 1a)

[c] Extract from plan of 1762 (ESRO, SAS Acc 1244)

[d] Extract from James Edwards's map of 1799

[e] Plan of St John's by WH Godfrey, as published in Midgley 1940

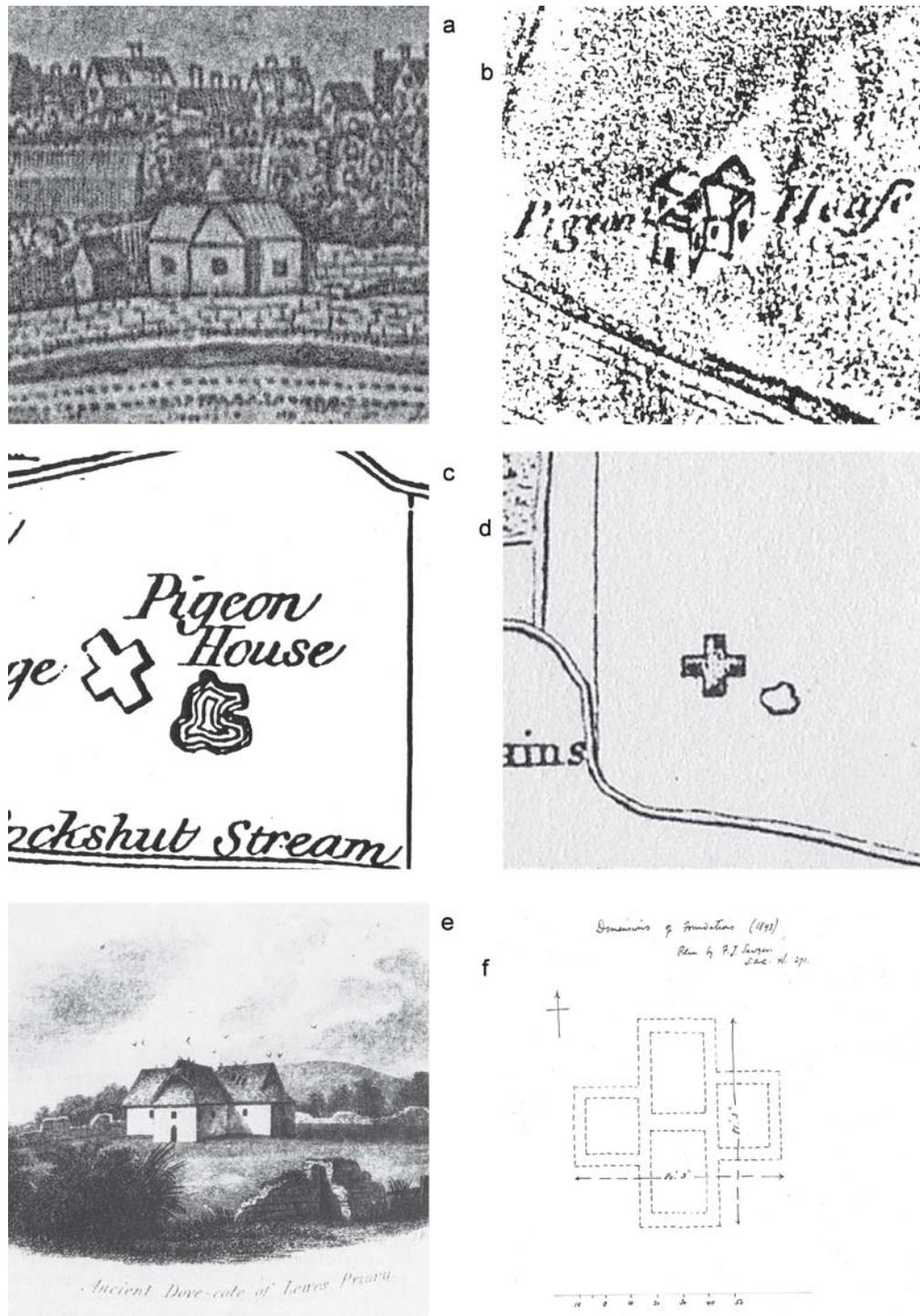


Figure 11.

The cruciform dovecote in Pigeon House Close

[a] Extract from the 'South Prospect of Lewes', 1724

[b] Extract from plan of 1762 (ESRO, SAS Acc 1244)

[c] Extract from Lewes town map of c1775

[d] Extract from James Edwards's map of 1799

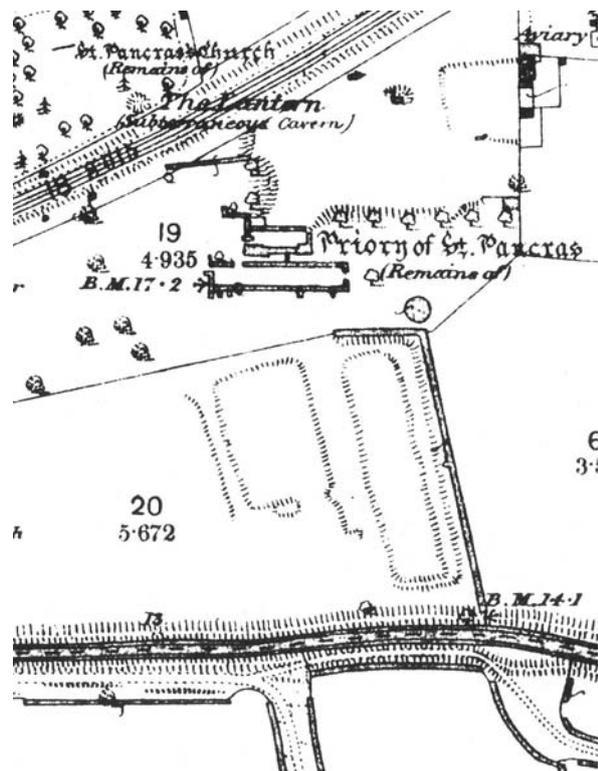
[e] Engraving reproduced in Hansell and Hansell 1988, 109

[f] Measured plan of its foundations as earthworks or parchmarks, with dimensions, as recorded by FJ Sawyer in 1895 (NMR; see Sawyer 1896)

Northamptonshire of the last decade of the 16th century, though its dimensions – at 80 feet in length of arm - were only half the latter's and in Lewes's case there is no record or sign in its depiction of any symbolical decoration and words such as characterise Sir Thomas Tresham's structures in Northamptonshire (Brown and Taylor 1973).

Archaeological investigations have shown that the lowest level of the priory's former reredorter complex had a purposeful post-Dissolution adaptation and use from the late 16th to late 17th century as the 'Greate Malthouse' referred to in documents (Lyne 1997, 66-8, 180; Appendix A). But the proposal outlined above means that the upper storeys were part of the great house. Immediately to its S, and E of the Pigeon House Close, a further low-lying close was the 'Pond Garden' (Appendix A, Fig 13). Forming a rectangle longer in its N-S than in its E-W dimension, it extended to the S boundary of the precinct ('E' on Fig 1). An E boundary may have been formed by a N-S channel linking the Upper Cockshut with the main stream, but that may have been a later rationalisation of watercourses that by the end of the 18th century had lost their original purpose. Little is known of the internal layout of the Pond Garden except for a long, straight N-S pond in its W part that is a persistent feature on early maps. In 1775 it is labelled as 'stew' and in Edwards's map it is lined by trees along its W side (Figs 6 & 7). The Bucks' engraved view gives the impression additionally that there was a pond lying E-W at the N end of the garden, immediately next to the back of the house (Fig 3), and the substantial scarp that can still be seen and planned in this area map actually be the N side of that pond (Fig 1). It would therefore have lain at right angles to the long pond, alias 'stew'. But the most reliable record of the configuration the several ponds that made up this garden is the portrayal of their residual remains as earthworks by The Ordnance Survey in published mapping of 1873 (Fig 12); and there is a faint hint of a similar

Figure 12.
Earthworks of the
Pond Garden, as
depicted on published
Ordnance Survey 1st
edition 25" map, 1873



configuration on Edwards's map of 1799. Such ponds may have had some place in the monastic layout; but actually they are common features of post-medieval formal gardens and are often found grouped in patterns and arrangements sometimes of considerable sophistication (Whittle and Taylor 1994). Forming garden compartments or fishing grounds, it has been argued that such arrangements may have had a relationship to the philosophical ideal and practice of quietism in the later 16th and 17th century (eg Everson forthcoming).

To the E of the Pond Garden was probably the 'Saffron Garden', of unknown extent and formal characteristics ('F' on Fig 1; Appendix A, Fig 13). During fieldwork in 1993, slight traces of 'ridge-and-furrow' up to 8m broad were noted in the close S of Convent Field and abutting the precinct boundary. It lay on an E-W orientation – that is conforming to the close boundaries – and in the context may represent traces of orchard banks or other specialist cultivation rather than of former arable. A closer and more systematic understanding of how, for what reasons and on what timescale the former precinct was broken up, subtlet and subdivided might throw light on this zone of the layout. At the SE corner of the precinct was 'Boathouse Corner'.

In **summary**, the earthworks known as the Mount and the Dripping Pan are clearly two compartments in an exceptionally elaborate formal garden layout of a late 16th- or early 17th-century type. The mansion with which it was associated was Lords Place, held for the formative period in the hands of the earls of Dorset. This house probably stood quite centrally to the layout, since its site is marked by the abbey ruins now on display to the public. The garden was clearly made up of a series of differently arranged or themed compartments, of rather varied size and shape. Nevertheless the way that some of these clearly group coherently together – as is the case with the Mount, Dripping Pan and Convent Garden – emphasises their planned purposefulness rather than any sense of randomness. The most intelligible parts of the layout lie (on the one hand) NE of the house, where the Mount and Dripping Pan and Convent Garden occupy the NE quadrant of the former monastic precinct and offer the best visible survival and (on the other) SW of the house, where lay the Pigeon House Garden and the Pond Garden, occupying the SW quadrant of the former monastic precinct.

An especially notable aspect of the site is the way in which the run of compartments that form the N part of the site was built up on a substantial scarp or terrace running the length of their S side. It is most marked in the visible remains in the change of level between the Mount compartment and the Convent garden on its S flank. This development placed the mansion house very markedly at an interface of levels and of designed terrains. It seems possible that this had an impact on its architectural arrangements. It may have been a full storey higher, for example, on its S elevation than on its N. The very substantial earth-moving involved in these major post-Dissolution developments are quite characteristic of

major garden undertakings of the later 16th and early 17th century, as has been recorded in field remains at places such as Holdenby, Lyveden, Quarrendon or Chipping Campden and investigated by excavation at Kirby Hall (Dix *et al* 1995). The terraced build-up also explains the good preservation of the main conventual church when revealed by railway construction in the 1840s and the levels involved there; and perhaps more exceptionally the preservation of burials and burial fitments - because these were made inaccessible to post-Dissolution looting and iconoclasm.

There was a Mount Garden at Hampton Court in the 1530s, featuring a mount novel in its exceptional size. But more relevant parallels probably lie in the great mounts in the Upper Garden at Lyveden created by Sir Thomas Tresham between 1597 and 1604 (Brown and Taylor 1973), or that which formed part of a labyrinth in Lord Burghley's gardens at Theobalds and was called the Venusberg, or those that very obviously formed central features in Oxford college gardens at Wadham and New College (Strong 1979, 28-9, 53, 115-6). The latter, perhaps the most elaborate surviving example, was a series of superimposed truncated pyramids whose construction was completed in 1640.

Though only partially surviving, the scale of conception of these garden earthworks at Lewes Priory vies with those of other courtiers of the later Elizabethan and early Jacobean period. They are most probably (as Dr Brent's notes persuasively argue, Appendix A) the creation of Thomas Sackville – from 1604 first earl of Dorset – perhaps in the period after he became Lord Lieutenant of the county in 1569 and probably before an anticipated visit from Queen Elizabeth in 1577. The manner in which, on the eve of the projected (but aborted) visit, Thomas Sackville wished that 'if her Highness had tarried but one year longer his House would by that time have been more filled <?fitted?> for her entertainment' (Sutton 1902, 221) may suggest the very moment and urgency of construction works at Lords Place, in a manner entirely typical of Elizabeth's courtiers when favoured by her visits on progress. But certainly the gardens existed before the first direct documentary reference to the Mount in 1604. Importantly, this is not the main Dorset residence; but the gardens' elaboration – even if originally stimulated by a projected royal visit - no doubt reflects the earl of Dorset's role as leader of county society and representative of royal influence locally in the county town.

5 Discussion

The preceding account offers a view, for the first time, of what the post-Dissolution layout at Lewes looked like, in general configuration and in relation to some of its details. In that it emphasises the complete recasting of the former monastic precinct that this entailed, it points to work that might be done to understand a number of features which have been traditionally described in other – typically monastic – contexts but must have a role, hitherto little considered, in this post-Dissolution phase of the site's use.

A few general points seem worth making by way of conclusion to this account.

[1] The identification of a substantial post-Dissolution phase of use on a monastic site like Lewes Priory might once have seemed a striking and innovative insight but now is in itself a commonplace (Everson 1996, already reflecting thinking then ten years old; and now, for example, a group of papers by Howard and others in Gaimster and Gilchrist 2003). Perhaps it remains slightly unusual to recognise the phenomenon principally through the survival of garden earthworks, and to re-cast the interpretation of architectural remains in the light of that newly-recognised context, rather than to focus on the retention and recycling of architectural fabric *per se*. And certainly the recognition that the impact of such a post-Dissolution conversion to house and gardens was typically one that affected the whole site represented by the former precinct (as reported here at Lewes), and not solely the immediate conventual buildings, is something insufficiently appreciated and thought through in the interpretation of field remains. For, even when a major post-Dissolution phase is recognised on a monastic site – as, for example, in such a clear case as Place House at Titchfield Abbey in Hampshire – its presence is not given full value in interpreting the remains or in their presentation. Elsewhere, interpretation and presentation tends to privilege medieval monastic features, sometimes to the point of ignoring later phases. At Lewes, the form and prominence of the principal post-Dissolution features could allow this significant phase to be recognised and presented effectively.

[2] The types and morphology of the garden earthworks represented at Lewes - principally a large mount and forms of earthwork terraces, but also water features making up the 'Pond Garden' - are now well documented as archaeological field remains in England and recognised as characterising post-medieval formal gardens (English Heritage 1997). At Lewes, in many ways the most distinctive arrangement – for all that its constituent elements are a series of terraces and raised walks – is the overall configuration of the Dripping Pan. Partly because of its sheer scale, it is rather unclear what sort of garden feature this is, and what specifically

occupied the flat central area. It may well be that the later sporting associations – which post-date the abandonment of the Lords Place and its gardens by perhaps a couple of centuries – are completely misleading. It may indeed be that it is unhelpful in respect of understanding, though useful in description, to separate the Dripping Pan from the Mount. They are actually interrelated in plan and visually. It might easily be, for example, that if indeed in certain contexts the Mount was ‘Calvary’ as it is named on the 1775 town map (Fig 6) then the Dripping Pan might have been ‘Paradise’, glimpsed and accessed through the events on Calvary; or it might have been ‘Gethsemane’, a forerunner to Calvary. In either case, a planted garden or orchard might have occupied the Dripping Pan rather than an open space for unknown activities. One of the issues that such inquisitive speculation highlights is that, in contrast to some garden remains surviving archaeologically as a combination of earthworks and fragmentary architecture, it is unclear whether we can yet understand with any reliability routes of movement around the complex at Lewes. That takes away the sense of created experience and viewpoints that is so strong on a contemporary site such as Chipping Campden, for example (Everson 1989). But it is something that further work at Lewes might set out to reveal.

[3] It is valuable to have the contribution into this report of notes relating to documentary sources (Appendix A) and architectural fragments (Appendix B). The latter helpfully points to a potential perhaps capable of fuller exploitation. The documentary evidence put together here for Lords Place at Lewes tells a rich story that is quite long-drawn-out and suggestive of piecemeal change. This might be very much closer to the undocumented reality elsewhere, and is the sort of story of repeated and piecemeal change within an established framework that has emerged from archaeological excavation of a contemporary garden such as Kirby Hall in Northamptonshire (Dix *et al* 1995). So at Lewes, the gardens whose layout we can now begin to appreciate were created by the Sackvilles – perhaps in the 1570s and certainly by the early years of the 17th century when Thomas Sackville was made earl of Dorset in 1604. But the documentary material tells of continuing change, and to some extent the architectural fragments too, though perhaps within an established compartmentalised layout.

The Sackvilles do not stand out generally as notable builders or architectural patrons, in the way that so many of their peers do; between them the major surveys by Summerson and Girouard note only the 2nd earl’s patronage of ‘Sackville College’ at East Grinstead, almshouses built 1619 (Summerson 1970, 181; Girouard 1983). They had an impressive ancient seat at Knole, of course, as their principal residence. And there, there is good evidence of the 1st earl’s alertness to modern developments and of his patronising new work, just at the time of his elevation (Jackson-Stops 1991, *passim*). Notable works of c1605 were the staircase constructed in an open well and thereby treated innovatively as an architectural spectacle, and the hall screen, which related stylistically to London models (Summerson 1970, 93, 184-6, 557). Girouard comments, too, on Jacobean fireplaces ‘of a delicate and enchanting

fantasy' (1983, 36). The style of the 3rd earl – husband of Lady Anne Clifford – and his love of 'noble ways at court' and his showy extravagance is perfectly encapsulated by his full-length portrait, attributed to William Larkin (Hearn 1995, no 135).

[4] Much archaeological work on gardens of this era has concentrated on identifying and cataloguing surviving field remains, or on describing an individual example. Lewes reminds us that this is still a fairly simplistic level of analysis and understanding. For Lords Place clearly had a distinctive and specialised function within the group of houses in Sussex and Surrey owned and regularly used by the Sackville earls of Dorset in the early 17th century. Evidence for this, and for the contrasting uses of the other properties, appears most directly in the diaries of Lady Anne Clifford, wife of Richard Sackville the 3rd earl, from 1609 until his death in 1624 (Clifford 1990). During the years covered by the diaries it seems that Lady Anne never resided at Lewes. The principal out-of-London house for the family – where she lived, bore the three male children who died young and brought up her two daughters, Margaret and Isabella – was Knole (Clifford 1990, 15; Sackville-West 1991). A second house at Bolebrooke near Hartfield in East Sussex served as her dower house during the six years of her widowhood before her re-marriage to Philip Herbert, earl of Pembroke and Montgomery (Clifford 1990, 85; see Nairn and Pevsner 1965, 517). Her husband, when not at Dorset House in London, more routinely used the house at Buckhurst, where the nearby parish church at Withyham housed the Sackville family tombs (see Sutton 1902, 58-84, 92-8; Nairn and Pevsner 1965, 635-7), and whence he sent gifts to Knole or visited Lady Anne there. In particular, Buckhurst was the locale for or the starting point of public activities, through which he exercised his leadership of the county. It was from Buckhurst, for example, that in August 1618 Dorset set out 'beginning his progress into Sussex. My Uncle Neville, my Brother Compton, Tom Glenham, Coventry and about 30 horsemen, they being very gallant, brave and merry' (Clifford 1990, 61). A month later he was 'in the midst of his merry progress far out of Sussex, where he had hunted in many gentlemen's parks', and in that mid December he hosted a gathering of 'country gentlemen' at Buckhurst with greyhounds and great feasting (ibid, 62, 65). Use of Lords Place at Lewes was very naturally integrated with this sort of local progress, since the town was the focus for county events, and the association of such visits with a county Muster or with the town's entertaining him with fireworks underline the role he was playing and the distinctive function of the property he retained in the town (ibid, 61, 70, 71). There was also Horsley House in Surrey, where Thomas Sackville lay so ill in 1607 'that he was commonly reported to be dead' (Sutton 1902, 221).

Similar networks of properties, each with a distinct usage, have been noted elsewhere in discussions of the field remains of early gardens. Examples are the cases of the Lees in Buckinghamshire and North Oxfordshire (Everson 2001) or of the Montagu estates in Northamptonshire, which included main houses at Barnwell and Boughton plus a dower

house of Beaulieu Hall at Hemington (RCHME 1984, 90-1; Everson 1991, Fig 2.7), or the Burghley properties around Stamford (Taylor 1996). Architecturally, each may be different in scale and form, suitable to their use; so too it may be that the setting created - the contemporary gardens - were not the same but differenced and suitable, too. This is a line of enquiry beyond the scope of this report, involving as it would the fortune of surviving evidence and a substantial comparative study; but it is one to which the evidence from Lords Place might contribute and help to take garden archaeology in England a further step forward.

[5] A final point ought perhaps to be touched on, albeit in a questioning rather than a dogmatic way. There are some features of the gardens at Lords Place at Lewes which raise the possibility of the presence of thematic or symbolic content. This is especially pertinent in view of the fact that the site had been a medieval monastery and still bore some outward and visible memorials of that circumstance, especially at its entrance where the medieval gatehouse was retained and flanked by an extant monastic building that became transformed into St John's church (Figs 8 and 10). The ostentatiously assertive mechanism whereby the fabric of the Old Faith was destroyed from its fundamentals by Portinari's gunpowder may itself have lent the site a particular significance.

The features are specifically:

- The naming of the Mount on the 1775 plan as 'Calvary'. None of its depictions suggest that there was ever, in the 18th century or later, a calvary sited on top of the mound, and nothing has been picked up in documentary searches (Appendix A). This naming has been explored a little above in relation to the sort of garden feature the Dripping Pan might have been; but it is difficult to see how to take that beyond informed conjecture.
- The pigeon house or dovecote with a cruciform plan is a most unusual structure (Fig 11). There is no other example of a form that is quite so manifestly an equal-armed cross known. The example at Brightwell Baldwin has much shorter arms and therefore looks much less obviously cruciform. The arrangement at Lewes gave the structure a very large capacity, with no obvious practical disadvantages, so viewed purely functionally it might be thought to require no comment. It was built of chalk, rendered and whitewashed in the manner normal for the class of building. Apparently undated in any direct way, it has been thought to have been medieval (Beacham 1990, 127 conjectures '13th century'); but it is more likely to have belonged to the post-Dissolution garden layout, both architecturally for that was a period of ingenuity and device in design (eg Girouard 1983, 21-8) and socially since 'the country gentleman's residence is not complete without a dovecote, a payre of butts for archery and a bowling alley' (Hansell and Hansell 1988, 173 quoting the Tudor physician and traveller, Dr Andrew Boorde). It clearly appears as the prominent, defining feature in one of the Lewes garden's compartments, in very much the manner that another,

still surviving dovecote of exceptional size did within the formal gardens surrounding the Tresham's house at Little Newton in Northamptonshire (RCHME 1979, 113-5). Such dovecotes were never the purely functional 'lord's larder' they are sometime portrayed as, but always stood as an emblem of lordly status. Doves themselves carried multiple layers of symbolism within Christian thinking, just as rabbits and other creatures did; and housing them in a structure so clearly referencing the cross must have tended to underline that in a way for which we have only Tresham's New Bield, which was overtly a gesture of adherence to the Old Faith, as an analogy.

And even if Sawyer's plan (Fig 11f) tends to undermine the perfection of a presumed equal-armed cross, later observers nevertheless read the building naturally as the image of a church (Hansell and Hansell 1988, 109-10).

The puzzling initials 'AM' – if initials they are - on architectural fragment No 9 from an elaborate garden archway do not match any member of the family (Appendix B). As initials, they could be taken to stand for 'AVE MARIA', in the way they do routinely on modern roadside shrines in parts of Italy. Something similar occurs on the archway from Gerards Bromley in Staffordshire, reused in the later parkland layout at Batchacre Hall in High Offley, where the initials of the Gerards' family motto, '**Bono Vince Malum**', declare their religious allegiance for those interested to read it (RCHME unpublished site account, ref NMR, SJ 73 SE 2). At the end of the 17th century William Lawrence used initials on gateways in his formal, memorial garden at Shurdington in Gloucestershire in just this cryptic way, so that 'the design appears not to the world unless I turn the key' (Sinclair 1994).

These details hardly add up to a coherent case of a parading of sympathy with the Old Faith on the part of the creator of the gardens at Lords Place, or his successors. In 'this stage-play world' of the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean era, which was the context for these gardens' creation, what seems often to have been a complex balance of personal religious beliefs or affiliations might be evinced publicly or signalled in private in a variety of ways. Clearly the Sackvilles were not notorious Catholics in the manner of Sir Thomas Tresham or even, a generation later, of the Digbys or Endymion Porter (eg Sumner 1995). Thomas Sackville did avoid sitting in trial of Mary Queen of Scots, though nominated to do so, and did acquire a memento of her in the form of a Procession to Calvary carved in wood from her private chapel; he did marry his eldest son – later his successor as 2nd earl of Dorset – to Lady Margaret the only daughter of Thomas Howard, attainted and executed Duke of Norfolk; and he did repeatedly find himself opposing peers of a clearly reformist religious stance, such as the earls of Leicester and Essex, for example in rival candidature for the chancellorship of Oxford University in 1591 (see generally Sutton 1902, 181-222). But equally, his private chaplain and encomiast at his funeral was George Abbot, future archbishop of Canterbury and biblical translator and in his early years Puritan supporter and renowned preacher (DNB); and his will, with its little homily on death and specific denial of the efficacy of works (though he had done them anyway!) and references to man's endowment with Soul and Reason and to the Elect in heaven, signals a serious Protestant outlook (Sutton

1902, 216-7). Principally, though that balance of religious outlook may have shifted from generation to generation, the Sackvilles present consistently as conformists and loyalists to the Crown, through to the Civil War and beyond.

The post-Reformation archaeology at former monastic sites such as Lewes Priory in principle and with careful handling has much to reveal about such questions (Everson and Stocker 2003). But in the case of Lewes the present report represents only the first step in recognising clearly and beginning to define the post-Dissolution use of the site.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abbreviations

DNB Dictionary of *National* Biography

ESRO East Sussex Record Office

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APPENDIX A Documentary evidence by Colin Brent

In May 1996, Dr Colin Brent made available the following draft notes, which represent his gathering of documentary evidence concerning Lords Place over many years. The original script is archived with other supporting material in the site deposit in the NMR at Swindon. In reproducing it here, no attempt has been made to expand or interpolate editorially, or to make good gaps or deficiencies in referencing.

'The Place' and Thomas Cromwell

Lewes Priory was surrendered to the Crown on 16 November 1537, and by 12 December Thomas Cromwell, the king's all-powerful minister, though not granted formal possession till February, had installed John Milsent and other servants in the deserted building, from which Lewesians nonetheless were stealing window glass, doors, locks and bolts (PRO SP1/241 fo 243). Milsent hoped Cromwell's only son Gregory and his wife Elizabeth (the sister of Queen Jane Seymour) would celebrate Christmas there, and clearly Cromwell planned to use the priory precinct as a provincial power base. By March 1538 £10 had been spent on 'building' and almost £150 on salt fish and other provisions (LP Henry VIII For & Dom, 14 pt 2, 782). In April Gregory reported that the 'commodious' house greatly pleased his wife (Ellis). In June a royal visit was mooted, and a Yeoman of the Guard was sent to inspect the premises, who found that they would be 'convenient' lodgings for the king. The royal progress though was cancelled because plague lingered at Lewes (SAC ... 228). In August Thomas Cromwell dispatched letters from Lewes (LP Henry VIII 13 pt 2, 201, 226, 234).

This 'commodious' house was presumably the former prior's lodging, which in December 1538 Sir John Gage referred to as 'The Place' (LP Henry VIII, 13 pt 2, 1091). The £10 spent on 'building' hardly suggests a remodelling. But 'new buildings' were mentioned in a 21-year lease of the priory precinct and its Southover demesne lands granted in June 1539 to Thomas Cromwell's servant, Nicholas Jenny. The lease excluded the Great Gatehouse and many rooms in The Place west of the hall. These were itemised haphazardly as the pantry, the chapel, two wine cellars, the chequer, the countinghouse, the great chamber, the outer chamber and the gallery 'with the new buildings above and below at the north and west ends of the great chamber', also the kitchen and bakehouse (PRO C66/693, m24). The principal rooms were on an upper storey. The great Chamber was approached from the south side by a flight of steps, and another descended from the Chapel 'downwards through the west door of the church'. Whether the new buildings were Cromwell's, or a late burst of monastic enterprise, is uncertain. From them the kitchen and bakehouse could be reached through the Great Malthouse.

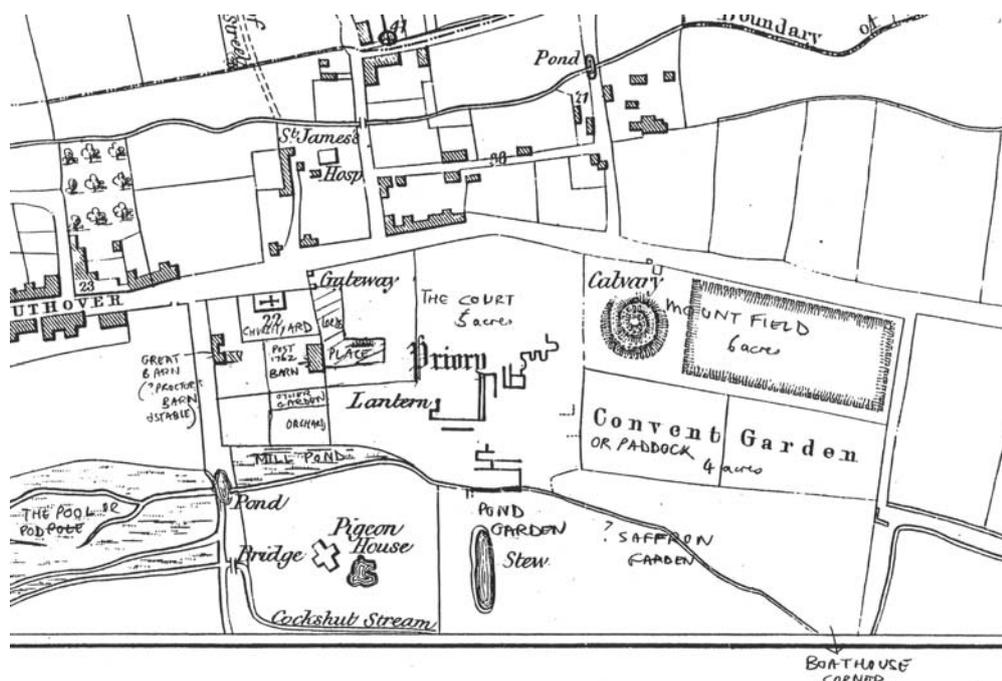


Figure 13. Sketch plot of the location of Lords Place as presumed in Dr Brent's 1995 notes and established Lewes tradition, using extract from Lewes town map of c1775 as base.

No later detailed description of The Place is known, though the 1664 Hearth Tax assessed its then owner, the earl of Thanet, for 33 hearths, and a 1668 lease dismissed it as a 'great old house' (REF). However, John De Ward's map, drawn in 1620, which depicts houses on Lewes High Street with some care, shows a mansion forming the south and west sides of a quadrangle, open to the east and bounded on the north by the surviving gatehouse and precinct wall (ESRO, A2187). The south range could be the east-west one detailed in Jenny's lease, and the west range, bordering the graveyard of Southover church, could be the new buildings north and west of the Great Chamber. The proximity to the churchyard was emphasised in May 1538, during the plague outbreak which prevented the royal visit, when Cromwell's agents secured the burial in St Anne's churchyard of Southover folk who died in the epidemic, because their own graveyard was 'within the precinct' of The Place (LP Henry VIII 13 pt 1, 1059). More specific still was the 1668 lease. This required the demolition within ten years of The Place, and specified that its west wall 'against the churchyard' should be spared to a height of eight feet' (ESRO, WH 191). A Buck print, published in 1737, shows with apparent precision the wall that resulted, seemingly battlemented by the remnants of window openings (ESRO PDAL1a).

After The Place's demolition its site was examined by Thomas Woolgar in 1797, by its proprietor in 1828-9, and in 1923-6 by WH Godfrey, who published a conjectural plan in 1927 (Horsfield's *History* 1824, & *Supplement* 1832: WH Godfrey, *The priory of St Pancras, Lewes*). The *Supplement* gives a circumstantial account of buried walls, cellars etc disturbed when the site was levelled in 1828/9, though sadly 'a plan of the foundations made at the

time, in the possession of the publisher' does not seem to have survived. Godfrey's plan is broadly confirmed by De Ward's sketch, and by the 1539 lease itemising steps descending 'downwards through the west door of the church'.

A probable early Elizabethan modernisation

However, The Place depicted in 1620 had probably been modernised since Cromwell's time. In January 1541, after his execution, The Place and Southover manor were bestowed on Anne of Cleves, who resided at Hever Castle in Kent till her death in 1557. Sir John Gage, her Chief Steward, kept an eye – perhaps covetously – on the mansion (REF). But routine supervision was probably left to Nicholas Jenny, who at his death in 1549 used a 'lodging chamber next adjoining to the great dining chamber' (PRO, PROB 11/33/6), and then to William Newton, Jenny's relative and legatee, who leased the Southover demesne till the late 1560s (REF). Newton came to Southover from Cheshire in about 1540, and lived 'in the Priory' for about thirty years, presumably at The Place (REF). By the late 1560s he resided at East Mascalls in Lindfield (REF), and in 1572 he built what is now The Grange at Southover (REF).

Presumably only repair work was done during Anne of Cleves's lifetime. But in 1559 Queen Elizabeth granted The Place and its Southover demesne to her second cousin, Sir Richard Sackville (1507-66), who staged her coronation. A Lord Lieutenant of Sussex and a Knight of the Shire, he bequeathed £100 to the poor of Lewes and East Grinstead (REF). Though he resided mostly at Westernhanger in Kent, his official business at Lewes caused him to use The Place, and he may have modernised it, as Godfrey concluded from his study of the site (SNQ, 5, 254).

But as likely a candidate was Richard's glittering son, Thomas (1537-1608), a poet, courtier and diplomat, created Baron Buckhurst in 1567, Lord Treasurer in 1599, and Earl of Dorset in 1604 (REF). Like his father he heaped up manors and advowsons in mid Sussex (ADA). In 1569 he became a Lord Lieutenant, and in the 1580s he was still intimately involved with the affairs of Lewes and Brighton; when the local beacons were mistakenly fired, he mustered the militia near Rottingdean (Webb; Hunniset; REF). To sustain his household at The Place, 'sweet' conies were sent from Telscombe Down, 'good' pigeons from Milton and fat steers and calves from Parrock (SNQ, 5, 193-5; SRL/7/3). By the 1590s his son Robert was deputising for him in Sussex (REF), though in his will he bequeathed armour and household stuff at The Place, and also £3000 to provide Lewes and district with subsidised grain in time of dearth (REF).

Presumably any modernisation by Thomas was done by the 1580s, and hopefully by July 1577 when the prospect of entertaining the Queen at The Place threw him into a panic over provisions (SAC, 5, 190-7). It may well have been an early priority of the young and stylish heir, and possibly was precipitated by a fire, since in September 1568 Thomas lamented that a house of his in the country had been burned down 'by a sudden chance'; the context suggesting it was in Sussex (MAL, *Worthies of Sussex*, 193). Conceivably any rebuilding used the 26 tons of Caen stone unshipped at Newhaven in March 1574 (PRO E/190/739/21), and may have allowed the transfer to the Grange of 'two interesting fireplaces almost certainly brought from the Prior's lodging' (WH Godfrey in SNQ, 12, 69). In 1955, fragments of 'elaborate Elizabethan plasterwork' were retrieved from the site (SAC, 94, xxxvi).

The succession in 1609 of Thomas's wildly extravagant grandson Richard (1588-1624) as the third Earl heralded a rapid decline in The Place's fortunes. He quickly squandered the immense Sackville fortune, and from 1614 manor properties in Southover Street began to be sold off (REF). But, though he lived at Knole, as Lord Lieutenant he did visit The Place for short bouts of militia business mingled with gaming and fireworks (Diary). Thereafter, The Place passed by marriage to John Tufton, Earl of Thanet, a Kentish magnate with no standing in mid Sussex, though he probably encouraged fruitless Royalist plans in December 1642 to seize and fortify it during a general advance from Arundel (REF). In June 1668 his son Thomas Tufton authorised the demolition of the 'great' but redundant house.

The Western Precinct 1539-c1670

Jenny's lease in 1539 included 'the site of the former monastery of Lewes, with houses, buildings, gardens, crofts, meadows and marshes, within the precinct of the walls of the site'. Besides the bulk of The Place, the lease reserved for Cromwell's use 'the garden adjoining the new buildings and the malthouse; the other garden and orchard, as they are enclosed between the millpond towards the malthouse and the gardener's house there; the moiety of the dovehouse at its north end; a stable and barn called the Proctor's Barn; a stable and house called the Fish House; the pond garden, with free fishing in the millpond and the Podpole; all swans and cygnets on the same ponds; and the hawks nesting in the premises.' This clause allows the layout of the western precinct to be pieced together; it seems to have largely survived till the 1670s, and indeed the 1830s.

'The other garden and orchard' bordering the millpond [to the south] are probably as shown in 1762 on the earliest known plan of the precinct (REF). By 1775 the millpond had become an ozier bed, but was shown on the 1762 plan as part of the orchard, extending to 3 roods 18 perches, its tail jutting to the east. By 1837 it was planted as an orchard (Figg 1765;

ESRO, ROB 2/1/1, 24). The mutilated north wall of the garden, extending to 16 perches, still stands in Cockshut Road, where stretches of the east and west walls of the orchard also remain. A shallow depression south of the railway, now part of the market garden, marks the site of the millpond.

'The gardener's house' lay presumably to the north of the garden and orchard, where the 1762 plan shows an enclosure of 1 rood 24 perches, possibly the site of the messuage, garden and little close, containing a hemp plot of 1 rood, rented by William Aucock in 1621 (REF). By 1797 this enclosure was a farmyard, with a well-house on the west part, which was perhaps already there in 1539. On the east part by 1775 was a barn, the Lords Place Barn, a remnant of which survives. This was probably erected after 1762 by the banker Samuel Durrant, who, while updating the 'manor house' along the High Street, demolished the great barn that adjoined it to the east, though part of its stonework seemingly remains facing High Street (1762 map).

To the west of the enclosure, garden and orchard, the 1762 plan shows a large, possibly three-bay building, and a network of farmyards, bounded by the churchyard, the High Street and Cockshut Lane. Here in 1668 stood 'the great barn called the Place Barn, divided in two, and the stall adjoining, and the great stable', quite possibly the stable and Proctor's Barn itemised in 1539. The demolition lease in 1668 authorised that 'along the west side of the said stable and barn, and at the north end of the said barn and stall against the highways there', ie along Cockshut Lane and the High Street, walling to a height of eight feet should be preserved; and the Buck print of 1737 shows this was done when the barn was demolished. However, the building shown in 1762 suggests that the stable, by then known as 'the great barn', was spared. If so, it was destroyed in November 1830 by an incendiary during the Swing Riots (SWA 22 Nov 1830).

In 1797 these barns and yards lay north of the stable, a cow-stall, and a pond which drained into the Upper Cockshut where previously the mill pond had spread its waters. Doubtless this was 'the watering place near the millpond' referred to in the priory account roll dated 1534-5 (REF). Carpentry work was done in 1529-30 on the mill, which remained in use till at least the 1640s (REF).

The 1762 map also depicts a substantial cruciform dovecote, as does John Basire's engraving, published by Gideon Mantell in 1845 (REF). Roughly 80 x 80 feet, with recesses of hewn chalk for 3228 pairs of doves, three wings were demolished in 1804, the other soon after (*Georgian Lewes*, 110). Though not specified in 1539, Pigeon House Close – reckoned as 2 acres 2 roods in 1709, 4 acres in 1797 – was leased in 1611 (REF). It was bounded by

the millpond, and in 1724 by stone walls along the Lower Cockshut and Cockshut Lane, where a mutilated stretch still stands (Budgen's map).

The Pond Garden, east of the Pigeon House Croft, was pinpointed in 1681 as situated due north of the driveway to Pulbar (REF). The 1873 Ordnance Survey map reveals two large depressions there between the Lower Cockshut and the ruins of the reredorter, bounded on the east by a ditch. The Buck print of 1737 shows a large pool there, possibly foreshortened in its depiction, behind a boundary wall along the Lower Cockshut, the banks of which are painted with dwarf trees. In 1533-4 a 'causeway' in the Pond Garden was made or repaired (REF). Presumably the pools served the priory and The Place as stewponds. The site has been levelled for lawn tennis.

The Podpole, where free fishing was continued in 1539, was probably The Pool, immediately west of Cockshut Lane. Paul Dunvan in 1795 stated that this 'pond or reservoir' of the priory mill had been supplied on occasion with water from the Winterbourne stream through a subterranean watercourse (Dunvan 414-5). After the mill ceased in the later seventeenth century ash trees were planted on it (REF). Presumably the 'stable and house called the Fish House' stood inside the precinct and perhaps near the Pond Garden.

No later reference is known, however, to the 'garden adjoining the new buildings and the malthouse', though it probably stretched south of The Place, since the malthouse must have stood near the Upper Cockshut (REF).

The Eastern Precinct 1539-c1670

The 1539 lease offers no guidance on the layout of the eastern half of the precinct. Indeed evidence is lacking until December 1603, when the watering pond in the Convent Garden was cleansed. In June 1604 a cow strayed out of the Mount and Convent Gardens, and in June 1605 both gardens were mown (REF). In 1709 they were itemised as meadow or pasture land, the 'Mount' of 6 acres and the 'Convent' of 4 acres (WSRO, Wiston 1870), and the 1762 map locates 'Mount Field' (6a 0r 17p) and 'Paddock' (4a 2r 9p), the latter described in 1765 as 'Convent garden or the Paddock' (REF). Budgen's map shows them bounded in 1724 by stone walls, and the southern wall of mount Field massively buttressed.

A deposition made in 1707 stated that 'the ruinous and demolished building called the Priory formerly stood on and adjoined the parcel of land called the Court', reckoned in 1709

to contain 5 acres (REF). It lay therefore between Southover Street, The Place, the still extant priory ruins, and to the east the Mount Field and the Convent Garden.

This leaves undefined an area of 11 to 12 acres, bounded by the Convent Garden, the Pond Garden, the Lower Cockshut and the brookland of Houndean Manor outside the precinct wall, which Budgen depicts in 1724 enclosing it to the east and south-east but giving way thereafter to a fence. Its south-east corner was known as Boathouse Corner by ????, and in 1686 the Upper Cockshut between the Pool and the boathouse there needed cleansing (REF). In 1619 the bargeman employed at The Place kept his vessel neatly dressed (ADA 45/140). This area was reckoned 'brookland' in 1893, and in 1765 a pool and spring of water inside its northern boundary supplied the Convent Garden. Possibly in the 1709 sale this was included with the Pond Garden as 'Saffron and Pond', though the acreage given, at 4 a 2r, is far too small. In 1611 a 'Saffron Garden' was leased, being described in 1637 as a meadow containing 2 acres.

The name Mount Field, being in existence by 1604, confirms that the ambitious garden works there – most obviously the Mount and the Dripping Pan – were not due to the garish, spendthrift third Earl. As with any modernisation of The Place, the early years of the cultivated, affluent Thomas Sackville seem the most likely time for such works. His contemporary neighbour, the eighth Earl of Northumberland, laid out formal gardens at Petworth between 1577 and 1582 focussing on a fountain brought from London by water to Arundel (SAC, 95, 1-27).

A local tradition linking an Earl of Dorset with 'the Tumulus', alias the Mount, was conveyed by the Reverend Mr Robert Austen, a Lewes antiquary, to Francis Grose in a letter dated 22 July 1772:

It is said to have been raised by one of the Earls of Dorset between whom and a brother of his Living at Lewes a Difference arose on the Acct of being overlooked by each other (SNQ, 16, 194-8)

The first Earl had no such brother. But a younger son of his, Henry, who went insane, was buried at Southover in 1635, expiring presumably at The Place, where perhaps he was confined (REF). Henry had been 'the finest and comeliest boy in nature, with such a rare curled head' that Queen Elizabeth took 'a very special liking to him'. But by 1597 his senses had 'fallen into a distraction', and his condition persisted (REF). As time passed, the memory of his tragic life and of his father's 'Tumulus' perhaps became fantastically intertwined.

The Convent Garden and the Saffron Garden were leased out by 1611, and remained so into the 1630s, but the Mount Field was not, presumably because its pleasure grounds were used by the third Earl, some of whose visits were recorded by his wife, Lady Anne Clifford. In May 1616 Lord Compton, Lord Mordaunt, 'Tom Neville, J. Herbert and all that Crew with Wat. Raleigh, Jack Laurie and a multitude of such company' came with him. 'There was much Bull Baiting, Bowling, Cards and Dice, with like sports to entertain the time.' In August 1617 the throng there was 'very gallant, brave and merry'. In March 1619 her Lord reviewed the mustered militia at Lewes 'which the county prepared in so much better fashion by reason of their affection to him'. In leisure moments there was 'great play' between Lord Hunsdon, lady Effingham and him, which lost them £200, and 'the town entertained him with fireworks' (Diary). Possibly the Dripping Pan hosted the marching columns and spectators, as it has done more recently.

APPENDIX B Architectural fragments by Freda Anderson†

Discussion of the post-Dissolution afterlife of the site in the mid 1990s with local people long involved in the care and study of Lewes Priory through the Lewes Priory Trust challenged one of them, Dr Freda Anderson, with the proposition that there would be a scatter of previously unremarked stone fragments of later 16th- and 17th-century date derived from this major phase in the site's history among the large lapidary collection at the Anne of Cleves Museum that she had curated diligently for many years, and/or in the fabric of local buildings. The notes reproduced here are extracted from a draft text Dr Anderson produced at the time. They represent a first, and perhaps not fully robust, response to that challenge. As such, their value lies principally perhaps in changing expectations and opening up new prospects.

It is a matter for regret that delays in finally putting this report together mean that Freda Anderson – who died in January 2000 – has not been able to see and comment on its completed form, as the outcome of an initiative into which she put characteristic enthusiasm.

The collection contains a number of pieces that fall into this category. They ... have no site provenance ... So all can be considered as possible components of the new house.

The first is a group centred round a small rounded arch with plain recessed orders; **No 1**, a square-edged tympanum contains strapwork decoration. A fluted, overhanging moulding has the remains of 2 bases above it. The material is greensand. The remains of 3 greensand shafts are obviously part of this complex. They were clearly designed to be placed on top of each other vertically and they display a double-purpose function, the capital of the lower one becoming the base of the one above. The central motif of the shaft is a rounded, double-lined lozenge within a rectangular border (**No 2**). To these must be added a piece, **No 3**, with the capital/base only surviving, the shaft having broken off.

The use of greensand is puzzling. Caen limestone was lying around the priory site in vast quantities and was being carted away by all and sundry. It is beautiful material to look at and excellent for sculpture. Moreover, in the priory collection there were very few examples of the use of sandstone from any earlier period. The most reasonable explanation is probably the provision of colour. The combination of cream and green would add appeal to the façade. For these essentially monumental pieces were most probably part of a façade and intended to enhance the imposing appearance of the building.

There are other single pieces that are also likely to have come from an ornamental facade. **Nos 4 and 5** show strapwork decoration on one side, but they are reused material; on the back is the outline of a 13th-century string course. Both are in Caen limestone. **No 6** is a battered sandstone piece, but not greensand. The decoration is strapwork as before. **No 7** shows two of several sandstone pieces that are hardly prepossessing. Their interest lies with the material, for the reasons given above; but also still more with the slanting parallel lines used for decorative effect ... unlikely to be employed except on the exterior of a large building.

There are two very interesting pieces that, at first sight, do not appear to have anything in common beyond their style. The first, **No 8**, is a console. The front face shows a strapwork pattern and both sides end in scrolls, which seem to end in scrolls; and this is enhanced by their curvature. The function of the second, **No 9**, is more controversial ... its decoration is ... elaborate, and it is dated and initialled on one side. It is more likely to be a dedication stone from an ornamental arch comparable with that in the Inigo Jones drawing for an archway at Arundel House (Harris and Higgott 1989, 126-80). Both are in Caen limestone. The link between Nos 8 and 9 is the intriguing fact that they display spaced-out notched edging as part of their ornamentation. In the case of the console it can be seen along the voluted side; in the case of <No 9> along the floriated face. Both pieces would have been sited within a large architectural feature. As both sides of No 8 are carved, a building façade is not a likely site; an ornamental archway within the grounds of the house may be a plausible alternative suggestion (as Jones's design for Arundel House was, Strong 1979, 170-4). The date '1599' may be an important indication of renewed work. Unfortunately, the initials 'AM' – if initials they are - cannot be correlated with members of the Dorset family.

Lastly, there is **No 10**. It is a slim, classical shaft of square design. Its original height is unknown. It was almost certainly free-standing. Now embedded in the garage wall of Grange Lodge, what is likely to be the same piece can be picked out on a photograph of piled-up priory sculptures taken by Reeve in 1874. As with the previous pieces, this could have been employed externally; but, unlike them, it might equally have been part of the decorative format of an architecturally impressive chamber.

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