BATTLEFIELDS OF THE PRAYER BOOK REBELLION: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

A Report for Devon County Council

Glenn Foard & Alex Hodgkins,[1] University of Leeds, 2009

During the reign of Edward VI , Somerset the Lord Protector took England to war with Scotland, continuing the policy begun by Henry VIII to secure the marriage of Edward to Mary Queen of Scots. Then in 1549 the protestant religious reforms, including the introduction of the *Book of Common Prayer*, pushed through by the new government, led to open rebellion in both Norfolk and the South West. Unlike the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536 against Henry VIII, these rebellions developed into open warfare and were countered with full military force.

Civil unrest developed in the summer of 1549 in Devon and Cornwall because the reforms represented an attack on both the traditional beliefs and the related income of the religiously-conservative western counties.[2] The situation came to a head in early June with the murder of William Hellyons at Sampford Courtenay, precipitating a series of riots and skirmishes with local authorities.[3] The government response was initially low-key, with proclamations for the rebels to disperse and offers of amnesty.[4] However the situation rapidly deteriorated and a rebel force laid siege to Exeter, requiring more forceful measures.[5] John Russell, Lord Privy Seal, was despatched to relieve Exeter and to quell the rebellion. His army was supplemented with both German and Italian mercenary forces originally intended for a campaign in Scotland, where English forces had control of part of the Lowlands following the battle of Pinkie in 1547.[6] The difficulties for the government in responding in the South West in the summer of 1549 were compounded because, as well as being committed to the occupation of the Scottish Borders, from early July they also faced Kett's rebellion in Norfolk which escalated with an attack on Norwich on 22nd July and culminated on the 27th August in the battle of Dussindale.

The military response to the Prayer Book Rebellion is often regarded as little more than a policing action. It was in fact a bitterly prosecuted struggle which left as many as 5000 dead.[7] In addition to the siege of Exeter there were various skirmishes and acts of civil unrest, with the campaign being decided when the combined rebel forces from Devon and Cornwall were defeated in four substantial battles. The first three, at Fenny Bridges on 28th July, Woodbury on 4th August, and over 4th-5th August at Clyst St Mary and Clyst Heath, enabled the government forces to relieve Exeter. The

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[1] The present assessment has been prepared for Devon County Council by Dr Glenn Foard, based largely upon an MA dissertation by Alex Hodgkins, (2008). The work has been undertaken at the University of Leeds, funded through a grant from Devon County Council. Digital mapping is by Tracey Partida.

[2] Duffy, (2001), 118-127
[3] Cornwall, (1977), 66-80
[4] Pocock, (1884), 37
[5] Bush, (1975), 84-93
[6] Merriman, (2000)
[7] Rose-Troup, (1914), 408

rebellion was then finally ended where it had begun, at Sampford Courtenay, where the rebels were defeated on the 18th August in the last battle of the campaign. While the military action was over, the provost marshal Anthony Kingston subsequently carried out brutal reprisals upon those who had been engaged in the rebellion.[8]

Sources

Careful examination of secondary sources shows that in some there is a degree of elaboration, with details being added that are not given the primary accounts. For example Brooks specifies the rout at Fenny Bridges continued to Streteway Hill and attributes some quotes from primary sources to Russell when they in fact come from Hooker's account.[9] This clearly demonstrates the need to work from primary sources for both the events and the historic terrain.

The battles are documented in five contemporary accounts, written largely from a government perspective. These are transcribed in appendix 1 to enable the exact wording to be consulted. No contemporary graphic representation of any of the battles has been identified or is to be expected.

The principal source is in **Hooker's** *Description of the City of Excester*, which gives an account of all of the major actions and has been the key source used in most subsequent narratives of the rebellion. The account is predominately concerned with Exeter, and thus provides limited evidence for events subsequent to the relief of the city in early August. This gap is filled by **Russell**'s official report to the Privy Council, which provides the only significant source for Sampford Courtenay. Further information exists in a series of draft letters from the council to Lord Russell, although there are doubts regarding their authenticity.[10]

Additional evidence is provided in several other sources, though there are many problems with these. **Holinshed's** description seemingly all relates to Fenny Bridges but then there is confusion of late July and early August which may indicate that the various events of the relief of Exeter are actually conflated in his vague account. The **Spanish Chronicle** similarly conflates the events making it impossible to securely relate any element to an individual battle, while the numbers it gives for both rebel and royal forces are improbably large compared to those given in other sources. The minimal details for the Woodbury action in Hooker's account can however, with caution, be supplemented by the Spanish Chronicle. In addition there is some information in **Risdon's** *Chorographical Description*. Compiled in the early 17th century and drawing upon earlier material, including Hooker, he may have had other independent sources.

Hayward provides a far more detailed account of the campaign but in places this also appears confused. In particular his understanding of the detailed geography of the area is inadequate, most obviously in his descriptions of the battles at Fenny Bridges and Clyst. He may also intentionally play down the strength of the rebel resistance for he omits detail of the action for Bishops Clyst and at Fenny Bridges, including the rebel counterattack and the failures of discipline and command within the Royal Army.

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[8] Cornwall, (1977), 200-204
[9] Brooks, (2005a), 307-8
[10] Youings, (1979), 100-110

Consequently, not only are the rebels' tactical strengths and bravery glossed over, their embarrassment of the King's professional mercenaries is also minimised.

The problems with both Hayward's and the Spanish account have led various historians to dismiss their information.[11] However Hayward in particular deserves more careful consideration, for he provides potentially significant detail for several of the actions. While he appears at times to draw his details from Hooker, as with the description of the reinforcing of the royal army after Fenny Bridges, he then gives additional fine details that imply access to independent sources. It seems improbable that he is providing fabricated explanations for the ambiguities in Hooker's account, because the additional information is so specific, particularly as regards the locations of events and the nationality and numbers of the men. However where Hayward's account conflicts with Hooker's, as for example in the explanation for and direction of approach to Fenny Bridges, it is Hooker's evidence which seem more believable on tactical grounds.

Methodology

The methodology applied here to characterise and assess the battlefields is based upon that previously applied for the investigation of major battles of the 17th century in England.[12] This involved first the re-examination of the primary accounts to compile a coherent narrative and to identify the topographical detail by which the events might be placed within their contemporary terrain. To facilitate such placing of the events the historic terrain of each site has, as far as practicable, then been reconstructed from surviving historic maps, mainly of the 19th century but with limited supporting evidence from the 17th and 18th centuries. The scope of the present study did not allow for more time consuming examination of earlier written sources which may allow more accurate reconstruction of the landscape as it was in the mid 16th century. Such work would form a valuable follow up to the present assessment.

All mapping has been conducted in digital form, with the first edition six inch Ordnance Survey mapping, registered in GIS, providing the base mapping for the analysis.[13] Other data on the road network, earlier stream courses and other significant features drawn from earlier mapping, which is specified for each battlefield, have then been transcribed to this map base. Aerial photography in the National Monuments Record has also been examined for each battlefield but little of value was recovered for the understanding of the historic terrain of the battlefields.

The battle archaeology deposited during the action is expected, as on most battlefields, to be largely in the form of scatters of metal artefacts in the topsoil. A search of the Devon Historic Environment Record (HER) and of the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) database yielded no relevant finds from the general areas of the four battlefields. It is also to be expected that each action will have left one or more mass graves. Whereas widely scattered bodies may have been collected together for burial in mass graves in the appropriate parish church, it is also likely that one or more mass graves was dug in the area of the main clash, or at a key point in the rout if

[11] E.g.: Rowse, (1941) which consistently follows Hooker with little to no mention of Hayward's account
[12] Foard, (2008b), 58-61; Foard, (2008a), 40-42
[13] http://digimap.edina.ac.uk/main/services.jsp?collection=historic

substantial numbers of troops were caught due to constrictions of terrain or if they made a stand. Only one record of human remains has been identified from the HER for the four battlefields, which is noted below on Clyst Heath.

The possible extent of survival of battle archaeology has been assessed with reference to the present state of development and previous mineral extraction as defined on the BGS mapping and modern Ordnance Survey mapping. The absence of any relevant finds on the PAS database or HER may indicate that none of the surviving areas of the battlefields has been subject to intensive treasure hunting. However this should ideally be subject to further local consultation with metal detectorists and landowners, in consultation with the Portable Antiquities Officer for Devon. The likely condition of unstratified battle archaeology has been crudely assessed in terms of the likely impact of mechanical damage, based on limited evidence of land use history in the 20th century.[14] The impact of soil chemistry, both from soil sampling for pH and chlorides, projected across the whole battlefield in relation to parent geology / soil type and modern chemical application, may also need to be considered when and if the presence and extent of battle archaeology has been demonstrated by fieldwork.

Armies and equipment

The later 15th and 16th centuries were an important transitional period across Europe in the development of warfare. It saw the progressive application of gunpowder weapons to the battlefield in parallel with the introduction of the pike, a long steel tipped weapon used both against infantry and also in defending against cavalry, in which it was far more effective than the medieval bill.[15] English armies saw a somewhat distinctive trajectory in the introduction of these weapons. While the crown had from the 15th century been developing a large arsenal of artillery for both field and siege use, there was more limited introduction of hand held firearms compared to continental armies. This was in part because of the continuing battlefield effectiveness of the longbow, which has a high rate of shooting arrows compared to the crossbow used in most continental armies in the 15th century. Even though Henry VIII had amassed large supplies of handguns, comprising various types of arquebus or 'hackbut', English armies of the mid 16th century remained dependent to some degree on foreign mercenaries for hand gunners or 'arquebusier'.[16] The degree to which these various new weapons had been diffused to regional garrisons and were in use by local militias will have determined the range of weapons available to the rebel forces.

There is some uncertainty as to effectiveness of these gunpowder weapons on the battlefield. Machiavelli in his 1521 treatise assigns only peripheral value to artillery and small-arms, claiming they were suited only to skirmishing and *'became a thing of no consequence after the … armies had joined battle'*.[17] In contrast Sir Thomas Audley in his mid 16th century English manual, prepared for the king, emphasises the value of combined arms in attaining victory.[18] He also considered that shot, typically at that time comprising a combination of approximately equal numbers of archers and

[14] Land use mapping 1931-5 from http://landuse.edina.ac.uk
[15] Arnold, (2001).
[16] Starkey, et al., (1998).
[17] Machiavelli, (1965), 97-100
[18] Audley, *Book of Orders For The Warre Both By Sea and Land,* British Library, M.S Harleian, 309, fols. 5-14; reprinted in Davies, (2002).

harquebusier, had won many battles without coming to push of pike or hand to hand action. In this Pinkie in 1547 provided an ideal example.[19]

The Royal Army

A royal army was mustered under the commanded of Lord John Russell, 1st Earl of Bedford and Lord Privy Seal. There is reasonably reliable and detailed information on the number of troops in the royal army, and the equipment and resources at their disposal. Hooker's account, draft correspondence between the Privy Council and Lord Russell, and financial documents together provide a detailed picture of the Royal Army and its changing composition over time.

It is suggested that the royal army was about 4000 strong prior to the battle of Fenny Bridges.[20] Hayward claims that after Fenny Bridges, Russell waited at Honiton for reinforcements and was about to return to London when Lord Grey arrived. His force according to Hayward comprised cavalry (mainly German), 300 Italian shot who had been intended for Scotland, and 200 troops from Reading, giving him in all a little over 1000 men. The latter number must refer to just Grey's force, otherwise Russell will have had an impossibly small number at Fenny Bridges. Hooker gives less detail, having Lord Grey of Wilton arrive with *'a crew of horsemen and one Spinola an Italian with three hundred shot'*. If only their commander was Italian rather than all the men then the shot may have been a mixture of English archers and foreign arquebusier, which is what Audley's contemporary military manual recommended for a detachment of shot, rather than all mercenary arquebusier.[21] Hayward's claim that the cavalry were mainly Germans might suggest they were mounted arquebusier. The Spanish Chronicle in contrast claims an improbable 10,000 troops in Russell's army, including 3000 mercenaries, with further troops recruited in his march from London.

The arrival of Welsh soldiers supplied by Sir William Herbert prior to Sampford Courtenay probably meant that the royal army heavily outnumbered the rebels.[22] However by this time the German mercenaries had been removed from the army to reduce costs following the victory at Clyst St. Mary and the relief of Exeter.[23] While artillery are not specified as being used by the royal army before the relief of Exeter, at Sampford Courtenay artillery was deployed by Russell.

The royal army thus moved from a position of weakness in numbers at Fenny Bridges to one of far greater strength than the rebels at Sampford Courtenay. However throughout the campaign Russell had the advantage of cavalry and his troops in general were as also better equipped. His officers may have included battle hardened troops from the Scottish campaign of 1547, with Lord Grey having commanded the cavalry in that campaign which included the battle of Pinkie. But the mercenaries in particular will have given a high level of professionalism, discipline and training to the main body of the army, something that was essential for the effective combined use of the new weapons and formations – something that could not be matched by their irregular opponents.[24]

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[19] Foard, (2007)
[20] Brooks, (2005b)
[21] Davies, (2002), 3 et seq.; Dasent, (1890), 298, F.544.
[22] Pocock, (1884), 44; Dasent, (1890), vol.ii, F.554; Hooker, (1919), Part 2, 73
[23] Dasent, (1890), F.565
[24] Cornwall, (1977), 237-240

The Rebels

The rebel forces were under the command of Herbert Arundell of Helland, a major Catholic landowner in Devon and Cornwall. There is little accurate information as to the numbers, military experience and equipping of the rebel forces. They seem to have taken no general muster, or if any such records were made then they were presumably carefully destroyed before they disbanded. As a result the sources provide wildly varying estimates of their total strength. The Privy Council draft letters assured Russell that there could only be 7000 rebels 'tag and rag', only 4000 of which were armed.[25] In contrast the Spanish Chronicle asserts an improbable number of *'over thirty thousand men.'* [26] The uncertainty will have been compounded by the difficulty of identifying enemy combatants amidst civilian populations and by fluctuation in numbers as individuals came and went, particularly depending on the fortunes of the insurrection.[27]

It appears to have been a wholly infantry force, while the rebels' use of improvised weapons at Clyst St. Mary has been taken as proof of their lack of military hardware.[28] However considerable resources and armament were available to English militia units in this period and so the rebel forces would have had access to the traditional bill and bow of the county levies, and have included many personnel trained in their use and junior officers to keep them in order in the field.[29] The Spanish Chronicler, while having little else to say on the subject, asserts that the rebels were 'brave and well armed'.[30] They had secured artillery from a number of garrisons in the South West including, according to Risden, from Plymouth and Topsham in the South West.[31] Artillery is mentioned not only in connection with the siege of Exeter, but also in the accounts of the battles of Clyst and Sampford Courtenay.[32] Though apparently of too small a bore to be effective siege weapons, this artillery was of value on the battlefield.[33] While most of the guns at Clyst St. Mary appear to have been acquired in the early stages of the action, in the capture of Russell's baggage train, on Clyst Heath the next day the rebels deployed various artillery pieces.[34] Despite their heavy defeat in that battle, which presumably resulted in the loss of their artillery, an additional fifteen pieces were fielded by them at Sampford Courtenay.[35]

Commentators have often observed that the rebels might have been better served by adopting guerrilla tactics rather than facing mercenary soldiers in conventional confrontations.[36] However, despite the evident disparity in training and armament, the rebels remained a potent adversary. This is demonstrated most clearly by the fact that the rebels could continue to resist after their defeats at Fenny Bridges and Clyst: '*Such*

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[25] Pocock, (1884), 44
[26] Spanish Chronicle
[27] Sturt, (1987), 73
[28] Jordan, (1968), 472
[29] Raymond, (2007), 51-52
[30] Spanish Chronicle, 181
[31] Risden
[32] Hooker
[33] Rose-Troup, (1914). 208
[34] Brooks, (2005), 309
[35] Russell
[36] Sturt, (1987), 83-84

was the valour and stoutness of these men, that the Lord Gray reported himself, that he never, in all the wars that he had been in, did know the like.'[37]

Overview of the action and its strategic context

The campaign can be divided into two distinct elements. The first comprised the battles of Fenny Bridges, Woodbury and Clyst, fought as the rebels sought to stop the royal army's approach from the east to relieving Exeter. The second represented the final suppression of the rebellion, after the relief of Exeter, which culminated in the battle of Sampford Courtenay. The battles varied significantly in character, both in terms of scale and of terrain context, varying from river crossings with and without prepared defensive positions, through street fighting to assaults on camps.

Figure 2: Location of the battlefields of Fenny Bridges, Woodbury and Clyst viewed in relation to the major road system of the pre-turnpike era.

The first group of battlefields lie along the two major roads from London which approached Exeter from the east: a northern route via Crewkene and Honiton, and a southern route via Dorchester and Bridport. These battles took place at locations chosen by the rebels. Fenny Bridges was fought at a strong defensive location where

[37] Hooker, 79

the Honiton route crossed the river Otter. Following that royal victory the rebels fell back to the next easily defended location before Exeter, the bridges across the river Clyst. The royal army now shifted its approach to the Dorchester road, probably because the rebels had felled trees along the Honiton route to block a further advance in that direction. The royal army set up a camp near Woodbury, possibly beside the Dorchester route about 5km east of the river Clyst on Windmill Hill to the north of Woodbury Salterton. The battle of Woodbury, possibly no more than a skirmish, resulted from a surprise early morning rebel attack on the royal camp. After fighting-off the assault, the following morning the royal army moved forward to attack the rebels' main forces. These were dug-in on the east side of river where the Dorchester road approached the bridge. They has prepared earthen bulwarks controlling the three roads which converged within in the settlement of Bishops Clyst immediately east of the crossing. The royal army overran the defences and took the bridge in an action which involved fighting both outside and within the settlement of Bishops Clyst and on the bridge immediately to the west. They then crossed to the west bank to camp on the hill on Clyst Heath. The second day of fighting took place on Clyst Heath, close to the junction of the two London roads within 3km of Exeter, with the rebels taking a defensive position in enclosures at the edge of the heath. Again the rebels were defeated, enabling the royal army to relieve Exeter.

One of the major rebel camps established around Exeter during the siege can be identified as lying on St David's Down. While it did not see action during the campaign it is possible that the occupation of the site may still have left an archaeological signature. As it saw no action the site has not been assessed for the present report, but it would appear that the majority of the area has been built up by suburbs of Exeter.

Following the relief of the city the rebel forces later regrouped at Sampford Courtenay, 28km to the north west of Exeter. This drew the royal army into the final stage of the campaign to crush the rebellion, which took the form of an assault on the rebel camp on high ground to the east of Sampford Courtenay village. This was a major action, involving the use of substantial numbers of artillery and handguns, in which the rebel forces were defeated.

Research needs and potential

The present work should only be viewed as a first stage of investigation, for it has demonstrated the potential for significant archaeological survival on most of the sites. Only Woodbury battlefield has not been securely located. The location of the other three sites is reasonably secure although the exact location of action within each site is not generally known. Of these only Clyst Heath has been largely destroyed by development in the 20th century. While part of the fighting at Clyst St Mary was within the town, a substantial area was in open ground, much of which remains agricultural land today. So too does much of Fenny Bridges battlefield, while Sampford Courtenay remains almost wholly under agricultural use.

The problem of definition of the exact location and extent of the battlefields, and of the exact placement of the action within its contemporary terrain is one that recent work has shown battlefield archaeology is ideally placed to answer, for battles of the

gunpowder era.[38] Thus survey of the battle archaeology in the surviving Prayer Book rebellion battlefields would be valuable both to confirm the locations for the actions presented here, including determining which of the alternative areas at Fenny Bridges is correct, and to refine the understanding of how the events fitted within the landscape.

At Sampford Courtenay, Clyst and Woodbury extensive scatters of lead munitions are to be expected from at least parts of the action. For Fenny Bridges this is less certain. Where such munitions exist they should provide a good understanding as to the distribution of the action. Where they are absent it is likely that relatively few artefacts will be recovered from the Prayer Book Rebellion battlefields. This is a reasonable conclusion to draw on the basis of survey results from Bosworth battlefield, which has yielded only a very low density of military and personal equipment (such as buckles, strap ends and other items of copper alloy; other objects of lead, silver coins and very small numbers other silver and gold). This is supported by the results of small scale investigation on Flodden battlefield.[39] In contrast the high density of non-munition finds from Towton may prove to be an exception amongst medieval battlefields, in part related to the number of high status individuals killed in that battle. The relatively low status of most of the rebel troops in the Prayer Book rebellion is likely to reinforce a pattern of low density of battle archaeology on these battlefields. The only exception might be if there is good survival of ferrous artefacts, particularly arrowheads, as these have been shown to survive in one part of Towton battlefield due to particular factors of colluviation and soil pH. The impact of soil chemistry, both from soil sampling for pH and chlorides, projected across the whole battlefield in relation to parent geology / soil type and modern chemical application, may thus be needed if the presence and extent of battle archaeology is demonstrated by fieldwork. This would show what may and may not survive, particularly with regard to ferrous artefacts.

Investigation of the battle archaeology would also be of value in national terms. It would provide a test as to the character of the remains to be expected on lesser actions involving militia and irregular forces against a substantial government army. The battles may also provide in Sampford Courtenay a good example of the battle archaeology to be expected in an attack and pillaging of a camp, a type of battle archaeology that has not yet been investigated systematically in Britain.

Most importantly it would provide direct evidence as to the exact character of the gunpowder weapons in use in English armies and militias in the mid 16th centuries. The archaeological investigation of the early battlefields where these weapons where employed is already contributing to our understanding of the nature of this transition, most notably through the evidence recovered at Bosworth (1485). The Prayer Book Rebellion of 1549 lies in the later part of the transitional period in warfare and is a time when there are relatively few military actions in England itself. Thus these and the small number of other battles of the rebellions against Henry VIII and Edward VI, if they are intact and can be located, are likely to provide an important complement to the archaeological evidence which may be available from the larger scale action of Tudor armies on the Scottish borders and in Ireland. The battles of the Prayer Book

[38] Foard, (2009); Foard, (2008); Foard, (in preparation); Pollard, (2009), 130-162.
[39] Foard, (in preparation)

Rebellion saw the substantial use of both artillery and of mercenary handgunners. It is likely that firepower deployed by the royal army, using professional artillerymen and mercenary handgunners, had a significant impact on the outcome of the battles.[40] If the battle archaeology on the sites does indeed prove to be intact then they have a high potential to contribute to the understanding of the changing nature of weapons and warfare as employed by English armies in the 16th century.

The historic terrain on each site has only been examined here through the use of surviving historic maps. While this data provides an important advance in our understanding of the battlefields and their tactical context, the data does not provide an adequate picture of the landscape as it was in 1549. Many changes including enclosure of open ground and realignment of the road network are likely to have taken place in the intervening period. Further research using written sources may enable the extent of enclosed and open ground in 1549 to be determined, and understanding of the communications network to be refined. Reconstruction of the main road network prior to the major modifications caused by turnpiking, from the mid 18th century onwards, and enclosure both of which changed the network and the exact routes of individual roads, is essential to a full understanding of the tactical context of the individual battles. To some degree these problems have been addressed in the present work. Ogilby's *Itinerary* of 1675 provides the detailed routes of the national roads approaching Exeter from the east, which had probably changed little since 1549. For Sampford Courtenay, which lay away from the national road network, we have drawn upon the less accurate, smaller scale mapping in Lea's 1693 edition of Saxton's Atlas, which provided more detail on the road network in parts of Devon. Unfortunately the first large scale map providing a full road network, Dunn's county map of Devon, was not completed until 1765[41] and so incorporates some changes made from the 1750s onwards in the turnpiking of the major roads. Thus further research on the chronology of turnpiking and the detail of the changes to key sections of roads both on and immediately adjacent to the battlefields is required to enhance the present study.

[40] Smythe, (1964), 29-56; Hall, (1997), 145-148; Strickland & Robert Hardy, (2005), 390-402
[41] Delano-Smith and Kain, (1999), 91-2.

Fenny Bridges — Sunday 28th July 1549

Parishes:	*NGR:*
Feniton / Ottery St Mary / Gittisham	***SY115985***

At the beginning of the campaign the royal army advanced into the South West along the main London–Exeter road and established its headquarters at Honiton. Lying about 25km east of Exeter this was the last market town on the main road before the city. Ottery St Mary was closer to the city but it was off the main road, which it will have been essential to secure so that reinforcements could reach them from London. Russell waited at Honiton for these other troops to come up to him, though the delay saw some of his existing forces desert.[42]

The first large-scale confrontation between the rebels and the royal army took place at Fenny Bridges, where the London-Exeter road crossed the River Otter about three miles west of Honiton, probably on Sunday 28th July.[43] Hooker and Hayward provide the principal accounts for the action. Holinshed is of limited value, consisting only of a brief description of the rebels resisting the initial attack and alluding to their unsuccessful counterattack.[44]

All the accounts agree that in this battle the royal army was heavily outnumbered. Hooker, who generally appears more reliable, says the royal army marched out from Honiton to engage the enemy because they had advanced to Feniton. It may have been sensible for the rebels to have sought to bring the Russell to battle before all his troops had come up. In contrast Hayward claims that the rebels set their forces between Russell and his base at Honiton, after the latter made an expedition towards Exeter, and that the battle took place when the royal forces had to force the crossing to return to their base. The only route which would have forced a retiring Russell to engage the enemy at Fenny Bridges would have been if he was returning along the main London road from the west. This seems unlikely as it was a far more risk tactic which would have separated the rebels from their headquarters, both for support and retreat. The topographical detail given in the accounts is also most obviously compatible with a rebel deployment on the west side of the river. Further complication is provided by the draft letters sent by the Privy Council, which refer to a small skirmish was fought 'in the straights', which Rose-Troup has interpreted to mean the land between Honiton and Ottery St. Mary.[45] While this theory connects the Privy Council letters with Hayward's chronicle - with Hayward merely conflating the two actions into one engagement – it is possible that the letter refers to an earlier skirmish unconnected to the battle at Fenny Bridges.[46]

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[42] Hayward.

[43] Secondary works generally give 26th or 27th July 1549. However Hooker says the attack was made on 'a holy day' and also later states that about 6 days after this, on Saturday 3rd August, the royal army set out again towards Exeter. Both suggests it was on Sunday 28th July that the Fenny Bridges battle took place.

[44] Holinshed, 52

[45] Rose-Troup, (1914), 253

[46] Pocock, (1884), 40-42. If this theory is correct then the skirmish described could have taken place as a prelude to the battle as the Royal Army moved back towards Honiton.

There were four elements to the action, which took place in different parts of the battlefield. The first action was the royal army's attack on the bridge against a small detachment of the rebel force. This was followed by the attack on the main body, which was routed. A counter attack then followed as the royal forces were plundering. Then came the reforming of the royal forces who routed and then pursued the rebels.

To assist in the placement of these events within the landscape a reconstruction of the histroic terrain has been compiled form the earliest available historic mapping. This shows earlier alignments of streams, roads and other features depicted on an Ordnance Survey first edition six inch map base. Additional data including the parish boundaries is also provided on a contour map.

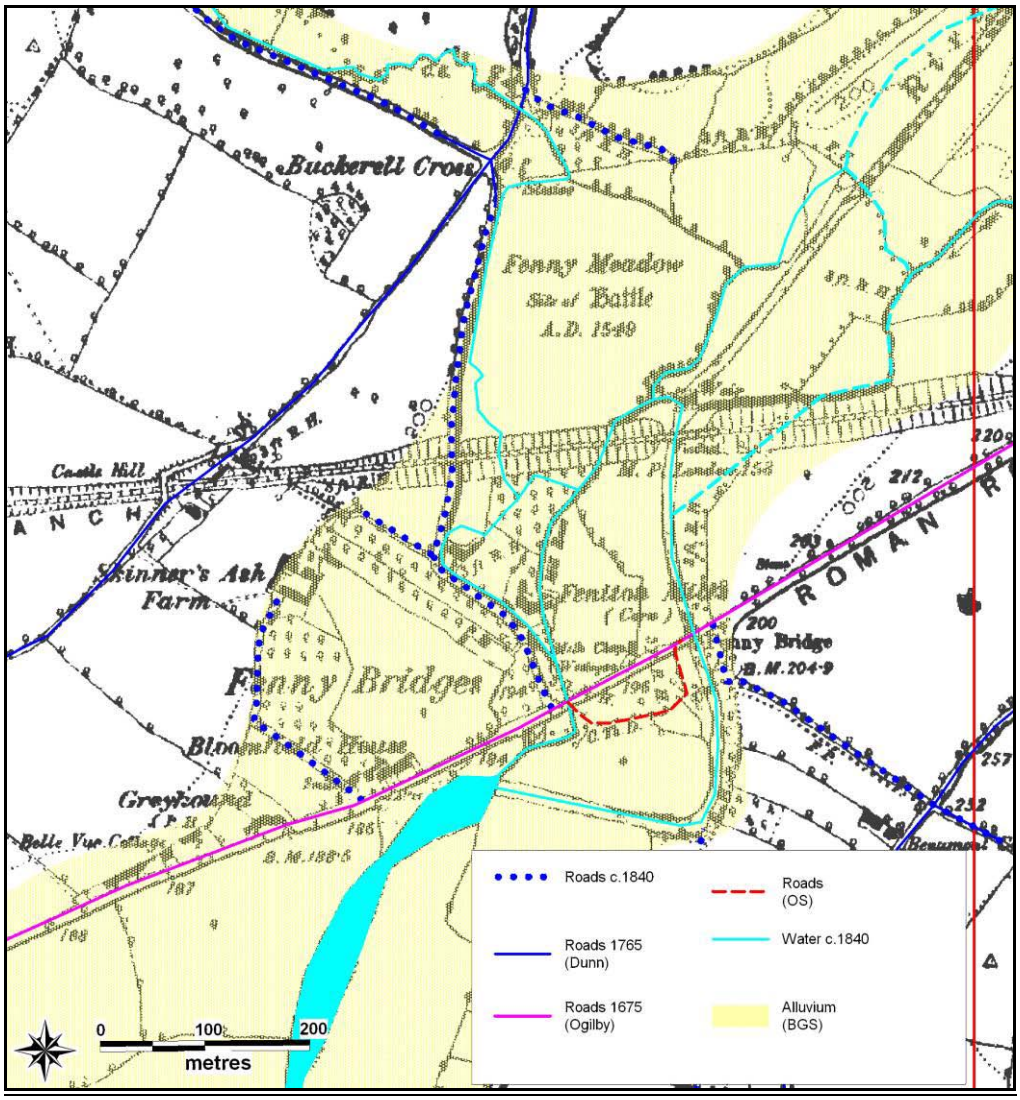

Figure 1: First Edition OS 6":1 mile map of Fenny Bridges (1854) with extent of alluvium added from the BGS mapping and roads and water from specified earlier historic maps.

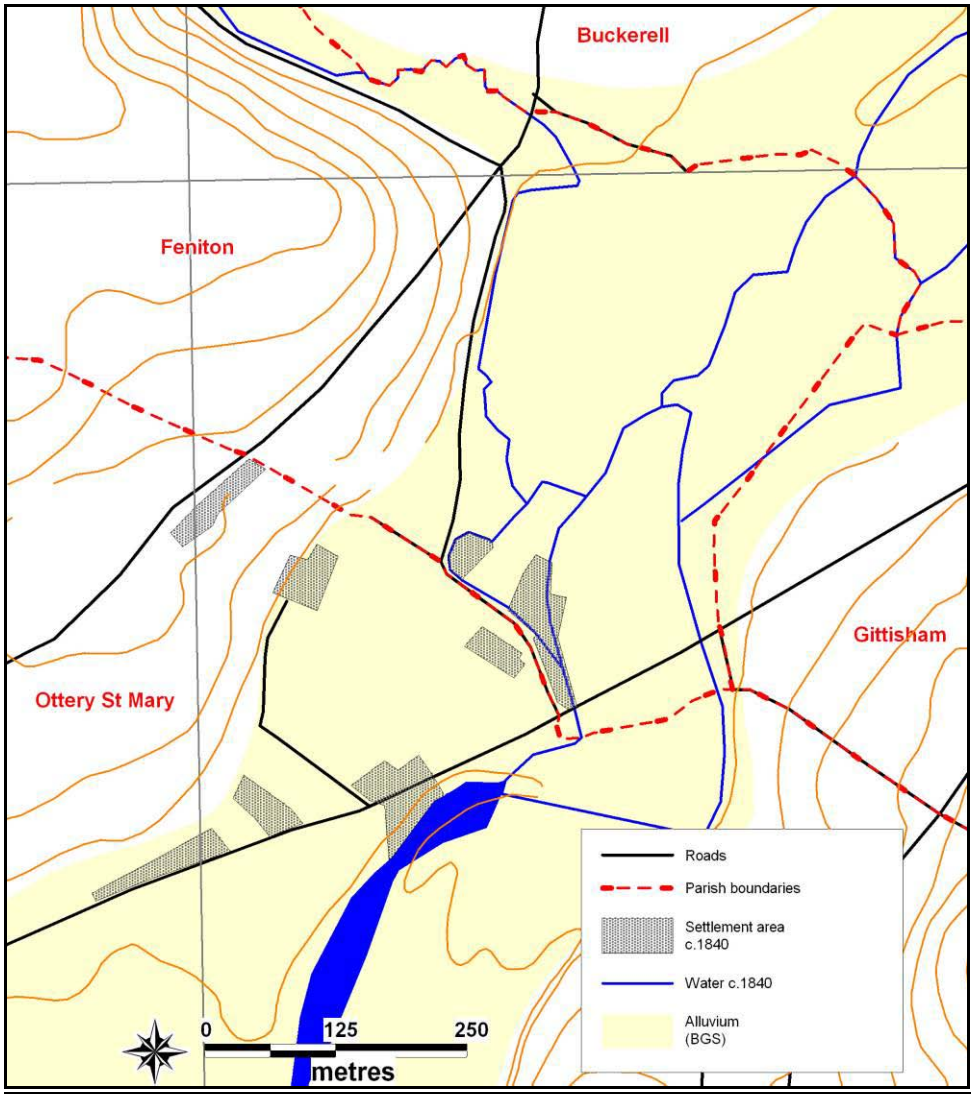

Figure 2: Early road network, stream course and parish boundaries depicted on Ordnance Survey contour mapping from the OS contour data. (© Crown Copyright/Edinburgh (2009) an Ordnance Survey/Edina Digimap supplied service)

Taking the bridge

The river represented a good defensive location by the rebel forces, especially given their lack of cavalry to counter those in the royal army. Both sources have a rebel detachment holding the bridge. Hooker simply says after attempts to take the bridge Russell was finally successful. Hayward provides more detail, saying Russell was unable to take the bridge and so forded the river at the foot of the bridge with his cavalry causing the rebels on the bridge to retreat to the main body. According to Hayward the main body was in *'a great fair meadow behind the bridge'*, a location described by Hooker as *'the meadow beneath the bridge'* and later as *'a meadow near adjoining in the lower side of the bridge'*.

As both Hayward and Hooker describe control of Feniton Bridge as the key to the action, it is easy to establish the approximate location of the battlefield, in the general area west of the present bridge. For the initial action it is possible to achieve very close positioning as the present bridge probably occupies a similar position, or one close to the location of its sixteenth century precursor. The steepness and depth of the banks rather than the depth of the river itself, which appears not to have a major flow

at least in summer, seems to be the main obstacle here. The exact position of the road and bridge is open to question as there may have been a minor realignment following turnpiking. Ogilby's Itinerary of 1675 makes it clear that Feniton bridge is what is now called Fenny Bridges but the exact alignment of the road and position of the bridge cannot be deduced from his map, or indeed from any other pre-turnpike mapping and even Dunn's map, which post dates turnpiking of this route, lacks sufficient detail.

A more complex situation may have existed here because the parish boundary between Ottery St Mary and Feniton follows the road through Fenny Bridges and north west towards Feniton. It may also have followed the earlier road alignment across the meadow and river and thus indicate that the bridge itself has been moved and originally it lay at a point where the main road curved south to join the road on the Ottery/Gittisham boundary and the road from Alfington. This is hinted at by the Ordnance Surveyors' Drawing of 1806 which shows an irregular course to the road west of the main bridge, on an alignment south of the present causeway. Any such changes in the road network would have significant implications for the exact location of the action and the survival of battle archaeology from this initial clash. The 1806 map also shows there has been alteration of the Otter's course north of Fenny Bridge as it runs alongside the meadow. It also shows a series of lesser streams and the mill leat running on the west side of the river converging on the main river. These water courses were then crossed by four bridges, with the main bridge on the east across the main river. Changes relate to drainage and to construction of the railway and very recently of the A30 by-pass.

Figure 3: Fenny Bridges as seen on the Ordnance Surveyors' Drawing of 1806. Image reproduced from http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/ordsurvdraw/

The main forces engage

When this was achieved the rebels stationed there retreated to their main body in the meadow. While Hooker simply says the royal forces then attacked and defeated them, Hayward again provides more detail, saying *'Then the King's forces charged lively*

upon them, and they again as stoutly received the charge, but being an untrained multitude without either soldier or guide, they were soon broken and put to flight'. Brook suggests that while the rebels fought bravely, they had chosen a conventional deployment in open terrain, and suffered accordingly against the military professionals in Russell's army.[47] Apart from Hayward's dismissal of the rebels as *'an untrained multitude without either soldier or guide'*, and the mention of them standing with their standards which might imply a standard deployment in battle array, there is insufficient information in the accounts to be certain of the detail of the events and the exact nature of the action. Despite the evident disparity in experience and training between the two forces, the rebels fought well: withstanding, as Hooker put it, a *'good store of blows and bloodshed'*.

The traditional site of the battle, placed in Fenny Meadow on the Ordnance Survey mapping of 1854 and known locally as 'Bloody Meadow',[48] must be intended to relate to this second phase of the action. However this location is problematic when the primary sources are reviewed. Hooker indicates the rebels' main body was *'near adjoining in the lower side of the bridge'* or simply *'in the meadow beneath the bridge'*, while Hayward says *'behind the bridge'*. The extent of the meadow can be estimated by the extent of alluvial deposits on the 1:10,000 scale BGS mapping for, prior to drainage which typically occurred in more recent centuries, it was common for the periodically flooded ground on the floodplains of rivers to be managed as hay meadows.

The traditional site is difficult to explain on tactical grounds, which suggest an alternative location for the main action. While it does lie in the alluvial area, it would place the rebel army well to the north of the main road and thus, once the bridge had been taken it would have allowed the royal forces would have cut off the rebel line of retreat south west to Exeter. Given the River Otter's south-westerly course and, if one accepts a direction of approach of Russell's forces from the north east along the main road as indicated by Hooker, the primary sources imply a location south or west of Feniton bridge.[49] One might expect the deployment to have been across the Exeter road, using the river to protect the right flank and perhaps embanked enclosures on the left or, if the stand was made further back, then the slope on the north west giving flank protection. Exact positioning may depend upon the degree to which the area of enclosures between the road and Skinner's Ash Farm was already divided into closes by 1549. The long narrow closes here in the 19th century, together with the high banked boundaries on either side of the tiny lane (now just a footpath) running along the parish boundary north west from the village street towards Feniton, might indicate this was an early enclosure.

[47] Brooks, (2005), 307
[48] Rose-Troup
[49] Such a location has previously been suggested by Brooks, (2005), 308

Figure 4: Looking south across the meadow beside the present main road on the west side of the bridge, extending south to the loop of the river. The slight earthworks of abandoned stream channels and other unidentified features were observed in the meadow but are not visible on this image. This is the southern half of the area suggested here as an alternative location for the core of the battlefield.

While such a deployment appears on tactical grounds to be improbable, the traditional site has formed the basis of most subsequent accounts of the battle by historians from Frances Rose-Troup onwards.[50]

[50] Rose-Troup, (1914), 257. Despite mentioning the description of the area by John Leland prior to the rebellion, the author fails to give a detailed estimate of the site of the action.

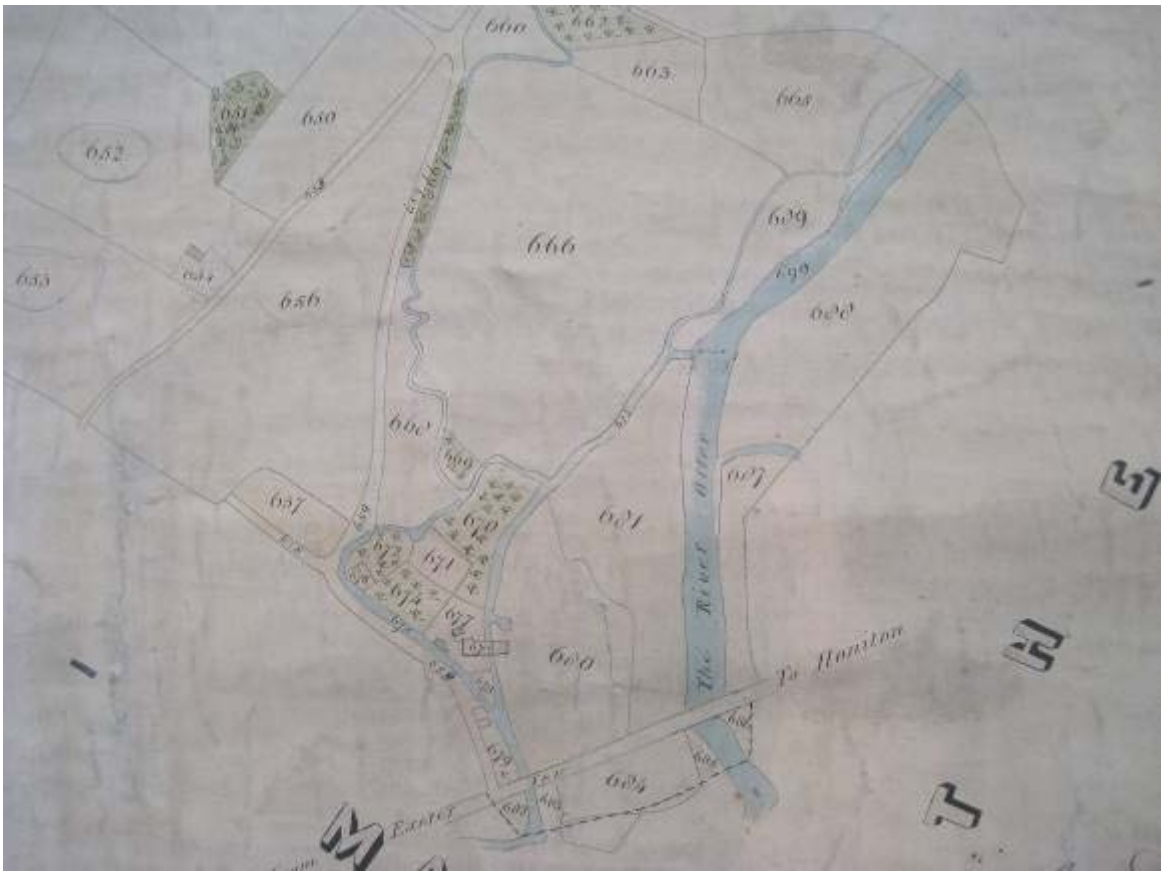

Figure 5: Feniton tithe map (Devon Record Office) shows the area west and north west of the bridge broken up by orchards and gardens. Such terrain would have impeded the conventional deployment apparently adopted by the rebels and so could have motivated the decision to deploy in Fenny Meadow, because it was a broad open area. However these enclosures may not yet have been created in 1549.

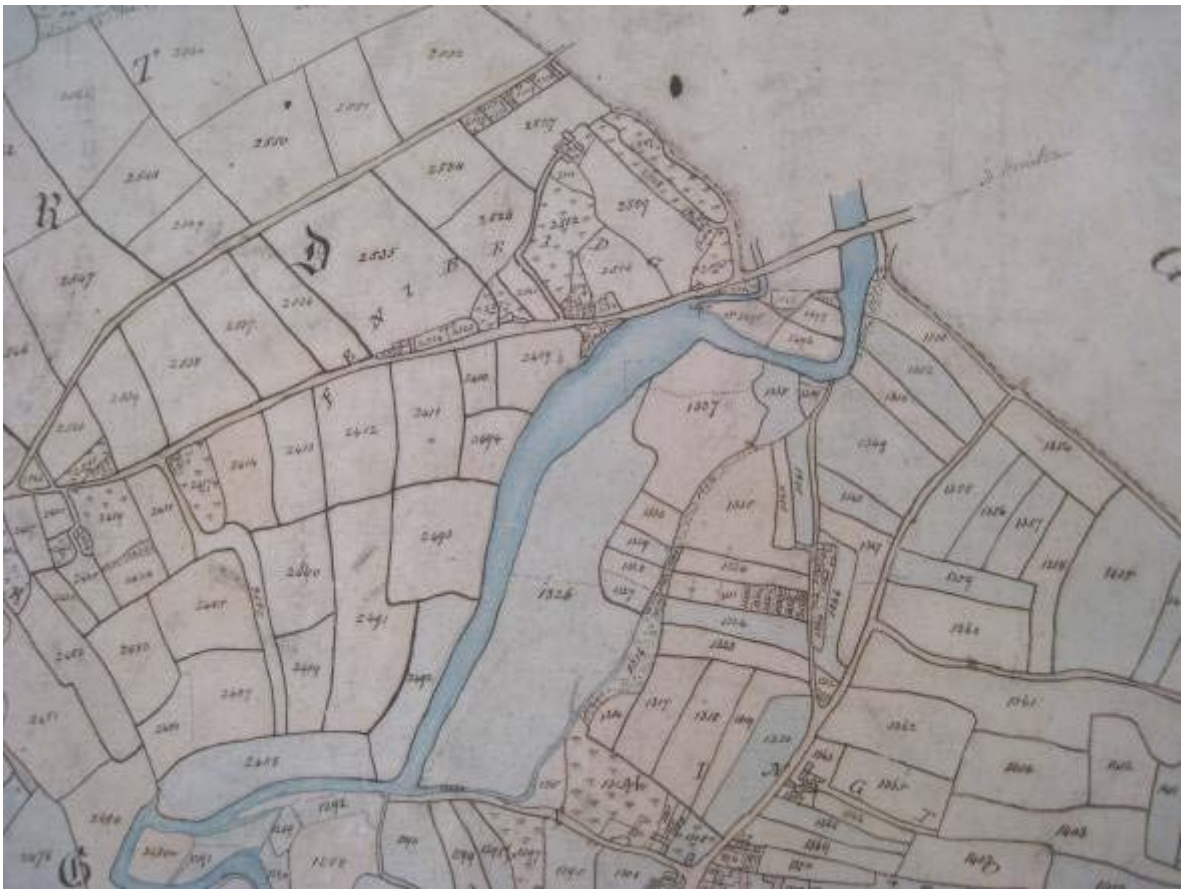

Figure 6: Ottery St. Mary tithe map (Devon Record Office). This appears to show a significant broadening of the river once it moves south of Fenny Bridge. This feature does not appear on any other mapping but it is possible it shows that at the time of the battle the river had a much broader form in this area. If so this would significantly reduce the extent of meadow ground west of the bridge.

Rebel counterattack

Now the troops fell to plundering and were surprised by a rebel counterattack by 160 or 200 Cornishmen. The nature of the terrain in either of the potential battlefield sites would be extremely well suited to concealing such a counterattack amidst the high banked field boundaries. This may be the event described by Holinshed when he says the rebels ‘got altogether again and abide a new charge, defending their ground’. As soon as some or all of the royal forces had been rallied set again in battle array, implied by Hooker’s words as being in two bodies, they attacked and the rebels were routed and driven from the field.

The narrow lanes bounded by high banks topped by hedges, already enclosed in this way in 1549, would also have facilitated the unobserved arrival of reinforcements to the battle, greatly contributing to the insurgents’ ability to mount their counter attack in its final stages.

The pursuit

The pursuit was followed for two or three miles but then abandoned, supposedly for fear of rebel reinforcements. Hooker’s account of Russell’s Fool, Joll, throwing the advance into confusion by claiming ‘that all the county behind him was up and

coming upon him' seems apocryphal.[51] It was however reasonable for Russell, given its small numbers in his force and having already suffered one unexpected counter attack, to have been wary of too distant a pursuit, particularly given the hostility of the local population.[52]

Rebel losses were estimated by Hooker at 300 and at 600 by Hayward, who also claims that the royal army suffered none killed, though Brooks on unspecified evidence has suggested royal losses of as many as one to two hundred.[53] While none of Russell's forces may have been killed, Hooker is clear that there were significant numbers wounded, for he says the attack on the bridge was only carried '*with the hurt of sundry of his company, amongst whom Sir Gawen Carew was one being hurt with an arrow in the arm'.*

The victory restored morale to the heavily outnumbered Royal Army which Hayward claims had previously been subject to desertion and disaffection while stationed at Honiton. But the failure to destroy the rebel army meant they were able to fall back on the next major river crossing while Russell retired to Honiton to await reinforcements.

Archaeological Potential

The 'battlefield area' has been defined widely to take in both the traditional site and that suggested here as more likely area of action. An area to the east of the river is also included, sufficient to encompass any overshot bullets from small arms fire during the fight for the bridge, though if artillery was in use then a longer final range may have been achieved by overshot munitions. On the west the boundary is defined to encompass the possible first stages of the rout and pursuit, where physical remains are most likely, although archaeology from the rout may be scattered at a very low density for two or three miles south-westward. The majority of the defined area probably does not contain battle archaeology but it is not possible on present evidence to predict where the evidence will be located. The one exception is the immediate environs of the bridge on the west bank of the river, defined by the river on east and south and the mill leat on north and west, where the initial action for the crossing must have taken place.

[51] Hooker, 73
[52] Rose-Troup, (1914), 261
[53] Hooker's figure could be a misunderstanding of Hooker's ambiguous description of the 300 rebels killed 'in these two fights'. Rose-Troup, (1914), 260; ; the higher number of royal casualties is suggested by Brooks, (2005b).

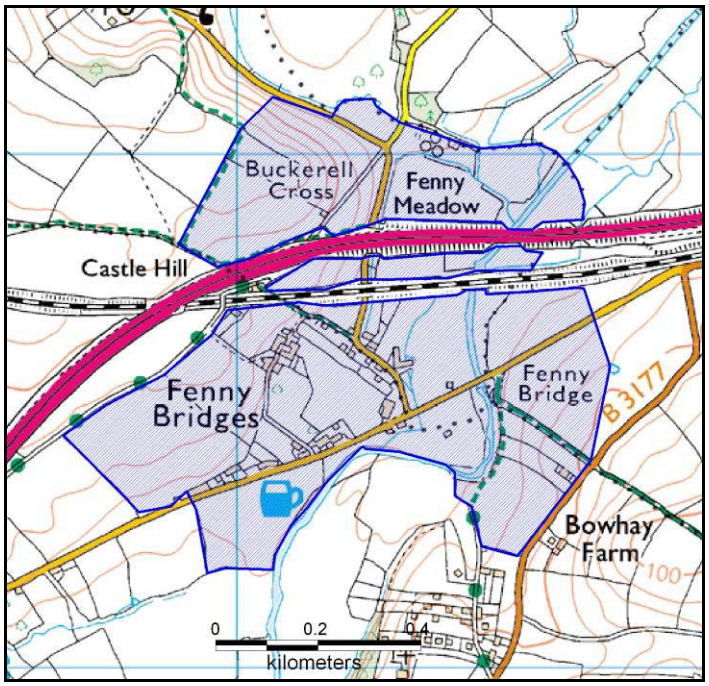

Figure 7: A 'battlefield area' defined on the modern OS Explorer map base. (1:10,000 scale colour raster © Crown Copyright/Edinburgh (2009) an Ordnance Survey/Edina Digimap supplied service)

There has been the loss of a substantial area of the traditional site to the railway and road embankments. Part of the area between the two and to the east of the minor road is in use as a compound and has also probably seen destruction of any battle archaeology. Much of the rest of the site is highly vulnerable because it lies in such close proximity to a built-up area, with various small scale infilling and land use change already taking place and so potentially eroding any surviving battle archaeology.

If hand guns were in use in the battle in significant number then substantial numbers of lead bullets should have been deposited on the battlefield. However no specific mention is made in the primary accounts of artillery or handguns being used at Fenny Bridges. This may simply be another example of early accounts failing to refer to the presence of particular types of weapon on a battlefield, but there is some doubt as to the nature of the weapons in use. Spinola's Italian mercenaries, all likely to have been handgunners, had certainly not yet joined the army and substantial portions of the artillery train was still en-route. It has been suggested that German mercenaries, who in other campaigns are seen using with arquebus and halberds, had already reached the army and were present in this engagement.[54] However Hayward states that a body of German cavalry did not reach the army until after Fenny Bridges. If this was the only German contingent, and if Hayward's comment is correct, then there may in fact have been few or no handguns in use in the battle.

There is no record on the Historic Environment Record or the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) database of battle related finds in the area. This may indicate that the site has not been badly affected by treasure hunting. If there has been some impact

[54] Miller, (1980), 176

then the area adjacent to the bridge, which is not normally described as part of the battlefield, may be less likely to have suffered. The only record of a significant assemblage of lead bullets on the PAS database, totalling 34 items, is at Escot about 3km to the west of Fenny Bridges. If not an error of location from the battlefield then this might represent action during the pursuit, though it may prove to have no relation to the events of 1549. In the absence of detail as to the extent or density of the distribution it is not possible to consider its potential locational significance. Nor is accurate measurement individually given for each bullet and so it is not possible to assess the bore of the assemblage in relation to that of the bore graph of small arms bullets from the Mary Rose, which provides the only baseline at present for the study of mid 16th century 'arquebus' bullets in England.[55] If there is not a scatter of bullets then, as noted above, it is likely that relatively few artefacts will be recovered from this battlefield.

The only exception might be if there is good survival of ferrous artefacts, particularly arrowheads, as these have been shown to survive in one part of Towton battlefield for particular reasons of colluviation and a neutral soil pH. While it is unlikely that the Fenny Bridges site will have such protective soil chemistry, the land use history as recorded in the 1840s and 1930s, when the whole battlefield lay in pasture, combined with the clayey soils likely over alluvium, which covers most of the battlefield, the potential for survival may be good. While the northern part of the area is now under arable the presence of earthworks of palaeochannels to the south of the main road suggest little or no disturbance there by arable cultivation.

It is possible that archaeological evidence survives, both as earthworks and as wholly buried features, for some terrain features, such as an earlier road alignment and bridge location and the alignment of former river channels in the area west of the river crossing. In addition the high embanked boundaries noted along the parish boundary road running north west towards Feniton and other similar boundaries in the area may also be of significance to the understanding of the battlefield. However any work on such terrain evidence should await definition of the exact extent of the battlefield which is likely only, if at all, be determined through a survey for battle archaeology.

[55] Foard, (2008)

Woodbury — 3rd/4th August 1549

Parishes:		*NGR:*
Windmill Hill:	***Woodbury / Faringdon***	***SY015895***
Aylesbeare Common:	***Aylesbeare***	***SY056916***
Woodbury Common:	***Woodbury***	***SY032873***

Russell remained at Honiton for about a week after the battle of Fenny Bridges, waiting for the arrival of reinforcements.

Then on the 3rd of August the royal army marched out of Honiton and moved toward Exeter. According to Hooker they left the main road and marched across the *'downs'* to Woodbury where they camped that evening. In 1801 on the Ordnance Surveyors Drawings a broad area of unenclosed common still extended from just south of the Exeter-Honiton road, across the top and eastern slopes of the ridge of hills on the west side of the river Otter, stretching south to beyond Woodbury Common. An even wider area may have been open in the mid 16th century. These must be the downs by which the royal army marched towards Woodbury. Russell probably took this alternative route because, as Risdon states, the rebels had *'thwarted the way with great trees'* in order to prevent the passage of the army, Hayward having described in relation to the action at Fenny Bridges that the rebels had *'felled all the trees between St Mary Ottery and Exeter'*.[56]

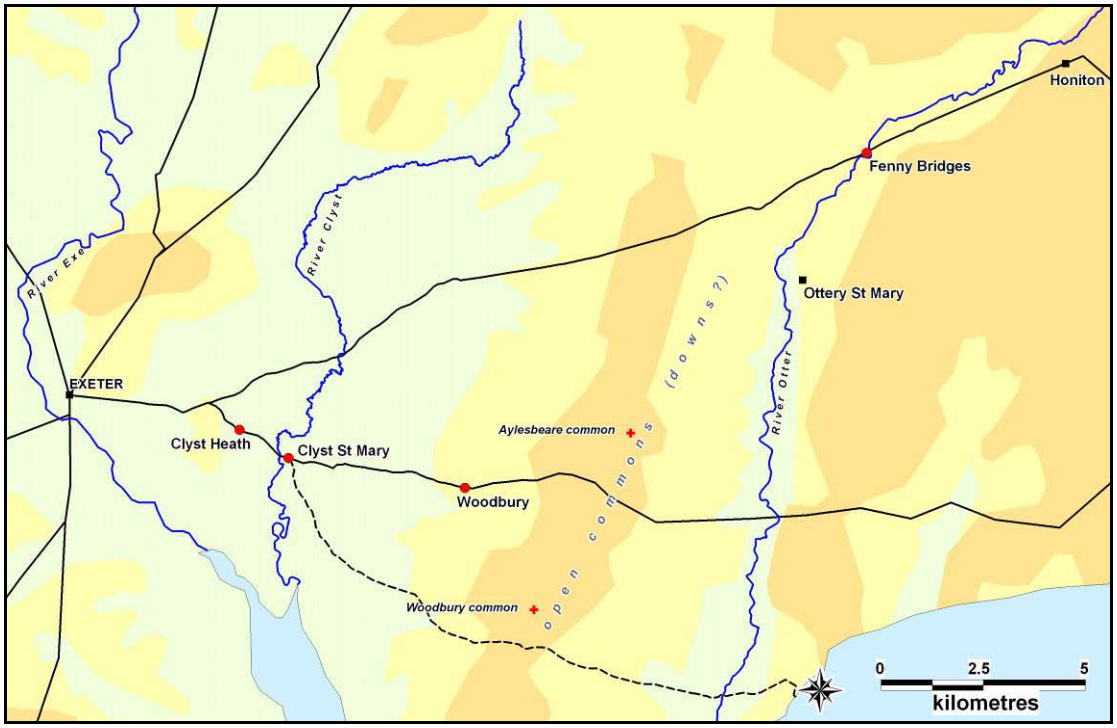

Figure 8: The probable route taken by the royal army was across the open commons west of the river Otter. The most likely site of their camp and of the night battle may be on Windmill Hill, shown here as 'Woodbury' but alternatives sites for the battle are Woodbury Common and Aylesbeare Common.

[56] Risdon, (1714), 36

The rebel forces had fallen back to the river Clyst after their defeat at Fenny Bridges and, according to Hooker, had fortified a position on the east side of the river at Bishops Cyst (in Clyst St. Mary and Sowton parishes). It seems likely that they will have taken similar precautions where the Honiton road crossed the river at Clyst Honiton but no reference is made to this in the primary accounts, probably because there was no action at this crossing. The rebels were aware of the royal army's movements and gathered to launch an attack on the royal camp during the night of the 3rd/4th August.

Hooker says the rebels '*came to the fore said mill'*, and were *'were overthrown and the most part of them slain'*. Following the action Miles Coverdale, chaplain to Russell for the campaign but later elected a bishop, preached a sermon on the battlefield which was disrupted by the false alarms of another attack. Then the next morning the royal army went onto the offensive with an assault on the rebel positions in Bishop's Clyst.

The 'Spanish Chronicle' seems to offers a different version of the events, maintaining the rebellion was suppressed in a single major action when the Royal Army 'arrived one night within a mile of the Cornish force' and defeated them at daybreak the next morning. Confusion creeps into the narrative regarding the rebels who 'waited on the field' for their enemies. While this may suggest confusion with the action at Fenny Bridges the Italian mercenaries did not arrive until after that battle. Whereas Hooker described the rebels launching an attack that was beaten off by Russell's troops, the Spanish Chronicle claims that Spinola's mercenaries pretended to pitch camp with the other troops but were instead deployed ahead of the main position to act as the vanguard of a surprise attack. In the meantime the rebels, who had spies within Russell's force, were deceived by a proclamation that 'all should go to rest, as within three days (Russell) wished to give battle to the Cornishmen'. According to the chronicle the rebels were consequently taken by surprise at daybreak and 'before they could rally six thousand of the Cornishmen were killed, and the rest fled amidst great slaughter'. The accuracy of this source has already been questioned, and it seems here that it conflates several events, at the least merging the action at Woodbury with those of Clyst on the following two days. However if this account is correct in its detail of the night action, it would suggest that the fighting took place to the west of the actual camp.

The only clue as to the location of the action at Woodbury is from Hooker when he says that Russell, in his march from Honiton '*Leaving the direct high way draweth over the downs towards Woodbury and there lodged and pitched that night at a windmill appertaining to one Gregory Cary.'* This imprecise information has allowed historians to suggest several sites for the action. These include the hilltop in Woodbury Common, a site sometimes specifically identified as the hillfort called Woodbury Castle, lying east of Woodbury village.[57] A second suggestion is the hill in Aylesbeare Common, east of Aylesbeare.[58] A third site has been identified on Windmill Hill to the north of Woodbury Salterton, immediately north west of Grendale. This site is identified because Rose-Troup states that Gregory Cary, the

[57] Devon HER, Monument 10500.
[58] Rose-Troup, (1914), 265

owner of the windmill according to Hooker, was granted land at Grendale in Woodbury Salterton in 1546.

It is not possible on present evidence to provide a certain identification of the battlefield but the strongest claim is for Windmill Hill. The campsite must have been close enough to Clyst St. Mary to enable the rebel forces to mount their night attack without undue difficulty, and then for the royal army to reach the rebel positions which Hooker says was by *'about nine of the clock'* the following morning. Windmill Hill lies close to the major road from Dorchester to Exeter, the other major route into the city from the east, and it is just 4km from Bishops Clyst to Windmill Hill. In contrast it is 8km to Woodbury Common and 9km to Aylesbeare Common. The Woodbury tithe map identifies Windmill Hill and immediately to its west lay Bishop's Field. While alternative explanations can be given for the latter name, it is possible that it denotes where Miles Coverdale gave his sermon after the action.

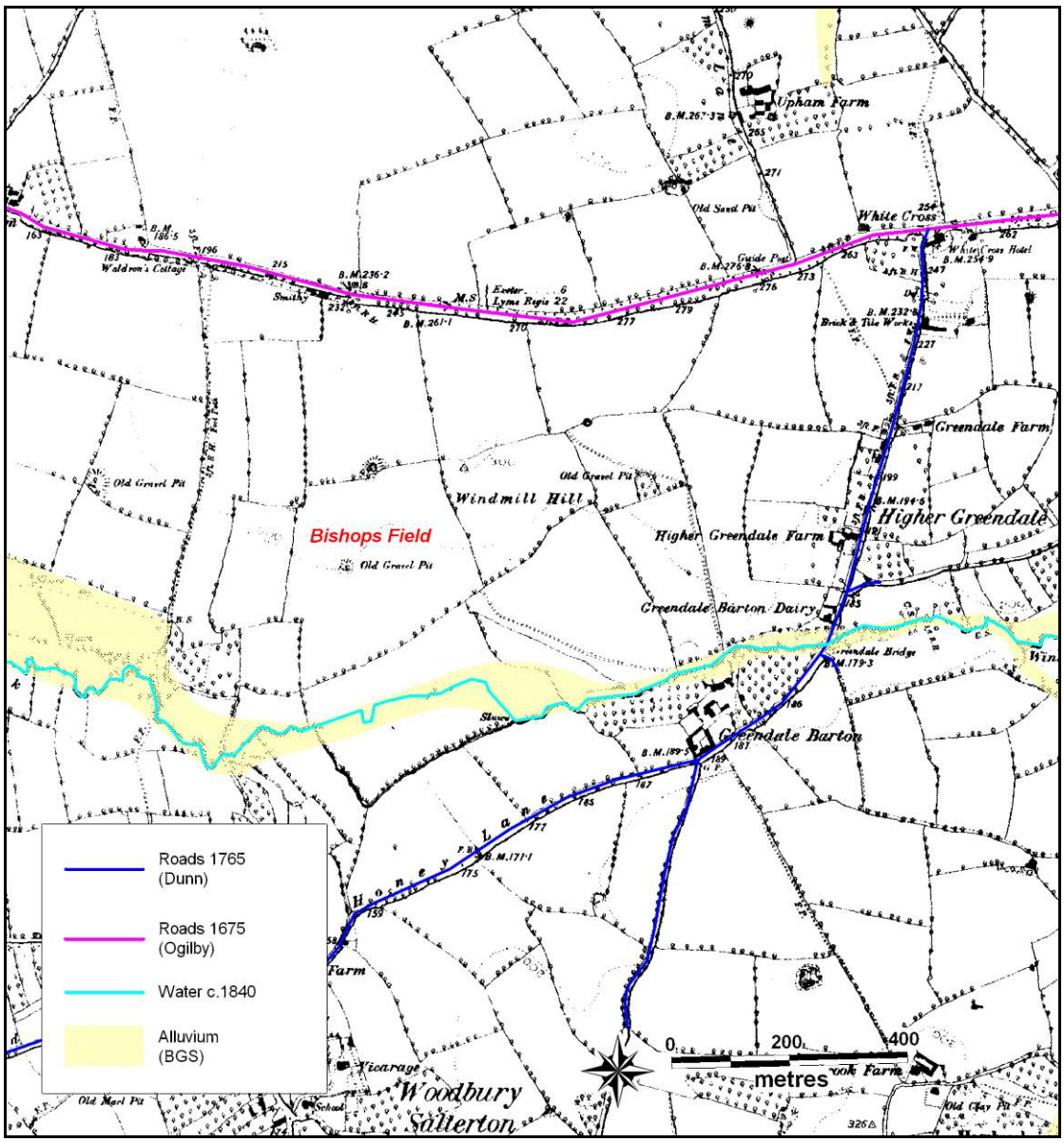

Figure 9: Windmill Hill on the Ordnance Survey first edition six inch mapping (1890) with the extent of alluvium added from the BGS mapping and roads from specified earlier historic maps. Bishops Field name from Woodbury tithe map.

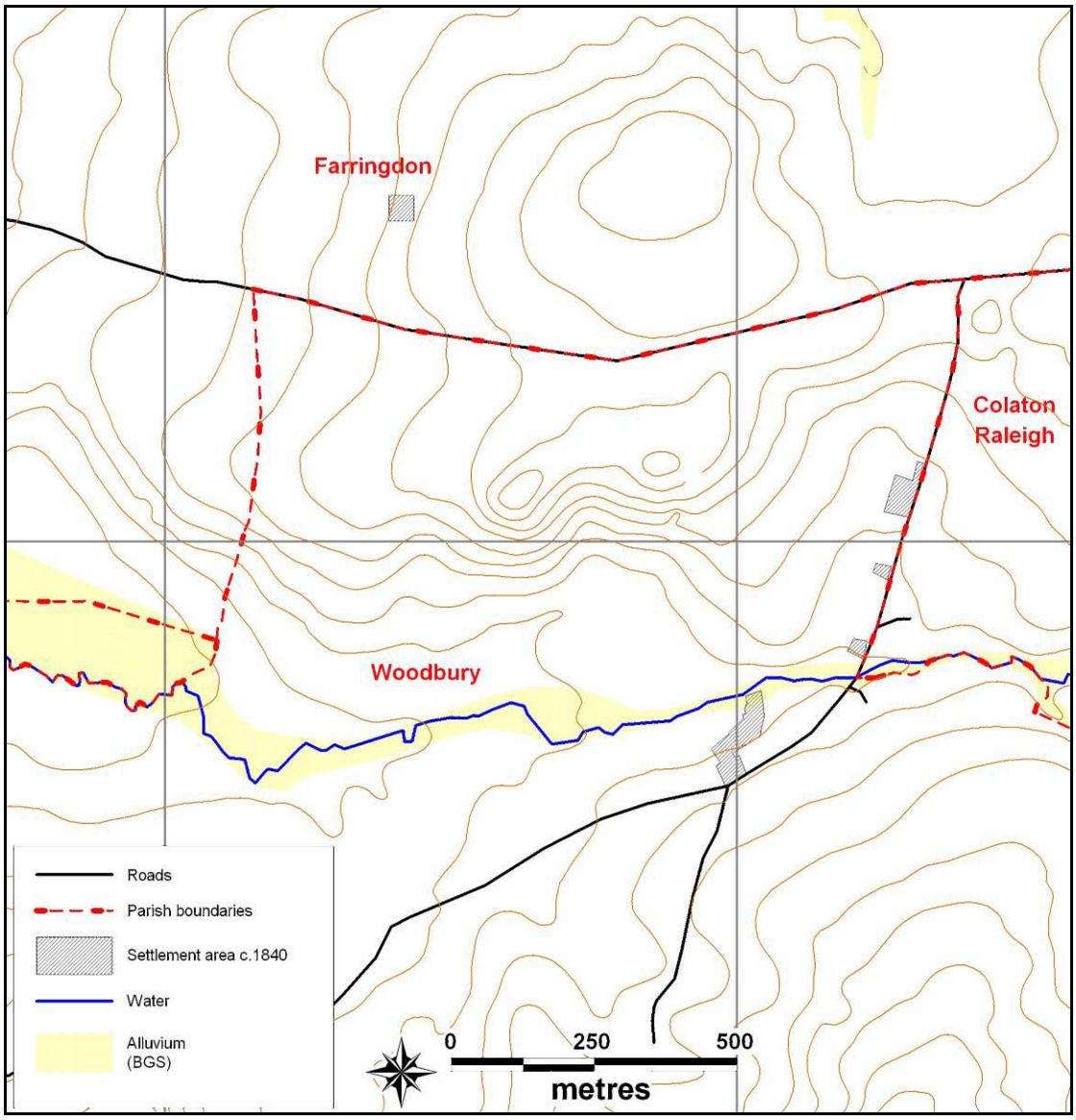

Figure 10: Windmill Hill shown against a background of early roads and parishes with OS contour data. (© Crown Copyright/Edinburgh (2009) an Ordnance Survey/Edina Digimap supplied service)

However Hooker in his account of the action at Clyst says Lord Gray, after reaching Clyst Heath when he looked *'back towards Woodbury, he saw and espied, upon Woodbury Hill, a great company assembled, and marching forward'*. Dunn gives Woodbury Hill as an alternative name for Woodbury Common, and at 180m high this may have been just as visible from Clyst Heath as was Windmill Hill. In this case the lesser road shown by Dunn passing south of Woodbury, may have been the road used by Russell to approach Bishops Clyst. However this was not an important route as it is not depicted on earlier county maps and may have been raised in significance only as a result of turnpiking.

Archaeological Potential

Until and unless there is certainty about the location of the events it is impossible to adequately assess the potential of the Woodbury battlefield and no boundary for the battlefield has been attempted here. If Windmill Hill is the site then the archaeological

potential has been partly compromised by modern development in the area of Greendale Barton, although apart from the access from the main road with its associated landscaping, the majority of the development is set on the sloping ground to the south. Thus Windmill Hill itself and the ground between it and the main road, and Bishops Field to the west, are largely intact as arable land.

The key role played in the action by the Italian arquebusier means that an extensive bullet distribution may be expected and thus metal detecting survey may be expected to recover substantial evidence on the battlefield. There is no record on the HER or the PAS database of significant artefacts having come from any of the three alternative sites. The first priority should be to assess the Windmill Hill site, which remains largely as open arable ground, to either confirm or rule out this location, something particularly important given the threat from further encroachment by development from the industrial estate and associated activities. Survey of the Woodbury Common and Aylesbeare Common sites would be far more difficult as there is no clear evidence by which to narrow down a possible search area, while at Woodbury Common much of the area cannot be surveyed doe to extensive shrub cover on the surviving common land.

Clyst St Mary & Clyst Heath 4& 5th August 1549

Parishes:	*NGR:*
Clyst St Mary*: Clyst St Mary / Sowton*	***SX975915***
Clyst Heath: *Sowton / Hevitree*	***SX963916***

This two-day battle at the crossings of the River Clyst by the Exeter-Dorchester road was arguably the most pivotal of the campaign. The rebels' defeat forced them to abandon the siege of Exeter and withdraw. Only Hooker provides a clear description of the battle. Hayward provides a confused account of an action simply identified as occurring after Fenny Bridges. Rose-Troup suggested that the 'little village' described was Alfington and that the battle took place after Russell's forces left Honiton,[59] but there seems little doubt from the other details given that the battle at Clyst is meant.

Given the duration and complexity of the action at Clyst, it is treated here as two separate engagements. The first, normally known as Clyst St Mary, was fought on the 4th August for the crossing of the river Clyst on the Exeter-Dorchester road at Bishop's Clyst. The second, on the 5th August, was fought on the northern edge of Clyst Heath and in the adjacent enclosed ground beside the Dorchester route for control of the road into Exeter.

[59] Rose-Troup, (1914), 264

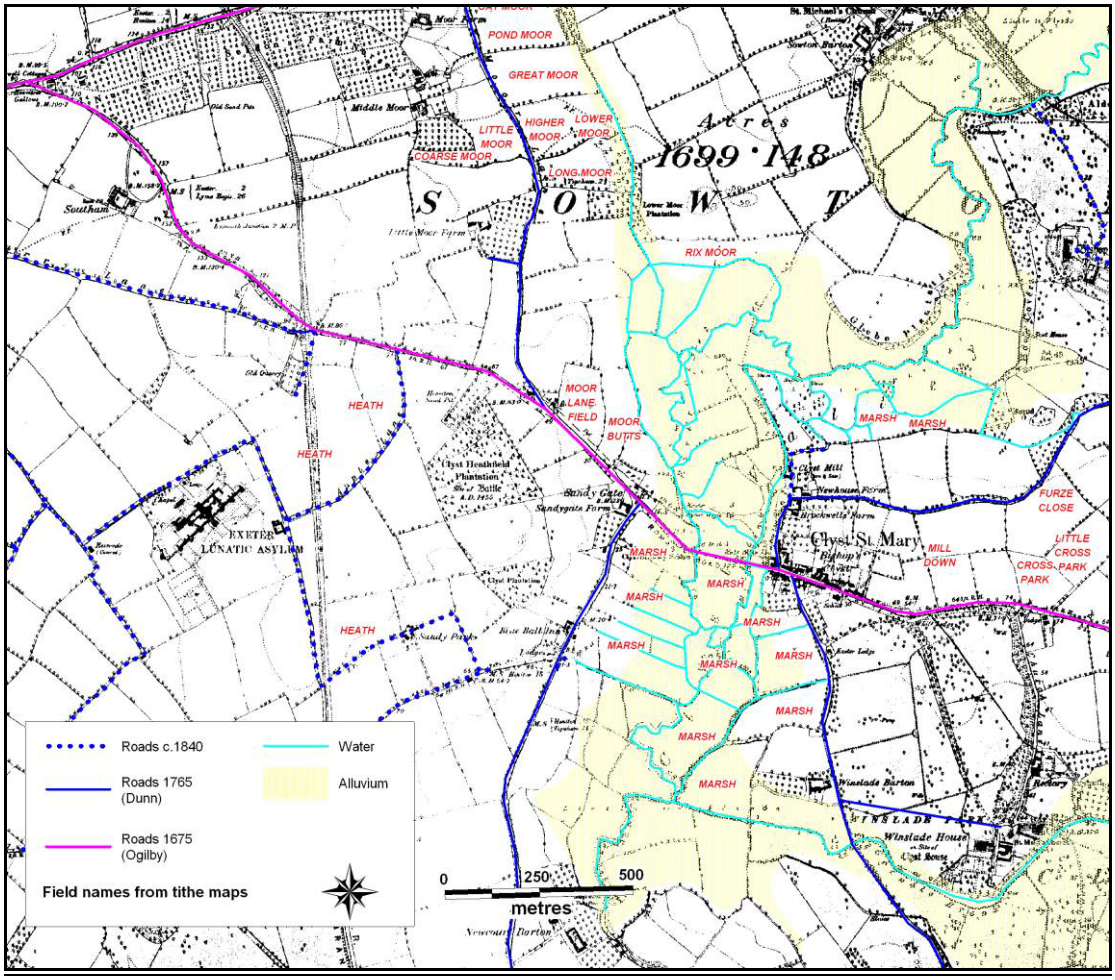

Figure 11: The Ordnance Survey first edition six inch mapping with earlier roads and significant field names added. Also the alluvial area from the BGS mapping. The boundaries of some fields had changes between the Tithe map and the Ordnance Survey mapping but those changes have not been added here.

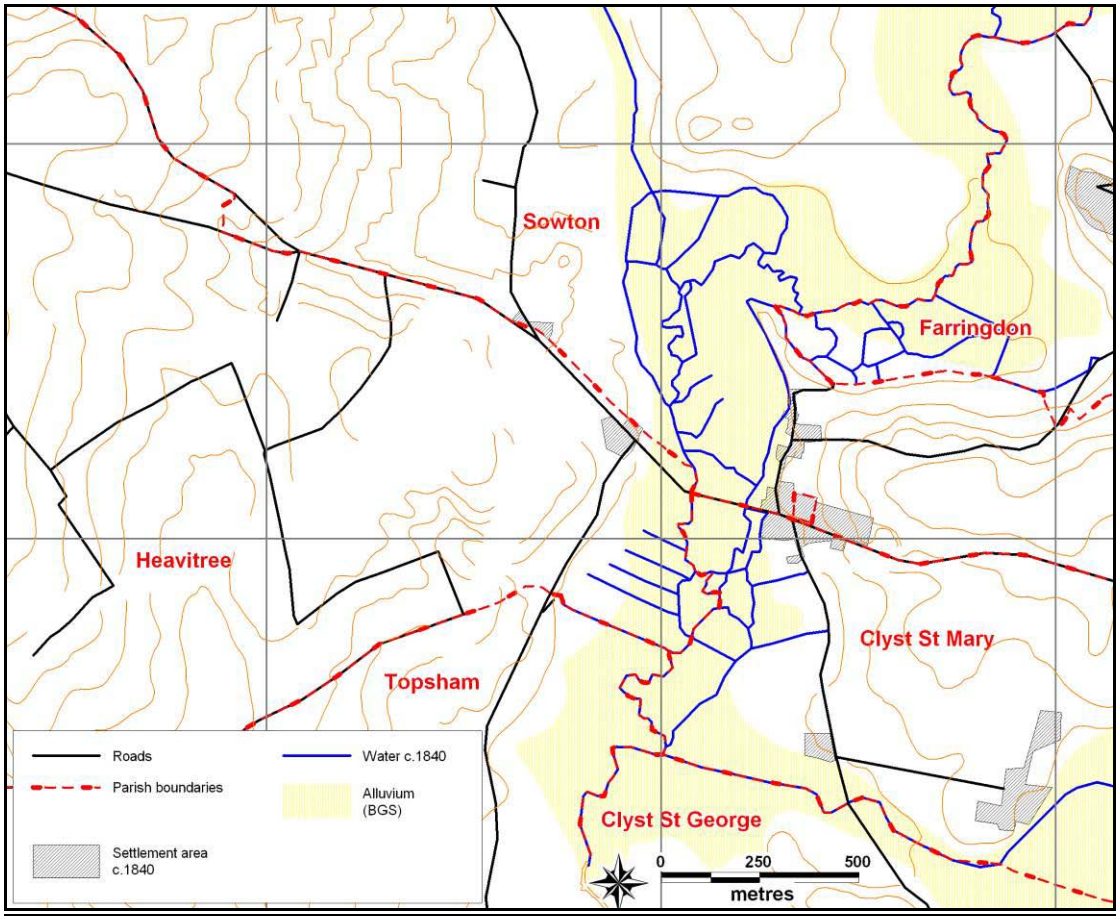

Figure 12: Clyst shown against a background of early roads and parishes with OS contour data. (© Crown Copyright/Edinburgh (2009) an Ordnance Survey/Edina Digimap supplied service)

Clyst St Mary

On the morning of the 4th of August, following the action at Woodbury the previous night, Russell advanced on the rebels' fortified position at Bishop's Clyst, which straddled the parishes of Clyst St Mary and Sowton. The rebels had brought up substantial reinforcements swelling their numbers to as many as 6000 men according to Hooker, although Hayward states they had just 2000.

Although normally described as Clyst St Mary, it is clear from both the historic topography and from a marginal note in Hooker's account, that the action was fought for control of the town of Bishop's Clyst, straddling the Dorchester road, which controlled access to the causeway leading westward across the floodplain to the bridge over the river Clyst. In the 20th century Bishop's Clyst has become joined by housing development to Clyst St. Mary, of which there are only a few early houses and a medieval church now surviving, probably as a result of imparking associated with Winslade Park.

There were and remain three roads into the town: the main road from Dorchester, which ran through the centre of Bishop's Clyst; there it was joined by the road from Exmouth and Woodbury on the south, and the minor road called Barton Court Lane leading from Clyst Honiton on the north. It seems likely from the descriptions of the terrain in the accounts that the royal army approached along the Dorchester road.

However if the camp the previous night was at Woodbury Common not Windmill Hill then the army might have approached along the Exmouth/Woodbury road.

According to Hooker, the rebels' fortifications consisted of 'great rampires' placed at three points for the defence of the town. These are likely to accord with the three roads into the town. Hayward however says that there were two ways to Exeter defended by *'bulwarks of earth'* or *'forts'*. It is unclear how reliable or independent is Risdon's brief description that they *'Entrenched themselves, thwarted the way with great trees and planted their ordnance*'. The various marsh names along the floodplain of the river suggest that marshy ground, together with the mill leat which abut the town on the west side, would have precluded an outflanking move.

According to Hayward the 2000 rebel troops were deployed in four companies*: 'In either of the bulwarks they lodged one, at the bridge near the back of one of the forts a third company was placed. The 4th was laid in ambush behind a hedge on the highway at the back of the other fortress.'*. It has been suggested that the ramparts or bulwarks were set well to the east of Bishop's Clyst, on the hilltop to the north of Clyst St Mary, but Hayward's account is clear that at least one lay close by the bridge and hence close to the settlement.[60]

Initial attack

Hooker claims the battle began 'at about nine of the clock' when Russell's force divided into three detachments, presumably intended each to attack one of the fortifications. These he says they took 'after some bickerings' and drove the rebels back into the town.

Hayward in contrast has the army divided into two contingents to attack the two forts. One was attacked by Captain Wavers, who commanded the rearguard, and drove the defenders back to the bridge where another company made a stand. This implies the rearguard, which would normally be deployed on the left in a standard battle array, attacked down the Exmouth road for here the edge of the town is indeed close to the bridge. The other was taken by the vanguard, commanded according to Hooker by Sir William Frances. It is clear from Hooker's description of the second attack that the vanguard did not make this first attack along the Barton Court Lane and so it probably attacked along the Dorchester road, if Hayward's account is to be believed. His description seems to indicate that Spinola's shot supported both attacks. Following the storming of their forts he has all the rebels retreating into Bishop's Clyst and prepared to defend the village.

Retreat

However as the royal forces were marching into the town the rebels deceived Russell's troops into thinking they had triggered an ambush. Hooker reports that '*one of the chief Captains of these rebels, named Sir Thomas Pomeroy, knight, kept himself in a Furze close, and perceiving the army to be past him, and having then with him a trumpeter and a drumslade, commanded the trumpet to be sounded and the drum to be stricken up. At which sound the Lord Privy Seal and his company were amazed, supposing verily that there had been an ambush behind them, to have entrapped and enclosed them. Whereupon, they forthwith retire back in all haste they may...'* This

[60] Cornwall, (1977), 182.

allowed the defenders to launch a limited pursuit in which they captured the royal army's baggage and artillery, which lay in the highway and they took the artillery back to strengthen their positions. This and the later events on the bridge suggest that the rebels had trained gunners in their forces.

On top of Mill Down to the east of the town the Sowton tithe map identifies a 'Furze Close' and adjacent to it Cross Park, the latter with a curving boundary that might indicate an ancient enclosure. By the time of the first edition six inch Ordnance Survey mapping the hedge boundaries had been realigned. The close lay between the northern two roads but a long distance out of the town. If this event is the same as the 'ambush' described by Hayward then he places the site beside the highway at the back of one of the forts. If this is the actual furze close mentioned by Hooker then it means the forts must have been a considerable distance east of the town. Alternatively all the forts may have been in as close proximity to the town and the southern fort and thus another, as yet unidentified, furze close may have lain nearer to the town.

Second attack

The royal army had retired to the hill, which may have been the eastern end of Mill Down. Realising they had been deceived they regrouped to mount a second attack. According to Hooker, realising that the rebels had occupied the houses in the town, to limit the dangers of the street-fighting that would ensue it was decided to fire the town as they advanced, to drive out the defenders. Hooker says that in this attack the vanguard, led by Sir William Frances, took an alternative route into the town to that he had used in the first attack. This '*way was both deep and narrow. The enemies being upon the banks upon every side of the way, with their stones so beat him, that they struck his headpiece fast to his head, and whereof he died.'* This was almost certainly Bishop's Court Lane, running north east to Clyst Honiton, for it is a narrow and incised road with high banks either side.

Figure 13: Bishop's Court Lane leading eastward out of the northern end of Bishop's Clyst up onto Mill Down. The steep-sided banks and narrow width match Hooker's description of the road taken by the royal vanguard in the second attack.

Action for the bridge

Hooker says the rebels were thus driven back but they made a stand in the middle of the town *'where the fight was very fierce and cruel; and bloody was that day: for some were slain with the sword, some burnt in the houses, some shifting for themselves were taken prisoners, and many, thinking to escape over the water, were drowned: so that there were dead that day, one with another, about a thousand men.'* Hayward, who remains silent regarding the retreat and the battle's subsequent renewal, simply asserts that the rebels made their stand at the bridge but were swiftly driven back onto the plain beyond and defeated. This was he claims because *'the King's footmen were finely ranked, the troops of horse in good array, whereas the seditious had neither weapons, order nor council, but being in all things unprovided were slain like beasts.'*

Hooker however says that Russell's advance over Clyst Bridge was blocked. In this defence the narrow character of the causeway leading to the bridge will have provided considerable assistance to the rebels by funnelling any direct attach along a narrow corridor. Also according to Hooker the *'water was somewhat miry and muddy, as also at that time very deep, by reason of the flowing of the seas, which causeth the same at every tide to swell.'* The rebels had also supplemented the natural defences with *'great trees and timber'* to barricade the bridge, behind which an artillery piece was deployed. It is unclear how many men held the bridge, with Hooker claiming a single

gunner while Hayward suggests the figure was in the hundreds, [61] but it is clear that the force was sufficient, thanks particularly to the artillery piece, to eliminate a forlorn hope sent to clear the way.

Hooker records how John Yard, a local gentleman in the royal army succeeded in crossing the river *'near unto a mill above the bridge'* with a detachment of troops to outflank and eliminate the rebel battery. The medieval bridge still remains today, now pedestrianised, alongside the modern crossing.[62] The mill is probably that at the north end of Bishop's Clyst identified on the Ordnance Survey first edition six inch map.

Figure 14: View from Clyst Bridge looking back towards Bishop's Clyst. The length and narrow width of the causeway made possible the defence of the bridge by a single artillery piece.

Figure 15: Aerial photograph of Bishop's Clyst with the flooded river picking out the extent of the floodplain. The narrow early causeway can be seen crossing the floodplain. (3/10/1960, NMR Swindon, P.58/RAF/3858)

[61] Hayward's earlier division of the rebels into four companies from a total strength of 2000. Hayward normally inflates rebel numbers and denigrates their combat effectiveness, while Hooker arguably does vice versa, so it may be that it was just a small detachment that held the bridge.
[62] *Devon HER*, Monument 10079

Executions

According to Hooker, once across the river Lord Grey ascended the hill in the heath to survey and secure the position. From here he supposedly saw large numbers of rebels on Woodbury Hill. In response to this perceived threat, although no attack occurred, the rebel prisoners taken in the fighting at both Woodbury and at Clyst were massacred. It is unclear whether Hooker was describing a real threat or if it was simply an invention to justify the butchery on the hill. Hayward seems to report the same massacre but, as at Fenny Bridges his understanding of the geography seems to be poor, and he places the event as the rebels fled towards St. Mary Clyst: *'the soldiers upon disdain of the unworthy actions filled themselves with revenge and blood, and slew of them about 900 not sparing one.'* With the field secured Hooker has the army pitch its camp on the hill in Clyst Heath.

Clyst Heath

The hill on which Russell spent the night of the 4th/5th August, on the west side of the river, can be clearly identified on Clyst Heath centred on the later Clyst Heathfield Plantation as there is no other hill in the area of heath names recorded on the Heavitree tithe map. Despite their heavy losses, during the night the rebels drew off forces from the siege of Exeter to face the royal army again in a final attempt to halt their advance to the city.

Hayward's account of the action appears to be of little value. Firstly he seems to conflates the events of two days into one describing how the rebels, after being driven back over the bridge and suffering many casualties, gathered 2000 men and *'affronted the King's fortress at the entrance of a highway'*. Finding their enemies *'ready and resolute to fight'* the rebels sought to distract them with negotiations while they fortified their position, *'but understanding that their intention was understood more like slaves than soldiers they furiously ran away.'* His chronology and geography is further confused because he subsequently states that the Clyst Heath battle occurred after the siege of Exeter was lifted.

So again it is to Hooker that we must turn for the main detail of the event, saying the new forces came to *'Clyst Heath: and in the lower side thereof, next to the highway, do entrench and fortify a place, fast by a hedge; and secretly there, in the night, do place their ordnance, and make themselves in readiness to abide the brunt: and, as soon as the daylight served, discharge and shoot off their pieces unto the army encamped about the top of the hill'*. The royal forces then divided into three battles, as was the normal practice for open warfare in this period. Faced by enclosed ground Russell *'causeth his pioneers to make way over the hedges and enclosed grounds; and by that means doth at length recover upon the very back of the enemies: and they were so entrapped on every side that they could not, by any means, escape, but must yield or fight.'* Though they fought valiantly the rebels were defeated and few left alive.

The First Edition Ordnance Survey six inch mapping claims to show the site of the 1455 battle south of the road leading to Exeter in the later Heathfield Plantation. This may derive from the local tradition that ploughing in the 1800s uncovered human bones from the conflict and from an earlier battle said to have been fought on the

same ground in 1455.[63] However this location lies close to the hilltop and so, if related to the 1549 battle, is thus more likely to be the mass grave from the massacre on the 4th August rather than the battle on the 5th August.

To the north of the main road lay an area of moorland, which may also have been open ground in 1549. Its approximate extent can be determined from field names on the Tithe map for Sowton. This shows the moor was on low lying ground beside a tributary stream of the Clyst, largely to the east of the farms which by the mid 19th century carried moor names. This area may not therefore represent the 'hedges and enclosed grounds' defended by the rebel forces, which is more likely to have lain further south, immediately adjacent to the main road whose course can be accurately mapped from Ogilby's itinerary of 1675. However without further documentary research it is not possible to accurately identify the early enclosed area and so it is not possible to securely place the royal army's outfanking move and the final action of the battle.

Archaeological Potential

Battlefield areas have been defined for Clyst St Mary, and more crudely for Clyst Heath because of the greater uncertainties there. Further terrain reconstruction using written sources would be valuable for both sites. This may help to resolve the uncertainties as to the extent of heath, moor and enclosures around Clyst Heath. For Bishop's Clyst the exact extent of enclosures around the town and a secure location for the furze close and the river crossing used on the outflanking of the bridge are required to more accurately place the action on the first day. However it is only for Clyst St Mary that significant archaeological potential appears to remain.

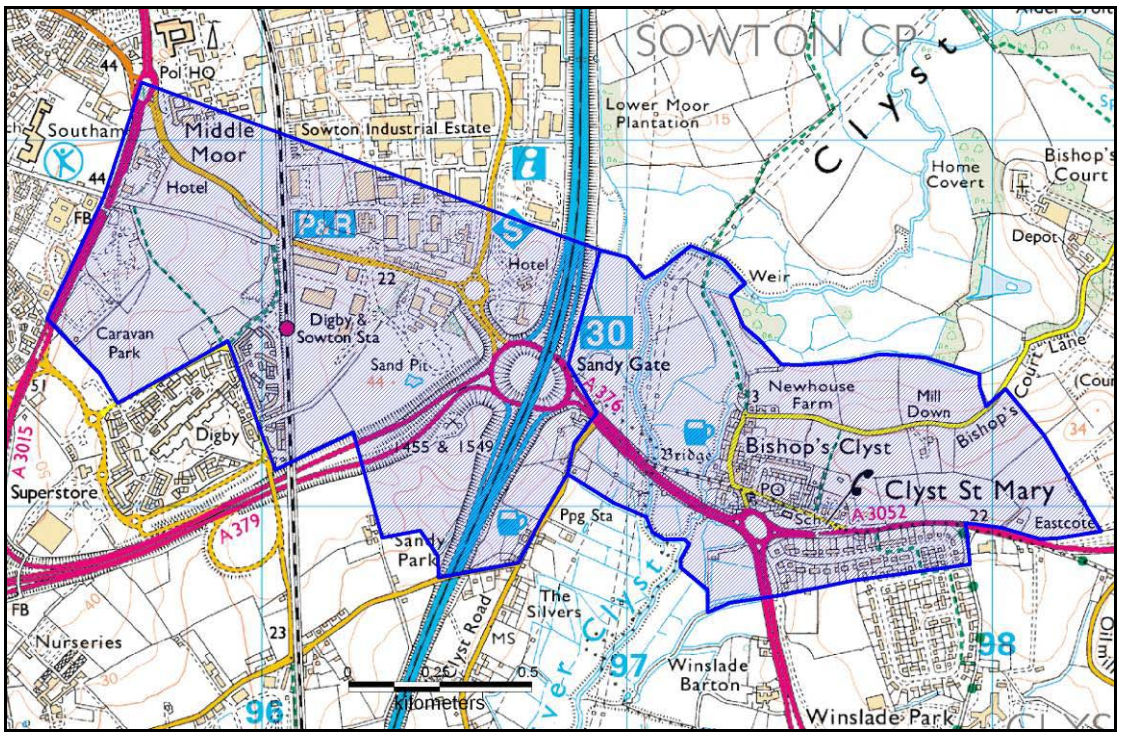

Figure 16: Two 'battlefield areas' defined for Clyst St Mary and Clyst Heath, on the modern OS Explorer map base. (1:10,000 scale colour raster © Crown Copyright/Edinburgh (2009) an Ordnance Survey/Edina Digimap supplied service)

[63] Radford, (1912), 261

At Clyst St Mary the greatest potential may be for metal detecting survey to the north of the Exeter-Dorchester road and beside Barton Court Lane, as an extensive area of Mill Down remains undeveloped, including the Furze Close. This may enable the firefights for the two of the ramparts to be identified, if they lay a significant distance out of the town. This might in turn allow targeted excavation to identify the fortifications, for cut features may remain from the ramparts constructed by the rebels to defend the three approaches to Bishop's Clyst. However on the south side that on the Exmouth road is likely to have been lost under the modern bypass. On the eats side of the town it might also identify action relating to the royal army's flight and the pillaging of their baggage train, which is most likely to have advanced along the Dorchester road. The greatest opportunities for evidence are probably along the Bishop's Court Lane as here the undeveloped land extends much further west, perhaps as far as the edge of the 16th century town. Here not only the fort but also evidence of the attack by the vanguard of the royal army should also survive in the form of an artefacts scatter.

It is uncertain whether case shot comprising lead bullets, rather than stone pebbles or flint shards, was already in common use in land actions by 1549. If the artillery piece on the bridge was firing lead case shot, rather than roundshot, then a scatter of bullets may extend onto the floodplain adjacent to the causeway. Experimental firing indicates a spread of over 40m and a range of about 300m for case.[64] Apart from this alluvial area, almost the whole of the surviving battlefield area is on sandstone or sand and gravel geology. This is likely to have a high soil pH and if so this will provide aggressive conditions in which ferrous artefacts, including arrowheads will be unlikely to survive, although lead and copper alloy artefacts should still be in reasonable condition.

Within Bishop's Clyst itself there is likely to be extensive stratified evidence of the destruction of the town by the fires set to drive out the rebels, and battle archaeology including bodies may be recovered within the area. However, it may be difficult to drawn any significant conclusions about the action from small scale excavation.

Almost the whole of Clyst Heath battlefield has been destroyed by mineral extraction and development in the seconds half of the 20th century. Several small areas of ground have so far escaped development and these might provide some conformation as to the location of the main action, if intensive metal detecting takes place before development. In addition there may be for mass graves although again these are likely to have been lost already.

[64] Allsop and Foard, (2008)

Figure 17: Aerial photograph showing that most of the battlefield and site of the camp on Clyst Heath was being destroyed by mineral extraction and development in the 1960s, although an area of land then remained undeveloped in the distance, on the lower side of the heath beside the former main road. (3/10/1960, NMR, P.58/RAF/3858).

Sampford Courtenay 18th August 1549

Parishes: *NGR:*
Sampford Courtenay / North Tawton ***SS635015***

The defeat at Clyst and the relief of Exeter did not mark the end of the rebellion. The rebels brought together their remaining forces in a camp at Sampford Courtenay, 28km north west of Exeter. On Friday 16th August, two weeks after the relief of the city the royal army, and now reinforced by Sir William Herbert's Welsh troops and other local forces, Russell advanced from Exeter via Crediton to engage the rebels. Poor roads delayed the advance, the army not reaching the rebel camp until Sunday the 18th of August.

Their approach was via the major Exeter-Barnstaple road to Crediton, shown by Ogilby in 1675, and then presumably west on a lesser route. Part of this is given on Lea's edition of Saxton's Atlas, published in 1693, which shows several major roads in Devon additional to those recorded by Ogilby, including one from Bow, which must have continued east to Crediton, extending westward via North Tawton to Hatherleigh. This crossed a north-south route at North Tawton. This was before substantial changes in the road network a result of turnpiking. By the time Dunn's map was drawn in 1765 turnpiking seems to have brought a new major road from Crediton to run south of North Tawton and through the south end of Sampford Courtenay – the present A3124. Lesser roads are not shown by Lea but these will not have been altered by turnpiking and so may still in 1765 be on their medieval course. That through North Tawton to Sampford Courtenay and beyond, of particular significance for the site of the rebel camp, is not shown. It may have originally been on the line of the lanes running across the north end of Sampford and part of the route was perhaps lost with the enclosure of Sampford / North Tawton moor which lay on the hilltop. A partial extent for the moor can be recovered from field names on the Tithe maps of Sampford Courtenay and North Tawton on the hill between the two settlements. This had already been enclosed by 1765, when no unenclosed roads are shown in this general area. Other substantial areas of upland moor to north and south of Sampford, which remained unenclosed in 1805 on the Ordnance Surveyors Drawings, are shown to have unenclosed roads in 1765.[65]

[65] Maps from 1809 and later in Cambridge University archives and many written sources from the medieval period onwards, have not been consulted. http://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/

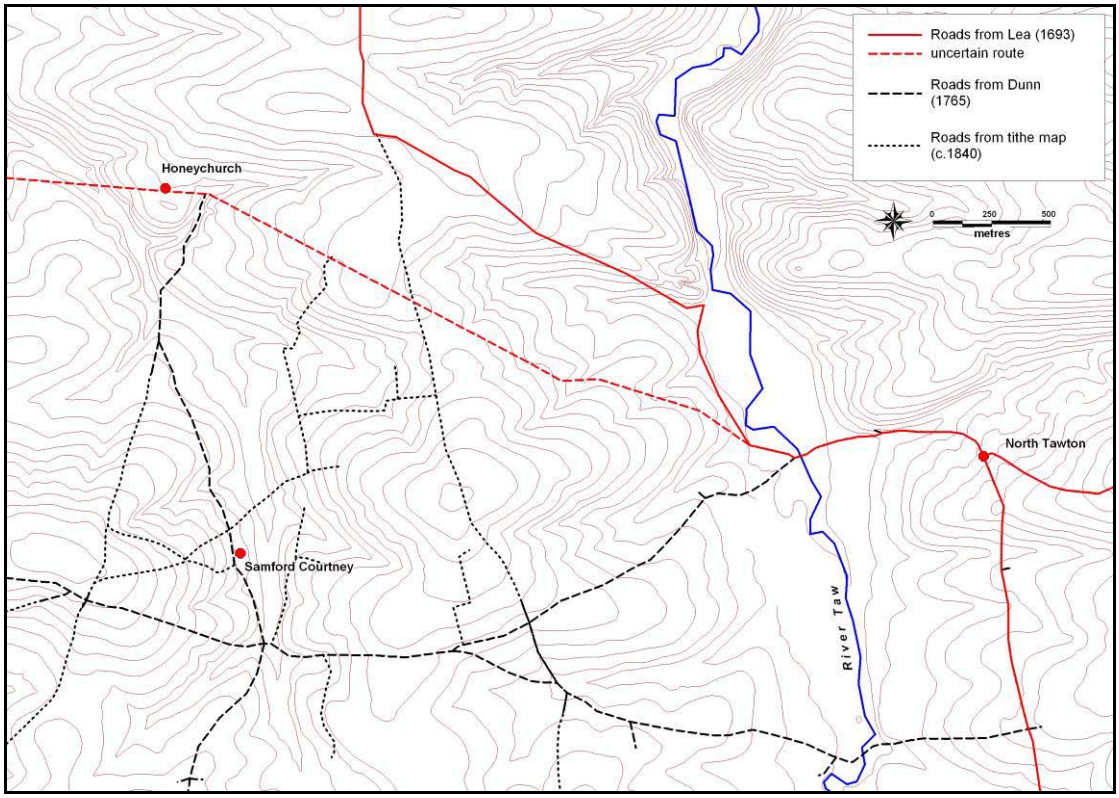

Figure 18: The early road network at Sampford viewed against the contours from the Ordnance Survey.

Figure 19: A view south to the hill suggested as the camp, looking along the road along the parish boundary with North Tawton to the west and Sampford to the right.

The village of Sampford Courtenay sits along the western slope of a valley, overshadowed by steep hills to both east and west. The rebels are described in Russell's report as *'encamped as well by the seat of the ground as by the entrenchment of the same'*. His description of Arundell's ambush makes plain that the vanguard was attacked as it engaged the rebels on the hill. He also mentions that after being driven from the hilltop, the rebels *'turned their backs and recovered the town'*. This shows the camp lay on a hilltop and implies that Sampford Courtenay lay behind

the encampment relative to the royal army's approach. The main road from Crediton shown by Lea ran through North Tawton giving Russell's approach from the east, which makes the hill between North Tawton and Sampford Courtenay the only reasonable location for the rebel camp. If the road from North Tawton at that time did approach Sampford over the hill along the Weirford Lane then the *'rampire at the town's end'* with which Hooker says the rebels protected the approach to Sampford may have lain at the north end of the town on that lane.

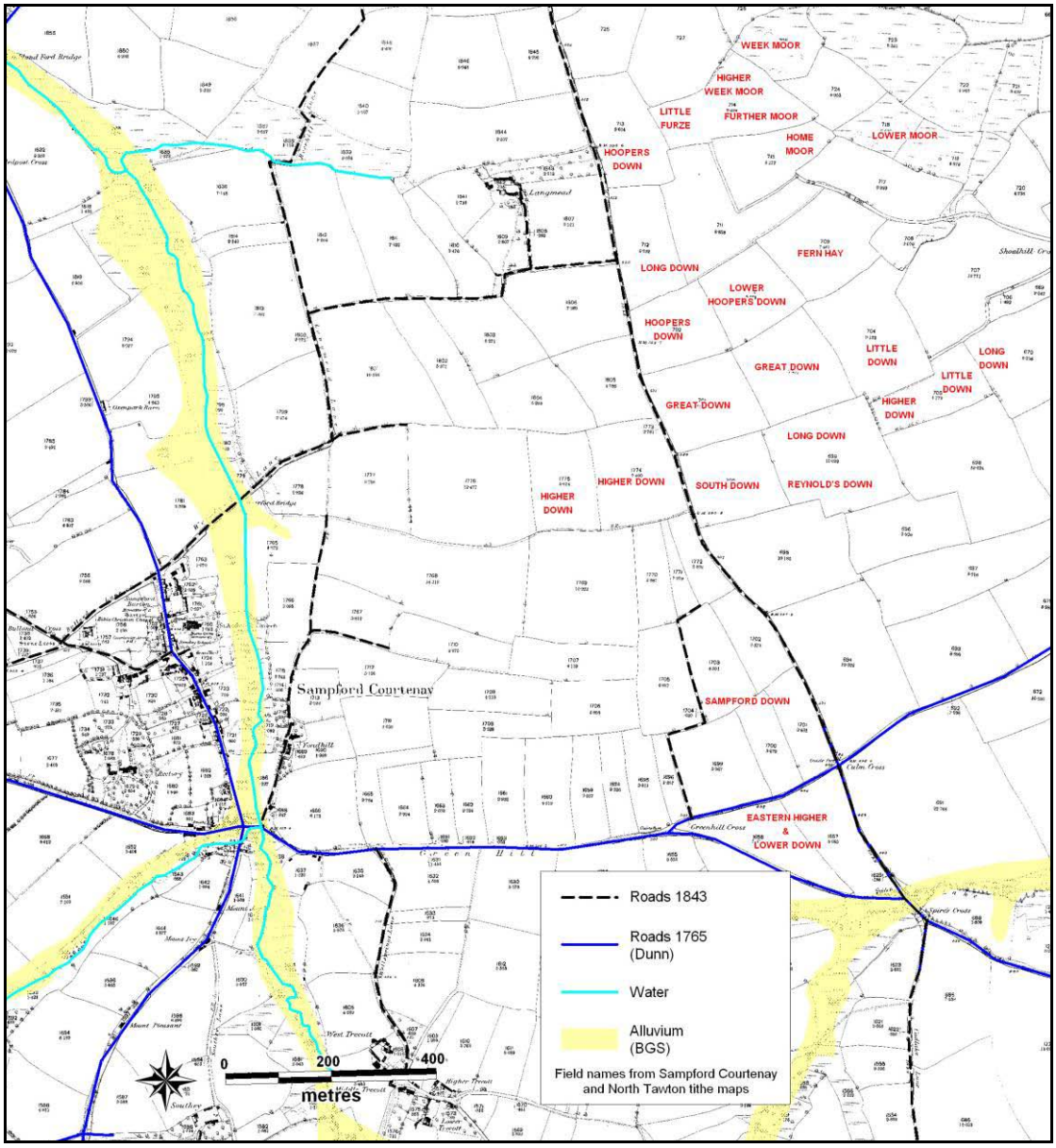

Figure 20: The Ordnance Survey first edition six inch mapping with earlier roads and significant field names added. Also the alluvial area from the BGS mapping. The boundaries of some fields had changes between the Tithe map and the Ordnance Survey mapping but those changes have not been added here.

Action

The following narrative, unless otherwise specified, is based on Russell's account of the action. The scouts in advance of the royal army surprised a rebel patrol and in the skirmish succeeded in capturing one of their commanders. In order to gain time, presumably because the main rebel force was now aware of the royal army's

approach, Russell sent forward Lord Gray and William Herbert, the latter according to Hooker being in command of the vanguard, with a good part of the army to assess the camp and how it might be attacked. Russell himself did not arrive until the action was well underway as his forces were defending the baggage train.

The vanguard kept the rebels occupied with an artillery bombardment while they waited for further troops to arrive and while pioneers prepared the way for an attack, presumably by cutting banks and hedges. As fifteen pieces of ordnance, some brass and some iron, were recovered after the battle the rebel force may be expected to have returned artillery fire. Herbert and Grey then made their attack '*on the one side with our footmen and on the other side with the Italian harquebutters in such sort as it was not long before they turned their backs and recovered the town which they before had fortified for all events.*' It is unclear whether it was then or later that the royal forces attacked the rebels in Sampford itself, but Hooker states that *'one Ap Owen, a Welsh gentleman, more boldly than advisedly, giving the adventure to enter the rampire, at the town's end, was there slain by the rebels.'*

As they assaulted the hill the vanguard was attacked by Humphrey Arundell who *'with his sole power came on the back of our forward being thus busied with the assault of the camp, the sudden show of whom wrought such fear in the hearts of our men as we wished our power a great deal more not without good cause.'* Gray to turned to face Arundell, creating stand-off with '*nothing for an hour but shooting of ordinance to and fro'*. This enabled Herbert to continue his attack until the rebels on the hilltop were 'driven…to a plain flight'. Then to the chase '*came fresh horsemen and foot men in the which were slain v or vi of the Rebels and among them was slain one Underhill who has the charge of that camp.'*

It is not clear where the vanguard was attacking, but Arundell may have approached them from Sampford, using the deeply incised lanes and embanked boundaries on the lower west slopes of the hill as cover for his counterattack as they are not visible from the hilltop. The boundaries and hollow ways suggest an anciently enclosed landscape. On the higher slopes to the east of the Longmead Lane, which must originally have run south to join the lane on the east side of the stream at the south end of Sampford, the boundaries appear less substantial and may indicate an area of later enclosure from the moor, though further research is needed to confirm this.

Figure 21: Looking east along Weirford Lane as it rises eastward from the stream up onto the hill. These deeply incised lanes, with their high banks and hedges, would easily have concealed Arundell's ambush party. This may have been the main road to North Tawton in the 16th century.

After this the royal forces seem to have withdrawn, at which point Russell himself arrived with the rest of the army. He then divided the forces into three divisions: one under Sir William Herbert and Mr Kingston with both infantry and cavalry he sent on one side; Lord Gray was sent to *'their far'* side and Russell with his troops on the other side. The exact direction of the attacks is again not clear, but the rebels now fled without a fight. They were pursued by the cavalry who killed some 700 and captured many more, the pursuit halted only by nightfall. Russell claimed to have lost no more than 10 or 12 killed. The royal cavalry sat on horseback all night, presumably in case of a rebel counterattack,[66] but then heard that Arundell himself fled to Launceston and was there captured.

With the battle at Sampford Courtenay the military action of the Prayer Book Rebellion ended, though provost marshal Anthony Kingston subsequently carried out brutal reprisals upon those who had been engaged in the rebellion.[67]

[66] Rose-Troup, (1914), 305
[67] Cornwall, (1977), 200-204

Figure 22: photograph of land surrounding Sampford Courtenay. Image taken looking towards Sampford Courtenay to the west from the hilltop

Archaeological Potential

The battlefield area has been defined to encompass the eastern part of the settlement of Sampford as action extend to the town including a rampart at the 'end' of the town. It covers the majority of the hill where the camp is believed to have lain extending as far south as the A3124, although the southern extent of any action is not clear. On the east it has been extended to the settlement at Week as it is likely that the royal army's advance was from this direction, as the main road to Hatherleigh and the road to Sampford may have crossed the hill from Tawton via Week.

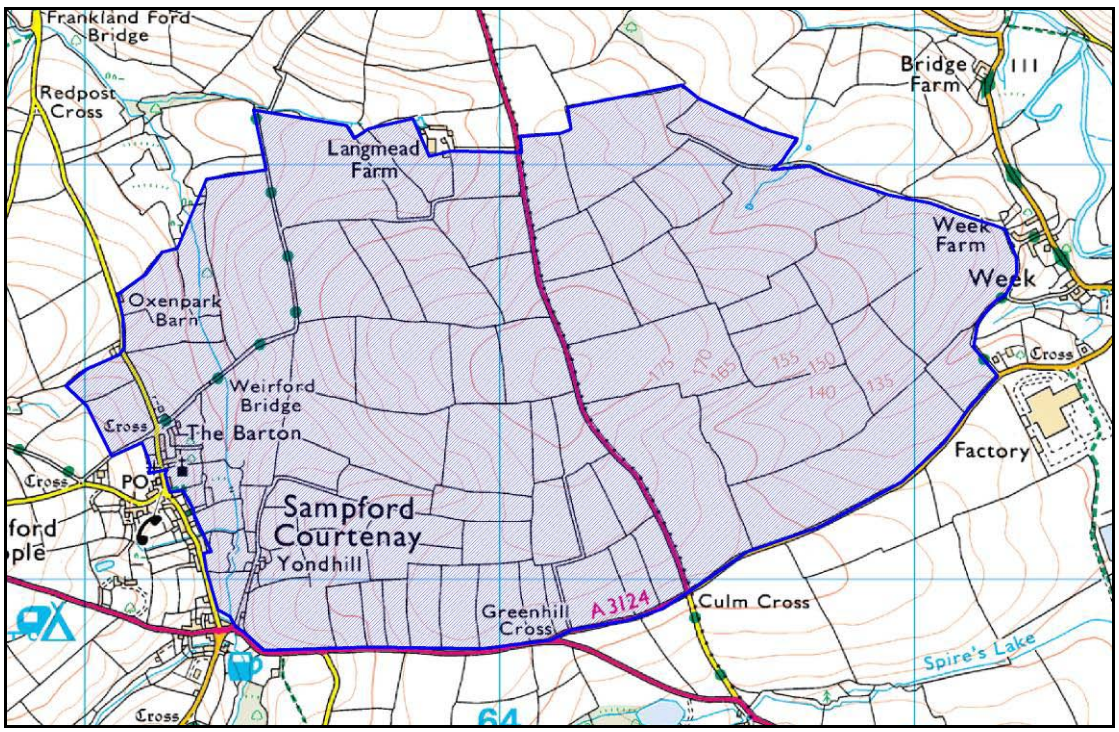

Figure 23: A 'battlefield area' defined at Sampford on the modern OS Explorer map base. (1:10,000 scale colour raster © Crown Copyright/Edinburgh (2009) an Ordnance Survey/Edina Digimap supplied service)

The hill is completely unaffected by development or other disturbance other than arable agriculture. Even the approach to the village of Sampford from the hill is unaffected by modern development. There is thus a high potential for the survival of battle archaeology. The Bow Breccia geology across most of the landscape, other than the alluvial area on the narrow valley floor, comprises silty and sandy deposits. This may have generated a soil with high pH not conducive to preservation of ferrous artefacts, but the actual soil chemistry needs to be assessed in the field. In addition, as today, almost the whole area was already under arable in the 1930s, except for the land beside the stream immediately east of the village, and so there may have been substantial mechanical damage to unstratified artefact scatters. Ferrous artefacts particularly iron arrowheads may therefore not survive, but lead and copper alloy objects should survive in reasonable condition. No significant finds are reported from the area on either the HER or the PAS database, so there may not have been significant damage to the site by treasure hunting, but this needs to be confirmed by consultation locally with both landowners and metal detectorists.

The prolonged exchange of artillery fire between Arundell's ambush party, possibly approaching from the west, and Gray's detachment may have produced a concentration of roundshot, which may mostly have been lead or lead composite though iron roundshot may also have been used. Account however will need to be taken of the problems of long overshot may exist, particularly where fired up a convex slope. The attack on the camp should also have deposited significant numbers of arquebus bullets from the Italian 'hagbutters' who supported the royal army's advance. It is also possible that surviving embanked boundaries contain embedded bullets, while where the banks have been lost there could be concentrations of heavily impacted bullets. It must also be assumed that arrows were used in significant number depositing ferrous arrowheads across the battlefield. Other metal finds form military and personal equipment may also be expected both from the camp, if pillaged, and from the action itself.

The first priority should be to sample for unstratified battle archaeology on the hill, in order to confirm that this is indeed the correct location for the camp and the battle. If correct then the extent of the action will also need to be defined from the survey of the battle archaeology. If the site is confirmed then further analysis of the historic terrain would be valuable, working from written sources in Devon Record Office and the Cambridge University archive.

In addition to unstratified battle archaeology, there is the potential for cut features. These may exist around the camp, where the accounts suggest defensive features were raised, and the guns may have been dug-in. Other features may exist where the rampart was constructed to defend the 'end of the town' although whether this was on the Weirford Lane entrance or elsewhere is uncertain. Other lost embanked boundaries on the hill and around the village may survive as archaeological features. All such work is dependent on prior definition of the extent of the action from the battle archaeology, and could be assisted by the additional reconstruction of the historic terrain.

Appendix A: Primary Source Transcripts

John Hooker ‘The Description of the Citie of Excester’

‘And being now somewhat revived news was brought unto him, that the rebels understanding of his distressed state, were coming and marching towards Honiton to assail him, and were come as far as Fennyton Bridge, which is about three miles off.

Whereupon he took advice with Sir Peter Carew and Sir Gawen Carew and others what were best to be done, and in the end after many speeches it was concluded that they should march towards them and give the onset upon them. And accordingly without further delays or much talk it was done out of hand, for upon the next morning being a holy day they set forth and came to the bridge aforesaid where the rebels were indeed. Some at the bridge but the greatest company in the meadow beneath the bridge who as soon as they perceived the Lord Russell and the gentlemen with all their troops to be come they make themselves ready to the fight but the river and the bridge being between them the Lord Russell useth all the policies that he can how to recover the bridge, with by bold adventuring he did in the end, but with the hurt of sundry of his company, amongst whom Sir Gawen Carew was one being hurt with an arrow in the arm. And having recovered the bridge and the river all the rebels such as were escaped were gathered together in a meadow near adjoining in the lower side of the bridge upon whom they so fiercely followed and gave the onset that though not without good store of blows and bloodshed, they in the end gave the enemy the overthrow and had the upper hand. And thinking that the victory was clear with them and that the enemy was clean gone, the soldiers and serving men gave themselves all to the spoil, and being in the middle of their game, and they nothing thinking less than of any more enemies to be coming towards, even suddenly marcheth towards a new crew of Cornishmen to the number of two hundred or eight score persons under the conduct of one Robert Smythe of Saint Germans in Cornwall, gentleman, and who taking these spoilers napping many of them paid dearly for their wares.

The Lord Russell forthwith setteth all his company in good array as the other did the like and gave the onset upon them, between whom for the time the fight was very sharp and cruel, for the Cornish men were very lusty and fresh and fully bent to fight out the matter. Nevertheless in the end they were overthrown and their Captain whose comb was cut showeth a fair pair of heels and fled away. In these two fights there were reported to be slain about three hundred rebels, which were very tall men lusty and of great courage, and who in a good cause might have done better service. The Lord Russell’s company followed the chase near three miles and he himself was thoroughly minded and bent to have passed through to the city, but one Joll his Fool who was then in haste come from Honiton and where he had heard as also by the way as he came bells ringing in sundry parish churches and supposing the same to a alarm came with a foul mouth to my lord and cried that all the county behind him was up and coming upon him. With his report considering the cruel fight past was credited and thought that a new company was in preparing to follow the former quarrels, whereupon they all retired and returned to Honiton.

And from thence his lordship sent his comfortable letters secretly by a boy appointed and accustomed to the purpose unto the mayor of his success, as also advertising him

of his determination that he would be shortly with him for the deliverance of the city. With this the city being then but in a doubtful and dismayed state came a very good season and yet in the end scarcely credited by some who because his coming was not so speedy as looked for. Which in very short time after the overthrow was given the Lord Gray of Wilton with a crew of horsemen and one Spinola an Italian with three hundred shot came to my lord, who being advertised of the overthrow of the enemy and that there were slain about three hundred persons of them they were in a great chaff and much bewailed their evil luck that they had not come sooner to have been partakers of that service.

My lord being now of a very good comfort and courage as well for the good success which he had over the enemy and that his long looked supply had come, sendeth his other letters to the mayor brining him as also (as before) promising him to be with him very shortly willing him that he should now take but a little patience for a little time, and accordingly about six days after on the Saturday the third of August in good order set forth out of Honiton and marcheth towards Exeter his company being above a thousand of good and fighting men. And leaving his direct high way draweth over the downs towards Woodbury and there lodged and pitched that night at a windmill appertaining to one Gregory Cary, Gentleman, which when the rebels of Clyst St. Mary heard of, forthwith with all their force and power came forth and marched onwards until they came to the fore said mill, where they offer the fight, and notwithstanding they were of very stout stomachs and very valiantly did stand to their tackles, yet in the end they were overthrown and the most part of them slain. Where after the victory was gotten, one Myles Coverdale then the preacher and attending upon my lord in this journey made a sermon and caused a general thanksgiving to be made unto God, but before all was ended there began a new alarm and forthwith everyone to horse and to harness again.

The rebels which remained in the town of St. Mary Clyst hearing of the evil success befallen to their neighbours and they doubting that their town would be the next to receive the like, do spread abroad the news and request to be aided and assisted. Whereupon forthwith in great troops reported unto them a number of their companions out of every quarter to the number as it was said of six thousand men, and forthwith they make themselves and all things in readiness to abide the brunt. Upon the next morning, being Sunday, my Lord, minding to follow on his course, commandeth the trumpet to sound, and every man to make ready to march forwards. And about nine of the clock, in the same morning, they came to Clyst; [68] *where the army is divided into three parts, and in three several places do appoint to make entry into the town. For in so many places they had fortified the town, and made great rampires for their defence.*

These rampires were, after some bickerings, recovered, and Sir William Frances, of Somersetshire, was named to be the first that gave the adventure, and made the entry. The commons, being driven from the said rampires, ran all into the town, and there join themselves together to abide the pulse. And, as the King's army was in good order marching into the town, one of the chief Captains of these rebels, named Sir Thomas Pomeroy, knight, kept himself in a Furze close, and perceiving the army to be past him, and having then with him a trumpeter and a drumslade, commanded the

[68] A marginal note indicates this is Bishops Clyst.

trumpet to be sounded and the drum to be stricken up. At which sound the Lord Privy Seal and his company were amazed, supposing verily that there had been an ambush behind them, to have entrapped and enclosed them. Whereupon, they forthwith retire back in all haste they may: which when they in the town perceived, they follow after, and never stayed until they came to the wagons, then being in the highway; and which now, by flying and retiring of the army, are the foremost and next to the town. And these being laden with munitions, armour and treasure, they take and bring into the town, where they rifle as much as they could, saving the pieces of the Ordnance, which, with the shot and powder, they bestowed in places convenient, and employed the same against my lord and his company.

The army, having recovered the hill, did there pause a while, and finding themselves to be deceived, march back again towards the town. But before they came thither it was advertised unto my lord, that the town, and every house therein, was fortified and full of men; and that it was not possible for any to pass that way without great peril and danger, except the town were set on fire. Whereupon order was given, that as they passed and entered into the town, notwithstanding it was my lord's own, they should set the houses on fire. Sir William Frances being in the fore-ward was foremost, and leaving the way he took before, took now another way, the which way was both deep and narrow. The enemies being upon the banks upon every side of the way, with their stones so beat him, that they struck his headpiece fast to his head, and whereof he died. The army being come into the town, they set fire on every house as they passed by. But the rebels conjoining themselves in the middle of the town, do stand at their defence, where the fight was very fierce and cruel; and bloody was that day: for some were slain with the sword, some burnt in the houses, some shifting for themselves were taken prisoners, and many, thinking to escape over the water, were drowned: so that there were dead that day, one with another, about a thousand men.

The town thus being recovered; and the overthrow given, the Lord Gray desireth to pass of the river, and to be in the open field, which is a great heath, named Clyst Heath; and this he could not do, but that he must pass over the water or the bridge, both which were somewhat dangerous, for the water was somewhat miry and muddy, as also at that time very deep, by reason of the flowing of the seas, which causeth the same at every tide to swell. Howbeit one John Yard, a gentlemen, and who had dwelled thereabouts, knowing the said water, gave the first adventure over, and found way near unto a mill above the bridge; and after him others do follow. But this was not for all the rest of the army, who must needs pass over the bridge, which as they could not do, by reason that the same was so overlaid with great trees and timber, as also there stood the gunner with his piece ready charged. Whereupon proclamation was made, that whosoever would adventure and make way over the bridge, should have 400 crowns for his labour. Then one forthwith, more respecting the gain than forecasting the peril, gave the adventure; but the gunner rewarded him, for he discharged his piece upon him, and slew him. And then, before he could again charge his piece, one of the company, who before was passed over the water, came and entered the bridge at the further end, and, coming behind him, slew him; who forthwith calleth company unmaketh the bridge clear, and so the whole army passed over the bridge into the heath.

The Lord Gray, as soon as he was passed over the water he rode forthwith to the top of the hill, which is in the middle of the heath; and from thence did make a view of all

the country about him. And looking back towards Woodbury, he saw and espied, upon Woodbury Hill, a great company assembled, and marching forward; and suspecting that they were a new supply, appointed to follow and come upon them, he advertised the Lord Russell thereof. Whereupon it was concluded, that the prisoners, whom they had before taken at the windmill and in the town, who were a great number, (and which, if they were newly set upon, might be a detriment and a peril unto them) should be all killed: which forthwith was done, every man making a despatch of his prisoners; and then the night approaching, there they encamped themselves for that night. The rebels, which were and lay about Exeter, were advertised out of hand of this the evil success of their neighbours; wherefore they, with as many as they could get, in all haste came to Clyst Heath: and in the lower side thereof, next to the highway, do entrench and fortify a place, fast by a hedge; and secretly there, in the night, do place their ordnance, and make themselves in readiness to abide the brunt: and, as soon as the daylight served, discharge and shoot off their pieces unto the army encamped about the top of the hill. The Lords and Captains, to end the quarrel, do determine to give the onset upon them, and, according to the nature of wars, do politically divide themselves into three parts, and every one hath his place assigned, and order appointed unto him.

The Lord Russell, having no way open before him, causeth his pioneers to make way over the hedges and enclosed grounds; and by that means doth at length recover upon the very back of the enemies: and they were so entrapped on every side that they could not, by any means, escape, but must yield or fight. The one they would not, and in the other they prevailed not. For, notwithstanding, valiantly and stoutly, they stood to their tackle, and would not give over, as long as life and limb lasted, yet in the end, they were all overthrown, and few or none left alive. Great was the slaughter, and cruel was the fight; and such was the valour and stoutness of these men, that the Lord Gray reported himself, that he never, in all the wars that he had been in, did know the like.

This fight being done, and all things set in good order, the whole army marched unto Topsham, which was about a mile off, and lay in that town all the night, and carried with them in a horse litter the body or corpse of Sir William Frances…

And his lordship thinking verily that all things were now quieted, and that the rebels pacified, suddenly news was brought unto him, that there assembled at Sampford Courtenay both Devonshiremen and Cornishmen, and who were fully bent to maintain their quarrel, and abide the battle. This news so troubled and tickled my lord, that, all business set apart, he commandeth forthwith the trumpet to be sounded, and the drum to be stricken up, and all his army to be forthwith mustered; which was then the greater, by reason of the Welshmen, and the gentlemen of the country, and of the commons who, upon submission, had obtained pardon, and increased to the number of eight or ten thousand men; and forthwith he marched towards Sampford Courtenay, where Sir William Herbert requested to have the fore-ward for that day, which was granted him.

And being come thither, albeit the great company of so many good soldiers, and well appointed, might have dismayed them, being nothing, nor in order, nor in company, nor in experience, to be compared with the others: yet as they were at a point, they would not yield to no persuasions, not did, but most manfully did abide the fight, and

never gave over until that, both in the town and in the field, they were all, or the most, taken or slain. At which time one Ap Owen, a Welsh gentleman, more boldly than advisedly, giving the adventure to enter the rampire, at the town's end, was there slain by the rebels, and after carried back to Exeter.'

John Hayward, 'The Life and Raigne of King Edward the Sixth'

'In the meantime the Lord Privy Seal lay at Honiton expecting more strength, and knowing right well that as the multitude are slow to danger, so are they most desperate when they are stirred, but whilst he expected more company, many of those he had slipped away from him. Hereupon he resolved for retaining the rest to entertain some present enterprise, and first he assailed by a by way to enter and relieve the city, but the seditious for prevention thereof had felled all the trees between St. Mary Ottery and Exeter, and laid them cross the way in such force as they impeached his passage, hereupon firing such places as he thought might serve either for use or ease to the seditious, he determined to return to Honiton. But the seditious forelaid a bridge over which he should pass, called Feniton Bridge, and in a great fair meadow behind the bridge placed a great number under banners displayed.

The Lord Privy Seal had but a small company in regard of the seditious, yet with good order and courage he attempted the bridge but could not force it, at the last finding the river to be fordable at the foot of the bridge, he there set over his horse, whereupon the guards appointed to defend the bridge forsook their charge and retired to their strength in the meadow. Then the King's forces charged lively upon them, and they again as stoutly received the charge, but being an untrained multitude without either soldier or guide, they were soon broken and put to flight, yet they valued themselves and tumultuously charged upon the King's forces, but were presently routed and cast out of the field, the chase was not far pursued for fear of fresh succours from before the city. Notwithstanding the seditious lost 600 of their men, and the Lord Privy Seal retired without loss to Honiton.

At this time the seditious lived by rapine and ruin of all the country, omitting nothing of that which savages enraged in the height of their unruly behaviour do commit, but the citizens driven to great distress for want of victuals, bread they made of coarsest bran moulded in clothes for that otherwise it would not cleave together. Their finest flesh was of their own horses, especially 12 days they endured most extreme famine. During this time they were much encouraged by an aged citizen who brought forth all his provisions and said that as he did communicate unto them his store, so would he participate of their wants, and that for his part he would feed on the one arm and fight with the other before he would consent to put the city into the seditious hands. Herewith the Lord Privy Seal for want of power to perform any services, was about to rise and return to London, but in good time the Lord Gray came to him with supply of forces most Almaine horsemen, and with him came Spinola with his band of Italians consisting of 300 shot. Proposed for Scotland, also 200 men were sent unto him from Reading, so being in all not much above 1000 strong, he made head against the seditious.

So departing from Honiton he came to a little village from whence by 2 ways towards Exeter, both which were blocked up with 2 bulwarks of earth, made by the seditious,

hither they had driven 2000 men from before Exeter whom they divided into 4 companies. In either of the bulwarks they lodged one, at the bridge near the back of one of the forts a third company was placed. The 4th was laid in ambush behind a hedge on the highway at the back of the other fortress. The arriere of the King's forces led by Captain Wavers set upon one of the forts, the vaward and battle upon the other. Spinola with his shot did bear upon those within who offered to appear upon the walls. At length Captain Wavers won the fort which he assailed and drove the defenders to the bridge where one of their companies made stand. Herewith the other two companies did forthwith report unto them, one from the second fort, the other from the ambush.

These casting a strong guard upon the bridge, marshalled the residue upon a plain ground behind the bridge. The King's forces coming forward drove the guard from the bridge, and making profit of the fresh terror set upon those who were upon the plain. The King's footmen were finely ranked, the troops of horse in good array, whereas the seditious had neither weapons, order nor council, but being in all things unprovided were slain like beasts. They took their flight towards St. Mary Clyst but the soldiers upon disdain of the unworthy actions filled themselves with revenge and blood, and slew of them about 900 not sparing one.

This sad blow abated much the courage and hope of the seditious, and yet the next day about 2000 of them affronted the King's forces at the entrance of a highway, whom when they found both ready and resolute to fight, they desired enterparlance, and in the meantime began to fortify. But understanding that their intention was understood more like slaves than soldiers they furiously ran away. The same night the seditious before Exeter raised their siege, and therewith discharged the city from many miseries and despairs…

Now the seditious driven almost to a dead despair and supported only by the vehemence of desire brought forth their forces to Clist Heath to whom many of the most vile vulgars reported hourly, which much enlarged their numbers but nothing their strength, but what measure have men in the increase of madness, if they kept not themselves from falling into it, they brought with the a crucifix upon a cart covered with a canopy, and heaped with crosses, tapers, banners, holy bread and holy water as a representation of those things for which they fought. The Lord Gray encouraged his men to set sharply upon the vague villains good neither to live peaceably nor to fight and to win at once both quiet to the realm and to themselves glory, so he brought the King's forces upon them rather as to a carnage than to a fight, insomuch as without any great either loss or danger to themselves, the greatest part of the seditious were slain, diverse also were taken of whom the common sort were forthwith executed by martial law, the chiefest leaders were sent to receive justice in London, some escaped and sailed to Bridgewater, who taking dangers to be the only remedy against dangers endeavoured to set up the sedition again, but they were speedily repressed, and thereby the sedition suppressed wholly.'

Raphael Holinshed's Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland

'Whereupon when no hope was left to procure them by any quiet means to lay down arms, the Lord Privy Seal and the Lord Grey, with their forces, although not

comparable with the rebels in number about the latter end of July set upon them and by great manhood put them from their ground. Notwithstanding they fought very stoutly and gave it not over for a little: and although they were thus driven to give place at this first onset, yet they got altogether again and abide a new charge, defending their ground. And doing what they could to beat back and repulse those that came to assail them. Brave nevertheless although the power of almighty God favouring the rightful cause, the rebels were distressed and followed in chase with great slaughter for the space of two miles this was about the beginning of august.'

Spanish Chronicle

Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England, Being a Contemporary Record of Some of The Principal Events of The Reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI. Written In Spanish By An Unknown Hand
ed and trans. by Martin A. Sharp Hume (London: George Bell and Sons, 1889)

'Things were in a great state when news came to the Protector that a rising had taken place in Cornwall, under a gentleman called Master Arundel, who had over thirty thousand men with him to march against the Lords; the cause of this rising being that commissioners had been sent thither to remove the sacraments from the churches, and the people resenting this rose to resist it. This Master Arundel sent word to the Lords that they would die rather than submit to any such thing, and then fortified themselves strongly with much cannon, taken from Plymouth and other forts of the King, and bore red flags with the holy sacrament on them. So that the people rose in defence of the faith, and the other in Norfolk and Suffolk because they wanted everything to be common property.

The Lords then sent the Earl of Warwick to Cornwall with ten thousand troops, in very good order, and amongst them there were over three thousand foreigners. When the Cornishmen heard of their coming they determined to give battle, and waited on the field for them. The Earl only marched six miles a day so as not to distress his people, and on the way they picked up a great many men, some by good will and some by force.

They arrived one night within a mile of the Cornish force, and as the rebels were not soldiers, although they were very brave and well armed, an Italian captain named Spinola said to the Earl that night, "My lord, we are not tired, but our enemy will think we require rest, so my opinion is that we should feign to pitch our headquarters here so as to lead any spies they may have to believe that we are going to sleep, and then, if your lordship wishes, we can be with them at daybreak, and take them unawares and defeat them easily.

The Earl liked this advice, and ordered proclamation to be cried that all should go to rest, as within three days he wished to give battle to the Cornishmen. The announcement was made, and the spies let the Cornishmen know, and thus caused them to be taken by surprise.

That same night the Earl sent for all his captains, and ordered them to advise their men to be ready to attack the enemy before dawn, and this was done. To be brief, at

the first sign of daylight they were on them and took them unarmed, and with such cleverness, that before they could rally six thousand of the Cornishmen were killed, and the rest fled amidst great slaughter. It is piously believed that many people in the kingdom were grieved at their defeat, as they came with such a good demand. When the Earl had routed them he pushed forwards, and at last did whatever he liked, and immediately had the sacraments taken away from all the churches. It was not very long before the rest of the Cornishmen became worse than any others.'

Russell's Official Account

Lord John Russell's Report on Sampford Courtenay: 'A Copie of my Lord Privie-Seale's Newes, Sent in the Same Letter, Wherein is Particular Mention of Notable Services of the Lord Gray and Sir William Herbert' 23 August 1549

'Upon Friday we marched from Exeter to Crediton seven miles, the which way was very cumbrous and therefore that day went no further. On Saturday we marched towards the camp at Sampford Courtenay and by the way of scouts and the rebels scouts encountered upon the Sunday on a sudden and in a skirmish between them was one Maunder taken, who was one of their chief captains. Order was given to my Lord Gray and Mr. Herbert for the winning of time and to take a good part of our army and with the same to make with all diligence possible towards the said camp to view and see what service might be done for the invasion thereof. They found the rebels' strength encamped as well by the seat of the ground as by the entrenchment of the same. They kept them play with great ordinance till more come and way was made by the pioneers, which done they were assaulted with good courage, on the one side with our footmen and on the other side with the Italian harquebutters in such sort as it was not long before they turned their backs and recovered the town which they before had fortified for all events..

While this was doing and I yet behind with the residue of the army conducting the carriage, Humphrey Arundell with his sole power came on the back of our forward being thus busied with the assault of the camp, the sudden show of whom wrought such fear in the hearts of our men as we wished our power a great deal more not without good cause. For remedy whereof the Lord Gray was fain to leave Mr. Herbert at the enterprise against the camp and to retire to our last horsemen and foot man, whom so caused to turn their faces to the enemies in the hew of battle. Against Arundell was nothing for an hour but shooting of ordnance to and fro. Mr. Herbert in this mean time followed the first attempt, who pressing still upon them never breathed till he had driven them to a plain flight. To the chase came fresh horsemen and foot men in the which were slain v or vi of the Rebels and among them was slain one Underhill who has the charge of that camp. At the retire of our men I arrived and because it was late of thought good to lost no time but appointed Sir William Herbert and Mr Kingston with their foot men and horsemen to set on the one side, my Lord Gray to set on their far and I with my company to come on the other side.

Upon the sight, the rebels' stomachs so fell from them as without any blow they fled. The horse men followed the chase and slew to the number of vii C and took a far greater number, great execution had followed had not the night come on so fast. All this night we sat on horseback and in the morning we had word that Arundell was fled to Launceston, who immediately began to practise with the townsmen and the keepers

and other gentlemen for the number of them that might. The leaders so much avowed this cruelty as they immediately set the gentlemen at large and gave them their aid with the help of the town for the apprehension of Arundell, whom with iiii or v ringleaders they have imprisoned. I have sent incontinently both Mr Eardwell with a good band to keep the town in a stay, and this morning I went thither with the rest. We have taken xv pieces of ordinance some brass and some iron. Of our part there were many hurt but not passing x or xii slain. The Lord Gray and Mr. Herbert have showed notably. Every gentleman and captain did their part so well as I wrote not whom first to commend. I have given order to all the ports that none of the rebels shall pass that way.'

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