

# Ditchling

## Historic Character Assessment Report

June 2005



Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS)

*Roland B Harris*



# Ditchling

## Historic Character Assessment Report

June 2005

*Roland B Harris*

## Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS)

in association with Lewes District Council and the Character of West Sussex  
Partnership Programme



## *Sussex EUS – Ditchling*

---

The Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (Sussex EUS) is a study of 41 towns undertaken between 2004 and 2008 by an independent consultant (Dr Roland B Harris, BA DPhil MIFA) for East Sussex County Council (ESCC), West Sussex County Council (WSCC), and Brighton and Hove City Council; and was funded by English Heritage.

Guidance and web-sites derived from the historic town studies will be, or have been, developed by the local authorities.

All photographs and illustrations are by the author.

First edition 2005.

Copyright © East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, and Brighton and Hove City Council 2005

Contact:

*For West Sussex towns:*

01243 642119 (West Sussex County Council)

*For East Sussex towns and Brighton & Hove:*

01273 481608 (East Sussex County Council)

The Ordnance Survey map data included within this report is provided by East Sussex County Council under licence from the Ordnance Survey. Licence LA 076600 2004.

The geological map data included within this report is reproduced from the British Geological Map data at the original scale of 1:50,000. Licence 2003/070 British Geological Survey. NERC. All rights reserved.

*The views in this technical report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of English Heritage, East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council, or the authorities participating in the Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author wishes to acknowledge the advice, assistance, and support of Bob Connell, John Mills, Mark Taylor, Peter Ross, Keith Watson and Mike Hicks (West Sussex County Council); Dr Andrew Woodcock and Greg Chuter (East Sussex County Council); Graham Fairclough (English Heritage); Dr Mark Gardiner (Department of Archaeology and Palaeoecology, The Queen's University of Belfast); and staff at the county records offices, English Heritage, and the library of the Sussex Archaeological Society.

*Cover photo: Bank House, 7 and 9 High Street, Ditchling.*

## Contents

List of maps, tables and other illustrations	6
1 INTRODUCTION	8
2 SETTING	11
3 HISTORY	13
4 ARCHAEOLOGY	18
5 STATEMENT OF HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER	23
6 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH FRAMEWORK	30
7 NOTES	31

### List of maps, tables and other illustrations

- Fig. 1. Location of Ditchling within Sussex.
- Fig. 2. Ditchling from the Downs (to the south of the village).
- Fig. 3. St Margaret's church from the west, with the remains of Court Farm in the foreground.
- Fig. 4. The Bull and Post Office, on small medieval cottage plots created from wayside waste.
- Fig. 5. Monument to local landowner Henry Poole, d.1580, in the parish church.
- Fig. 6. Baptist meeting house and burial ground.
- Fig. 7. Lewes Road: a new turnpike road of 1812.
- Fig. 8. Surviving shops at 19th-century 4-8 West Street.
- Fig. 9. Former Baptist free school, 28-32 East End Lane.
- Fig. 10. St Margaret's church: west wall of nave.
- Fig. 11. St Margaret's church: view from the chancel.
- Fig. 12. 45 East End Lane.
- Fig. 13. Brewers, 11 East End Lane.
- Fig. 14. Wings Place Place, 24 West Street: 16th-century timber framing.
- Fig. 15. 1 South Street, showing northern gable.
- Fig. 16. The Limes, 32 High Street.
- Fig. 17. Ford Cottage, 42 East End Lane (c.1812).
- Fig. 18. 9-21 The Twitten.
- Fig. 19. Ditchling tithe map, 1839 (copy in *East Sussex Record Office*).
- 
- Table 1. Sussex EUS Historic Character Types
- Table 2. Sussex EUS chronology
- Table 3. Summary of assessment of Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) for Ditchling
- 
- Map 1. Extent of Ditchling EUS study area
- Map 2. Solid and drift geology with 5m contours
- Map 3. Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Series 25" (c.1875)
- Map 4. Historic buildings
- Map 5. Period 4 (950-1065)
- Map 6. Period 5 (1066-1149)
- Map 7. Period 6 (1150-1349)
- Map 8. Period 7 (1350-1499)
- Map 9. Period 8 (1500-1599)
- Map 10. Period 9 (1600-1699)
- Map 11. Period 10 (1700-1799)
- Map 12. Historic Character Types (2005)
- Map 13. Historic Character Type areas showing principal period from which present character is derived

Map 14. Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs)

Map 15. Historic Environment Value (HEV)

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the project

This report is an archaeological, historical, and historic urban character assessment of Ditchling. It is part of the Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (henceforth Sussex EUS) that examines 41 towns across the ancient county.<sup>1</sup>

The Sussex EUS forms part of a national programme of such surveys initiated by English Heritage in 1992. The national programme is already well underway, with roughly half the English counties having been completed or currently undergoing study.

As the surveys have progressed, the approach has developed. In line with recent surveys, the Sussex EUS includes more modern towns, the main significance of which stems from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Another recent innovation is the introduction of the characterization concept, comparable with the map-based techniques adopted by historic landscape characterization. This approach was developed in Lancashire (2000-4), and is further refined in Sussex.

The Sussex EUS has been funded by English Heritage, and supported in kind by the commissioning authorities: East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, and Brighton and Hove City Council. A wide range of stakeholders (including district and borough councils, and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) has supported the project.

In West Sussex the Sussex EUS forms part of the *Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme*,<sup>2</sup> aiming to provide guidance and advice on the protection and enhancement of all aspects of character in the county. Other historic environment projects come under this umbrella:

- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) of Sussex
- Intensive Urban Survey of Chichester and Fishbourne
- Local Distinctiveness Study of West Sussex.

### 1.2 Aims and objectives

#### 1.2.1 Aims

The aim of the Sussex EUS is to deliver a unique and flexible tool to aid the understanding, exploration and management of the historic qualities of 41 of the most significant towns in Sussex with a view to:

- archaeological and historic environment research and management.
- informing strategic and local policy.
- underpinning urban historic land and buildings management and interpretation.
- encouraging the integration of urban historic characterization into the wider process of protecting and enhancing urban character.

#### 1.2.2 Objectives

Key objectives of the project include the:

- synthesis of previous archaeological and historical work.
- creation of a Geographic Information System (GIS) that maps and allows the analysis of archaeological events, monuments and urban plan components using information obtained from a variety of sources.
- analysis of the origins and development of each town by establishing and examining its principal plan components and existing standing structures.
- identification of county-wide Historic Character Types and attribution of the types to different areas within each town.
- preparation of a Statement of Historic Urban Character for each town, to include assessment of archaeological potential and Historic Environment Value.
- identification of gaps in the understanding of the past occupation and historical development of character of each town through the development of a Research Framework.
- advice to local authorities on the development of guidance derived from the town studies.

### 1.3 Outputs

The principal outputs of the project comprise:

- Historic character assessment reports. Documents (of which this is one) that, separately for each town, summarize the setting and pre-urban activity; synthesize current archaeological and historical research; describe the development from origins to the present day; assess the surviving historic character and historic environment value; and set out a framework for future research on the historic environment of the towns.
- Geographical Information System (GIS) for the historic environment of each town. The GIS underpins the analysis and mapping of the town



reports, and is available to local authorities as a unique tool to support their decision making. The EUS-generated GIS data includes historic buildings and archaeological data, and mapping of areas for which Historic Character Type, historic land use, and Historic Urban Character Areas have been defined. The GIS data will be maintained and updated by the West Sussex County Council *Sites & Monuments Record* (SMR) and the East Sussex County Council *Historic Environment Record* (HER).

- Informing historic environment management guidance specific to each local planning authority, for the 41 EUS towns and Winchelsea, produced under the new Local Development Frameworks, and subject to formal consultation procedures.
- Background papers for the Sussex EUS project. Documents that include the project design, a summary of the methodology and an overall bibliography.

## 1.4 The structure of this report

### 1.4.1 The Setting

This introductory section describes the topography, geology, communications, and pre-urban archaeology of the ‘town’ (known as a village).

### 1.4.2 History

The history of Ditchling in this report can be a brief summary only. It aims to synthesize published research, and to provide a chronological overview of the development of the town as seen from documentary sources. The focus is placed on those matters – such as origins, economy, trade and institutions – that are most closely related to the built-up historic environment today. Aspects of the history of the village – such as the ecclesiastical, manorial, jurisdictional and more recent social history – have been published elsewhere, most notably in the *Victoria County History*<sup>3</sup> and the publications of *Ditchling Museum*.<sup>4</sup>

### 1.4.3 Archaeology

The archaeology section of this report draws on published and unpublished reports of excavations, archaeological assessments, and records of finds. This section also includes analysis of historic buildings (listed and non-listed) and the topography. Again, this section follows a chronological structure, and focuses on aspects of the material evidence of the past of

the village that relate most closely to the historic environment today.

### 1.4.4 Statement of Historic Urban Character

Whereas sections on history and archaeology (above) explore the development of Ditchling over time, this part of the report considers and defines the physical evidence of the past in today’s ‘townscape’. It does this by means of a character-based approach, operating at three different scales: areas of common Historic Character Type; larger and topographically familiar Historic Urban Character Areas; and the whole village. Assessment is made of the Historic Environment Value of each of the Historic Urban Character Areas, taking account of the archaeological potential.

## 1.5 Principal sources

Ditchling has been the subject of some archaeological and historical interest. The principal sources drawn on during the writing of this report are listed below. Many other sources have been used too, and full references have been given by use of endnotes.

### 1.5.1 History

Several local histories have been written for Ditchling, but there is no authoritative overall study such as those of the recent volumes of the *Victoria County History*. Nonetheless, the unpublished research of **Heather Warne** for the **East Sussex Archaeology Project** in 1984 is extremely important and valuable for its detailed analysis of the topographic and, chiefly medieval, documentary sources.<sup>5</sup>

### 1.5.2 Archaeology

Ditchling has seen very little archaeological investigation, reflecting its modest village-like scale today and the consequent lack of major redevelopment. Such work as there has been is limited to evaluations: **3-5 East Gardens** (no archaeological features or finds),<sup>6</sup> and **The Sandrock public house** (High Street).<sup>7</sup>

The **East Sussex Historic Environment Record** (HER) database has been invaluable for providing the pre-urban archaeological context.

### 1.5.3 Historic buildings

Ditchling has a high density of historic buildings, several of which have been the subject of detailed analysis or informed internal inspection by Margaret Holt and Margaret Goodare: their

record of the timber-framed houses having been published posthumously.<sup>8</sup> English Heritage’s statutory list of historic buildings is also of use, though many of the descriptions are dated and were necessarily produced without internal inspection. Very limited fieldwork only was possible during this assessment and focused on correcting dating derived from such sources, identifying hitherto ignored buildings of historic interest (e.g. small flint barns and outbuildings of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century date), and re-evaluating the dating and function of key buildings and monuments.

### 1.5.4 Geology and topography

The contextual discussion of the solid and drift geology has principally derived from 1:50,000 British Geological Survey digital data. Ordnance Survey Historic 25” maps for Epochs 1-4 (c.1875 onwards) have proved invaluable, especially as these have been used in digital form, allowing overlaying with each other and with other data.

The 1839 Tithe Map (*East Sussex Record Office*) captures pre-railway age Ditchling at a large scale. This map has been digitized and rectified to fit the National Grid to allow comparison with other maps and data. Vertical air photo coverage of 2000 provides a useful snapshot in time. All analysis and maps utilize the most recent large-scale Ordnance Survey mapping (digital MasterMap data).

### 1.6 Area covered by the report

The Sussex EUS assessment of Ditchling covers the historic core of the village. This excludes the 20<sup>th</sup>-century suburbs to the north and south-east of the village.

Ditchling is one of five ‘towns’ in Lewes District that have assessments such as this. The others are Lewes, Newhaven, Peacehaven and Seaford.

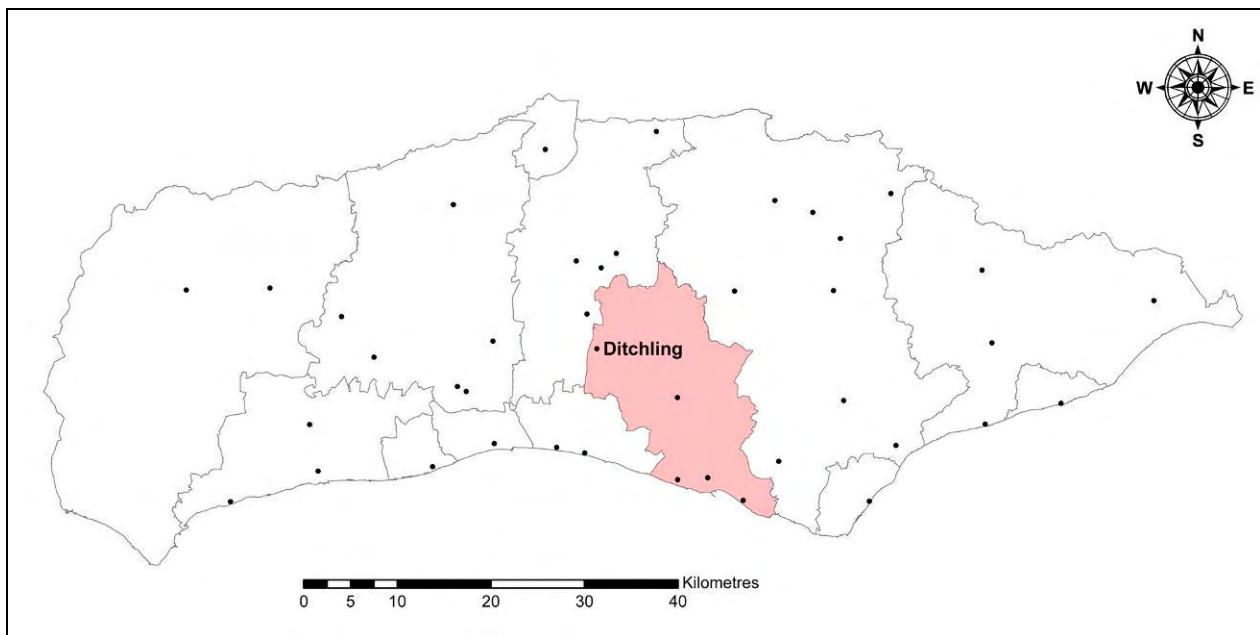


Fig. 1. Location of Ditchling within Sussex. Lewes District is highlighted and points locate the 41 Sussex EUS towns.

## 2 THE SETTING



Fig. 2. Ditchling from the Downs (to the south of the village).

### 2.1 Topography (Map 2)

Ditchling is situated at the southern edge of the Low Weald just 1.3km north of the scarp of the South Downs, which rise to their highest point at Ditchling Beacon (248m OD) south of the village. The village is on the south-east slope of a minor ridge, rising from 58m OD at the southern end of South Street towards Lodge Hill (over 85m OD) immediately north-west of Ditchling.

The principal streets of Ditchling are the north-south South Street/High Street/North End and the east-west Lewes Road/West Street, which form a cross-roads at the centre of the village. East End Lane runs parallel to, and 130m to the north of, Lewes Road, and was formerly a principal road. Today, the main shopping area is along the High Street.

Suburbs largely comprise ribbon-developments to the north and south-west of the historic core.

The village is at the centre of Ditchling Civil Parish, which, like the parishes to the east and west, is elongated so that it measures c.9.7km north-south, but only c.1.8km east-west. The southern third of the parish is on downland and Ditchling Common is located at the extreme north. The north-west corner of the parish was

transferred to Burgess Hill Urban District in 1934.<sup>9</sup>

### 2.2 Geology (Map 2)

#### 2.2.1 Solid geology

Along with the whole of Sussex, the rocks of the Ditchling area are sedimentary. Descending the Downs and crossing the village towards the High Weald, the rocks become progressively older. Ditchling lies 1.3km north of the Upper and Middle Chalk Formations (all Upper Cretaceous) of the South Downs, separated by a 1km-wide band of mudstones (commonly called clays) of the Gault Formation (Lower Cretaceous). The southern suburbs extend on to this, but the historic core of the village mostly lies on the sandstones of the Folkestone Formation (Lower Cretaceous). Around 30-50m north of, and parallel to, Boddingtons Lane and East End Lane this gives way to the silty sandstones of the Lower Greensand Group (Lower Cretaceous) and, 700-900m further to the north, to the mudstones of the Weald Clay Formation (Lower Cretaceous).

Large crystalline sandstone boulders – or sarsen stones – are found near the church at Ditchling (including an example built into the south wall of the churchyard itself). Although evidently moved around by man and, probably, previously by natural forces, they are a feature of the Downs, concentrated between the River Adur and the River Ouse (see especially Falmer, Rottingdean and Stanmer), and derive from silicification probably (and unusually for Britain) as late as the Neogene or Quaternary.<sup>10</sup>

#### 2.2.2 Drift Geology

In the absence of riverine and estuarine conditions, the drift geology of the Ditchling area is limited to undifferentiated head lying east and west of the village and extending southwards to the coombs of the scarp of the South Downs.

### 2.3 Communications

#### 2.3.1 Water

Ditchling is not located on or near any navigable water. Rather, it straddles the boundary of the catchments of the River Adur and the River Ouse.

#### 2.3.2 Road

Ditchling lies on comparatively minor roads. The B2112 is the main north-south road, linking

Haywards Heath and, via Clayton and Pyecombe, the London-Brighton A23(T). The B2116 forms a cross-roads with the B2112 at the centre of the village, and is a significant east-west route from the A281 north of Henfield, through Hurstpierpoint, Hassocks, Keymer, Ditchling and Plumpton to the A275 at Offham. South of Ditchling, the steep bostal road up to Ditchling Beacon provides a minor route to Brighton and to the A27(T).

### 2.3.3 Railway

Ditchling has never been on the railway network, with the nearest stations being at Keymer, on the London-Brighton line (opened 1841), and Plumpton, on the Lewes-Keymer Junction (Burgess Hill) line of 1847. Both lines were built by the London Brighton and South Coast Railway (LBSCR).<sup>11</sup>

## 2.4 Evidence for pre-urban activity

### 2.4.1 Prehistoric

There has only been one rather ambiguous (*ex situ*) prehistoric find within the EUS study area:

- Ditchling churchyard – a Lower Palaeolithic (500000 BC to 150001 BC) handaxe was found in 1977, in a pile of flints delivered to Ditchling churchyard for repair of a flint wall, but appears to have come from the area [HER reference: TQ 31 NW53 – ES1314].

Finds and sites are better attested just outside the EUS study area:

- Lodge Hill – Mesolithic (10000 BC to 4001 BC) site situated on the Lower Greensand close to the foot of Lodge Hill. Approximately 2000 flints were found c.1976 with a high percentage of waste flakes and several hammerstones, concentrated in an area of about 30m square. The completed tools include parallel-edged blades, microliths, scrapers, microburins, awls and points, the last including a few examples of hollow-based points [HER reference: TQ 31 NW50 – ES1312].
- Lodge Hill – Bronze Age (2350 BC to 701 BC) bowl barrow [HER reference: TQ 31 NW8 – ES1305].
- Nether Bowries, North End – fragments of a Late Bronze Age (1000-701 BC) cauldron found in the garden c.1939. It is of Leeds B2 type, datable by associated finds to 600-550 BC [HER reference: TQ 31 NW10 – ES1306].

- Laine Field (north-east of Dumbrell Court) – Iron Age silver coin of Verica, King of the Atrebates tribe AD 10-40, was found on farmland in 1987 [HER reference: TQ 31 NW52 – ES1313].

### 2.4.2 Romano-British

The east-west 'Greensand Way' Roman road is a reliably attributed Roman road that passes east-west through the EUS study area, crossing the main north-south road of the medieval town c.75m north of the junction of Boddingtons Lane and High Street. The road connected Stane Street, the London-Hassocks road and the London-Lewes road.

The only Romano-British find spot in the immediate vicinity of the EUS study area was found c.200m north of the Roman road:

- Field 250m north of East End Farm – Romano-British pottery and several 2<sup>nd</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>-century AD coins have been found whilst ploughing [HER reference: TQ 31 NW49 – ES1311].

### 2.4.3 Early to mid Anglo-Saxon

No evidence of early or mid-Anglo-Saxon activity has been found in or immediately adjacent to the EUS study area.

### 2.4.4 Implications of pre-urban archaeology

Despite the lack of excavations in or near to the EUS study area, the implications from all the pre-urban finds are clear: significant evidence for Romano-British, and earlier, occupation of the Ditchling area and its environs has been found and should be anticipated in any archaeological excavation in the area.

## 3 HISTORY

### 3.1 Origins: 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries

#### 3.1.1 Place-name

The name *Ditchling* is first recorded in the Old English form *Dicelinga* from c.765, and as *Diccelingum* in King Alfred's will (c.880), probably meaning 'people of Dichel'.<sup>12</sup> An early suggestion that the name refers to ditches or dykes has been revived recently, either in relation to the pale of the park at Ditchling (probably originating in the Anglo-Saxon period) or, even, postulated defences relating to the pre-10<sup>th</sup>-century regional centre.<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 3. St Margaret's church from the west, with the remains of Court Farm in the foreground.

#### 3.1.2 Anglo-Saxon regional centre

Heather Warne has made a case for the royal manor of Ditchling as a regional centre before the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Her argument can be summarized as follows: the Alfredian burh of Lewes appears to have been founded on a largely empty site in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, implying a shift of administration away from an older centre; Ditchling is centrally placed to a postulated region of Sussex (effectively a precursor of the

Norman rapes) bounded by the Adur and Ouse; the village is located on key routes (including the Roman road of the Greensand Way); Ditchling manor is unique in Lewes Rape for having dependencies and land throughout the whole rape (including the only ironworks recorded in Anglo-Saxon Sussex); Ditchling had a park probably before the late Anglo-Saxon period; and in Domesday Book (1086) Ditchling was located in Swanborough Hundred (Old English *swāna-beorg* meaning 'peasants' hill'<sup>14</sup>), being detached from the other constituent manors in the Lewes area, reflecting the putative former folk-moot location at Ditchling (possibly to be identified with Lodge Hill). If Warne is correct, then this would imply a significant and early focus of population. The replacement of such an early regional centre by the Alfredian burh of Lewes would have reflected both defensive needs and the lack of a port at Ditchling.<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to, but by no means contradicting, this early secular importance, Ditchling appears to have been part of the *parochia* of a minster probably coincident with the boundaries of the discontinuous estate of Stamner, recorded c.765. This estate extended as far as the Surrey border, and may well have had its minster church at Lindfield rather than Stamner itself.<sup>16</sup> Ditchling had developed as an autonomous parish by the late 11<sup>th</sup> century, with its boundaries from the village northwards seemingly preserving those of part of the old *parochia*.<sup>17</sup>

#### 3.1.3 Late Anglo-Saxon and medieval village

Whatever the status of Ditchling before the 10<sup>th</sup> century, it is clear that by the late 11<sup>th</sup> century there was a village. Domesday Book (1086) records a church, a mill, 108 villagers and 40 smallholders, but a significant proportion of the population were Wealden tenants of Ditchling Manor. Consideration of the post-Conquest manorial records suggests that just under half the 108 villagers in Domesday Book were living in Ditchling and it is almost certain that this population was clustered in a village. Allowing for families, and cottagers and servants on the demesne lands, this could indicate a population of c.200-50.<sup>18</sup>

Further evidence of a significant nucleated settlement by the late 11<sup>th</sup> century is supplied by a grant of the church and common rights to Lewes Priory, by William de Warenne c.1090:<sup>19</sup> the precise definition of the monks' tenants common rights is a good indication of an existing

population with its own well-established common rights.<sup>20</sup>



Fig. 4. The Bull and Post Office, on small medieval cottage plots created from wayside waste.

Immediately south of the village, running east-west on the band of Gault clay, lay medieval Ditchling Park. This is documented from 1274, but its extension across Keymer parish indicates that it pre-dates the definition of the parishes c.1100 and, as we have seen (section 3.1.2) was probably pre-Conquest.<sup>21</sup> However, the park was evidently established, or a least extended to its medieval form, later than the creation of Court Farm, the home farm of Ditchling Manor, and the location for the manorial courts three or four times each year.<sup>22</sup>

Within the village centre population expansion in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries has been linked to expansion of the village west of the High Street into demesne land, and to the creation of small cottage plots on the east side of the cross-roads near, and including, the site of the Bull Inn. The latter were without common rights and were probably carved out of spare wayside land for an increasing population of artisans and tradesmen. Certainly the trades of baker, thatcher, tailor, white tawer and tanner were recorded in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>23</sup>

While such evidence does not suggest Ditchling had achieved anything approaching urban status, the granting, in 1312, of a weekly (Tuesday) market and an annual fair (on the vigil, feast and morrow of St Margaret's: i.e. 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> July) is significant.<sup>24</sup> With other contemporary or earlier market centres (Cuckfield, Lewes, Brighton, Preston, and Henfield) all approximately 10km distant, Ditchling evidently had a significant hinterland. Given this hinterland, the earlier growth of

Ditchling, and the fact that political expediency by Edward II had much to do with the flurry of market grants at this time, it is likely that the grant simply formalized customary usage.<sup>25</sup>

The impact of the Black Death and economic national decline in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century is not documented, but it appears that population growth in the 15<sup>th</sup> century was sufficient to cause subdivision of earlier medieval plots. By the end of the medieval period some virgaters were living by their lands at a distance from the village, apparently as a result of this population growth.<sup>26</sup>

### 3.1.4 Church and religion

Little is known of the medieval history of the parish church after being granted to Lewes Priory. The first vicar is recorded in 1415, with the last rector recorded in 1382.<sup>27</sup>

## 3.2 The village c.1500-1800



Fig. 5. Monument to local landowner Henry Poole, d.1580, in the parish church.

### 3.2.1 Economic history

In the absence of population figures for Ditchling in 1524, it is difficult to gauge precisely the change in the early post-medieval population figures. Records from c.1600 onwards, however, confirm that 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup>-century growth resulted in more colonization of wayside waste on the edge of the demesne, and new colonization to the north of the village on or near the common. The subdivision of medieval plots severed from their land holdings occurred

throughout this period but was particularly a feature of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. This had a significant impact on East End Lane, which evolved from a cluster of farmhouses into a village street that included tradesmen and cottagers (with such trades as tanners<sup>28</sup>). At the same time, the continuing development of wayside waste on the north-south road to Haywards Heath saw the beginning of the move of the village centre away from East End Lane to the present High Street.<sup>29</sup>

In 1676 the population was around 270, although numbers at this date were typically reduced by epidemics. In 1724 the population had either recovered or grown to around 360, and thereafter grew steadily, reaching 706 by 1801.<sup>30</sup> The predominance of parish, rather than village, statistics and the diverse source of these figures, means that they should be taken as indicative of general trends only.

The location of the village on a trans-Wealden route to London was significant for the post-medieval economy. The Bull was in existence by the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>31</sup> and in the survey of inns and alehouses of 1686, Ditchling had less than 20 stablings and less than 10 guest beds, and was on a par with nearby Henfield. The provision for travellers at Ditchling was a little less than at smaller towns further into the Weald (such as Cuckfield and Lindfield) and insignificant compared to the major Wealden towns: Horsham provided 365 stablings and 83 beds, on the main road from London to Brighton, via Steyning; and East Grinstead provided 247 stablings and 103 beds, on the main road from London to Lewes and (increasingly) Newhaven and Brighton.<sup>32</sup>

With the growth of Brighton accelerating in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, a more direct route to London was required, and the parallel routes through Cuckfield and Lindfield were both turnpiked through Acts of 1770.<sup>33</sup> The Lindfield turnpike used the medieval road from Turners Hill, ascending the South Downs at Ditchling. The ascent of the scarp of the South Downs marked an eastwards shift to the present route from the previous ascent via Burnthouse Bostal. The road from the west, from Henfield and Keymer, was turnpiked following an Act of 1777.<sup>34</sup> In the Ditchling area this initially used existing roads: the route led along West Street, turning south just west of the junction with Lodge Hill Lane, past Drove Cottages. The existence of a second inn, The White Horse, by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century reflected the increased traffic coming through the village.<sup>35</sup>

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, fairs were held on Lady Day (25<sup>th</sup> March) and on 12<sup>th</sup> October.<sup>36</sup>



Fig. 6. Baptist meeting house and burial ground.

### **3.2.2 Church and religion**

The impact of Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries and the Reformation was minimal on the parish church. Although the surrender of Lewes Priory required the alternative granting of the rectory and advowson (initially, in 1538, to Thomas Cromwell then, in 1541, to Anne of Cleves),<sup>37</sup> there is no evidence for substantial decline following the loss of the patronage of the Cluniac monks.

Protestant nonconformity flourished in the renewed conformism of the Restoration (1660) and, especially, the Act of Uniformity (1662) with its Revised Book of Common Prayer. The Compton census of 1676 records that 64 of the 202 adults in the parish were nonconformists.<sup>38</sup> A similar proportion is recorded for 1724, with 25 of the 80 families being Anabaptists, and 10 more being other dissenters.<sup>39</sup> The Toleration Act (1689) allowed for the building of meeting houses, but the first evidence of a purpose-built house is found c.1730-5 when Robert Chatfield gave a piece of land for a Baptist meeting house and burial ground.<sup>40</sup> Records relating to the new meeting house date from 1737.<sup>41</sup> Evidently, Ditchling was a focus of Baptist worship for a wider area, although secession (unapproved departure) had an early effect when Wivelsfield seceded from Ditchling in 1762-3.<sup>42</sup>

### 3.3 The village c.1800-2005

#### 3.3.1 Economic history



Fig. 7. Lewes Road: a new turnpike road of 1812.

The early 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the peak in London-Brighton coach traffic, as the seaside resort expanded rapidly. Increased road travel meant that the granting of a new and more direct London-Brighton turnpike route – approximately on the line of the present A23 – in 1808 (opened 1813) had little effect on Ditchling.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, further development of turnpike routes took place at Ditchling. An Act of 1812 established the Offham-Plumpton-Westmeston-Ditchling road, which created a new route within the village (Lewes Road).<sup>44</sup> Around this time, the route to the west was modified to make a more direct route to Keymer from the end of West Street (Keymer Road), and the old route was abandoned. Further major modification occurred in 1830 with the construction of a new route leading south-west of the village to the London-Brighton road at Clayton, effectively bypassing the road over Ditchling Beacon. The impact of the new routes, especially the faster access to Brighton, resulted in a minor property boom in the village and the ‘influx of new middle class’.<sup>45</sup> Other direct economic effects of the turnpike roads are visible in the success of The Bull and, to a lesser degree, The White Horse as coaching inns.<sup>46</sup>

The advent of the railways brought the coaching trade to an abrupt end. A London-Brighton

railway was proposed as early as the 1820s, but the eventual scheme was passed by Parliament in 1837. Haywards Heath station marked the southern end of a section of the line that opened on 12 July 1841: the section from Haywards Heath to Brighton, via Burgess Hill, opened on 21 September 1841.<sup>47</sup> The nearest station to Ditchling was 2km distant, just west of Keymer (Hassocks Gate Station). A line from the burgeoning channel port at Newhaven opened in 1847, joining the London line at Keymer Junction (750m north of Burgess Hill station). This passed 2km north-west of Ditchling, with the nearest station at Plumpton, 3.5km distant.<sup>48</sup> In a similar manner to the nearby Wealden towns of Cuckfield and Lindfield, the economy of Ditchling suffered from this lack of a rail connection. Bereft of the coaching trade, the village stagnated as the new railway towns of Hassocks and, especially, Burgess Hill flourished within its former hinterland. With the decline in the agricultural workforce in the later 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the popularity of the motor car in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ditchling’s economy has become increasingly dependent on commuters and the retired population.



Fig. 8. Surviving shops at 19<sup>th</sup>-century 4-8 West Street.

In addition to the usual shops and trades of a village that survived this new competition,



Ditchling had a distinctive printing craft, using hand presses. St Dominic's Press was founded by Hilary Pepler in 1916, in a workshop at the rear of Sopers, 28 High Street (previously occupied by sculptor Eric Gill). Pepler and Gill relocated the press to the workshops of the Roman Catholic community of Dominican tertiaries on Ditchling Common in 1920, then back to the village (at 2-8 South Street) in 1937 – at which point it became Ditchling Press. The business moved to Burgess Hill in 1986.<sup>49</sup>

The population figures for the period are particularly interesting. A rapid increase in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (706 in 1801; 1148 in 1841) was followed by a slight reduction (1069 in 1851; 1082 in 1861), and a rise to 1342 in 1881. Thereafter, in common with many other parishes in the very west and east of Sussex,<sup>50</sup> population decreased, falling to 1226 in 1891. After three decades of no growth, the total population figure had recovered to its 19<sup>th</sup>-century high by 1921 (when it numbered 1414), and, allowing for the loss of part of the parish to Burgess Hill in 1934 (with c.300 of the population) thereafter saw steady small-scale growth: 1683, in 1931; 1644, in 1961; and 1802 in 2001.<sup>51</sup>

### 3.3.2 Church and religion

St Margaret's church has remained intact as an institution throughout this period. In 1926 the vicarage in East End Lane (now Dymcocks Manor) was sold, with the new vicarage being an 18<sup>th</sup>-century house in West Street.<sup>52</sup> Protestant nonconformism strengthened in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a Beulah Strict Baptist chapel built in 1867 (closed 1935-8: survives as 9 East End Lane).<sup>53</sup> Apparently a Wesleyan chapel in South Street opened in 1873.<sup>54</sup> There was a mission room, or chapel, next to 26 North End c.1900, and another, perhaps the replacement, was built at the southern end of South Street before the First World War.<sup>55</sup>

### 3.3.3 Urban institutions

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Ditchling has seen the development of a range of social and public functions that did not exist previously. The detail of these is beyond the scope of this brief account, but the salient institutions are included.

A free school was built to the north of the Baptist meeting house on East End Lane in 1814. This was in use c.1830, but had closed by 1836: it was converted to houses (School Cottages).<sup>56</sup> At this date a National School was built near the church in 1836, and extended in 1886. When St Margaret's Church of England Primary School

moved to new premises off Lewes Road in 1983, the old building became Ditchling Museum.<sup>57</sup>

The 18<sup>th</sup>-century workhouse survived the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, with the new Poor Law Union of Chailey having workhouses in Chailey, Ringmer and Ditchling.<sup>58</sup> The workhouse on the corner of South Street and Lewes Road was demolished 1872-4 for widening of South Street.<sup>59</sup>

The village hall in Lewes Road opened in 1920.<sup>60</sup> The village green was created in the 1960s from the ancient farmyard of Court Farm, purchased for such use to prevent threatened redevelopment.<sup>61</sup>

The cricket club was formed in 1835, and its first match played the following year at the bottom of Lodge Hill.<sup>62</sup> Cricket in the parish, however, dates back at least to 1785.<sup>63</sup>



Fig. 9. Former Baptist free school, 28-32 East End Lane.