

## **A CLOSER LOOK AT BATTLE'S HISTORY**

This section looks at Battle's history in a little more depth, noting along the way the many questions still to be resolved. The intention is to provide a 'taster' for each century **not** a detailed history, so there will be gaps. If you have any comments, please email the Museum on [admin@battlemuseum.com](mailto:admin@battlemuseum.com).

It is generally agreed that the area which was to become Battle was a hilly piece of scrub land until after 1066. There is, however, ample evidence of earlier civilisations in nearby areas.

### **Neolithic era**

There is evidence of burning in Ashdown forest 6000 years ago according to a lecture to the Battle and District Historical Society by Geoff Mead of Sussex Archaeology Society in 2011. [<http://www.battlehistorysociety.btck.co.uk/Publications/BDHSJournal162011>]

### **Bronze Age**

Breastplates and other treasure were found in Mountfield in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. What was a rich person doing depositing treasure in Mountfield in 500BC?

### **Roman**

The Romans were based here 43AD to c400AD. Pevensey (Anderida) was an important fort for them. Near to Battle are the remains of a bathhouse which was part of one of the Roman Empire's largest bloomeries (ironworks), run by the Roman navy and exporting iron ingots to the continent. It cannot be visited and much of it is under a golfcourse but there is a full exhibition, with finds, about Beauport Park at [Battle Museum of Local History](#).

### **Saxon**

The Saxons are reputed to have landed in Sussex in 477AD and developed the kingdom of Suth Seaxe. This group is thought to have controlled Pevensey Castle around 491AD but they did not go much beyond that point. Another group of Saxons - the Haestingas - were prominent in East Sussex but little is known about them.

### **What was there before Battle?**

- Probably nothing but scrub or heathland. Past authors have debated whether there was a settlement before 1066 and if so what it might have been called, but with no firm conclusion reached or likely to be.

Some authors think Battle used to be called 'Epiton' before the Conquest but others doubt that. Lower - a prominent historian of the Nineteenth Century - says that Orderic Vitalis, the chronicler, uses 'epitoneum' to denote a field and others refer to 'Epituomo Senlac', as a thyme-covered field of Senlac. It is probable that the word 'epituomo' has been misunderstood and mistranslated as a place name.

Hilaire Belloc, writing in the 1930s, claims the Brede river is in an area [where Battle now is] 'known until the Norman invasion as the Hastings plain' He goes on to say (p98) 'Battle was so little known until the great fight of 1066 that even its name appears in doubt at that date. It certainly was not Senlac'. 'Senlac' was the ancient name of the place according to Orderic Vitalis. Lower recommends an article in Sussex Collections by Rev Edward Turner and, from his own translation of Chronicon de Bello in 1851, asserts there is no authority for some pre-Conquest village or site called Senlac. Walcott wonders whether this name referred to an ancient well discovered in the sixteenth century and the name appears as Sandlake in Edward I's time; he discounts the story of 'Sanglac' referring to the blood-filled Asten, as 'an idle story'.

At the time of the Battle of Hastings, the place now called Battle was probably known to the English only as a local landmark, 'the old hoar apple tree'. Professor Robert Barratt in *The Normans*, refers to the site of the battle as a place known as the 'grey apple tree'. Some historians think that a yew tree in Telham marks the site of William's HQ before the Battle.

After 1066, the town was at first known as La Bataillage. Horsfield quotes 'an intelligent correspondent' as saying that was called St Mary's or Martia's in the Wood before being called 'Battaile' but we have found no other mention of this elsewhere.

## Eleventh Century

- In the late Eleventh Century, Battle merited only a small entry in the **Domesday Book**. It was a farming area with no useful materials or river. The village to support the Abbey was only just starting, but Battle soon became an important staging point on the way to France.
- In 1076 **temporary Abbey buildings** were finished. Prior to the erection of the Abbey the monks built 'mean dwellings of little cost as residences for themselves'. Robert Blanchard from Marmoutier was the first Abbot of Battle 1076 while the buildings were still temporary.
- The **Battle Abbey Chronicle** is a useful source about the early history of the Abbey to 1178.
- February 1095 marked the **consecration of the Abbey** attended by William Rufus with many nobles and Archbishop Anselm officiating. William conferred on the Abbey advowson of several churches and donated to the Abbey the Conqueror's pallium in which he was crowned.

Presumably the Abbey's leuga - 1.5mile radius - was conferred at this time. It was divided into 5 boroughs: Middleboro, Uckham, Santlake, Montjoy, and Telham.

Abbots of Battle were mitred, had a seat in Parliament and were not subject to episcopal jurisdiction, which led to difficulties with successive Bishops of Chichester.

The Abbot's town residence was near St Olave's in Tooley Street. The Abbey had three parks, a vineyard and ample stewponds. It had the manors of Wye and Alciston, and priories in Brecknock in Wales and St Nicholas, Exeter. At the Dissolution, the Abbey had an income of £987 pa but was poorly run and neglected. It remains notable and unexplained as to why Battle did not get a Charter until 1124.

- There is a glass-protected wood and plaster wall in the Chequers public house, thought to date from Doomsday.

## Twelfth Century

- An area for further research in the work commemorating 'Battle 950' is: what would have been the impact of the 'peculiar' status of the Abbey?
- **Early occupations:** The Chronicle of Battle Abbey records that at this time there were 115 householders in Battle, some officials, a gardener, 2 swineherds, a miller, and artificers (5 shoemakers, 2 smiths, 2 carpenters, 3 cooks, 2 bakers, 1 weaver, 1 goldsmith, and 'Aedric who casts bells'. From the very great dignity of the place, they were called burgesses. But there was no formal incorporation and no burgesses are ever heard of again. There were two guildhalls - Claverham and Sandlake.
- It is unclear when **guilds** began in Battle. The Victoria History says there were *three*: St Martin at Sandlake; Claverham, probably the Mountjoy Guild later in the High St opposite Mount St; and thirdly outside Battle at Quarrere (*quarry*) 'for the use of churls, who live out of town, ad opus rusticorum'. The Abbot was a member of the guilds and his deputy attended meetings. Their members were exempt from payment on burial. At stated times of the year members provided tapers for St Martins.
- So it was that by 1115 there was enough of a village for the Abbot to build a church – **St Mary's** – for the separate use of those outside the Abbey.
- Henry I granted a charter for **Battle Fair** to be held on St Martin's Tide – 11/22 November lasting 3 days. (The Fair was last held in 1938; Cattle used to be sold by the roadside from the police station to the railway station.)

## Thirteenth Century

- **King John** visited Battle in 1206 and 1213, and perhaps other occasions, and presented to the Abbey in 1200 (unclear whether personally delivered) 'a piece of

our Lord's sepulchre which his brother-in-law (*sic*), Coeur de Lion, had brought from the Holy Land' (Lower).

- In 1265 **Henry III** stopped at Battle on his way to defeat by Simon de Montfort at Lewes.
- **Battle Abbey lands** Edward Turner says in Battle Abbey 1865 that 'Receipts of money for apples and pears sold in considerable quantities are items of not unusual occurrence in the Treasurer's Rolls of Abbey accounts; from whence we may infer the Abbey orchards to have been extensive. Three are distinctly mentioned in the Abbey records, one as adjoining the Abbey to the south; another near the house called the Hospital; and the third by the Chapel of St Mary on the north side of the Abbot's and monks' garden. A garden in Sandlake, Battel, is described as adjacent to the Convent Perrygarden. Nineteen acres of land near to the Abbey, and the property of the Abbot and the monks, are represented as planted with cheery trees and called 'the Cherry-gardens'. The pomarium, too, of the House is frequently alluded to in the Abbey documents'.
- **Edward I** visited the Abbey in 1260 and 1298.

## Fourteenth Century

- It has been claimed that in this century Battle Abbey became the first abbey to produce **commercial cider**.
- **Edward II** visited Battle in 1313.
- The Abbey gatehouse was built in 1338 as a defence against possible French invasion.
- In 1345 Alan Payn is accused of breaking into the hospital adjoining the Abbey and stealing a silver chalice and other goods. (Source: Gaol Delivery R 129 m 71.)
- **Abbot Hamo de Offington** beats off the French in 1377 after they had sacked the Isle of Wight and carried off the Prior of Lewes. He refused to pay a ransom and instead gathered forces and attacked successfully.
- At this time, Battle was divided into the **boroughs** of: Sandlake (upper and lower lake + Senlac east and south of the Abbey): Middleboro (market place and west of High St), and Mountjoy (north of the market and east of High St).
- '*Gleanings*', a Victorian history of Battle says that in the late fourteenth century Battle had, very unusually, its own **glazier**, John Swanton, who possessed considerable property in the parish.

## Fifteenth Century

- Some authors claim that Battle became a place of **tourism** in the Fifteenth Century but do not provide evidence and the state of the roads would have been a problem!
- **Pilgrims' Rest** erected in 1420 on the site of a twelfth century building.
- In Bathhurst Wood, near Battle, the seat of the family of that name was destroyed in the Wars of the Roses.

- Warren in a Tapestry of Battle says that ‘The marshy areas around Battle made **malaria** a great scourge. Between the Sixteenth and Eighteenth Centuries the average life expectancy was 14 years in the villages of Sussex compared with 35 years in the rest of England.’ He says that between one and two thirds of the population suffered from malaria, which began to reduce around 1790 as drainage of marshes improved.
- 1412: Henry IV makes a huge grant of lands to one of his supporters **Sir John Pelham**, whose family was based in East Sussex. His connection to Battle if any is not clear at this stage but there is a link to nearby Netherfield and he was clearly a major local personality.

## Sixteenth Century

- By the time of the **dissolution of the monasteries**, Battle Abbey was reported as having an income of £987 but was poorly run and neglected. Assessment of the impact of dissolution of the Abbey in 1536, will be carried out as part of the Battle 950 research.
- **Sir Anthony Browne**, who purchased the Abbey and grounds on its dissolution was allegedly cursed as despoiler of the Abbey by a monk. It was thought this curse came to fruition in later centuries, with the family’s Cowdray House burning and the last member of the Browne family drowning in an attempt to shoot the falls at Laufenberg on the Rhine.
- Through to the nineteenth century there were about 20 **clockmakers** in Battle, originating in this and the next century. There will be further research into the causes of this development.
- In 1566 Battle was awarded the right to hold a **Thursday market** by special Act of Parliament, but discontinued by the Nineteenth Century.
- 1575 First **parish registers** of Battle according to the Victorian historian Lower.

## Seventeenth Century

- 1610 Edmund Langdon of Battel, was an **astronomer**. In the Sussex Archeological Collections XVII of 1865, p246 a correspondent, ET, presumably Edward Turner, says ‘Can any reader of our (*Sussex Archaeological* ) Collections give me information respecting this gentleman? He is mentioned in a volume of Manuscripts among the records of the Ashmolean Museum Oxford, as the writer of an astronomical work, of which the following is given as the title: ‘Speculum Planetarum, or plaine Tables, whereby the Planet governing the Signes ascending at one instant is easily knowne in any hour of the day or night, with the pleasant and profitable use thereof; Compiled and collected by Edmund Langdon, General Practitioner in Astronomy and Phisicke, 1610’. That the author is a resident of Battel appears from his address ‘to the Reader’, which thus concludes: ‘And so wishings all good and happiness to you, and all them that feare God, I end this short epistle from Battel in Sussex, this tenth day of December 1610. Your’s in the Lorde, Edmund Langdon.’

- **Ironworking** was well established in this century, continuing centuries of tradition for the area. In 1623 Beech was one of 15 furnaces in Sussex. In 1724 it was leased to Sir Thomas Webster for 9 years.
- It is rumoured that Ashburnham Place near Battle once had the **clothes of Charles I**, removed after his execution by John Ashburnham.
- 1664: the toughness and style of **punishment** at this time is illustrated by what happened to Edward Baker: convicted of forgery at Horsham Assizes, he is put in the pillory at Battle and has one of his ears cut off.
- 1666 Battle suffered badly from the **plague**.
- A brass plate near [Mrs Burton's Tea Rooms](#) on the Green marks the spot where bulls were tethered for **baiting** at this time.
- In the late Seventeenth Century, **gunpowder manufacture** replaced iron working and lasted till 1874. In 1676 John Hammond obtained a grant to produce gunpowder, the first specific record of a gunpowder mill in Battle. According to *Gleanings*, Hammond in the same year is granted by Anthony, 3<sup>rd</sup> Viscount Montague, a lease on the Old Mill at Peperinge, to erect a Powder Mill. At the height of this industry there were 5 such mills in Battle, all built on the banks of a small stream called the Asten. Defoe mentions that Battle made 'the finest gunpowder and the best perhaps in Europe.' Gordon in *Tapestry* says that making of gunpowder transferred to Dartford in 1874 - the landlord the Duke of Cleveland refused to renew the lease because the Duchess was disturbed by the 'frequent explosions.'

The famous **Battle bonfire and Guy Fawkes celebrations**, still one of the great events in the town, began at roughly the same time as the gunpowder industry. 1686 was the first authenticated mention of a Battle bonfire celebration – the churchwarden's accounts show 17 shillings and 6d to be 'expended on gunpowder treason for rejoicings.' One of John Hammond's colleagues as a churchwarden at that time was Thomas Langley, whose descendants have been stalwarts of the [Battle Bonfire Boyes](#) for many generations.

The centrepiece of the celebrations has been **Battle's Guy Fawkes effigy**, whose head dates from the early Seventeenth Century when it was the custom to put the body of the effigy on the fire and save the head till the following year. The head - carved in pear wood - is the oldest Guy Fawkes head in the world and, along with displays about the gunpowder industry in Battle, can be seen in the [Battle Museum of Local History](#) on top of a body made in the late Nineteenth Century by Mr Barrow, a Battle upholsterer at that time.

For many years a firework, the '**Battle Rouser**', was a feature of the town's bonfire celebrations – a squib or banger on the grand scale designed to skip along the ground – but it was banned by the Home Office in the 1950s. An example can be seen in the Battle Museum of Local History.

The bonfire celebrations in Battle have continued uninterrupted for over 300 years although in the second world war during the black out the tradition had to be kept

alive by the presence of a candle left burning on the ring of cobbles left for the bonfire when the Green was tarmacked in the 1930s.

Among the reasons for the popularity of bonfire celebrations in Battle might be:

- (a) Sussex had one of the highest percentages of Catholics in the Seventeenth Century. In his book *Sussex 1600-1660*, Anthony Fletcher says Battle was a 'hotbed of Popery' which included a centre for Catholic teaching.
- (b) There was fear of invasion from nearby Catholic France.
- (c) Local gunpowder manufacture.
- (d) The Abbey was owned by friends of royalty, who would have encouraged – at least for a long period if not at the end - the celebrations.

The Daily News of 1888 records that in bonfire celebrations of the time, 'the original object was completely lost sight of...' ie anti-Catholicism was by then no longer a factor.

- Around 1688 the Montagues used spare stone from the demolished kitchens at the Abbey to create the **Bull Inn**. In 1983 it was known as the Nonsuch Hotel, and then briefly became an estate agents, Woodhams, before becoming the Bull Inn again. Among many pubs that did not survive was the Rose and Crown, roughly where Cooks is in Mount Street, which was there at least until the Seventeenth Century.
- In 1670 a **cattle market** was established for the second Tuesday of the month. Fairs were held on Whit Monday and in November but the Whitsun market was discontinued in 1875 according to the London Gazette of April 1875.
- In 1693 the people of Ashdown Forest staged a successful **revolt** against enclosing landlords, being awarded 6400 acres in a decree of that year.

## **Eighteenth Century**

- This century gave Battle High Street many buildings in the **Georgian style**, although a glance at first floor windows indicates internal woodwork from earlier eras.
- A **garrison** was stationed in Battle for over a decade towards the end of the century arising from fears that the French might attempt military action. In 1798 Prince William of Gloucester visits Battle from Hastings where he had been to see anti-invasion troops (Guilmant). German troops supporting the British – The King's German Legion - were stationed in Bexhill in the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Century. In 1805 the troops at Bexhill peaked at 3540. Barrack Cottage on the east side of Whatlington Road is all that remains of the garrison quarters. Dances for the officers were held in the Assembly Room of the George Hotel in Battle, now *Simply Italian*.
- The Victoria History records that in 1729 indentures were finalised for officers of the parish purchasing Workhouse Field 'in trust for the sole use of the poor of Battle'. William Pack had made a gift of £20 in 1714; the parish borrowed £130

- towards the coast. The **old workhouse** near the current site of the Senlac Inn was for able-bodied men and was often the cause of trouble in the town. It was to be replaced in the following century by a new workhouse in North Trade Road
- Around 1720, Defoe visits Battle and mentions **turnpike roads**, then coming into being. Poor and often impassable roads in Sussex were a notorious feature of the area until the Victorian era. In 1728 the roads were so bad that Sir Thomas Webster paid for oxen to assist in getting his carriage from Robertsbridge to Battle. Toll houses were part of maintaining the turnpike system which in the second half of the century improved the condition of roads which had been significantly damaged by transport of iron in heavy vehicles. An original toll house ('Toll Cottage') with its observation windows can still be seen on North Trade Road, just east of Claverham School.
  - Horace Walpole stays at Battle in 1752 and describes visiting a **smuggling** pub at Robertsbridge and the bad state of roads (Francis p 38).
  - George Gilbert, an independent Calvinist, known as the 'Apostle of Sussex' preached in Battle in 1776, under the Great Oak or Watch Oak at the entrance to the town 'not without opposition'.
  - **Tourism** is seen in Battle with a visit to The George by Francis Grose in 1777 while on a sketching tour, and a trip to Battle by John Byng, another eighteenth-century tourist.
  - **Big family scandal** Swinfen and Arscott describe on p29 a 1780 story about Elizabeth Vassall who, fed up with her husband Godfrey Webster, elopes and pretends her child is dead lest the Websters take it back. There is another story of Webster's efforts to get his aunt out of the Abbey by mocked up ghost incidents.
  - **Marie Antoinette: fact or fiction?** Princess Lamballe, one of Marie Antoinette's ladies in waiting, was sent to Catsfield Place in 1791 with the Queen's jewels. She was to give them to Lady Gibbs for safekeeping. After Marie Antoinette's execution in 1792 the jewels were never recovered, although the safe in which they were stored remains in Catsfield Place. A passage to Battle Abbey is rumoured to have led from this building- seems unlikely!
  - Warren in Tapestry pp51-3 describes the **rise of charity schools** in Battle in the Eighteenth Century and devotes a chapter to Battle Abbey School.

## Nineteenth Century

- **The High Street:** the Star Hotel (now *Costa Coffee*) was rebuilt in the 1800s, changing its name from The Eight Bells. It was used by the Royal Mail, as was The George. For most of the century the visitor would have found and doubtless smelled a brewery, tannery, jam/sweet factory and weekly market. The rural nature of Battle would have been evident, with, in 1833, 247 acres planted with hops around the town.
- Cobbett first visited Battle in January 1822 and praises the **turnpike roads** of Sussex.
- Battle was affected by **agricultural poverty** after the Napoleonic Wars – William Cobbett lectured on this subject just outside Battle on 16 October 1830. The price

of corn and the operation of poor relief were among factors causing poverty. ‘Swing riots’ were widespread and two labourers in the Battle area were tried for arson, apparently as an attempt to implicate Cobbett. He was tried for seditious libel at Lewes in July 1831, the Government case being that he encouraged labourers to riot and cause damage as a means of rectifying low wages. An affidavit signed by 112 citizens of Battle who were at the lecture helped Cobbett get off, on the grounds that he had said merely that the protests seemed to be effective, not that they should continue. Agriculture presumably recovered for in 1860 Battle Market began, mainly on Market Green. Private trading ended 1920 - different animals were sold in different areas of Battle, including draught horses in North Trade Road.

- With the **industrial revolution** in mid-century, iron making shifted north and, for a few years, Battle and some other Wealden towns substituted manufacture of gunpowder. Gunpowder manufacture cannot have been helped by Battle Powder Works blowing up on 20 March 1801, but it continued through to 1874. It was late in the century that the gypsum mines near Mountfield were set up – still operating today. Normanhurst Court was built by Thomas Brassey, a leading railway entrepreneur, on his retirement in 1865 but he died before it was finished.
- **Social developments** began which are still recognisable today: 1834 first Battle flower show, the precursor of ‘Beautiful Battle’; the new workhouse in 1840 now the prominent Victorian gothic building on the A271 west out of Battle; and the creation of the railway in 1852, providing links to and from London markets. In 1879 a scheme was approved by the Charity Commissioners to create the Battle Charities, basis of countless voluntary good works since then in the town.
- **Public health:** The Cresy Report in 1850 into insanitary conditions and ill health in Battle resulted in enhanced piping and sewerage. A Battle Board of Health was set up in 1852, later to become Battle Urban District Council (Guilmant). Warren in *Tapestry* says that the General Board of Health reported in 1850 there were in Battle open cesspits where children played, ditches harbouring fevers of the most fatal kind. There was a complete lack of clean water or proper drainage. And in 1859 a town ‘abounding in filthy deposits’ was reported.
- **Religious census of Sussex 1851:** this survey showed, leaving aside Church of England and Roman Catholics, a strong Protestant tradition in Battle: Baptist; Freethinking Christian; Unitarian; Wesleyan Methodist. Of 30 churches: 15 were Church of England; 3 Baptist; 1 Unitarian; 10 Wesleyan Methodist; and 1 Freethinking Christian. The Churches listed in 1851 were:  
 St Marys  
 Zion Baptist Chapel Mount St 1820; 1821 indenture  
 Netherfield Baptist Church  
 Wesleyan Chapel Battle  
 Netherfield Wesleyan  
 Freethinking Christian Meeting House (also used for the Mechanics Institute)  
 Unitarian Chapel Mount Road 1828-1897 then sold under Charity Commission scheme  
 Congregational Chapel and Sunday School 1881  
 Brightling parish church

Dallington – Baptist  
Penshurst  
Parish Church Ashburnham  
Joyce Pain writes a chapter on this in *Tapestry* p76ff

- **Archaeology**- there was mixed news in the century. The bad news was that in 1834 Sir Godfrey Webster sold the charters, rolls and registers of the Abbey to a Mr Thorpe, a bookseller who produced 97 folio volumes of this material and sold it all to Sir Thomas Phillips of Middle Hill. In turn he sold the charters to the Huntingdon Library, San Marino, California. The good news was the finding of the Sedlescombe hoard of Edward the Confessor coins – now in the British Museum - in 1876 : it may have been put aside by Harold to pay his army.

## **Battle at War: First World War**

The human cost in terms of lost lives of Battle servicemen as well as the harrowing experience of those who survived is documented in the exhibition at [Battle Museum of Local History](#), based on research by George Kiloh. Over 400 men of Battle were involved out of a population of some 3000.

At home in Battle there was strong support for the war effort. For example, Idena Brassey, assisted by the Battle chemist Karl Emeleus, turned the covered tennis court at now-demolished Normanhurst Court, into a convalescent home for wounded soldiers. Karl used to ferry the wounded up from Battle railway station. The surgeon there was none other than a member of the longstanding Battle family of Ticehurst. Lord Brassey did his bit for the war effort by refusing to employ men fit enough and of suitable age, to join the armed forces.

The women of Battle would have done much to help the war effort: some may have gone to the front as nurses, others looked after families; others would have been employed in local industries such as the jam factory, tannery or brewery. There's an interesting account in *Battle in Pictures* (on sale £5 at the Museum) of the women who worked at Dannreuther's fruit farm. Some women became labourers in the Womens' Forestry Corps. Keith Grieves in his 'Sussex in the First World War' describes the scale of efforts to resist a German invasion, thought to be both likely and imminent. Volunteer groups covered areas such as services for the fallen, supplies for hospitals, and presents for soldiers.

The impact of the First World War on Battle is at this distance of time hard to distinguish from the social and scientific developments taking place anyway. In 1914 Battle was a town with few telephones and no mains electricity, where buses were non-existent, cars rare and for the wealthy only, and horses the usual means of transport. All this was to change in time. But for some residents the effects of the war were immediate and startling. There are several stories of local Battle Councillors in a meeting during late 1914, who emerged from their deliberations to find that their horses had been summarily requisitioned and removed for the war effort!

## Battle at War: Second World War

- Normanhurst Court, built by railway entrepreneur Thomas Brassey, was used as a German POW camp prior to its demolition in 1951. Some accounts say it was used for Canadian troops. Can anyone help clarify what happened?
- Ashburnham Place was largely destroyed in 1944 through a plane crash arising from a collision between two American B26 Marauder bombers. Memorial plaque to the 11 dead from the crews is in Battle British Legion Premises in the Memorial Hall.
- In 1941 a Wellington NZ-N crashed at Darwell Hill in Netherfield, killing 4 of the 6 Polish crew. There is a memorial there.
- Battle was in the middle of 'bomb alley' as German bombers unloaded on the way home.
- Battle was bombed on 2 February 1943 by 3 German bombers coming from the direction of the windmill on Caldbec Hill. They discharged three 250lb bombs:
  - (a) one bounced over the George Hotel and blew up on the cricket ground
  - (b) one demolished two shops, killing Mr and Mrs Tickner according to 'Battle in Pictures', although a web source names Tom and Gladys Giles. One of the houses was where Martins newsagents now are. Assume the other house was next door.
  - (c) The same bomber dropped the bomb which bounced unexploded through the Abbey entrance, scraping it to the right hand side. The Abbey contained Canadian soldiers and was full of explosives.
- In 1944 a Spitfire from RAF Friston near Beachy Head, crashed in a field 1000 yards south of the Abbey. The pilot Kiki Limet survived the crash and after the war on returning to Belgium, founded Sabena Airlines. The remains were excavated by enthusiasts in 1994 and some are on exhibition in the Museum. 'Battle in Pictures' says the plane was named Hawkes Bay 'in appreciation of the people of Hawkes Bay, New Zealand, who had subscribed to the cost of the plane'.
- Pre-war the Augusta Victoria finishing school in Bexhill had coached German girls including the daughters of Goering and Ribbentrop.
- In the war Bairstow and Hewett's Lower Lake premises were the Senlac Cinema which did shows for the troops.

## The rest of the Twentieth Century

- **Battle in Celebration:** in 1932 Battle organised a Pageant, the programme for which is on display at the Battle Museum of Local History. In 1966 there was also celebration when Queen Elizabeth II visited the town.
- Many **significant buildings** were demolished in and around Battle, for example in 1958 the Unitarian chapel in Mount Street that had been erected in 1789; and much of Ashburnham House the following year. The Tower Hotel made way for

the fire station and the market made way for the supermarket/Library complex. In the 1930s out of the ashes of part of the Abbey buildings came the noted Battle Abbey School and restored Abbot's Hall.

- **Battle and popular pastimes:** The Council went to the courts in 1984 to prevent motorcycle scramble racing in Whatlington. This preference for quiet did not stop Battle being associated with several popular musicians: Frank Chacksfield was a Battle person and led a successful career as an orchestra leader and singer from the 1950s to the 1970s. 1997 Keane, still a famous rock band, were formed in Battle and there is a walking trail associated with them. In 1969 Brian Jones of the Stones, died in a swimming pool at Cotchford Farm, Battle.
- **Charitable work** in Battle continued as in previous centuries, strengthened by the creation of local organisations such as the Battle Bread and Cheese Club and the 'Muffins'.

## USEFUL BOOKS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF BATTLE

There is no single comprehensive detailed history of Battle, but the following are useful:

Anna Foster with Battle Museum of Local History: Battle in Pictures 2011<sup>1</sup>

Battle and District Historical Society: The 1066 Malfosse Walk 2000<sup>2</sup>

Battle Writers' Group: A tapestry of Battle 2002

Braybrooke C: A history of the Parish Church of Battle 2009<sup>3</sup>

Behrens LB: Battle Abbey and the 39 Kings 1937

Brodribb,G (reprinted 2014): The Roman Bath House at Beauport Park<sup>4</sup>

Foord KD: Battle Abbey and Battle churches since 1066, 2011

A Native: Battle and its Abbey - gleanings 1841

Guilmant: A Bygone Battle 1983

Hoad MA: 400 and still burning 2007

Lower: Compendious History of Sussex Vol 1 1870

Lucey, B: 20 Centuries in Sedlescombe 1978

Pyke, L: A short guide to Battle 1965

Turner, Edward: Battle Abbey 1865

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<sup>1</sup> Order from Battle Museum of Local History

<sup>2</sup> Order from Battle and District Historical Society

<sup>3</sup> Order from Battle and District Historical Society

<sup>4</sup> Order from Battle Museum of Local History