



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Field survey of the Marlborough Mount

:an earthen mound at Marlborough College,

Wiltshire

English Heritage Archaeology & Survey Projects Division

Field Survey Report

The National Monuments Record is the public archive of English Heritage

NATIONAL MONUMENTS RECORD CENTRE
GREAT WESTERN VILLAGE, KEMBLE DRIVE, SWINDON SN2 2GZ.

Telephone 01793 414700 Facsimile 01793 414707 World Wide Web <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk>

Field survey of the Marlborough Mount

: an earthen mound at Marlborough College, Wiltshire

County: Wiltshire
Parish: Preshute
Administrative District: Kennet
NGR: SU 1837 6866
NMR No: SU 16 NE 8

Surveyed by: D Field & G Brown
Report by: D Field
Archive drawing by: D Field

**Field survey of the Marlborough Mount: an earthen mound at Marlborough College,
Wiltshire**

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Geology, geography and land-use
3. Archaeological background
4. The Earthworks
5. Discussion
 - a) The Garden Mount
 - b) The Motte
 - c) The mound compared with Silbury Hill
- 6 Method and acknowledgements
7. References

Illustrations

1. Plan of the earthworks at 1:500 scale
2. Plan view of the Mount and gardens in 1723 (from W Stukeley *Itinerarium Curiosum*).
3. View of the Mount and formal gardens 1723 (from W Stukeley *Itinerarium Curiosum*).
4. View of the Mount at Marlborough and beneath it an illustration of the cascade at Wilton House (from W Stukeley *Itinerarium Curiosum*).

Field survey of the Marlborough Mount: an earthen mound at Marlborough College, Wiltshire

Introduction

The large earthen mound situated within the grounds of Marlborough College, Wiltshire, and variously described as a castle motte and/or garden mount was surveyed by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England (RCHME) in April 1999. This was prompted by the recognition that certain garden features on the mound had fallen into disrepair and that a management plan was required to keep it in good order. A separate survey of the trees was carried out by Donald Insall Associates of Bath, and the position of marked trees on the mound was recovered as part of the RCHME survey. Wessex Archaeology undertook small-scale excavations in relation to conservation of the garden buildings on the mound, and this report should be read in conjunction with separate reports by the third parties mentioned.

The mound is located in the grounds of Marlborough College at the extreme western limit of the town of Marlborough in the administrative district of Kennet at NGR SU 1837 6866, but in fact lies within Preshute parish. It is recorded in the National Monuments Record as SU 16 NE 8 (see also related sites SU 16 NE 103, 72, 108, 109, 112-125, 129), and is Scheduled Ancient Monument No WILTS 321, while its reference in the County Sites and Monuments Record is 450. The grotto at the base of the mound is a Grade II listed building No SU 1868 5273 while the site of the garden as a whole is included by English Heritage within the *Register of Gardens of Historical Importance* (WILTS G342). While placing it within its landscape context, this report focuses on the mound itself rather than the immediate surroundings.

Geology, geography and land-use

The site lies on first terrace valley gravels just above the alluvium of the present floodplain of the River Kennet. It is situated to the north of the river itself, hard against the river bluff, and within the confluence of the river with a small stream that formerly rose on Manton Down to the north-west of the site, but which has now been canalised.

The gravel terraces here are too narrow for viable agriculture and land use of this part of the Kennet valley floor has tended to be meadow. The proximity of the town of Marlborough, however, has ensured that the site itself has long been developed, and has taken on something of an urban aspect, being currently occupied by buildings of Marlborough College.

Archaeological background

The mound is certainly the motte of Marlborough Castle, which, although not specifically mentioned in documents until 1138 (Renn 1968, 239-40), is thought to have originated soon after 1066 (Brentnall 1938: Stevenson 1983). Stukeley believed that there were antecedents, and suggested that the site lay on a Roman fort, recording that Roman coins were discovered when the mound was landscaped in the 17th century (Stukeley 1776). He also considered that the mound held the keep of a medieval castle and noted that in his time a spiral walk had been carved around it. Despite Stukeley's misidentification of the site as Cunetio (Mildenhall), there are other discoveries of Roman artefacts from the site. Trenches cut in the nearby Cricket Field in 1892 produced two Roman coins and a probable pair of shears (Eve 1892, 66). Brentnall too (1938, 141) described the presence of Roman coins recovered from the 'castle ditch', but perhaps of greatest interest is his assertion that the date of the mound might in fact be prehistoric. Following Colt-Hoare's (1821) comparison, Brentnall described how, in 1912, a 'channel was cut up the side of the mound to accommodate the flue of an engine-house chimney. About half-way up and between two and three feet in... a pocket of red deer antlers' was found. These were evidently of some antiquity as they were brittle and the chalk was said to have thoroughly impregnated them, and Brentnall thought that they must be antler picks. The deposit comprised a beam and one *tres* tine; the remainder were crowns with the brow tine broken off and burrs worn (Brentnall 1912, 24-5). Previously portions of a

red deer antler had been found at the base of the mound in the east '*opposite the Hall, where the bank has been walled up with sarsen*' (Eve 1892, 66), and Brentnall recorded a further example found on the slope to the south of the chapel, 36m north of the mound (Brentnall 1935). All this seemed to confirm the view already current by 1892, that the mound was '*supposed to be British and pre-historic like Silbury Hill*' (Eve 1892, 65). Brentnall (1935) was cautious in drawing parallels simply describing Silbury Hill as '*our greater neighbour*'. However, the seed was sown.

The few excavations into the mound have produced inconclusive evidence of date. In 1892, a new cart-shed was constructed near the laundry. This is shown on plans of the grounds to lie partly across the conjectured line of the moat immediately north of the mound (*Plan of Marlborough College* by E Blore c1848-50: *Ground Plan of Marlborough College of c1850* - both in Marlborough College archives). One corner of the shed cut into the base of the mound, and excavations for the foundations revealed that below a thick deposit of accumulated surface soil was a layer of chalk that decreased in thickness towards the edge of the mound, while beneath the chalk at the base of the mound was a deposit of '*stiff creamy clay*'. The foundations for the shed itself were in '*undisturbed chalk*' but at 2.4m distance, presumably towards the mound, it was found necessary to lay concrete as the '*foreman found spongy earth and mud*'. Almost certainly this represented deposits within the former ditch.

Foundations for the Victorian Physical Laboratory dug late in the 19th century were inspected every day by the College Natural History Society. Trenches here encountered 1.2m of rubble, evidently rubbish employed to backfill the ditch. Beneath this lay '*mud*', at its deepest about 18m from the Mount, but the only dating material was a horseshoe and a portion of a glazed tile and it would appear that the ditch had been scoured out (Eve 1892, 67).

In 1912, when water-pumping arrangements were considered inadequate, a new pumphouse was constructed at the base of the mound. An inclined flue leading to a chimney at the summit occasioned the cutting of a channel up the west side of the mound, while the new pumphouse was to be partially set into the base. About half way up the mound and some 0.6m deep within the chalk, the six pieces of antler described above were discovered.

At the base of the mound, the ancient ground level was revealed as a thin black layer of charcoal ½" thick, overlying a natural alluvium, which was in turn overlaid by a thin layer of

red clay. On this weathered surface lay the chalk rubble of which the mound appears to have been constructed (Brentnall 1912, 24). Neither the 1892 or the 1912 excavations produced other finds from sealed contexts, but a portion of the charcoal found beneath the mound in 1912 was retained (Hayman 1956, 97) and said to have been given to an unnamed archaeologist by Devizes Museum in the 1960s (pers comm T Rogers). Surface finds consisted of a token of 'Edward Delamere', a spur and claypipe both probably of the 17th century, 19th century pottery and a 'doubtful' fragment of late Iron Age pottery (Eve 1892, 66: Brentnall 1912, 25).

Further excavations were carried out in 1955 at the base of the western edge of the mound. Above the natural ground surface was a layer of packed chalk and soil, over which lay a thin layer of flint, and then a layer containing medieval refuse incorporating building materials, bone, shells, and Norman pottery. A second trench was cut in 1956, 1.8m to the south of the boiler house, the aim being to try to obtain further charcoal samples from the deposit that was encountered in 1910 and *two one pound jars of impure charcoal* were indeed obtained, but evidently not dated. The stratigraphy of the earlier trench was confirmed but additionally provided details of the layer considered to represent the body of the mound, allowing it to be subdivided into four distinct layers of chalk and soil, silty soil, chalk rubble, and alluvium (Hayman 1956, 14-15). All finds made by the College Natural History Society were passed to Devizes Museum (T Rogers pers comm).

The Earthworks

The mound rises steeply from 83m in diameter at the base to 31m across the top. In plan form it is very nearly circular, although post-medieval and recent activities have slightly affected its symmetry. No serious rounding or weathering of the overall profile is observable and if it were not for the spiral walk the sides would be tapered. The spiral walkway itself is 1.5m wide and takes four rising circuits to reach the summit, but is now swathed in vegetation that all but obscures hints of soil creep and possible revetting on the inner side. Some modern revetment of the mound is present at ground level on the west and east sides. On the summit a flat-bottomed depression some 15m in diameter, surrounded by a shallow earthen bank that overlies the spiral, provides a solid base for a water tank. Nearby, closer to the north-west edge, is a brick chimney that once served a boiler-house at the base of the mound. A number

of cuts and runnels scar the sides of the mound to a depth of 0.5m or more. One of these marks the line of the boiler-house flue, but others may have occurred as a result of fallen trees or of children sliding down the mound. These scars reveal that the mound - at least in part - is composed of chalk, although flint and sarsen building material can be observed in places, particularly close to the summit.

The remains of an arched brick feature, some 3m wide and 2m deep, survive in the east just below the summit and adjacent to the spiral walkway. At ground level a grotto, 11m in length by 4m wide, is cut into the south side of the mound, and currently roofed by corrugated iron at the level of the first spiral circuit. Immediately in front of this is a concrete setting of three linked circles approached by concrete steps. A few metres to the west of this feature a flight of concrete steps provides modern access to the summit.

The area by the foot of the mound is laid to tarmac in order to provide vehicular access to school buildings, and in the north-east the boiler-house has clipped the base of the mound. Other school buildings surround the mound and these, together with garden landscaping, have obscured any remnant of ditch that might have surrounded the monument.

Discussion

a) The Garden Mount

Whatever the original nature of the mound, that it was used as a garden feature is not in doubt. The castle was certainly ruinous in 1541 when Leland visited Marlborough, and it is likely that a house existed at the location by then or soon after. Sir Francis Seymour certainly constructed a house on the site before 1621 and this is thought to have been located in the same area as a later house (below), and formal gardens may also have been constructed at this time (Stevenson 1983, 169; Bradley *et al* 1893, 33). Parliamentary soldiers used the mound in 1642 and are likely to have erected defences (Stevenson 1983, 169), but in 1644, with the changing fortunes of war, Charles II took advantage of the position of Lord Seymour's house

in order to strengthen his influence in the region, and evidently fortified it (Bradley *et al* 1893, 30). Much damage was apparently done; *'some of Lord Seymours own tenants have cut down and much defaced the house there'*. Two years later Seymour was pardoned and allowed to rebuild (*ibid* 1893, 30, 33). John Evelyn visited Marlborough in 1654 and reported in his diary that *'...at one end of the town we saw Lord Seymours House, but nothing observable except the Mount, to which we ascended by windings for near half a mile..'* (*ibid* 1893, 34). It is perhaps noteworthy too that Charles II lodged with Lord Seymour in 1663 on which occasion he met Aubrey, who showed him the monuments at Avebury (*ibid* 1893, 35).

Celia Fiennes described the house as a *'great rambling building'* when she passed through in c1701-3, the building being *'most pulled down'* (Morris 1947, 330) and a new one designed by John Deane was under construction by Charles Seymour, the 6th Duke of Somerset (1662-1748). After 1750 this became a coaching inn, ideally situated just outside the town on the London to Bath road, until, sometime after 1843, it was converted into a school and became the home of Marlborough College (Stevenson 1983, 170).

As the Mount was noted as a garden feature by Evelyn the gardens themselves are likely to have been laid out before 1654, probably by Sir Francis Seymour. The mound itself is referred to by Stukeley quite deliberately as a mount, rather than a mound or motte, and is depicted by him as an integral part of the garden layout. He illustrates it at one corner of a formal garden arrangement that comprised compartments to both north and south of the house with geometric flower beds or lawns, and with a long rectangular canal set into a terrace leading from south of the Mount towards the river. Compartments to the north of the house were thought by Brentnall (1933, 76) to be laid out over an outer bailey that accounted for the curving nature of the Bath to London road. In the south a channel cut from the river is shown arcing around the base of the Mount and then feeding the canal. The compartment formed by this arrangement appears to have been used as a wilderness but at its southern (river) end several formal lines or avenues of trees can be seen, and as this must have been the formal approach to the Mount (no other access is depicted) it is likely that the wilderness was encouraged to develop out of a more formal arrangement in order to provide contrast and astonishment as one began to ascend the mound. A third representation, a plan view dated 6 July 1723, differs in its detail. It depicts the same area as a series of geometric beds on a slightly different alignment to the canal, with trees among the beds and an avenue approaching the Mount from the south-west. There is, however, a problem with the date of

Stukeley's illustrations. Each illustration, though apparently prepared in the same year, shows a markedly different garden arrangement, and according to Brentnall (1933, 71) Stukeley depicts a terrace in 1723 that was not constructed until 1740. It may be that an element of artistic licence was involved. Stukeley was certainly repeatedly in the area from about 1719 until 1743, engaged with his studies into Avebury (see Ucko *et al* 1991) and may well have visited the house at Marlborough on more than one occasion. Perhaps a clue lies in the depiction of a cascade at Wilton House, placed beneath an illustration of the Marlborough Mount in *Itinerarium Curiosum* and dedicated to Lady Hertford, wife of the 6th Duke. Cascades were inserted at Marlborough shortly before 1740 and it may be that Stukeley himself had an influence on the garden design there.

Lady Hertford constructed a grotto of flint at the base of the mound sometime before 1726 (Stevenson 1983, 170) but this is not shown on Stukeley's illustration. A letter to the Countess Pomfret (Waylen 1854, 384) indicates that Lady Hertford was pleased with it; *'The grotto which we have made under the mound, and which, without particularly, I think is itself much prettier than at Twickenham'* (Alexander Pope's house). Colt-Hoare (1821, 15) witnessed the mound in the gardens of the inn with the summer house on the summit and parapet hedges all apparently still in good order, and was amongst the first to notice the similarity to Silbury Hill.

Waylen (1854, 384; also Brentnall 1933, 71) described a series of letters between Lady Hertford and the Countess Pomfret that shed further light on the gardens. From these it is clear that Lord Hertford made considerable alterations in 1737 or 1738 *'he has widened the channel of the water that surrounds it to about thirty feet; and at two angles formed cascades, which although they do not fall from any considerable height have still a good effect.... The uppermost cascade passes betwixt two artificial rocks.... The lower one, where the stream falls into the main river, has the ruins of an arch built over it'*. A letter dated 1739 also describes the construction of cascades, a ruinous arch and the widening of the canal, while another of 1741 (*ibid* 386) describes *'sitting near the cascade on a favourite seat by the side of a little wilderness of flowering shrubs'*.

The Mount itself appears to have been landscaped at an early stage. Evelyn noted that the spiral walk around the Mount was present in 1654 (Bradley *et al* 1893, 34) and almost 50 years later Celia Fiennes described the spiral walk as being bordered by a low quickset hedge.

On the summit was a similar hedge '*cut in works*'. She described a ruinous house and pond on the summit and '*halfway down is a seate opposite to the dwelling house which is brick'd*' (Morris, 1947, 330-1), almost certainly the feature depicted by Stukeley as arched, currently in disrepair. Stukeley's illustrations also depict a fence around the outside of the walkway. On the summit is an octagonal summerhouse surrounded by a low castellated wall; the latter shown as a balustrade in a second illustration.

While no trace remains on the surface of a ditch or moat, Fiennes described the foot of the mound as being '*encompassed by such a cannal which empties itself into a fishpond*' and then into the river (Morris 1947, 331). Stukeley depicts this too, as do a number of later plans and maps (e.g. *General plan of the premises of the Castle Hotel Marlborough as proposed to be altered 1842*- Marlborough College Archives). The curvilinear line of this watercourse suggests that it utilised the former castle moat, and Brentnall (1933) suggests as much, the course being straightened in the east to create a formal canal and conform to the geometric garden design. The excavations of 1892 (Eve 1892) and 1955 (Hayman 1956, 16-20) encountered this ditch, but it had evidently been scoured out leaving no evidence of medieval, let alone prehistoric, origin.

Sanitary arrangements were never satisfactory, and sewage from Marlborough College was said to have been discharged into the canal, contaminating the wells (pers comm Terry Rogers). It is likely that this is why the ditch was filled in before 1850, the laundry being shown partly across the site of the canal on plans of that date. A circular tank is shown on the summit shortly before 1850 (Plan of Marlborough College by E Blore 1848-50), and a rectangular reservoir on the summit of the mound on the *Ground plan of Marlborough College c 1850* (both Marlborough College archives). Soon afterwards it appears to have been reconstructed yet again in circular fashion (Plan showing the buildings at the College and the Gas Pipes leading into the different points 1863 - Marlborough College archives).

While there were medieval antecedents (Thacker 1979, 85), mounts appear to have become a fashionable feature of gardens from the 16th century. The notion that geometric knots and garden designs were better observed from above (Thacker 1979, 85,140; Jackson-Stops 1991, 12) appears to have caught on quickly, encouraged and standardised by seventeenth century French garden manuals. The *Theatre d' Agriculture*, by Olivier de Serres in 1600 depicted use of a mount for a herb garden, with a spiral path leading to the pavilion on top and with a

grotto in the base, while *Raisoir des Forces Mouvantes*, by Soloma de Caus in 1615 (both quoted in Thacker 1979, 140, 145) advocated construction of a mount with spiral walk, again with a grotto constructed in the base. The probable inspiration was the mound at the Villa Medici in Rome which, flanked by trees, gave no clue of the vista until the summit was reached and a view of Rome unfurled (Thacker 1979, 99, 100). Illustrations suggest that the mound here was either scarped to give a tiered effect or had a spiral walkway. At the summit was a belvedere, and like Marlborough the approach lay through a closely planted wood.

Medieval Mounts appear to be a rare garden feature. The only examples said to survive are those in College gardens in Oxford and Cambridge (Thacker 1979, 85). Neither are later examples particularly abundant although many may lie unrecognised. At Holdenby, Northants (SP 66 NE 21) a large circular mound, 4.5m high, is located in the south-east corner of a garden arrangement (RCHME 1981, 108), while at Dunham Massey a mount depicted by Kyp in 1697 as comprising four scarped tiers that echo a spiral, with a gazebo on the summit, was, like the Marlborough example incorporated close to the house in one corner of the garden design. The sheer labour involved in construction of a Mount from scratch was likely to pose a problem that could be greatly alleviated where houses lay on former castle sites and where the presence of earthworks gave them a distinct edge. Similarly, where prehistoric or Saxon barrows lay close to the house, at Taplow, Bucks (Everson 1997, 5), for example they could be easily remodelled. Mottes large or small, in particular, provided easily adapted features. Within Wiltshire, however, a county not renowned for its mottes, and lacking research into its garden earthworks, there appear to be few parallels. At the Clack Mount (NMR No ST 97 NE 4 & 5), little more than 1.5m high, near Bradenstoke Priory, Lynham, the garden feature was perhaps remodelled from a prehistoric mound as it is mentioned in a charter of 850AD (Grundy 1919, 167), while proximity to a mansion and use of the summit as a bowling green suggests that the 'motte' at West Dean (Cathcart King 1983, 501 and references therein) may have been used as a Mount. In contrast, while Silbury Hill itself was fortified during the Saxon period (Reynolds 1999, 94) there is no evidence for its use as a garden feature.

The construction of surfaced spiral paths appears to have developed in conjunction with that of mounts and to have been a relatively early innovation, presumably in order to provide a formal approach and ensure that those enjoying the garden did not get their feet wet from the damp vegetation. Leland writing in the 1530s described two mounts at Wressel Castle, East

Riding, Yorkshire, that had spiral walks (Thacker 1979, 85), while a mound with a spiral walk is shown on an estate map of Burton, Lincolnshire to dated c1600 (RCHME 1991, 79-82). At Lyveden, Aldwinckle, Northants two of the four mounds of Treshams late 16th century garden contained spiral paths (Brown & Taylor 1979, 157; RCHME 1975, 6-8; Jackson-Stops 1991, 12) as did that at Packwood House, Warwickshire (National Trust 1978, 8), although the extent of such treatment is not recorded in archaeological literature. The spiral path around the small mottes at Abinger, Surrey (Hope-Taylor 1952) and Holgate (Holdgate) in Shropshire, where an ice-house has been inserted into the base (P Everson pers comm), for example, indicate how widespread the practice of re-use mottes may have been, and even the larger examples, such as that at Warwick Castle, did not escape remodelling.

The spiral at Marlborough, however, appears to be rather different from these. Here the summit is reached after four circuits, a lengthy course a little exaggerated by Evelyn's comment '*near half a mile*', but which is in contrast to other examples where, at most, two circuits reach the top. It may be that the length of the walk with its constantly changing views was of importance. The circuits here also provide the mound with a tiered effect and in this respect there are similarities with truncated garden pyramids, for example, the two northernmost mounds at Lyveden, New Bield, Aldwinckle, Northants (Brown & Taylor 1973, 156; RCHME 1975, 6-8), features where the walk channelled around the terraces appears to have been part of the experience. Similarly at Marlborough, the journey around the mound may have been as important as the ultimate destination. Unlike Packwood House, however, where the Mount is traditionally thought to have formed part of a garden design depicting the '*Sermon on the Mount*', there is here no evidence of symbolic attachment.

b) The Motte

The records of continuous use make it clear that the mound formed the motte of the medieval castle and as such it equates with larger examples such as Oxford, Arundel and Richard's Castle in Herefordshire (Best, in Whittle 1997). Being a royal holding during the medieval period there is much documentation (e.g. Brown *et al* 1963, 734-8), confirming, for example, that until the early-13th century the mound was surmounted by a wooden palisade, stone being introduced some time before 1226 when the '*walls and battlement of the tower were*

already being repaired' (Brentnall 1933, 82). Part of a *'dungeon'* (Toulmin-Smith 1964, 130) or *'tower'* (Chandler 1993, 500) was still standing when Leland passed through in 1535-43. Camden saw it as *'a heap of ruins: a few fragments of walls remain within the ditch'* (Camden 1610, 136). Brentnall prepared a speculative plan based on documentary research (Brentnall 1938, 135,138, fp 140) that shows a keep on the mound, with a bailey to the south incorporating a complex array of buildings. Only in three places, however, was any of this confirmed by archaeological observation or excavation. A small section of the curtain wall was revealed in the east, a small section of wall in the south, and a *'buttress of the keep'* on the summit of the motte (Brentnall 1935, 543; 1936, 42; 1938, 135), the latter presumably the *'curved shell keep with pilaster buttresses'* mentioned by Pevsner (1963, 337).

c) The mound compared to Silbury Hill

In recent years, the chief interest in the site has been the possibility that it is a massive Neolithic mound to match that at Silbury Hill, 8 km to the west along the Kennet valley. Aside from the hints of antiquarians, recent writers (e.g. Burl 1979; Malone 1989; Best, in Whittle 1997) have also added to the debate. In terms of shape there is certainly some similarity with Silbury Hill - the spiral even echoes the terrace close to the summit of Silbury - although in size there are considerable differences. No basal or summit measurements of Silbury Hill are available but it is somewhere in the region of 165m base diameter reducing to 30m at the summit. The sides incline at *c* 30% and the mound attains a height of 37m (Whittle 1997, 8). In contrast the mound at Marlborough is very much smaller, at 83m base diameter and 19.3 m in height, just half that of Silbury Hill.

Comparisons between the two also extend to their location. Both lie on the valley floor at confluences. Silbury Hill seems to have been constructed on a chalk spur but may also partly cover the adjacent gravel terrace (British Geological Survey 1" map no 266). Excavation tunnels approaching from the chalk indicate that the subsoil is Clay-with-flints (Whittle 1997, 14), an unlikely deposit to be found in such a position, and it may in fact be solifluction or terrace material. The nature of the water table and position of springs during the Neolithic is unclear but springs are present at Swallowhead 500m to the south of Silbury. Similarly, springs issue close to the Marlborough Mount, and are said by Stukeley (1776, 64) to rise in the castle ditch.

The case for a prehistoric mound is partly based on the place name Marlborough, '*Merleberge*' in the Domesday Book, which is often interpreted as meaning Merlin's barrow (Gover et al 1939, 288: Stevenson 1983, 160), and - as befitting a famous personage - implies therefore a barrow of some size. Camden, who claims that this link was suggested by Alexander Neckham in a poem on Divine Wisdom, thought it '*ridiculous to the last degree*' (Camden 1610, 136). Haslam views the early settlement at Marlborough as being located nearly 1km to the east of the castle, around St Mary's church, on the *hillslope* above the confluence of the rivers Kennet and Og. Despite the above interpretation of the place-name, Ekwall (1974, 311-2) has interpreted it as meaning '*Maerla's hill*' and suggests that it may in fact come from OE *meargealla* meaning '*gentian*', in which case the '*hill*' could just as easily be that identified by Haslam.

The alignment of the Roman road (Margary 53) on Silbury Hill has also been thought to have supported an early date (Best, in Whittle 1997, 169). This is perhaps the most compelling evidence as within a river valley any feature used by surveyors for alignment must have been a substantial one. However, the route of the Roman road through, and for a considerable distance either side of, Marlborough is completely unknown (Margary 1973, 135), and remains conjectural. Rather than following a tortuous course along the river valley, it may have taken the higher ground to the north, just as an important early medieval route (pers comm T Rogers), following the alignment of Silver Street, appears to have done.

The case also rests upon the finds of antler, a number of which have been found (see above), and some of which were apparently impregnated with chalk, although by themselves these do not indicate a Neolithic origin for the mound. With the proximity of Savernake Forest it would be surprising if the castle did not act as a focus for hunting parties and as such antler is likely to be abundant in a medieval context.

Whether the chalk rubble described by the excavators (Brentnall 1912: Hayman 1956) does indeed form the bulk of the mound is uncertain and for the moment much remains unclear. At face value the Norman potsherds and rubble found close to the base of the mound appear to preclude an earlier construction but, as the excavators have considered, the deposits encountered may be silt /creep from the upper slopes of the mound (no prehistoric material has so silted) and it remains conceivable that it encompasses a much smaller prehistoric

mound. The slopes were evidently silting relatively early as there is record in 1211 of providing a 'girth', perhaps a revetment, around the motte (Brentnall 1933, 75). However, in the absence of evidence to the contrary the available archaeological and documentary evidence indicates that the mound is essentially an early medieval construction. While it must be admitted that there is not a great tradition of such motte construction in Wiltshire, for most medieval fortifications in the area are ring-works, it may be a case of early medieval builders trying to emulate the fortifications on nearby Silbury Hill as much as following Norman blueprints.

Method and acknowledgements

The mound, hard detail and trees, together with a survey control network, was surveyed by EDM using a ten-station traverse, seven around the base of the mound and three on the summit. Some scars were added by tape from the control network. The survey took place when vegetation was high, which restricted observation of subtle detail but it is considered by the surveyors that this is likely to be negligible. The resulting data was computed using Key Terra Firma software.

The survey was carried out by D Field and G Brown and the archive illustration, research and report by D Field. M Bowden commented on the text while P Everson provided helpful comments about garden Mounds. Our appreciation is due to E H J Gould, and S Eveleigh for providing access to the site, and to T Rogers, Archivist at Marlborough College for assistance with documents relating to the site.

References

Bradley, A G, Champreys, A C, & Baines, J W, 1893 *History of Marlborough College*
London: John Murray

Brentnall, H C, 1933 *Castellum Merlebergae Rep Marlborough Coll N H Soc* 82, 60-104

Brentnall, H C, 1935, *Marlborough Castle Wilts Archaeol & Nat Hist Soc Mag* 47, 543

- Brentnall, H C, 1936 The Curtain Wall *Rep Marlborough Coll N H Soc* 85, 42-7
- Brentnall, H C, 1938 Marlborough Castle *Wilts Archaeol & Nat Hist Soc Mag* 48
- Brown, A E, & Taylor, C C, 1973 The gardens at Lyveden, Northamptonshire *Archaeol J* 129, 154-160
- Brown, R Allen, Colvin, H M, & Taylor, A J, 1963 *History of the Kings Works* 2, 734-8 London:HMSO
- Burl, A, 1979 *Prehistoric Avebury* London:Yale Univ Press
- Camden, W, 1610 *Brittannia* trans R Gough 1806 London:John Stockdale
- Cathcart King, D J, 1983 *Castellarium Anglicarium II* London: Kraus International
- Chandler, J, 1993 *John Leland's Itinerary* Stroud:Sutton
- Colt-Hoare, R C, 1821 *The Ancient History of Wiltshire* vol 2 London:Maver & Lepard
- Eve, A S, 1892 On recent excavations at Marlborough College *Rep Marlborough College N H Soc* 41, 65-9
- Everson, P E, 1997 *Monuments Protection Programme Single Monument Class Description - Post medieval formal gardens* unpublished report
- Gover, J E B, Mawer, A, Stenton, F M, 1939 *The Place-Names of Wiltshire* English Place Names Society XVI Cambridge Univ Press
- Grundy, G B, 1919 The Saxon land charters of Wiltshire *Archaeol J* 76,143-301
- Hayman, P E C, 1956 The Mound *Rep Marlborough Coll N H Soc* 97, 13-20
- Hope-Taylor, B, 1952 The excavation of a motte at Abinger in Surrey *Archaeol Journal* 107 (for 1950), 15-43
- Jackson-Stops, G, 1991 *An English Arcadia 1600-1990* Washington:AIAP
- Malone, C, 1989 *Avebury* London:Batsford
- Margary, I D, 1973 *Roman Roads in Britain* 3rd ed London: John Baker
- Morris, C, 1947 ed *The journeys of Celia Fiennes* London: Cresset Press
- National Trust 1978 *Packwood House* Plaistow:Curwen Press
- Pevsner, N, 1963 *Wiltshire* revised edition B Cherry 1975 Harmondsworth:Penguin

RCHME, 1975 Northants I

RCHME, 1981 *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Northampton: vol 3 archaeological sites in north-west Northamptonshire* London: HMSO

RCHME, 1991 Change and continuity

Renn, D, 1968 *Norman Castles in Britain* London: John Baker

Reynolds, A, 1999 *Later Anglo-Saxon England* Stroud: Tempus

Stevenson, J H, 1983 Preshute, in C R Elrington ed *A History of Wiltshire* XII, 160-183
Victoria County History. Oxford University Press

Stukeley, W, 1776 *Itinerarium Curiosum* facsimile ed 1989 Gregg: Farnborough

Thacker, C, 1979 *The History of Gardens* London: Croom Helm

Toulmin-Smith, L, 1964 (ed) *Leland's Itinerary in England and Wales* London: Centaur Press

Ucko, P J, Hunter, M, Clark, A J, & David, A, 1991 *Avebury Reconsidered* London: Unwin Hyman

Waylen, J, 1854 *A history military and municipal of the town (otherwise called the city of Marlborough) and more generally of the entire Hundred of Selkley* London: John Russell Smith

Whittle, A, 1997 *Sacred Mound, Holy Rings* Oxford: Oxbow Mon 74

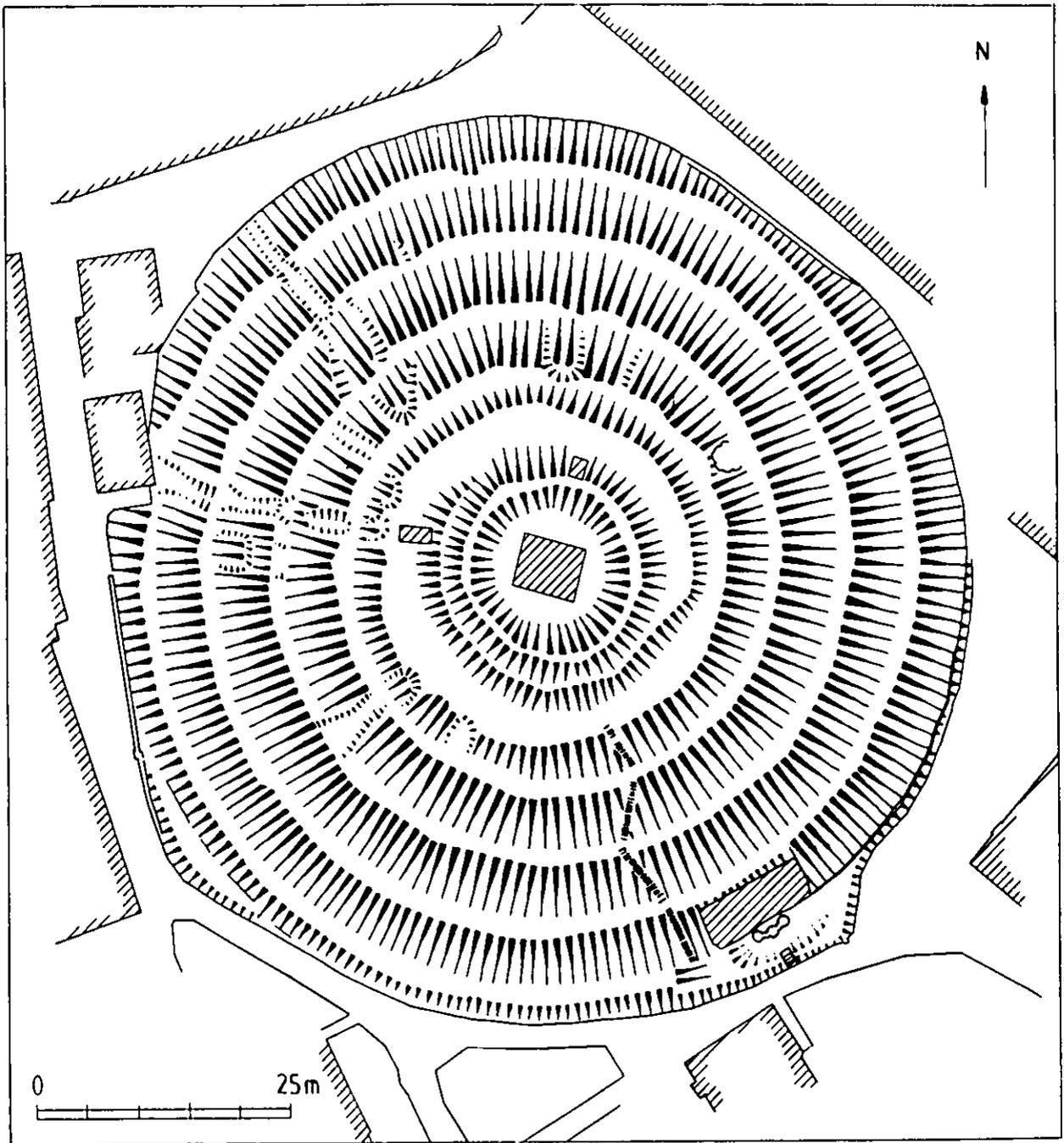
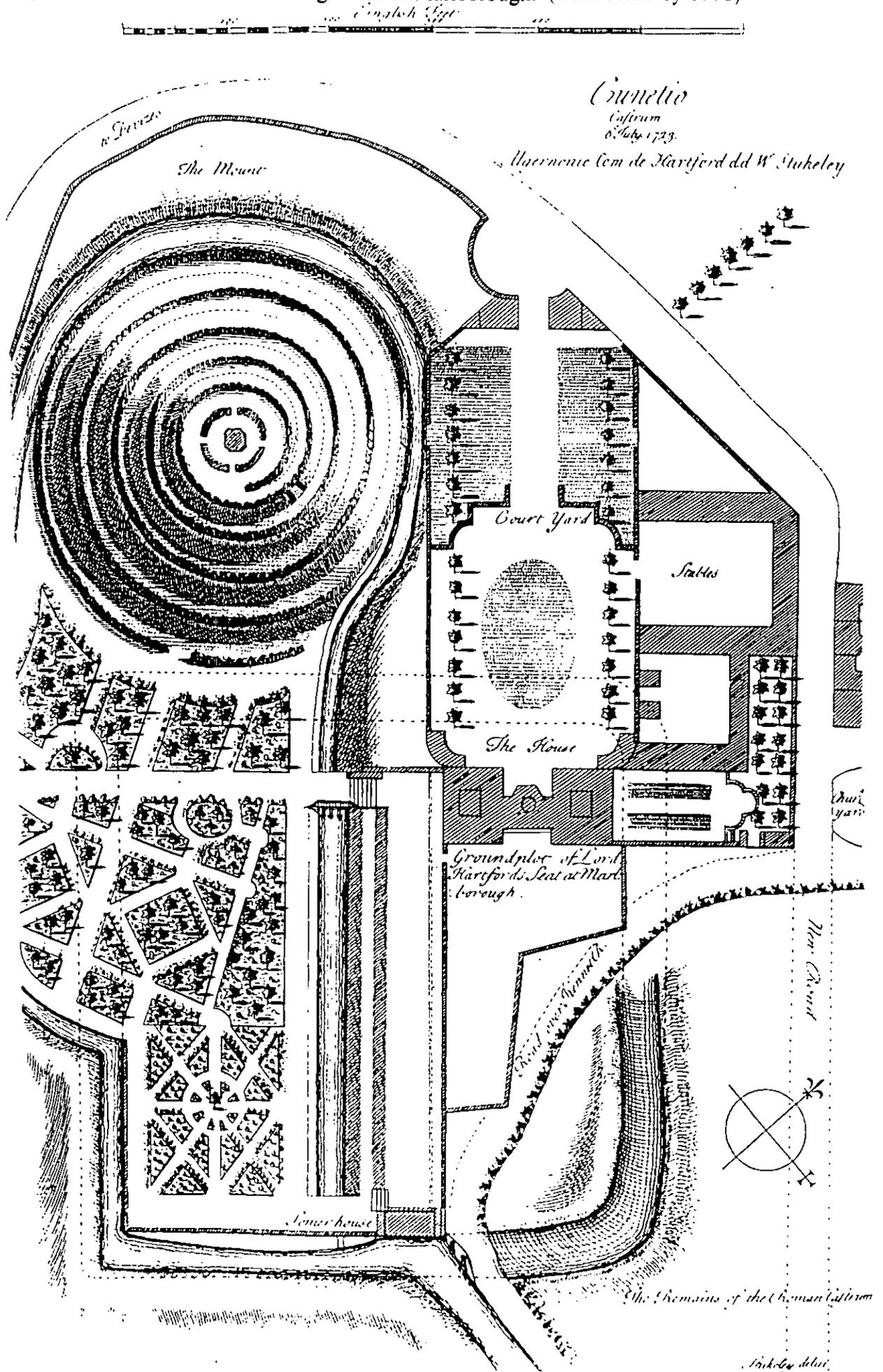


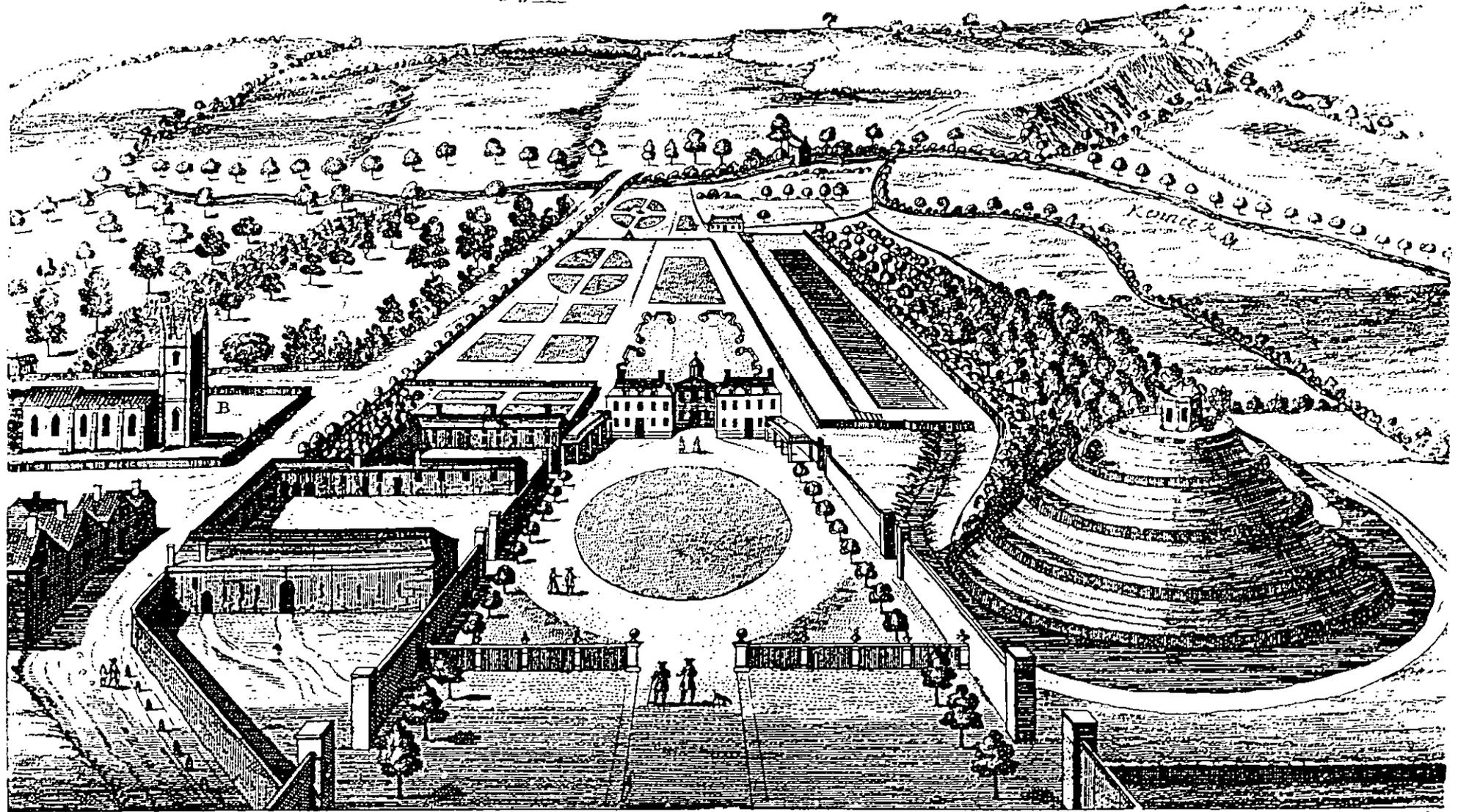
Fig.1 Plan of the Marlborough Mount

Fig 2 Plan view of the Mount and gardens at Marlborough. (from Stukeley 1776)



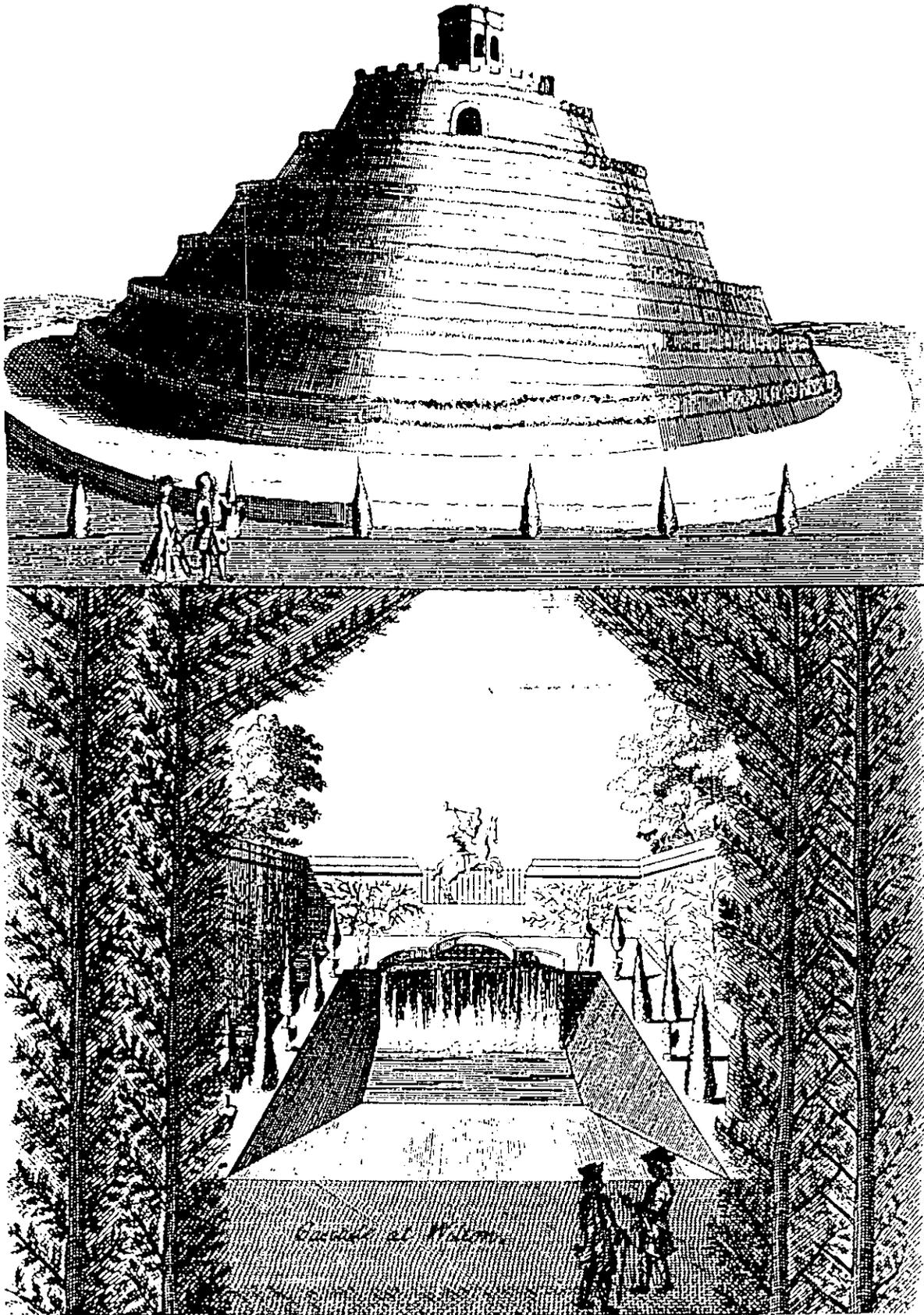
B. S. Tatum.

View of Lord Hartfords House at Marlborough 29 Jun. 1723. A. the Seats of our Ancestors &c.



S. Kebley del.

Marlborough Mount



Dedicated to the Right Honourable the Lady Hertford.

Fig 4. View of the Mount at Marlborough and beneath it an illustration of the cascade at Wilton House (from W Stukeley 1776 *Itinerarium Curiosum*).