

TILTING AT WYNDEMYLLS

by

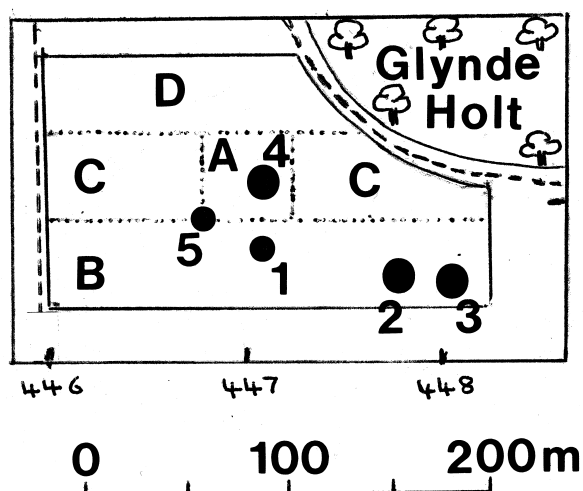
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Introduction

During the winter months of 1979-1982 I was engaged on a fieldwalking project at Glynde. The site lies on the Down west of Glynde Holt, on the area marked by the Ordnance Survey spot height 148 m (N.G.R. 447 096; see the map at the end of this article). Saxon Down is 0.6 km to the north and Mount Caburn, only 1 m higher, lies 0.75 km to the south. There is abundant evidence of prehistoric occupation of the Downland, but this article is concerned primarily with the medieval period and involves a somewhat elusive windmill. The map inset shows that the area selected for fieldwalking contains the sites of five ploughed out Bronze Age barrows. As long ago as 1930 L. V. Grinsell thought that barrow 4 could have been used as a millstead (1). An opportunity to examine the site came early in 1973 when the Down was rotovated and barrow 4 bulldozed in advance of ploughing. E. W. Holden visited the area at that time and retrieved some medieval sherds and associated objects which provided tangible evidence for the site of a windmill (2). An aerial photograph taken in 1975 shows clear outlines of barrows 1, 2 and 3 in the plough, but of barrow 4 and the adjacent small barrow 5, which had been so disturbed in medieval times, all distinguishing features were obliterated. Six seasons of ploughing had taken place before I first came on the site and suggested to P. L. Drewett, then Director of the Sussex Archaeological Field Unit, that it might repay investigation before further plough damage took place.

A close examination of the site revealed a very significant distribution of sherds. A small area in the neighbourhood of barrow 4 contained a relatively dense concentration of medieval sherds, to the virtual exclusion of all those of earlier date. I defined this collecting area as section A (45 m²), with barrow 4 in the south east quadrant. Sections B, C and D contained the vast majority of the prehistoric sherds. A limited two-way spill across the border of section A involved only 8 - 9% of the two main assemblages. Some 6,710 sherds were collected from the site, of which 70% are prehistoric ranging from the Beaker to the late Iron Age/Romano-British periods. A high proportion of these (84%) could be assigned to the late Bronze Age/early Iron

Plan of the Site



Age, corresponding to the early period of occupation of the Caburn Hill Fort and surrounding area during the 8th - 6th centuries B.C. (3). Only two sherds link the Romano-British period with the medieval period some 700 years later. The medieval sherds number 1,965 and date from the 13th - mid 15th centuries. A small post-medieval group of 67 sherds span the 16th - 19th centuries.

The Medieval Windmill Site

The archaeological evidence overwhelmingly supports Grinsell's opinion that barrow 4 had possibly been used as a millstead. Documentary research not only confirms the archaeological evidence but adds a new dimension by extending the life of the windmill by some 200 years.

1. The Archaeological Evidence

a) The Millstead

Medieval postmills sometimes used barrows as millsteads but the more usual practice was to sink the horizontal cross trees into the ground or to place them on masonry piers. The cross trees bore the trestle supporting the massive vertical mill post (4). Where the topsoil is thin, as on the Sussex Downs, extra material from a barrow would contribute to the structure's support. Mr. L. V. Grinsell's criteria for identifying millsteads or barrows as having supported windmills were based on indications of a cruciform pattern in the turf (the crosstree trench) giving a hot cross bun effect, and also on the

presence of nearby crescentic pits which he believes were associated with windmills (5). One cannot tell how convincingly these features were displayed on the Glynde site when Grinsell surveyed it in the late 1920's. The purpose of the crescentic pits is puzzling. They are unlikely to be refuse pits, which are usually circular; possibly they represent portions of a barrow ditch dug out to provide extra up-cast.

The Ordnance Survey describes the meagre remains of barrow 4, which were visible on the turf before its final destruction in 1973, as "a possible windmill mound, originally a bowl barrow". Their measurements reveal a mound 21 m wide and 0.5 m high with a large central crater 9 m wide. The surrounding ditch (lost on the S. E. side) was 3 m wide and 0.3 m deep (6). The large central crater, the partially destroyed ditch and an accompanying spoil heap indicated some considerable disturbance in the distant past. The nature of the disturbance and the subsequent finds on the site are consistent with the erection and, at least three centuries later, the dismantling of a structure that can only have been a windmill. The final bulldozing of the site in 1973 obliterated all signs of barrow 4. The barrow would have effectively protected the area it occupied from later prehistoric occupation debris, but this does not explain the paucity of such material over the whole of Section A.

Systematic excavation of windmill sites is a relatively recent venture, and the diverse results obtained depend on the individual mill's history. The important factor is continuity of occupation with its resultant assemblage of dateable artefacts. This can be affected by a number of factors such as changes in farm practice or ownership, distance from the settlement, or destruction by fire or storm. For example, a windmill recently excavated by R. J. Zeepvat at Great Lindford, Bucks., was only 300 m from the village and, probably as a result of the proximity between it and the settlement, produced no evidence of occupation. A radiocarbon date of 1220₊₈₀ was obtained from the timber. This was confirmed by a document dated 1303 relating to William le Waleys "who owned 120 acres of land, several houses and a windmill at Great Linford" (7). Stevens has just published his report of the excavation of 10 windmill sites near Eastbourne. Three, at Ocklynge, were roughly contemporary with the Glynde site and, where they overlapped, produced a similar range of pottery. In this case there was no documentary support (8).

b) The Pottery

This consists of 1,965 sherds. Section A was given eight complete 'sweeps', in contrast to the two sweeps accorded sections B, C and D. The assemblage

is characteristic of simple household ware, such as storage and cooking pots, bowls and shallow dishes. Only 284 body sherds are glazed; the majority of these probably belong to jugs. Decoration is minimal and restricted to a few sherds bearing rudimentary strap work. Nine of the 250 rim pieces (mostly flanged) are decorated with simple linear scrolls. Occasionally the stabbing process, necessary for firing, suggests a decorative intent. The jugs, characteristically more sophisticated, display a variety of coloured glazes, combed body decoration, thumbled and frilled bases and several types of handle. These accord with forms from the Barnett's Mead kiln in Ringmer, excavated by J. I. Hadfield (9). I compared the Glynde assemblage with some pottery from C. Vigor's partially excavated medieval settlement at Wyke on Saxon Down in Ringmer and Glynde. Only a very small proportion of Vigor's finds have survived. His report indicates that the windmill and Wyke sites were coeval, but the middens and structures at Wyke yielded a much more sophisticated range of household goods and suggest the presence of a substantial homestead (10).

c) Miscellaneous Finds

These were concentrated in section A but spread quite widely over its borders. They comprise broken roof, floor and pierced oven tiles, 65 large nails, nine pieces of brick (three of which are possibly Tudor) and many oyster shells. A cache of 30 broken pieces of red fired clay bars was found nearby in section D. Some have expanded ends and appear to be bars from an oven of unspecified nature. Amongst the broken stone objects commonly used for abrasive purposes and which cannot be closely dated are some rocks of a different nature. These were small pieces of silicious sinter, a fresh water hot spring deposit. L. Stevens immediately identified them as pieces of millstone known as French Burr. They have been imported from the Paris basin since the 13th century for grinding meal and are still in use today. This stone cannot be quarried in sufficiently large blocks, so pieces are squared up, cemented with plaster of Paris and bound with iron hoops. Three large sub-triangular blocks of French Burr (totalling 5.2 kg) were found at the close of the project and left no doubt as to the site's identity as a millstead. It is interesting to note that the Glyndebourne windmill used Neidermendig lava for millstones. This comes from the Eifel highlands of the Rhine. A large block of lava once lay 100 m north of the windmill site on Mill Plain (11). It has subsequently been 'lost' and a recent effort by Stevens to locate it was unsuccessful.

2. Documents and other sources

I have had no experience of historical research, so emerge from my foray into the medieval period a demented Don Quixote clinging to his jaded steed Rosinante. Fortunately I was frequently re-seated and kept on course by the faithful Sancho Panza who embodies all the expertise of the East Sussex Record Office, the Barbican House Library and many other people working in the same field.

a) The Maps (The following paragraphs are based mainly on evidence appearing in H. Margary's series of Old Sussex maps (12)).

Early maps can be very deceptive. Position and relative distances are inaccurate and attempts at portraying physical features are often ludicrous. Furthermore, since they were largely pictorial, the selection of objects could be both arbitrary and incomplete. To some extent cartographers borrowed from earlier sources and incorporated what was useful to know at the time of production.

Norden (1595) is the first to portray windmills. Here three whirl merrily atop "volcanic cones" representing the Beddingham and Firle Downland ridge and what is assumed to be Mill Plain with the Glyndebourne windmill, which collapsed in 1925. William Budgen (1724) follows with the same three windmills on a more recognisable Downland landscape. He identifies "Ringmer Windmill" on the hill (Mill Plain) above Glyndebourne. During the 18th century these Downland windmills were joined by others on the plain south of Glynde Reach. These appeared in sequence at Balcombe Quarry Hill, West Firle and Beddingham Preston, to end ignominiously in 1873 with the corn mill behind Glynde railway station. The 1717 Glynde Estate map of Beddingham by Thomas Attree shows a windmill on Combe Fore Down (13), but this one seems to be predated in a document of 1592/3 (14).

b) Documents

Research in this field provides evidence that a windmill existed at Glynde for some 300 years between 1347 and 1648. Its life thus spanned two important periods in the manor's history. Firstly, the transfer of the lordship of Glynde from the le Waleys to the Morleys between 1410 and 1474 (15), and secondly, the period in the 16th century when radical changes in land management resulted in a reorientation of the manor's interests from Ringmer to the area south of Caburn.

The crucial question is the position of the windmill. The least helpful documents are those in which a windmill is merely listed amongst other manorial assets. They give no clue as to its position and do not necessarily provide reliable dating evidence owing to the prevailing habit of copying details from earlier documents. There are, however, five sources of major importance and these are discussed below.

The following three references are quoted by Mrs. P. Revill in her article on the etymology of the word 'Caburn' (16).

- i) 1347-8 account roll of the manor of Glynde. " xxvi s. de firma molendine ventriciti apud Caldeburgh."
- ii) Fourteenth century. A statement of dower mentions the "Mill de Caldeburg."
- iii) Sixteenth century. Reference to " firma molendini ventriciti super de Calborough."

These references locate a mill in the vicinity of Caburn.

The most conclusive evidence is from a deed dated 10 August 1515. It records a seven year lease by Robert Morley, lord of the manor of Glynde, to Thomas Vynehale of the "Tenement called Brykdene" (Brigdens Farm). The lease includes the right to pasture 80 sheep on Morley's pasture ground called Calbrough with the sheep of Robert Morley so that the sheep of the said Thomas "do pasture noe ferder than unto the crosse of Tre unto the foteparth that ledith from Glynd to Lewes upon the doun betwen the wyndemyll and Calbroughhill" (17).

This is an exact description of the relation of the Glynde windmill site both to the present footpath from Glynde to Lewes and to Mount Caburn. The 25 inch O. S. map of 1872-78 and current maps show a footpath starting opposite Glynde Post Office and heading north west for Oxtedde Bottom and thence past the Golf Club House down into Cliffe High Street. There is no reason for thinking that the modern footpath does not take the same route as the "foteparth", nor that they are not one and the same as the "Wold hors Wey" leading to Lewes across the sheepdown north of 'Calborowe' that is mentioned in another early 16th century document (18).

Evidence for the windmill's continued existence at the beginning of the 17th century is to be found in a marriage settlement deed (unexecuted) dated May 1614. This mentions " ... land, part of the demesne of the manor of Glynde in all 1507 acres with Sheep Down and Windmill" (19). Further references to the windmill of the manor of Glynde occur until the middle of the century. The last 'sighting' is in 1648 (20) and as it does not show up on Attree's map of Glynde of 1717 (21) it must be assumed that the latter half of the 17th century or very early years of the 18th saw its collapse.

A regrettable omission in this story of the Glynde windmill is the absence of any mention of a miller. The presence on the site of medieval pottery of the 13th to mid 15th centuries is the only evidence of his existence. I have not been able to trace a Glynde miller in the published catalogue of the Glynde Place archives, though occupational surnames such as 'Molendino' (i.e. Miller) do appear in a Ringmer context. The lack of any reference to a Glynde miller may be partly due to the fact that the windmill had a restricted role to play in the manorial economy on account of the manor's interest in the water mills of Mellynk and, during the 16th century, Barcombe Mills.

Conclusion

The implications of much of my documentary research were helpfully illuminated by the expertise of the co-editors of this Journal. The deficiencies inherent in the archaeological evidence can be attributed to the fact that the site was not excavated but only fieldwalked. As a fieldwalker I had to rely entirely on what the plough turned up from an already much disturbed site. One can do no more than record and date the finds as closely as possible. The insignificant collection of 67 post-medieval sherds may be discounted as dating evidence. It is impossible to tell to what extent, if any, they represent the true statistical relationship between the pre- and post-medieval collection. They could in fact amount to no more than litter from occasional visits to a popular site.

During the last 200 years of the windmill's known existence radical changes were being made in farm management. During the 16th and 17th centuries many acres of land were enclosed and marshes drained. The windmill, which, according to the pottery assemblage, was untenanted from the mid 15th century, may have operated seasonally in much reduced circumstances. It may be significant that in the last thirty years of the 16th century the lord of the manor of Glynde gave up his interest in his water mills in Ringmer, built (or

rebuilt) Glynde Place, and bought the manors of Coombe and Beddingham (22), in the former of which, as has already been noted, there was a windmill from at least the 1590's.

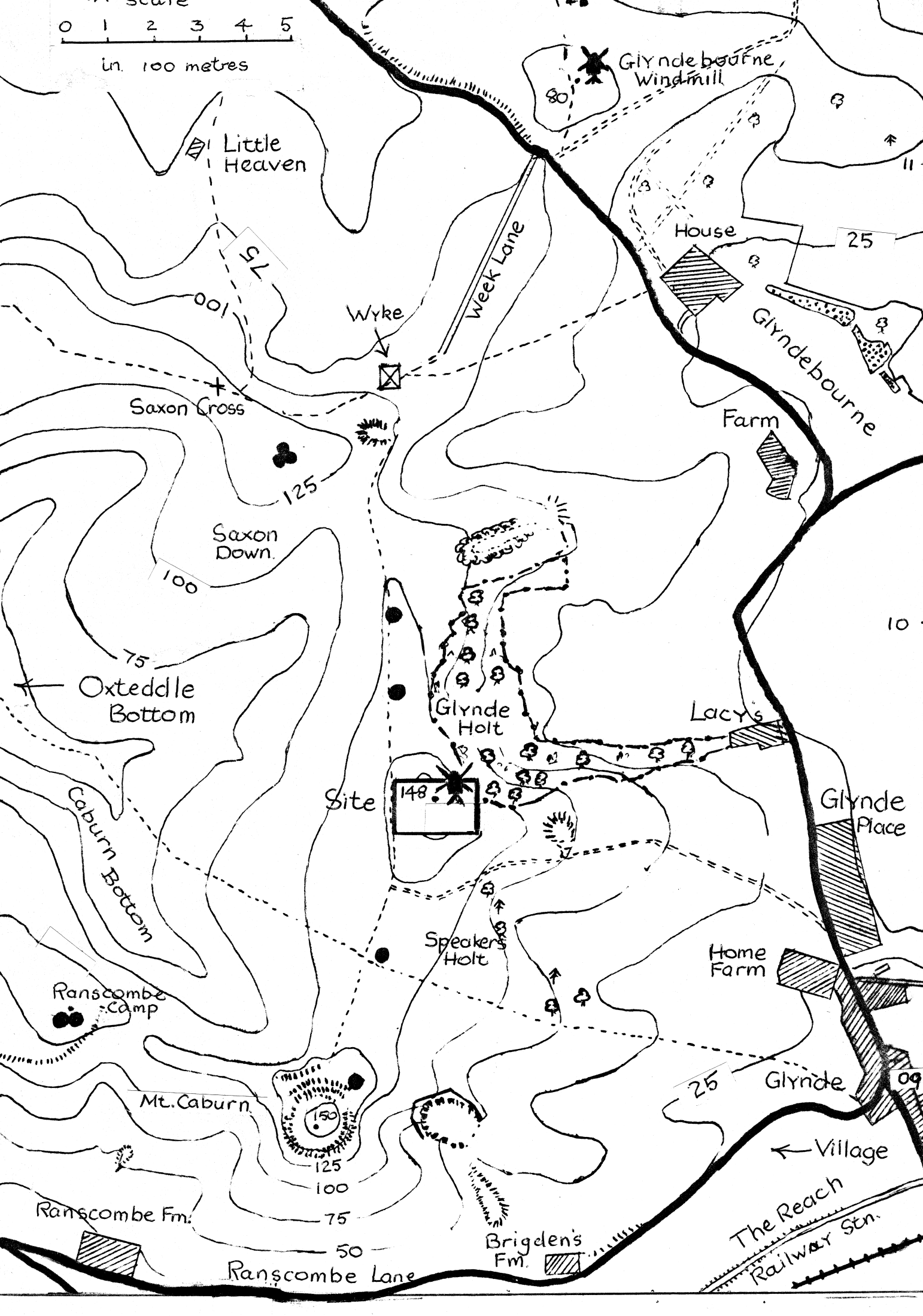
Towards the end of its life the Glynde windmill may have stood as a ruined landmark, or alternatively it may have been transported elsewhere for renewed life on a different site.

References

1. L. V. Grinsell, 'Sussex Barrows', Sussex Archaeological Collections (S. A. C.) Vol. 75 (1934), p. 263.
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4. V. J. N. T. Vince, 'Discovering Windmills', (Tring, 1969), p. 5.
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8. L. Stevens, 'Some Windmill Sites at Friston and Eastbourne', S.A.C. Vol. 120 (1982) pp. 93 - 138.
9. J. I. Hadfield, 'Excavation of a Medieval Kiln at Barnetts Mead, Ringmer', S. A. C. Vol. 119 (1981), pp. 89 - 106.
10. C. Vigor, 'Excavation at Saxon Down, 1945, typewritten report (unpublished), Sussex Archaeological Society Library, Barbican House, Lewes. (For 'Wyke' see John Kay's article in this issue of Ringmer History).
11. Note by A. H. Allcroft on the 'Archaeological Site Maps', S. A. S. Library, Barbican House, Lewes.
12. H. Margary, (ed.), '250 Years of Mapmaking in Sussex, 1575 - 1825', (Chichester, 1970).
13. R. F. Dell, (ed.), 'The Glynde Place Archives - A Catalogue', (Lewes 1964), No. 3108.
14. Ibid. No. 120.
15. Ibid. p. xv.
16. P. Revill, 'An Old Name for Caburn', Sussex Notes and Queries Vol. 15, No. 1 (May, 1958), pp. 43 - 45.
17. Dell, op. cit., No. 1489.
18. Ibid. No. 1485.
19. Ibid. No. 132.
20. Ibid. No. 166.
21. ESRO/GLY/3111.
22. Dell, op. cit. No. 1260 and p. xvii.

Scale 0 1 2 3 4 5

In. 100 metres



Little Heaven

Glynde boafne Windmill

House

Wyke

Week Lane

Glyndebourne Farm

Saxon Cross

Saxon Down

Farm

Oxtedde Bottom

Glynde Holt

Lacy's

Site

148

Glynde Place

Caburn Bottom

Speakers Holt

Home Farm

Ranscombe Camp

Mt. Caburn

Glynde

Ranscombe Fm.

Brigden's Fm.

Village

The Reach Railway Stn.

Ranscombe Lane