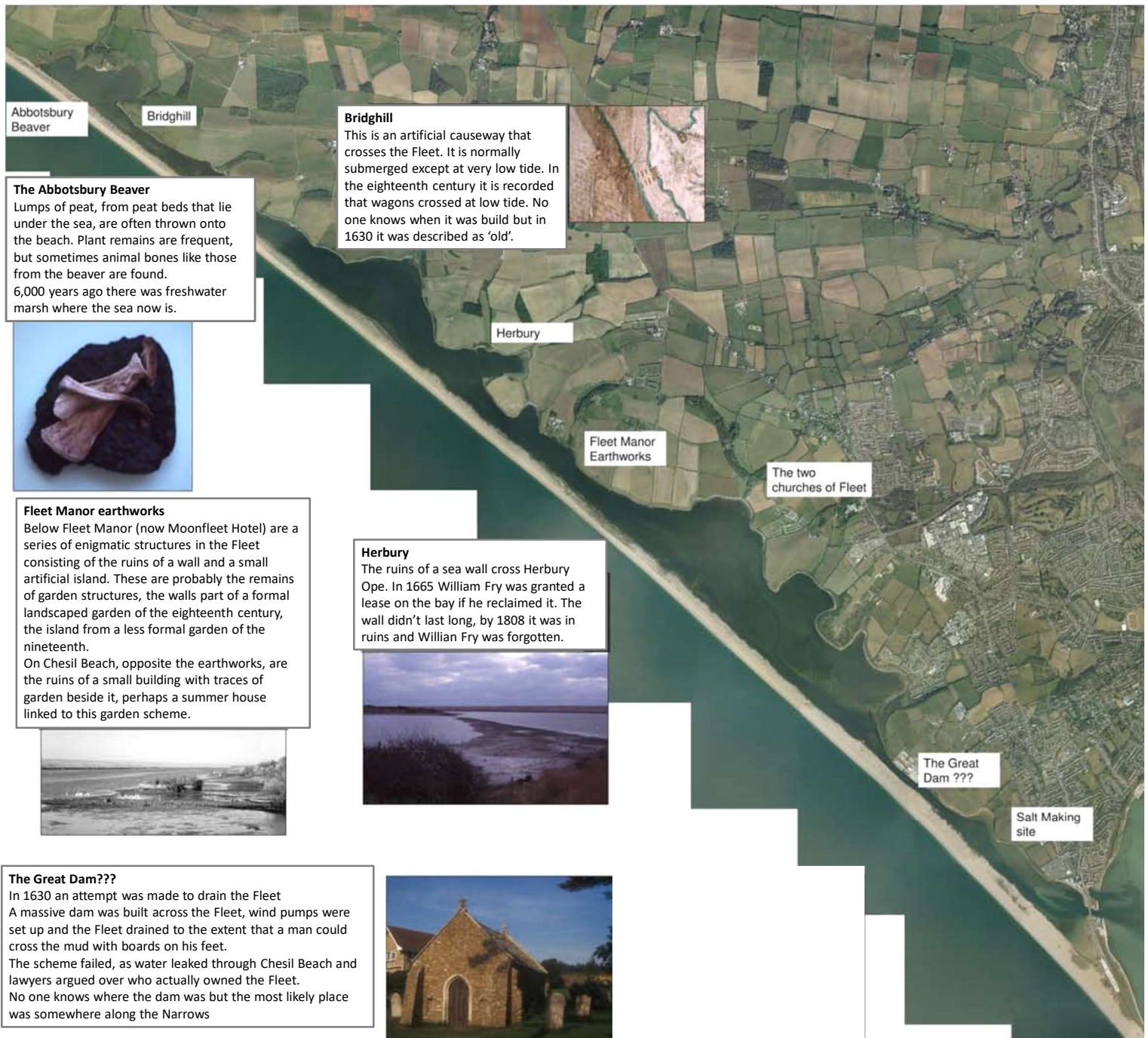


Archaeology of the Fleet

Gordon Le Pard



Abbotsbury Beaver

Bridghill

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This is an artificial causeway that crosses the Fleet. It is normally submerged except at very low tide. In the eighteenth century it is recorded that wagons crossed at low tide. No one knows when it was built but in 1630 it was described as 'old'.



The Abbotsbury Beaver
Lumps of peat, from peat beds that lie under the sea, are often thrown onto the beach. Plant remains are frequent, but sometimes animal bones like those from the beaver are found. 6,000 years ago there was freshwater marsh where the sea now is.



Fleet Manor earthworks
Below Fleet Manor (now Moonfleet Hotel) are a series of enigmatic structures in the Fleet consisting of the ruins of a wall and a small artificial island. These are probably the remains of garden structures, the walls part of a formal landscaped garden of the eighteenth century, the island from a less formal garden of the nineteenth.
On Chesil Beach, opposite the earthworks, are the ruins of a small building with traces of garden beside it, perhaps a summer house linked to this garden scheme.



Herbury
The ruins of a sea wall cross Herbury Ope. In 1665 William Fry was granted a lease on the bay if he reclaimed it. The wall didn't last long, by 1808 it was in ruins and William Fry was forgotten.



The two churches of Fleet

The Great Dam ???

Salt Making site

The Great Dam???
In 1630 an attempt was made to drain the Fleet. A massive dam was built across the Fleet, wind pumps were set up and the Fleet drained to the extent that a man could cross the mud with boards on his feet. The scheme failed, as water leaked through Chesil Beach and lawyers argued over who actually owned the Fleet. No one knows where the dam was but the most likely place was somewhere along the Narrows



The two Fleet churches
On Monday 22nd November 1824 the village of Fleet lay around its ancient church, just inland from Butterstreet Cove. On Tuesday 23rd it didn't! During the night the coast was hit by the terrible combination of hurricane force winds and a tidal surge. The sea flowed over Chesil Beach and massive waves pounded the village. Most of the cottages were destroyed. Over the next few years the village was rebuilt slightly inland, complete with a new church. The chancel of the old church remains to serve the churchyard.



Salt making hearth
Below high water mark in Pirates Cove are the remains of an iron age salt making hearth. Here, over two thousand years ago, when the sea level was much lower, sea water was boiled to make salt. Similar sites may still lie undiscovered under the waters of the Fleet.

